

sports & outdoors

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

According to my dictionary, the word “Neanderthal,” when used informally, means “primitive, unenlightened, or reactionary; culturally or intellectually backward.” In other words, calling somebody a “Neanderthal” isn’t quite the compliment you might have thought heretofore.

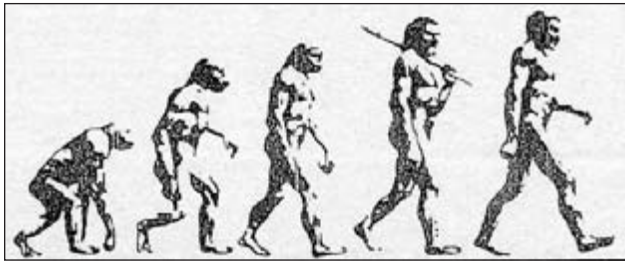
Much of this negativity regarding *Homo neanderthalensis* comes from the misguided belief that, amongst other things, Neanderthals were, I guess you’d say, primitive and unenlightened, plus a little bit culturally backward. But recent science suggests that quite the contrary was the case. It seems that our old friend Neanderthal Man was capable of using advanced tools, complex language and ritual treatment of the deceased. Mind you, they are also thought to have practiced cannibalism, but that doesn’t fit so well with my little theory here, so I’m excluding it intentionally. It’s my column and I can do what I want, thank you very much.

Their propensity for eating one another aside, it seems that Neanderthals were actually a relatively nice and cultural bunch of folks. They’re thought to have been slightly shorter but yet stronger than modern humans, and their skulls (and, theoretically, their brains) were actually larger than those found in modern humans, too. They used fire, skinned animals and lived in groups. And when you start reading about these guys, you discover that there’s a whole bunch of scientific mumbo-jumbo about genomes and a lot of words ending in “-ological” that I don’t even pretend to understand, but which is all good, I’m sure. And there’s one characteristic of Neanderthal Man, a recently discovered little tidbit that piqued the interest of yours truly, that is the *pièce de résistance* in terms of proving Neanderthal’s supreme worth.

It seems that a few lucky Neanderthals were actually redheads.

That’s right, kids. Just like ol’ Uncle Andrew, the select elite of Neanderthals were graced with fair skin and red hair, a result of a mutation in the MC1R gene. And no, I don’t really understand what that means either, but I know it results in an Adonis-like appearance. At least that’s what it means in my case. But I digress.

So you’ve got this group of people who aren’t



Walk like a man, Andrew?

around to defend themselves against baseless accusations of being primitive cannibals due to the pesky little problem that they’re extinct. Thank goodness some well-meaning scientist discovered this fact about their hair color. And that one little discovery took the whole public view of Neanderthal Man and threw it into disarray. No longer could we look at these people as savages. I mean seriously, people. Redheads, while possibly a wee-bit temperamental, are certainly not savages. Lizzy Borden was a redhead. And so was Napoleon. Emperor Nero, too. Savages? I think not, dear readers. Misguided and misunderstood by historians, perhaps. But certainly not savages.

What this whole redhead discovery thing points out, though, is the necessity of going in a different direction (Christopher Columbus was a redhead, thank you very much), daring to attempt the impossible (General Custer was a redhead, too) and questioning authority (did I mention that Judas Iscariot was also a redhead?). Long story short, kids, you’ve gotta’ think outside the box.

And the same thing holds true for when you’re out there fishing these days.

That kind of makes you look at segues in a whole new light, doesn’t it?

Friends and neighbors, summer might have gone out like a lamb, but winter kind of showed up all of a sudden like a train wreck. It’s getting dark outside at four-thirty and I think I might have noticed a wee-bit of a chill in the air, too. But there’s still fish out there to be caught, so don’t let the elements keep you away.

I’ve heard reports of stripers being taken off the South Shore still, but that’s kind of mainstream, Neanderthals-were-primitive-people thinking. There’s been more than one good-sized striper taken from local ponds in recent days, a feat that is not unheard of. It just requires a little of that Neanderthals-were-smoking-hot-looking-redheads kind of thinking. When the ponds are opened to the sea — especially at places like Miacomet, Hummock and Sesachacha — a whole bunch of things happen. First, the pond water flushes out into the ocean and a lot of saltwater comes into the pond. Another thing that happens is that a lot of the little pond dwellers get swept out into the ocean, a fact that is not lost on the bass. The latter sit along the cuts and gorge on the small fish being flushed out. Now, the only problem with that equation, from the bass’s standpoint, is that occasionally the stripers themselves get swept into the pond, which isn’t that big a deal until the pond closes up, leaving the bass in the pond which, incidentally, now has a high enough salinity level to support striped bass. The same theory has been used to explain the Loch Ness Monster, but that’s a whole other column for a whole other time.

