



Walter Mencken's

SD ON THE QT

Almost factual news

THE ART OF FOOTBALL

A Conversation with Nørv Turner

A CONCRETE BUNKER SOMEWHERE BELOW QUALCOMM STADIUM — San Diego Chargers coach Nørv Turner had guided his team to yet another slow start this season, once again raising questions about his coaching style, his motivational skills, and, ultimately, his artistic vision. Recently, “SD on the QT” was able to sit down with this enigmatic athletic provocateur to get the real story of the Man who Steers the Rivers.

Before speaking, Turner took a long sip from his favorite cocktail, which he has named after himself. “The Nørv is made from absinthe and Gatorade Cool Blue, plus a twist of lemon rind. I have them cut to look like little Chargers bolts. It’s precious, I know, but we have to allow ourselves these eccentricities if we are to main-



“The world of professional sport is not a simple binary system of wins and losses — it is a fluctuating landscape that admits countless shades of gray. I am hoping my visual appearance will help you to understand this.”

tain a larger sense of sanity while directing young men in mock military campaigns on national television — don’t you agree?”

This reporter wholeheartedly concurred before beginning to ask about locker-room dynamics. “The season is my canvas, my stage,” interrupted Turner. “I regard it as both a narrative and a performance. People

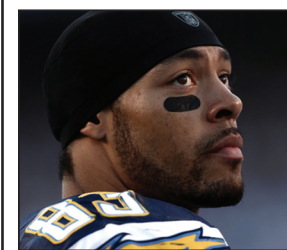
think they want endless success, a string of wins stretching from opening day to the Super Bowl. But they don’t, not really. They want drama. It’s a coach’s job to understand that, and to shape the season accordingly.

“Consider, for a moment, the 2007 New England Patriots, coached as it was by the troglodytic Bill Belichick — a man who wouldn’t know art if somebody tattooed it on Tom Brady’s backside. Undoubtedly, they managed to achieve a kind of white-knuckle, horror-movie tension

as they approached the 16-0 regular-season record. But it was a cheap sort of thrill — wondering, *will they go undefeated?* was not unlike wondering, *will Jamie Lee Curtis escape Michael Myers?* in the first *Halloween*. There is no dramatic movement, only endlessly heightened emotion. And that’s why that kind of success ultimately breeds boredom — the mind has nothing to do while the body writhes in nervous anticipation. Boredom, of course, breeds contempt, and, ultimately, hostility. Has any team from the past ten years been as hated as the ’07 Patriots? I think not.”

Again, this reporter could only agree. Turner continued. “Contrast that, if you will, with the shape of my previous work here. In 2007, my charges — pardon the wordplay — stumbled to a 5-5 record before going on a win streak that took them all the way to the conference championship. In 2008, I allowed the team to slip all the way to 4-8 before narrowly winning the division with an 8-8 record. Such a vic-

Inaction Jackson! Standout receiver, who recorded 68 catches, 9 touchdowns, and 1 DUI in 2009, languishes in league limbo after Chargers owner A.J. Smith puts a price on his head so big, he’s not able to go near a civilized franchise.



Jackson in a moment of sober reflection on his future in San Diego

After Chargers’ sloppy week-three loss to Seahawks, suspended star Jackson tells “SD on the QT” that it “looks like I’m not the only one who isn’t playing for the first six games of the season.”

tory is exhilarating, but also faintly hilarious, as is proper for art created by men wrapped in Spandex and mesh. Last season, we slipped to 2-3 before I grew wary of repeating myself, and allowed them to dominate the rest of the regular season. Then, I had the sublime pleasure of subverting expectations in the playoffs, losing to a New York Jets team that had finished 9-7. It was perhaps my finest work to date.”

And this season? “I confess, my hand has been unsteady on the wheel,” sighed Turner as he sank back on his divan and luxuriated in the grotesque strains of

Schoenberg’s “Cacophony for Strings.” “Our hesitant beginning, while it may appear to be in the mold of Classic Nørv, is more the result of aesthetic uncertainty than anything else. I enjoyed the absurdist farce of losing to the Seahawks as much as anything I’ve ever done — to watch Philip throw for 455 yards, only to lose through the inept goofery of special teams...brilliant. But I’m still searching for the thread, the story element that will give shape to the whole. If I don’t have something by New England in week seven, I may have to throw up my hands and start planning for 2011.”

KIDZ CORNER

A Whale of a Buried Treasure... For the Children of the Future



Diagonal lines clearly indicate the whale’s burial site. Inset: artist’s representation of the newly discovered whale in its pre-fossil days, plus unrelated super-toothed giant sperm whale.

San Diego Zoo officials opt to seal newly discovered whale fossil on zoo property under layer of protective asphalt, “to ensure that this momentous discovery is preserved undisturbed for future generations. Centuries from now, the children and parents of San Diego will thank us for not greedily excavating this historic discovery for ourselves, and for allowing them to experience the thrill of uncovering the ancient past. And, who knows, maybe in three or four hundred years, they’ll have the parking issue sorted out as well.”

WHO PLAYS WHO

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS EDITION



In *The Rookie*, **Dennis Quaid** played Jim Morris, a man who didn’t win a ballgame until he was 39.



Chargers coach **Norv Turner** usually prefers not to win until around four games into the season.



As the Joker in *Batman*, **Jack Nicholson** went crazy after suffering terrible injuries.



If Chargers quarterback **Philip Rivers** gets terribly injured, suffering fans will go crazy.



In 2002, **Denzel Washington** was the film industry’s Best Actor.



In 2010, **Antonio Gates** is the league’s best tight end.