As the season winds down, the cream of the crop rises to the top, and you can't stop that slop.

Naturally, I am talking about my picks, not the stupid playoff teams.

HERO (Hutchison's Exciting Ranking Orgy) finally paid off for me big-time, netting me a 11.5-4.5 record for the week - a season best. Even my single HERO Overrule (Panthers over Raiders) worked out. Ah, to have laid down the mortgage last week...

DJC and BT both came in with respectable 8.5-7.5 records, but both have now (inevitably) fallen behind me in overall record as it now stands: Me 120.5-111.5, BT 117.5-114.5, DJC 115.5-116.5. 9 games over .500 certainly represents the high-water mark on the season, especially seeing as I was 11 games under .500 when I instituted HERO after Week 10 - meaning (for those of you too lazy to do simple math) the System is 20 games over .500 in 6 weeks.

Not going to win you a skyscraper, but also not going to make you too destitute to live anywhere but Western PA.

All odds are from VegasInsider.com :

CLE at PIT OFF (Browns QB situation)

Me - *My Line: PIT by 7.5*. God, I wish the Browns would stop having to play these meaningless late season games against the Steelers. It seems like every year by the end of December they're a 4 or 5 win team with a Head Coach who's been doomed for weeks and a roster full of players that have quit starting a 4th string QB in Pittsburgh. You know it's going to suck, and who cares by this point anyway? It's not like there's a helluva rivalry at this juncture, and these useless Week 17 matchups further water it down.

Vegas has this one off the boards due to the QB situation, as if that would make a huge difference. CBS Sports has this one as PIT by 5.5. I'm assuming Thad Lewis will start at this point, so I'm giving the Browns the 3 point QB deduction for first-start-third-string-QB-against-number-1-defense factor. *Pick: Steelers*

DJC - *Pick: Steelers*

BT - Shitsburgh unfortunately. *Pick: Steelers*

NYJ at BUF -3.5

Me - *My Line: BUF by 4*. Week 17 unfortunately stars a lot more terrible games than attractive ones, seeing as half the Playoff teams will be resting players and only a few Playoff spots are still up in the air. Take this one. The Jets were technically "in it" until last week, but they were really dead the second the traded for Tim Tebow and submarined an already volatile situation. Rob Ryan is a noisy jackass, but this disaster is not all his doing. Whether it was created by an idiot GM or a meddling owner (more destructive than rust), I don't know. But they managed to turn a meh QB situation into Chernobyl. So the 3 point QB deduction is a certainty.
Pick: Bills

DJC - I miss Tebow. *Pick: Bills*

BT - *Pick: Bills*

MIA at NE -10

Me - *My Line: NE by 9*. The Dolphins should be an interesting team next year. Ryan Tannehill was mostly just ah-ight, but since I expected him to be more Gabbert-esque than he's been, that's a plus. Good running game, good Defense... not sure if that kind of team can realistically compete for a Ring, but they can be a Wildcard team as soon as next year. So even though the Pats never mail it in, I think Miami can stay within the spread. *Pick: Dolphins*

DJC - *Pick: Patriots*

BT - *Pick: Patriots*

BAL at CIN -2.5

Me - *My Line: CIN by 2.5*. Man, those Kitties tried so hard to shit the bed last week. Pittsburgh is a pretty mediocre team this year, and they were giving Cincy every opportunity to Carpe Diem, but that Bengals Offense was having none of it. Fortunately, Pig Ben and the moronic "Let's Try And Heave The Ball Down The Field With 20 Seconds Left Deep In Our Own Territory" tactic saved the day for the Paper Tigers, and off they go to be Slaughter Fodder for the Pats in the Wild Card round. Congrats!

As far as this game is concerned, it means nothing to either team, so I assume a lot of dinged up players will sit and flip a coin at who wins this. I will literally do this, and... tails, Baltimore. *Pick: Ravens*

DJC - *Pick: Ravens*

BT - *Pick: Bengals*

HOU at IND +6.5

Me - *My Line: HOU by 4.5*. This game is meaningless to the Colts, who will play in Baltimore in the Wild Card round, but they are just way too young and inexperienced for them not to play full-strength. I think they'll try to win this one, not just for momentum, but for the return of ailing Coach Pagano. Houston needs this game too, but that team is valleying at the wrong time, a TD is too much to give them on the road. *Pick: Colts*

DJC - One more time Fleener! *Pick: Colts*

BT - *Pick: Colts*

JAX at TEN -4

Me - *My Line: TEN by 4*. Remember when I mentioned terrible games? *Pick: Titans*

