

The Doggity Chiefs Report

Preseason Final – 2005

Chiefs at Norsemen from the Humphrey Dumpty Dome. *MN=27, KC=16*

Chiefs vs Seahags from the Head. *SE=38, KC=31*

Chiefs vs Deadbirds from the Head. *AZ=24, KC=17*

Chiefs at Lambs from the Identity Crisis Dome. *SL=27, KC=23*

*First a prayer for those whose lives have been lost or forever changed by Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing flooding. Please give whatever you can to the Red Cross or your church or charity. We may only be one person, but as Doggity-daughter, Morgan said, "You know like 'Horton Hears a Who' sometimes one person makes all the difference."*

*Coming to you from the Southern Dogg House – hangin' with the Blowfish 'rents at beautiful Lake Hamilton in Hot Springs, AR. This is the summary Preseason report in preparation for next week's game that counts. Be sure to visit our host, the Illustrious Potentate, George Blowfish to read back issues of the Doggity Report at [www.georgeblowfish.com](http://www.georgeblowfish.com)! While you're there, visit the KC Sports hall of wax-n-whacks, and follow the link to RadBlow – Radio Blowfish. If you know others who might want to get this report blocked by the spam filter of their e-mail inbox every week – send me their addresses so we can add them to the large handful of people who regularly read the Dogg. I promise not to sell any email addresses to anyone concerned about your digestive health.*

Overview – the O-fer preseason is mercifully over. But to put it in perspective – the NFL's only other winless team in the preseason is Indianapolis. Does anyone think they can't win when it counts? As has been said before, the Dogg pays no attention to the score of preseason games. Which should make anyone wonder why the Dogg is willing every year to buy tickets and parking for preseason home games at full price. Dumb Dogg. Preseason games are played to evaluate players! Oh yeah. So let's do that, shall we? This report will break down each side of the ball by position. Keep in mind the only information this is based upon is preseason game action. Having not been with them in practice and camp, that part is naturally missing. At the end will give the Doggity predictions for the AFC West. Before heading to Vegas armed with this information, you should first visit Blowfish.com and check out how wildly accurate the Dogg has been in the past. Also – be sure to send those tailgate recipes. Next week will be the return of one of our favorite features -- "Ms. Priscilla's Recipe Box." We'll take them by email, or fax to 913-831-1307.

Offense – Despite all the hoopla about the D this off-season, this team is still offense-dependant. The D will be better, but they will not win games on that side of the ball. Of course this has for the past three years been one of the top offenses in the league in nearly every category. That despite mediocre receivers and not much depth. The key has been the consistent health of the offensive line and quarterback Trent Green. From what we have seen this preseason, it will still depend upon that. And, unfortunately, both have been called into question this year. That's the bad news. The good news – the emergence of LJ as a premiere back to compliment Pro-bowlers Holmes and Richardson gives KC a backfield unmatched in the NFL. In addition, the receivers will be much better this year. The return of Marc Boerigter, the strong play of Sammie Parker and Chris Horn, along with receiving TE Kris Wilson back from injury to compliment or spell Gonzo, this will be the best bunch-o'-catchers that Vermeil has ever had in KC. Here is how I see each position going into the year. The numbers in parentheses is the total number the team will likely keep on the 53-man roster:

Quarterbacks (3) – There's Trent and then there's...uh...um...er...have I mentioned Trent? Trent's balky knee that Rodney Harrison blew up in 1999 (and should have been jailed for) has not bothered him since. Until now. Scarring and damage has begun to restrict blood flow to his lower leg – requiring minor surgery to place a stint to protect the blood vessels. The doctors say it's no big deal. Let's hope they're right. The backup QB position in KC is embarrassing. There is no other way to describe it. The coaches LOVE Todd Collins. He must give good backrubs. He might be one of those guys who practices well, but chokes under live fire. He looks as though he has the tools, but his decision-making is dreadful. Damon Huard will make a fine high school coach. The sooner the better. Kilian may be a good QB someday. He showed some flashes, but

let's pray we don't need him to win an NFL game this year. Things are so bad KC brought in Jon Quinn – last year's lowest rated QB. You know things are bad when you're hiring QBs who can't make da Bears. Quinn looked OK against St. Louis, but I sure don't want to see #7 in a game that counts.

