

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
SPORTSBernie
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bjmiklasz@post-dispatch.com**Coach who devised
Eagles defense has
a punishing style**

Jim Johnson is the Mike Martz of defensive coordinators. In running Philadelphia's defense, Johnson doesn't rely on traditional, conservative football. The Eagles start blitzing the opposing quarterback as soon as he steps off the team bus.

"I want to put stress on the offense," Johnson said. "I'm not going to let up or back off. I'm going to make sure they've got something to think about on every play. I want to create problems for the offense. I want to show them something and then show them something else."

That sounds like Martz when Mad Mike discusses his relentless and unconventional approach to offense. No wonder the Rams coach thinks Johnson is the best defensive coordinator in the NFL. Martz puts Johnson with New England coach Bill Belichick as the finest defensive mind he's encountered in a match of football chess.

"Jim is very gifted," Martz said. "He's a brilliant coordinator. It's amazing that he hasn't been a head coach. He certainly deserves the opportunity. He's a great coach."

Johnson blitzes 40 percent of the time and is willing to send anyone, including both cornerbacks. Johnson is clever at faking blitzes. He even drops hulking defensive linemen into pass coverage. The Eagles like to pound a quarterback physically and then scramble his mind with confusion.

The quarterbacks who can handle the all-out assault have an excellent chance of turning Johnson's aggression against him by finding an uncovered receiver. Those who are weak have no chance. The same ethic applies to the coaches; only the smart ones can figure out a way to counter-attack Johnson's blitz. Johnson thinks he'll be facing the best when he squares off with Martz.

"Mike does so many good things," Johnson said. "He's the toughest to go against. I admire him. The shifting, the formations, the personnel groupings. You never know what he's going to do. People talk about the Rams' talent, but it's much more than that. You have to give Martz a lot of credit for the way he utilizes his players. It's a lot more than just having good talent. And his style of football is fun to watch. It's not so much fun to go against."

I'm still trying to understand how an old Mizzou quarterback could turn against the fraternity by causing QBs such as anguish. Johnson, 60, played for Dan Devine at Missouri from 1959-62 and was the starting QB in '62 when the Tigers went 8-1-2. In a 14-10 victory over Georgia Tech in the Bluebonnet Bowl, Johnson scored on a 21-yard run and finished with 66 yards rushing on three attempts. He misfired on all five passing attempts and was intercepted once.

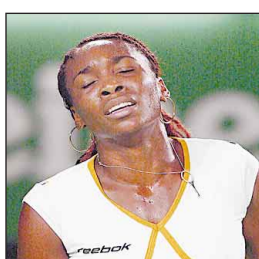
Johnson wasn't exactly Paul Christman or Phil Bradley. For the entire 1962 season he completed 12 passes in 33 attempts with six interceptions, for 198 yards. He didn't need to be a passer. The Tigers thrived on Devine's power-sweep offense. Post-Dispatch columnist Bob Broeg told us that Johnson was an intelligent, physical quarterback who'd sprint downfield to deliver punishing blocks after handing the ball off to Johnny Roland on those mashing sweeps.

Devine was a significant influence on Johnson's development as a leader. "The one thing about Dan that stood out to me is that he was always the boss," Johnson said. "There was never any question that he was in charge. And it's important for a team to have strong leadership."

That's why Johnson signed on with new Eagles coach Andy Reid in 1999; Reid gave him full control of the defense and encourages Johnson's radical tactics.

Johnson's coaching roots were formed in Missouri. He was a graduate assistant at Mizzou, coached quarterbacks

See Miklasz, D3

**Seles ousts Venus Williams**

Venus Williams' winning streak came to an end Tuesday at the Australian Open, where Monica Seles defeated her in three sets. **D2**

**Sunday's game**

3:15 p.m. KTVI (Ch. 2)
The line: Rams by 12

Inside

Guard Tom Nutton's determination sets him apart. **D4**

Mike Martz isn't upset with Merrill Hoge anymore. **D4**

Former Ram Chad Lewis is a standout for the Eagles. **D5**

Rams "fed" off win vs. Eagles**OT victory proved 2001 team had a defense, too****Defense passed first test**

In their season-opener against the Eagles, the new Rams defense demonstrated surprising resiliency after squandering a lead.

