

S P O R T S

Sports Pace

Predictions test a player, team's gumption

*By Huel Washington
Special to Sentinel-voice*

In modern sports, nothing could be more pleasing to an athlete than predicting a victory and then going into a sports arena and making the promise a reality.

New England's Tom Brady predicted on New Year's Day that he and his team would be in Houston playing in Super Bowl XXXVIII on Feb. 1. Had we really believed him and bet the house and lot in Georgia on his prediction, we wouldn't have to work for a long time.

Last weekend, standing in Brady's path in Foxborough, Mass., was high-scoring Indianapolis. The league's co-Most Valuable Player, Peyton Manning, quarterbacks the Colts. In consecutive weeks, the Colts had annihilated Denver and the Kansas City in an awesome demonstration of precision.

The Patriots appeared headed for mass destruction, even though they had won 13-straight games.

Things fell into the Patriots' favor when they won the coin toss and elected to get the ball first. With recent success scoring on the opening drive, this gave them a chance

to at least score three points before the well-oiled machine from Indiana got the pigskin.

The 13-play drive nearly stalled at midfield when the home team was faced with a fourth and one. New England made the yard and then marched to a touchdown on a pass from Brady to David Givens. After taking a 7-0 lead, the Patriots never trailed, depending on the leg of Adam Vinatieri for 15 points on five field goals and a safety by the Indianapolis punter.

Brady's University of Michigan alumnus, Ty Law, helped out on defense by intercepting three Manning passes, stymieing the Colts each time they appeared on their way to overtaking the Patriots. Indianapolis closed the gap to 21-14 after Brady missed a chance to add another touchdown in the fourth quarter. Instead, he was intercepted in the end zone trying to hit his tight end Christian Fauria.

During the NFL regular season, Kansas City rode into Cincinnati with a 9-0 record and seemed bent on continuing their streak. Bengals' Chad Johnson, a third-year wide receiver from Oregon State, predicted his team

would stop the marauding bunch from Missouri.

At the time, Cincinnati, under first-year coach Marvin Lewis and Jon Kitna, a journeyman at quarterback, had a 4-5 record. The team's record for the previous year was 2-14, so this squad had already performed better than its predecessor did.

Johnson's brashness enraged some of his teammates who were quite critical of the young man's prediction. Chief's coach Dick Vermeil didn't need any speeches to uplift his team. Johnson had taken care of that. Johnson must have also sparked his teammates, who knocked the Chiefs out of the unbeaten ranks with a 24-19 win.

Johnson scored a touchdown on a pass from Kitna. The Bengals went on to win three more games and end the season with an 8-8 record.

Predictions might be making a comeback.

Last year, James Toney, cruiserweight champion in two of three boxing organizations, told anyone who would listen that former four-time heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield was over the hill. Toney said he would prove it when they tangled at

the Mandalay Bay Resort last November.

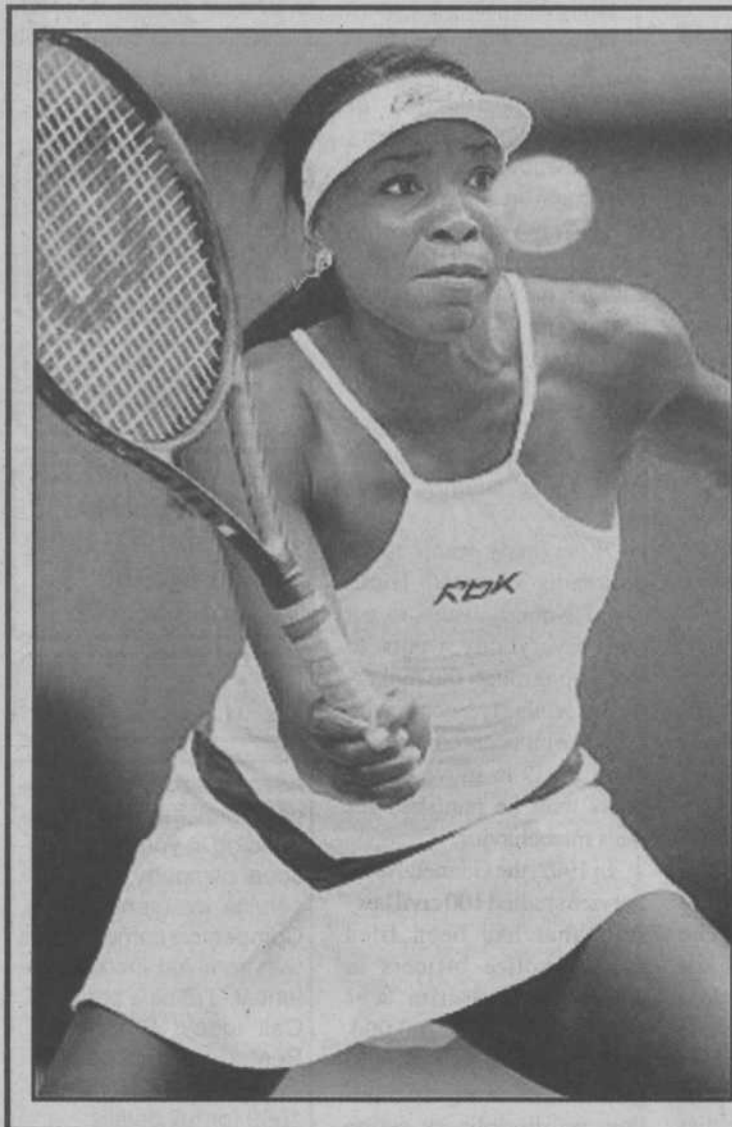
Many boxing fans realized Holyfield was losing some of his effectiveness in the squared circle but he had experience on his side and would put the loud, constantly talking Toney in his place. By the ninth round of their scheduled 12-round bout, Toney not only proved his point, he even convinced some of those present that Holyfield should have retired a couple of fights before their

meeting.

Brady, Johnson and Toney aren't starting a new trend. A great many athletes have said they would triumph in their respective competitions. There was Joe Namath in Super III, when the New York Jets defeated heavily favored Baltimore. In boxing, way back when, Max Schmeling predicted his victory over Joe Louis. There is nothing like the rush that comes when the athlete making the prediction actually makes the victory a

reality. Brady said his team hasn't finished the job yet

The Patriots are only the second team in NFL history to win 14 consecutive games. The Miami Dolphins, the last team to win 14 straight, won Super Bowl VIII. At this time, Brady hasn't made a notable prediction about the Carolina Panthers, his team's opponents in Houston. Maybe next week, after studying the tapes, he will let the world know who will win Super Bowl XXXVIII.



Back In Stride Again?

Venus Williams hits a volley against Ashley Harkleroad in their first round match Tuesday at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Williams won 6-2, 6-1. Williams is trying to regain the form that made her the top women's player in the world a few years ago.



County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates

Clark County Government Youth Program Summer Jobs

"Providing Today's Students With Opportunities For Tomorrow"



Finance Dept is recruiting High school students. Must be a Junior or Senior by the Fall of 2004

Inner city youth living in urban neighborhoods are strongly encouraged to apply.

Applications can be obtained at the **Clark County Government Center, 4th Floor**

500 S. Grand Central Parkway
OR

KCEP Radio Station
330 W. Washington Ave.
OR

Local High School Job Banks

Application Deadline March 5, 2004

For more information, contact
702.455.4432 or 455.2426



Sponsored by the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community Program