

Buddy Bags & Dilibonics: A Man Born to be King

by Deep Float

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He's been on the cover of *Newsweek*, he's been kicked off the Saints' airplane (although not in mid-flight), and his legion of squirrels who call into his sports radio talk show are more than enough resumé lowlights to make him the perfect king of the irreverent and wacky Krewe du Vieux.

His Eloquence, Yat King Buddy Diliberto, brings to the Krewe an entourage that not even past kings Al "The Seafood King" Scramuzza or Ronnie "The Virge" Virgets could provide. Abdul the Tent-Maker, Bubba and His Magic Carpet, Sid in Jefferson, and The Inquisitor (regular callers into his show who are major characters) are all expected to be on hand when King Buddy D leads "The Krewe du Vieux Goes Deep" through the streets of N'Awlins the night before the Stupor Bowl.

Buddy's immensely popular post-game show frequently finds callers debating such scholarly topics as how efficiently Captain Tom (not to be confused with Major Tom) Benson of the Good Ship Lollipop, the official carrier of the New Orleans Saints now that the Bright Field is out for the season, is heading his team on a direct course for the Bermuda Triangle. A former columnist for the *Times-Picayune* and sports director for both WVUE-TV and WDSU-TV, Buddy D. is not only THE authority on the foibles and follies of the Saints, but he is da man who breaks the news as few can.

This is due in no small part to the unique lingo the King applies to his reporting. Known affectionately as "Dilibonics", it is understood by few, but cherished by many.

As a classic example of Dilibonics, which was recently turned down for federal funding by the U.S. Dept. of Educajun, when then-Saints quarterback Dave Wilson was injured, King Buddy reported that he had suffered

"torn lee knigaments". This unfortunate medical nightmare, he later said, led to the signing of "Stake Snabler" to replace Wilson at QB (or was it GQ?).

Times-Picayune Sports Editor Pete Finney, a long-time friend and one of the world's leading authorities on Dilibonics, believes that Buddy D. may have reached his zenith when he announced that veteran quarterback Dan Fouts was "retiring after a long career of bombing opposing secretaries". A boxing match one night was held in "Levada, Nas Vegas", and Saints defensive lineman Renaldo Turnbull played college ball at "Western Union" (which explains why he's so wired up for the games).

Despite his occasional grammatical gaffes and mangled metaphors, few people are as finely tuned in to the Saints franchise and its carrying-ons, said Finney.

In 1980, when the Saints were a stellar 1-15, Buddy D. and the bartender who ran Buddy D's tavern in Metairie came up with the idea of the Bagheads. Later that season, near Christmas, a fan sent Buddy a bag decorated with real electric Christmas lights. News Director Alec Gifford decided it would be a neat idea to open Buddy's segment of the show with the bag on his head and then plug the lights in. The Yat King sat there with the bag, which when plugged in immediately shorted out (prompting rumors that it was sent by the Saintabomber), shocking the linguistics out of Buddy.

"I could hear bulbs popping and felt the shock and twinges," he recalled. "I thought, God, will Mecom love this -- I electrocute myself on live TV!"

(John Mecom was the team owner at the time and had barred Buddy from flying on the Saints plane because of his criticisms of the franchise.)

That same year, in its year-end

issue, *Newsweek* had a montage on its cover featuring pictures of world leaders, personalities and events that made news. Included was King Buddy and the bag. "You're talking about everything that happened in the world that year, and there I am with a bag. That's pretty ironic."

A graduate of Jesuit High and Loyola U., Buddy D. brings a kingly resumé to the parade, having previously kinged the Tchefuncte River Parade and the Gladiators in St. Bernard. "I've been around the block a few times with this king stuff," he said.

For his Krewe du Vieux ride on January 25, King Buddy may be wearing a jewel-encrusted cape of squirrel fur pelts, symbolic of the callers who dial into his show predicting that the Saints will go to the Stupor Bowl (actually, several players bought tickets and will in fact be there). Buddy has dubbed these hopelessly optimistic fans "squirrels". Recently, he began using a squirrel caller on his talk show, and the word is he may be throwing some during the parade.

"All I try to do is represent the common man," said the common King. "You gotta remember you represent him. And never be inflexible. Things can change. And you can change your opinion."

For those who think His Eloquence is too hard on the Saints, nothing could be further from the truth. Not many people know this story, but when the Saints clinched a playoff berth for the first time in 1987, Buddy D. was waiting along with Finney for the team to run off the field into the tunnel to the locker room. He looked up at the delirious Saints fans. "I looked up and saw the people screaming and celebrating," he said, "and I felt something coming down my cheek. It was a tear. Nobody wants this team to win more than me."

In hooking up with the Krewe du Vieux, Yat King Buddy has found himself a winner -- and proved himself one as well. All allege obedience and kail to the Hing!