Running Backs (5) – By far the team's strongest position. Nothing needs to be said about Priest. And T-Rich, despite making the Pro Bowl, is still perhaps the most under-appreciated member of this team. Take nothing from Priest or Johnson, but there is a measurable drop-off in the running game without Richardson's lead blocking. Johnson has channeled his anger into his game and it's working. He may actually be the better of the two halfbacks. Ronnie Cruz likely gets the fullback #2 by default, and has played pretty well. The #3 back battle seems to be between McKenzi Smith and Dee Brown. I believe the edge goes to Smith because of special teams play, although Brown looked solid against St Louis.

Tightends (4) – There actually will only be three, but Kendall Gammon is on the roster as a tightend even though his only job is to handle long-snapping. Tony Gonzales and Jason Dunn have the top two slots locked down. Dunn is a decent receiver who will always get a few TD grabs when everyone focuses on Gonzo and Priest. Dunn may be the best blocking TE in the NFL. Kris Wilson, if healthy, could be the guy to watch this year. He is touted as Gonzo II. The only question mark is the health of Gonzo's hoof.

O-line (7-8) – The best line in football has four slots set, of course – Roaf, Shields, Weigmann and Waters. Roaf and Shields are likely in their last seasons, and both are playing through pain. Hopefully they have one more in the tank. Weigmann and Waters were actually the team's two best linemen last year. Weigmann deserved a trip to Hawaii with his running mates. Kevin Sampson gets the starting nod at RT over Jordan Black, who will certainly stick as the primary backup. John Welbourne would be a shoo-in except for the "special vitamins" he got from Barry Bonds. Brett Williams was competing for a backup gig when he went down in the St Louis game. That leaves Bober and Barnett as the most likely to round out the posse.

Receivers (6) – The only sure thing is Eddie Kennison, and of course Dante Hall, who will be carried as a receiver, but is really only the return specialist this year. It's possible we will see Dante in a few reverses or as a decoy, but he will be pretty much the return guy. The #2 WR is a battle between Parker, Boerighter and Horn, with Parker looking like the guy. Fred Ex is an outsider at this point, along with McIntyre – who was great against St Louis, and Crapnonso Thorpe – who is a Dogg fave just because of his name.

Defense – For the first time in the Vermeil era, this unit looks ready for primetime. The #1's punked the high-octane Rams offense that ran all over Jax on MNF. Other than the Minnesota game, the first team has looked aggressive, fast and fun to watch. In fairness the Viking game was the D's first time playing together – they were without a couple of key pieces – and Culpepper and Co. make a lot of pretty good defenses look pretty silly.

D-backs (8-9) – Surtain and Knight are the high-profile pick-ups that will anchor the revamped defensive backfield. Unfortunately, Warfield's "toasty" nickname took on new meaning last fall when he tried driving-while-toasted and drew heat from the law and the league. Warfield's four-game suspension will hurt. It means Oh! Dexter! will start and his backup is yet to be determined. Let's just hope we get good line play for four games. The corners are Surtain, Warfield and McCleon for sure. They will likely also keep Bennie Sapp, who has played pretty well – that means that rookie Alphonso Hodge, Ambrose and/or Washington are vying for one slot. My bet is on Washington because of experience, with Hodge making the practice squad if he clears waivers. See ya Ash! The safety situation cleared up with the release of Willie Pile and Shaunard Harts. Jerome Woods and William Bartee – who has been a surprise since his move inside – will likely fill the remaining two places. TDBFKAC Bartee has performed well on Special teams as well.

Linebackers (6-7) – The starters are in. Kendrell Bell hasn't played much and his durability over the course of 16 games is a real issue – but when available, he's the best LB we have at this moment. Kawika Mitchell has finally emerged as a dominant inside LB and leader. His speed was never a question, but his decision-making was suspect. This preseason he has established himself as serious MLB. Rookie Derrick Johnson is being compared by many to the late Derrick Thomas. That's a poor choice. Thomas was one of the best pass rushers in NFL history, but he was not a well-rounded linebacker. Gunther even invented a position he called "falcon" for DT because of his lopsided skill set. Johnson is a player. He can cover, rush, play the run. He's fast, smart and explosive. It will take him a few weeks to get used to the NFL game, but if one were to compare his upside to a former Chief linebacker, it would be Bobby Bell. The Dogg has always said that Bobby Bell is the best player in the history of the franchise. This is another position that will be hard-fought, but the water cleared with the unfortunate release of Mike Maslowski. Can't keep a guy who can't play. Barber will be on the PUP list and Quinton Caver will be selling Buicks. Keyaron Fox has a spot for sure, as does walk-on surprise Kris Griffin, who has been nothing short of amazing in the preseason. That leaves Rich Scanlon, the NFL defensive player of the year, fan-fave Boomer Grigsby, veteran Scott Fujita and special team pro-bowler Gary Stills fighting for two, maybe three roster spots. My guess either Fujita or Grigsby – or both are gone. It's a rare luxury of late to be in the position to cut linebackers who will likely play, and might even start on another team.