DJC - *Pick: Titans*

BT - Wow. *Pick: Titans*

PHI at NYG -7

Me - *My Line: NYG by 9*. Well, the Giants done blew it. When they're on, they're one of the best teams in the NFL. They can beat ANYBODY. But they went and screwed around like they always do and it's now very likely they'll miss the Playoffs. And they'll take that out on the Eagles, who will send Andy Reid packing with a glorious loss. *Pick: Giants*

DJC - *Pick: Giants*

BT - *Pick: GMen*

DAL at WAS -3

Me - *My Line: WAS by 5*. I must admit that I haven't watched enough of the Cowboys over the last couple years to deduce what their weaknesses are. Tony Romo always seems to put up big numbers. Dez Bryant always seems to be a huge threat. The Defense always seems to get a lot of sacks. Yet here they are again, about to get sent packing yet again. The Skins are just on a roll right now, not just at QB but the entire team. I don't see how Dallas wins this one in Northeastern December weather conditions. *Pick: Redskins*

DJC - *Pick: Redskins*

BT - Romo fails again. *Pick: Redskins*

CHI at DET +3

Me - *My Line: CHI by 4.5*. This game is essential to the Bears, and the Lions suck. Chicago will throw every player on their roster against Matty Stafford, and he'll throw about 3 picks and walk around like a confused Cherub. Matt Millen will spend the telecast discussing which WR

Detroit should take at the #5 slot. *Pick: Bears*

DJC - *Pick: Bears*

BT - *Pick: Bears*

GB at MIN +3.5

Me - *My Line: GB by 1.5*. Sure, Christian Ponder blows parakeets, but the rest of that team is good enough to go in and beat a solid Texans team last week. Are they good enough to beat an elite QB (which Matt Schaub certainly is not)? Nope, even though this is essentially a Playoff game for them. The Pack is playing for a Bye, so it's not like they'll lay down. But I can definitely see a 3 point loss for Minny. *Pick: Vikings*

DJC - *Pick: Packers*

BT - *Pick: Vikings*

TB at ATL OFF (ATL sits players)

Me - *My Line: ATL by 9.5*. CBS Sportsline has this as an 8.5 point line, which seems like a large line for a team that will likely be resting a boatload of key players. Tampa has just come apart at the seams the last couple weeks, however, and there's a good chance they'll be mailing it in a bit. And since this line is off as far as picks are concerned... *Pick: Falcons*

DJC - *Pick: Falcons*

BT - *Pick: Falcons*

CAR at NO -5.5

Me - *My Line: NO by 6*. Ah, the battle of two Preseason Cinderellas who lost their slippers and were forced to marry the Cobbler instead of the Prince, but have now rebounded enough to show what the Prince saw in them in the first place. Either of these teams would be dangerous if they were able to get in. But since they can't, this is their Super Bowl. New Orleans is just more explosive at this time. *Pick: Saints*

DJC - *Pick: Saints*

BT - *Pick: Saints*

KC at DEN -16

Me - *My Line: DEN by 17.5*. Woooo! This is the second time this season a game has featured #1 vs. #32, but the line result is different since I have tweaked the formula since then. Normally, in the NFL, it is insanity to take a team giving 16 points. However, the Chiefs are quite bad and the Horsies quite good and Denver needs this game, so they'll try to step on KC's throats early and often. *Pick: Broncos*

DJC - *Pick: Broncos*

BT - *Pick: Broncos*

OAK at SD OFF (OAK QB situation)

Me - *My Line: SD by 9.5*. Not sure why this one is off, we know that Terrell Pryor is taking on a key role in the game, and I don't see how there is much doubt about what that means for Oakland. CBS has SD by 7.5, I have it by more. *Pick: Chargers*

DJC - Pryor to get more time? Uh, no. *Pick: Chargers*

BT - *Pick: Chargers*

ARI at SF -16.5

Me - *My Line: SF by 15.5*. I'll take a 16 point line with Denver over KC, but not here. Just too many points, even though Arizona clearly has the potential to get blown out.
Pick: Cardinals

DJC - Too many. *Pick: Cardinals*

BT - Too many points. *Pick: Cardinals*

STL at SEA -10.5

Me - *My Line: SEA by 11.5*. Look at all these fancy double-digit lines! And deserved, too. This one not so much because the Rams are bad (they're only mediocre) but because of how well Seattle has been playing and the fact that this game is at home, where they look unbeatable (even when they are actually beaten - ask Green Bay what that means).
Pick: Seahawks

DJC - What's the over/under? Take over! (It's actually 41) *Pick: Seahawks*

BT - *Pick: Seahawks*