

Three Cheers For Mel Tucker

Sunday, November 12 2006 7:00 PM -

There's a lot of credit to go around for yesterday's big win in Atlanta ... but no one may be more deserving of praise than defensive backs coach Mel Tucker. Tucker has done an amazing job with the secondary despite losing Baxter, Cutch, and Bodden. Bodden, Jones, and Pool have all developed nicely on his watch, and he shot down the Falcons yesterday with the CB trio of Holly, Perry, and Brown. The Rhino weighs in on Mel T.



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There's a lot of credit to go around on the defensive side of the football for the Browns' victory over the Falcons, but in light of Michael Vick's [horrendous passing performance](#) (a 43.4 QB rating, his worst since the 7th game of the 2005 season), the guy most deserving of praise may well be defensive backfield coach

[Mel Tucker](#)

Tucker's a Cleveland Heights native who played his college football for Barry Alvarez at Wisconsin. He then served as an assistant to Nick Saban at Michigan State, and eventually followed him to LSU. Jim Tressel hired him away from LSU, and he served as the Buckeyes' defensive backfield coach from 2001 until the Browns hired him in 2005. By the way, when the Browns hired him, there was much [wailing and gnashing of teeth](#) in Columbus.

The results that Tucker's achieved during his short tenure in Cleveland have been impressive. Last season, all he did was help the Browns take Leigh Bodden, an unknown free agent from Duquesne, and turn him into one of the top young cornerbacks in the game. This year, despite season-ending injuries to Daylon McCutcheon and Gary Baxter, and nagging injuries to just about everybody else, the play of the defensive backfield is one of the biggest reasons that the Browns rank 6th in the league against the pass. Even more impressive is the fact that opposing QBs have completed [only 52.3%](#) of their passes against the Browns, which is easily the lowest completion percentage in the league.

Those numbers are solid enough on their own, but when you consider that they're being achieved with only a mediocre pass rush and a defensive backfield that includes cast-offs like Ralph Brown and Daven Holly, they're downright amazing.

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Tucker's [starting to get noticed](#) for his work, and it's likely that he's going to have some pretty big opportunities elsewhere after the season's over. With Todd Grantham [at or near](#) the top of the list for the Michigan State job, maybe it's time to consider offering the defensive coordinator's job to Mel Tucker. It seems to me that he's given one hell of a nine game audition for it.