



These damn kids. If it's not one thing, it's another.

Your rookie QB and RB play a zillion times better, but your pass defense goes straight to H-E-double hockey sticks, so the team loses another close one for completely polar opposite reasons.

In the entire Paddy O'Shurmur era, it is difficult to recall a game where all 3 phases of the team played well at the same time. Generally, one or two play well enough to keep the game from being a blowout, but they seldom play well enough as a Team to even get a win, much less impress.

However, this loss is being viewed in a MUCH more positive light than last week's, likely due to the incredibly improved play from the two 1st Round (hopefully) "Franchise" players, Trent Richardson and Brandon Weeden.

So what if our #3 and #4 CB's got burned repeatedly? So what if the punt team was left flailing about like a bunch of eels on blacktop? Maybe we FINALLY have answers at KEY offensive positions!

That, at least, is the general thinking behind the general positivism.

The scoring started early in the contest as Pacman "Skrip-Club" Jones returned a punt 81 yards for a TD, evading numerous tackle "attempts" on the way. Browns defenders were flying around comically, arms grasping at air as they dove off the edge of the TV screen. It was like watching Wile E. Coyote chase the Road Runner, except with less hope of catching the prey. My daughter heard me laughing at the replay and watched it. "*What are they doing?*" she asked.

"*Laps tomorrow,*" I answered.

The Browns never really could catch up to the Bengals after that. Richardson broke out for 32 yard TD about halfway through the 2nd Quarter, and the Browns only punted 2 more times the entire game after that. But they were already down 14-3 when Trent made that score because the Defense - namely, the Defensive Backs - gave up both big plays and long drives.

Down 17-10 at the Half, the Bengals got the ball first and went on an 80 yard drive capped by a 44 yard TD pass when Brandon Tate got behind Eric Hagg. Later, at the start of the 4th, down 24-17, Andy Dalton scrambled around on 3rd and 10 and hit Andrew Hawkins across the middle and he did the rest, turning a 12 yard pass into a 50 yard TD by leaving the Browns D flailing again.

Having just completed his first NFL TD pass on a spectacular 23 yard run by Richardson after a screen pass, Weeden led the Browns on another response drive culminating on a beautiful 24 yd TD pass to Greg Little over the middle that was perfect despite his arm getting hit on the follow-through.

But the Defense cringed at the challenge once again, down 31-24 with 7 minutes left, allowing a 5 minute possession that ended with a FG and a 10 point lead - basically Game Over. Weeden drove them down to the Cincy 7 with about 30 seconds left, but Pat Shurmur opted for the FG on 4th Down and the Onside Kick was easily covered by the Bengals.

Ob-la-di.

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## Stats

Time of Possession: CIN - 32:53, CLE - 27:07

Total Yards: CLE - 439, CIN - 375

Net Yards Passing: CLE - 309, CIN - 295

Net Yards Rushing: CLE - 130, CIN - 80

First Downs: CLE - 21, CIN - 21

Turnovers Forced: CLE - 1, CIN - 1

Sacks: CLE - 6, CIN - 2

**Final Score:** Cincinnati 34, Cleveland 27

The slight edge in the Offensive numbers can perhaps be attributed to Cincy going into a softer zone near the end, but it was hardly like they were slowing the Browns down in that 2nd Half no

matter what scheme they were in.

The stats don't lie about how even the game was, so the message is clear: You can't spot the opponent a Special Teams TD when you are without either of your starting CB's.

Must admit those 6 sacks kind of snuck up on me.

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## Game Balls



*Trent Richardson* - The TD run was a good play, but the TD screen was a great play. Making 4 defenders miss, the combo of speed and power... that's the kind of special that we haven't seen at that position in a long long long long long time.

*Brandon Weeden* - Going from 5.1 to 114.9 - nearly 110 points - must be the biggest back to back game passer rating jump in NFL history. He wasn't quite as quick or decisive yet as he'll need to be if he hopes to become a good pro QB, but he did show marked improvement in pocket awareness and accuracy. Hell, his best pass was an incomplection (deep right on the sidelines, dropped by Alex Smith). But he was just solid, not spectacular. He really gets this Game Ball for having the mental chutzpah to mentally overcome such a terrible outing as he had in Week 1. God knows how doubts can eat at ya.

*D'Qwell Jackson* - 3 sacks, an Interception, and an annihilation of that Armon Binns dude. Playing at an All Pro level right now.

