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Fans go head-to-head with NFL's best offensive minds in interactive game

By Bryan Strickland

## aspons ialior

Hank Williams Jr. poses the ques-
ion, and interactive football may provide the answer. Every crisp Monday night during the
fall, the country music legend shrieks fall, the country music legend shrieks lions of North Americans.
"Are you ready for some football?"
Williams asks. williams asks. "Nol" rains the answer from most
households, especially when the menv reads as skimpy as it did this past Monday: the John Elway-less Denver BronSeahawks.
Butfor a select group of football fans gathered at the Chapel Hill Holiday Inn lounge - fans like UNC dental stu-
dents Raleigh Wright and Tim Barlow - the teams involved have little bearing on their interest level. Whether it's he Washington Redskins or the New England Patriots, these guys are riv-
eted. "We stayed for the Chicago-Minne-
sota game when it was $41-10$." Barlow says, entering his next play call onto his QB1 playmaker set. Barlow and Wright tive football at the Holiday Inn, a satel-lite-rransmitted system that allows participants to match wits with the NFL's nators. and worst - offensive coordCommunications, players attempt to predict what type of play the offensive dicts either a run or pass play, and they then try to guess if the play will goright, eft or up the middle. For pass plays, the

## Calvin and Hobbes



## Doonesbury



THE Daily Crossword by Hank Haringatoo


will be short, deep or to a back.
The QB1 computer system then cal-
On this night, Barlow and Wright are
culates each player's points based on
accompanied by Dana Williams and
Karen Benson, alsostudentsin the UNC culates each player's points based on
the accuracy of their call, and two big. he accuracy of their call, and two big.
screen monitors in the lounge keep a running point total for all competitors. formance is compared to that of other local bars, as well as bars around the U.S. and Canada.
This is like ahug

This is like a huge game show where people can compete against literally
thousands of people every time they play," says Kevin Gallagher, competiGallagher says for the $\mathrm{QB1}$ system. which began in 1985 with just 15 sys. tems, now boasts more than 700 locations. Gallagher estimates that on Monpeople comptectes, more than 18,000 And Gallagher has brought the competition even closer to home, organizbarscompete leagues in which nearby "It's fun competing on the we ational. level and everything, but when you get maybe right down $\begin{aligned} & \text { dospecially that is }\end{aligned}$ nearby town, you cour street or in a
little more"." At the Chapel Hill Holiday inn A the Chapel Hill Holiday Inn, one in North Carolina, the concern is not with the national or even the local pic-
ture - it's with beating the guy at the ture - it's with beating the guy at the
next bar stool. next bar stool.
here, and you get a little bit of competition going," says Barlow, who ogoes by
TMMMER on the interactive scoreboar TMMMER on the interactive scoreboard play with, and he thinks he knows evdoesn't. We whip him every time." dentistry school. Williams' and Benson's sinterest in interactive football that of Barlow and Wre a bempered than "It's OK,", Benson says of her first
interactive experience."I's kind of stuinceractive experience. ${ }_{\text {pid }}$ I just don't like it. $s$ kind of stu-
"Td rather be actually watching the
game instead of having game instead of having to pay total,
complete attention to it and have to complete attention to it and have to
punch those littie things in before every
play.
But Barlow says it time before Benson catches the fever. "It's the first time she's done it," Early in the game, John Davis, an employec at Duke who lives in Chapel
Hill, appears to be in control. Davis, an Hill, appears to be in control. Davis, an
avid Denver fan, wins the first quarter. avid Denver fan, wins the first quarter.
But the early lead doesn't concern Barlow.
"We've
"We've played with him before," he says. "He "ll fall off after awhile."
Davis doesn't deny that he has been known to takese late-game dives. "Tve won quarters, but I've never won the
game before," Davis says. "Usually it's because of alcohol, but I'm drinking Three seats down, Anthony Weaver an employee in the UNC asset accounting office, is struggling.
It's a great game, but it's hard to
describe," says Weaver, who stands in
sixt sixth place.
"You have $t$
"You have to sit here and call what
you think they're going to call you think they' re going to call as op-
posed to what you would call. That's the object of this game, and that's hard because you're too tempted to call what
you would call."



Ross, an operating room nurse at UNC Hospitals. The pair comes every Mon-
day night after competing in abowling league. "Tm not a football fan, but I like to
watch everybody else play," Ross says. watch everybody else play," Ross says.
This night, only eight people are play ing. "We have 10 sets, and we usually run out," says Clay Brinkley, bartender at
the Holiday Inn and a UNC praduate student. "I's In and a UNC graduate addictive. It's very addictive." Moments later, the free appetizer Moments later, the free appetizers cheese and meataalls are there for the penny. game "T'd just come in for the food wasn t working, "Brinkley says.
After the grub is wolfed down Weaver is forced to face the music: He won't be winning on this night. By the end of the third quarter, be calls it quits

"It's been a typical experience," Weaver says. "Just as I'm beginning to
walk everybody down, I've got to walk everybody down, ' 've got to go
and rII watch the fourth quarter at
home." home." Weaver no longer a factor, the
With Weat
battle at the top heats up. Wright takes
week. "There are exams next week, and
ome people some people might actually be studyExams? So what, say Barlow and says Wright, offering Barlow a high-
five. "And the Monday after that," Barlow battle at the top heats up. Wright takes
the lead, but Davis refuses to die, staying well within sight of the top spot. On the game's final play, the un-
thinkable happens; a tie. Wright has hinkable happens; a tie. Wright has But so has Davis.
Luckily for the competitors the Monday night game goos to overtrime. .But
from Williams' and Benson's perspecrom Williams' and Benson's perspec
ive, it's not so fortunate. "T'm ready to go home," Williams says. She and Benson turn off thei playmakers.
Finally, at 1
And just as Barlow had predicted ear And just as Barlow had predicted ear-
lier, Davis fades. Wright takes the win,
17,780 ${ }^{17,780 \text { to } 16,520 \text {. }}$. knew I'd pull it through in the Iknew Id pull it through in the enis, fledgling sidebumums. "It's got to be
his. the sideburns." Wright's victory. "Even a blind squirrel finds an acorn every once in a while."
Will Williams, thilledto finally beheaded home, isn't sure if she'll be back next


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