The Eagles entered the fourth quarter trailing 17-3. But they intercepted a Kurt Warner pass and went on to tie the game with touchdown drives of 98 and 69 yards.

The key moment came in OT when the Rams defense shrugged off the mistakes of the previous quarter. They sacked Donovan McNabb for the fifth time and stifled the Eagles' opening drive. The Rams offense took possession and was able to kick the winning field goal.

BY JIM THOMAS
Of the Post-Dispatch

Before the season opener Sept. 9 against Philadelphia, Rams quarterback Kurt Warner evaluated the matchup by saying: "I guess it's two teams that feel like they can vie for a chance to win the Super Bowl this year."

He proved to be prophetic. More than 4½ months later, the Rams will meet the Eagles in Sunday's NFC Championship game, with the winner advancing to the Super Bowl in New Orleans.

"It seemed like that game was a long time ago," cornerback Dre' Bly said.

It was. But several things about that 20-17 overtime victory by St. Louis affected the Rams' season and still have rel-

evance entering Sunday's contest.

"I think we fed on that victory for a long time during the season," coach Mike Martz said. "To come out of there with a win when nobody expected us to win. Nobody. I think all you (local writers) here felt like we wouldn't win."

"And I understand that. There were too many question marks about our football team to know what was going to happen."

Actually, some observers did pick the Rams to win that game. But in many ways, the Eagles were the more established team entering that game. They had more returning players. They had won one more game in 2000 than the Rams. And St. Louis was unveiling a totally revamped defensive unit.

See Rams, D4



CHRIS LEE/POST-DISPATCH

Even though he was sacked five times, Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb's scrambling caused the Rams trouble in their first meeting on Sept. 9.

CINCINNATI 54, ST. LOUIS U. 50

Up next vs. Marquette, 1 p.m. Saturday

Bearcats claw by Bills

CHRIS LEE/POST-DISPATCH

St. Louis U.'s Chris Sloan (left) pulls down a rebound in front of teammate Kenny Brown and Cincinnati's Jamaal Davis and Jason Maxiell.

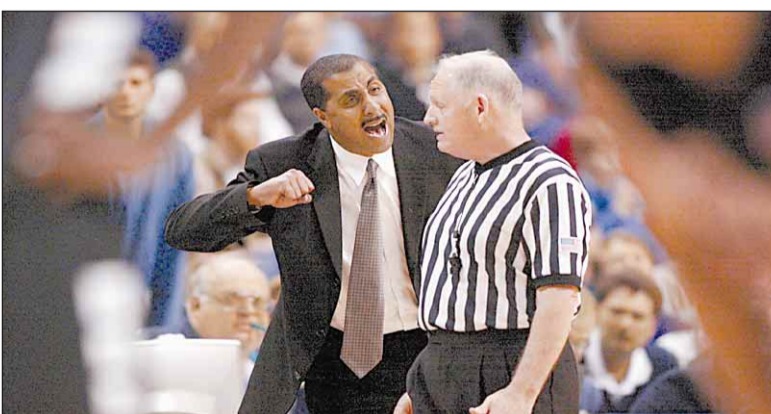
Two cold stretches put the chill on Billikens' chance for an upsetBY STU DURANDO
Of the Post-Dispatch

A daunting task under any circumstances seemingly became a mission impossible for St. Louis University Tuesday night with word that Marque Perry would miss his third consecutive game.

But the Billikens set out to establish an identity without their leading scorer and pushed No. 4 Cincinnati to the limit before succumbing 54-50 in a Conference USA game at Savvis Center. SLU rallied to tie the game at 43 with 7 minutes 2 seconds remaining but went nearly seven minutes without a field goal down the stretch.

Cincinnati extended its nation-leading win streak to 18 games despite a season-low offensive output.