*John Hughes* - Helluva game, big guy. Back to back great plays in the 3rd, including a very impressive sack on Dalton. The D Line rotation could be a huge strength when Phil Taylor gets back.

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### Honorable Mention

*Ishmaa'ily Kitchen* - I noticed him stuffing the run fairly well on a couple plays. The Ish is a rookie too (Kent State), so the parade of young and interesting players marches on.

My name is Ish. On my hand I have a dish. I have this dish to help me wish. When I wish to make a wish I wave my hand with a big swish swish. Then I say, "I wish for fish!" And I get fish right on my dish. So...if you wish to wish a wish, you may swish for fish with my Ish wish dish.

*Frostee Rucker* - Didn't do a whole lot outside of his nice shoelace sack, but it was that good.

*Defensive Line* - Solid job of Run D and 6 sacks. What happened behind you and on the edges wasn't your fault.

*Offensive Line* - I *guess* I feel compelled to give this since you *did* help produce a 100 yard rusher and you *did* help keep Weeden clean most of the day against what is *supposed* to be a good D Line, so...

*Mo Massaquoi* - Maybe experience does count for something at that position.

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## Hall of Shame

*Joe Haden* - Thanks for hanging your team out to dry, dude.



*Punt Coverage* - I counted 7 misses on that pathetic TD return.

*Johnson Bademosi* - Made(?) the initial miss on the punt return; the worst one.

*Replacement Refs* - Still curious what the Personal Foul on DQ was called on.

*Taking a Time Out with 1 second left in the 1st Quarter* - Not sure whose fault this was, but there was plenty of time left on the play clock, and they blew a TO one second before the refs would've given them one for free. Clearly, these people did not play their college ball at MIT.

*Eric Hagg* - Actually had some decent plays, but letting the WR behind him for a 44 yard TD is a cardinal sin for a Safety.

*Dimitri Patterson* - Talked a lot of shit this week, then added to the flail-fest with the tackle "effort" on the 10 yard TD to AJ Green in the 2nd Quarter. Aided his bid for this "honor" by lining up offsides - twice.

*Trevin Wade* - You lost that Hawkins guy in coverage, allowing Dalton to convert the 3rd and 10, then compounded it by showing that you too can do "The Flail" after he caught it.

*Chris Ogbannaya* - I love ya, Og, and you were pretty effective catching passes out of the backfield, but that fumble was a bad one.

*Shawn Lauvao* - He's not terrible. Nor is he good.

*Jabaal Sheard* - Jumped offsides late in the game to convert a Cincy 3rd Down for them, and has been generally invisible the entire year. Why can we not have an honest-to-goodness Pass Rush DE in this town?

*Penalties* - 7 for 81 yards at Half. 10 for 103 for the game. You CAN'T BE GIVING OPPONENTS 100 FREE YARDS, DUMBASSES.

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### Just Shoot Yourself

*Buster Skrine* - Haven't seen a CB have a day like that since Eric Wright got violated by Anquan Boldin and the Ravens 2 years ago. There's no combination like soft coverage, missed tackles,

and pass interference. Better improve in a hurry or Haden's suspension will seem like eternity.

*Owned Marecic* - Another dropped ball, hit him right in the bread basket. There's really no justification for him to be on this roster. They don't hand the ball off to him anyway; just stick Alex Smith in his role and free up a spot on the 53 for some emergency Corner help.

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### Regarding The Offensive Explosion

Weeden threw for 322 - a Browns rookie record. Richardson ran for 109 - the first Browns rookie to go over 100 since the immortal Lee Suggs - and accounted for 145 total yards and 2 TD's. And Mo Mass - Mo freakin' Mass! - almost pulled in 100 yard receiving.

All in all, Cleveland rolled up 439 yards on what was supposed to be a good Bengals Defense. To put Weeden's 322 yards and 114.9 rating in perspective:

\*Colt has one career 300 yard passing game (last year versus Titans) and averaged 210 yards/game. Blaine Gabbert has zero 300 yard games in 16 starts (155 yards/game average). Christian Ponder has one in 12 starts (189 yards/game average). Jake Locker has only started 2 games, but saw significant time in 3 others last year, and has never passed for 300 (187 yards/game average).