What this all boils down to is that you end up with some stripers that are trapped in the ponds and they’re basically a captive audience, no pun intended. To catch them, use the same techniques as you would use in the surf, but you’ve got to be a little more delicate in your presentation. But they’re in there. It just takes a little outside-the-box thinking to catch them.

Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got to go find a donkey and some henna. Cleopatra, another redhead, swore by washing her hair in henna and donkey’s milk to preserve its lustrous beauty.

And while I’m at it, if you happen to see my mother, tell her happy birthday. Just don’t tell her I said anything.

Tight lines. ■

ISLAND CUP

Continued from page 33

the next season’s contest.

It could have been called the Nantucket Island Cup in the beginning, however, as the Whalers took the first 7 contests, 10 of the first 11, and 16 of 21 Island Cup matches. That dominance ended in 1998 — since then, Nantucket has won just one inter-island game in the last eight meetings, a 25-20 home win in 2002.

The Vineyard has won the Cup for four successive years, and in eight of the last 10, while Nantucket’s last three Cup victories were in 1996 (a 13-7 OT thriller), 1998 and 2002. Nantucket hasn’t won on the Vineyard since 1995, when the Whalers rolled, 30-

13. Last year, with both teams sporting similar records — Nantucket entered the game 6-4, 4-1 in the Mayflower Small; the Vineyard had a 7-3 record, 4-1 in the Mayflower Large — the purple men endured as 41-14 victors.

While the game has often held post-season implications, this will be the fourth straight year that a Super Bowl berth doesn’t hinge on the outcome, although the Vineyard will earn a share of the Mayflower Large crown, and a chance to advance to the Super Bowl for the first time since 2003, if Bristol-Plymouth defeats Blue Hills on Thanksgiving.

This will be Vito Capizzo’s 52nd game against the Vineyard in his 44-year tenure and, hard to believe, Vineyard coach Don Herman’s 20th Cup game since he began coaching on the other island in 1988. Herman’s record in Cup games is 11-8, while Vito is 17-12 in Cup games and 30-19-2 against the Vineyard overall. He has suffered only 3 shutouts at the hands of the other island since 1964, while his teams have shut out the Vineyarders 13 times in his career.

The teams alternate home games, with Nantucket playing host during the even-numbered years.

There have been some memorable Cup moments over the years, from a deep freeze on the Vineyard in 1983 (where the Channel 3 cameras stopped working), to the infamous “water boy” game of four years ago.

Dick Herman, who has witnessed every Island Cup game, remembered that one well, a home game for Nantucket. “The Vineyard scored a field goal with 10 seconds left to go ahead 21-20,” he recalled. On

the ensuing kickoff, Brennan Dooley took the ball down the right sideline as time expired. Some players on the Vineyard sideline, however, (perhaps encouraged by the excitement of the water boy) forgot the play was still on and rushed the field, preventing Dooley from further progress upfield. “They should have been called for too many men on the field,” Herman said, “and there would have been one more play for Nantucket.”

Another Herman favorite is the 1996 overtime game. “Nantucket had a 7-0 lead for most of the game, but the Vineyard tied it up late in the game. We scored first in the overtime, and then they had four downs to score but we stopped them on fourth down” for the 13-7 final. Herman’s son, Rik, was co-captain of that team.

Herman’s other son, Peter, played in what Herman calls “probably the hardest loss ever,” 1992’s 14-12 heartbreaker won by the Vineyard in the game’s final seconds. “We were up, 12-0, in the fourth quarter before the Vineyard began its comeback.”

The Whalers have pulled out last second victories as well. Herman recalled one game at the Vineyard in the early ’70s, “before they had a scoreboard,” when Jamie Cabral caught the winning touchdown pass — “lying on his back in the endzone. The pass was thrown to Glenn DaSilva, but it got deflected off his hand and went up into the air. The closest to the ball was Cabral, who caught the ball on his back.”

The fun began back in 1953, a game won by Nantucket, 33-20, against a team of Vineyard all-stars. The teams played to a 0-0 tie in 1954 before

Show them some
STAR POWER
this weekend

Good Luck
Whalers!



1 NORTH UNION STREET 228-4435
WWW.STARLIGHTNANTUCKET.COM