The Billikens (9-10 overall, 3-3 in C-USA) suffered



CHRIS LEE/POST-DISPATCH

Billikens coach Lorenzo Romar argues about an elbowing call in the second half Tuesday night at Savvis Center.

through droughts at the end of both halves. The first resulted in the Bearcats (18-1, 6-0) wiping out a nine-point SLU lead. The second cost them a chance at the upset.

"I was extremely proud of the guys and how they competed,"

SLU coach Lorenzo Romar said. "But I'm not satisfied with the fact we lost the game. If we want to be the program we set out to be, we have to win that game."

Perry missed his third consecutive game with symptoms

Inside the game

▶ SLU's loss to Cincinnati ended its seven-game home winning streak.

▶ The Billikens held the Bearcats to their lowest score of the season.

of a concussion that he suffered Dec. 29 against Washington. He watched the game in street clothes on the SLU bench.

He witnessed a scrappy effort by the Billikens, who fought back from a 30-23 halftime deficit to tie the game on a 3-pointer by Josh Fisher with 7:02 left. The Billikens then had two chances to take the lead but turned the ball over both times and followed with a third on their next possession.

See SLU, D9

La Russa gets three more years with Cards

Pact is believed to be about \$2 million a year

BY MIKE EISENBATH
Of the Post-Dispatch

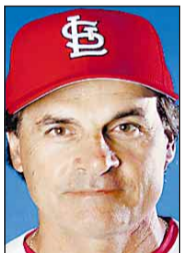
Under Tony La Russa, the Cardinals have gone to the playoffs three times and achieved back-to-back seasons of 90 victories for the first time since 1967-68. But La Russa wants more, so he will continue as the Cardinals manager in quest of a World Series ring.

La Russa agreed to return to the club months ago, originally for a two-year deal.

On Tuesday, the Cardinals announced just a few hours before the 44th annual Baseball Writers' Dinner at the Millennium Hotel that he has officially signed a three-year contract extension, carrying him through the 2004 season. Financial terms were not disclosed, but it is believed he will make slightly more than \$2 million a year.

La Russa said that after speculation he might not come back for a seventh season with the

See Cardinals, D3

La Russa
23 years as manager**The La Russa years**

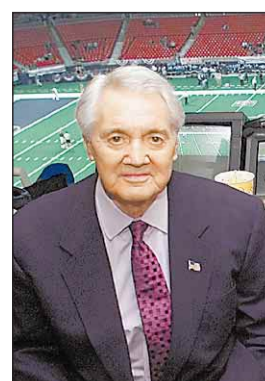
Year	W	L	Finish
1996*	88	74	1st
1997	73	89	4th
1998	83	79	3rd
1999	75	86	4th
2000*	95	67	1st
2001	93	69	(tie) 1st
TOTALS	507	464	

* Reached National League Championship Series in postseason

Dungy agrees to deal with Colts

Eight days after being fired as coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tony Dungy reached an agreement in principle to coach the Indianapolis Colts, and a formal introduction is expected today.

Colts owner Jim Irsay said the deal is for five years and will pay Dungy about \$13 million. **D6**



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INSIDE

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2 BASEBALL: A court upholds an injunction requiring the Twins to play in the Metrodome next season.

7 NHL: The Rangers come back from three goals behind to defeat the Islanders.

7 NBA: Allen Iverson leads a second-half charge to help Philadelphia beat Washington.

Summerall steps down as Madden's partner

Pat Summerall announced Tuesday that he will end his partnership with John Madden on NFL telecasts after the Super Bowl, closing a 21-year run. The move comes after Fox Sports executives failed to assure Summerall, 71, that he would be paired with Madden next season. "It was totally my move," Summerall told reporters. "However, I'm not saying

they're not glad I decided to do this." He said he is not retiring: "I still want to do games."

They have two more games together — the NFC title game Sunday at the Trans World Dome, and the Super Bowl the following week.

It has widely been speculated that Joe Buck will work with Madden next season, but Buck said he has not had discussions with Fox about that.