D-line (8-9) – The starting line is still in flux. Hicks, Sims, Dalton and Wilkerson are in pencil. However, last year's Mack Lee Hill winner, Jared "Subway" Allen finally looked good in the Rams game after his Claude Raines impersonation in the first three games. John Browning of course will stick, as will Junior Siavii and Carlos Hall. These guys are no better than average, but seem to be playing with more intensity than last season, with noticeable improvement from Sims.

Special Teams – The specials go into the year missing two of their best players from last year, Derrick Blaylock and Monte Beisel – who were free-agents to the Jets and Pats, respectively. The punting situation is settled, and sometimes you go to war with the place kicker you have, not the place kicker you wish you had...

Specialists – Dr. Jekell and Mr. Tynes will be the kicker, it appears. He has a good strong leg, if a little bit of a control issue. All I have to say is, "rosettes go in front, big guy." Rookie punter Dustin Colquitt should be fun to watch this year. His punts go 40+ yards, and take nearly 5 seconds to do it. That's Ray Guy territory, but the best part is, he's left-footed so his kicks drop spinning backward for most return guys, and they flutter like a maple seed. He could be good for four or five muffed returns this season. That could win a game or two. Dante Hall needs no introduction, and this season he has a couple of credible backups (assuming they keep Smith). Boerigter and Bartee could be sufficient replacements for Blaylock and Beisel with a little time.

My AFC West Predictions for 2005:

No division in the NFL is more wide open. Playboy picks the Criminals to win the West (pshttt), and I looked at three different NFL preseason magazines today and got a nod to each of the other three teams as the eventual champs – all three picked the Faders last, by the way.

- 1) Kansas City Chiefs – The division will be down, but the real competition will be with the young and scrappy Chargers. KC has the edge in – of all things – defense over San Diego, and far better than Denver or Oakland this year. The “big if” remains the health of Green and the O-line. Assuming they can go 15 or 16, this will be the year for Dickie V.
- 2) San Diego Bolts – This is almost a case of 1a and 1b. San Diego has LT, but doesn't have a backup for him like KC does with Priest. They will lose Gates for one game, and he may be the next Gonzo, but there isn't a #2 like Kris Wilson. And, despite their better depth at QB, neither Brees, nor Rivers is as good as Green. Again, one key injury on KC's O-unit and this could easily flip.
- 3) Denver Donkeys – The Donkey running game – of all things – (I've been saying that a lot) is the worst in the division this year. Even the Convicts will run the ball better than Denver. Denver's defense is suspect and they have Jake the Joke under center. That by itself will cost them two or three games. Coach Ratbert's best days are behind him.
- 4) East Bay Convicts – Vastly improved in the running back and ONE wideout position will not make up for an inexperienced and spotty offensive line and Kerry “Todd” Collins as their QB. The defense won't be much if any better than last year. Expect the usual mid-season meltdown from the trolls from the hole.

Throw Him A Bone Award –

The preseason Bone goes to linebacker Kris Griffin. The Dogg loves walk-on free agents. T-Rich, Priest, Eric Hicks are all examples of undrafted guys who have excelled on this team. I hope we have one more.

The Doggity Dog –

The biggest disappointment this preseason has been Todd “Kerry” Collins. His limited time and horrid mental errors leave me very worried about Trent's blood flow issues. Huard was worse, but Quinn and Kilian were both better – and Collins has a much time in this offense as Green. The others don't.

Next week –

IT COUNTS! Herm Edwards' solid Jet team will be a major test right out of the chute. Thankfully they get to play it at the Head. Strap it on for the full Doggity next week.

Your faithful scribe,  
Mr. Doggity