\*Colt also has one career game with better than a 110 passer rating (in 2010 versus the Bengals, his highest last year was 97.5 and had 74.6 for the season). Gabbert's highest rating ever is 96.1 (65.4 for his rookie season). Ponder's highest was last week at 114.6 (70.1 for his rookie year). Locker got a 108.3 in relief late last year.

(Of course, none of them ever had a 5.1 rating or 4 picks either).

What Browns fans witnessed on Sunday was the single most impressive offensive display for Cleveland since they beat the Defending-Champ Giants in 2008 - a game that was the sole bright spot in an otherwise dismal season. That's a shit-ton of terrible offense for 4 years.

So it's almost rapturous to see them finally break out of it. Just don't expect it to continue.

That's not to say that they won't look this good again. Both Weeden and Richardson will have their good days, especially since they now know they CAN do it.

But I'd be shocked if there weren't still some steps backwards for this O. Weeden is still a rookie QB. Richardson hasn't played a full season of NFL-caliber football with NFL-caliber hits. The WR's are still young. The O Line is still gelling. And Shurmur is still calling the plays.

Is there any way I can get everyone to just acknowledge that now so we can avoid the roller coaster of "*He's terrible! Bench him for Colt! They'll NEVER be good! What a waste of draft picks! He's awesome! His right toe is better than Colt! They're GREAT! Tom Heckert is a genius!*" massive overreaction? That would be fab.

There are still 14 games to go and this story will take many a turn before the final chapter.

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### Regarding Talent

I keep hearing that the Browns cannot win because they simply don't have enough talent.

Now, when they are playing the likes of Houston, of Baltimore, of San Francisco, that's true. There is a talent gulf there.

But against a team like Miami? Jacksonville? Buffalo? Kansas City? Tennessee? Oakland? I can go on and on.

Let's look at Cincy. Where are the Bengals "so much more talented" than Cleveland? WR? Yep, AJ Green is MUCH better than anyone the Browns have. QB? I can't say that. Not a compliment to Weeden, I just don't buy that Dalton is all that good. We'll have a better idea this time next year.

RB? No. O Line? No (a slam on Cincy rather than a compliment to Cleveland). Tight End? Yeah, probably, but it's hardly like Gresham is a world-beater.

D Line? Maybe, but it's marginal, especially when Phil Taylor gets back. Linebackers? I guess, although Mauluga is horribly overrated. Corners/Safeties? Debatable, at least when Haden is present.

The Bengals D looks terrible so far this year, ranking 30th overall and 29th in points allowed. Their run game is ordinary and their QB is ah-ight. If the Browns played them 10 times in a row, Cleveland probably wins 4 or 5. Give them Haden and they might win 6.

There are a ton of teams like this out there, teams with only a marginal talent advantage, if any at all.

All can be beaten on any given day given good coaching, solid execution, and a little luck.

Which might just be why the Browns lose.

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## Regarding Moral Victories

It has been said that there is no such thing as a moral victory, that there are only Wins and Losses, and only a Loser thinks a Loss is OK.

This is simplistic black/white good/evil thinking.

If you are a Championship caliber team, there is no moral victory. Ravens fans aren't comforting themselves with a "close loss against a good team" today. Patriots fans aren't consoled by their team's improved draft status after Gostkowski yanked the FG kick.

The Browns, however, are not Championship caliber yet. There's little chance that a team this young and inexperienced and thin will get anywhere near a playoff berth. So progress in important areas combined with close loss actually helps the team in the long run more than any other result.

Please do not mistake this as actively rooting for losses. I want the team to win. I want them to develop. But there is a difference between hoping that a team tanks/loses versus shrugging off a close loss where the team played hard because said loss inadvertently helps draft position.

Remember kids, the goal is not to win 7 games instead of 5. The goal is to win a Super Bowl.

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## Regarding The Potholes In Super Bowl Way That Still Need Filled

Whatever the 2013 1st Round pick is, he needs to be a Playmaker of some sort. But if we had to surmise what position this Playmaker might be, I'd say Starting CB, Big-Time Pass Rusher, Starting Guard, Linebacker, Wide Receiver, Non-Useless Fullback.

Fullback will not be an early round pick, and Guard probably not in the Top 10.

I'll get more into this later in the year (when the draft becomes the focus), but just glancing at 2013 Mock Drafts, these 2 guys have been slotted for #1 overall in separate predictions and fill that Pass Rusher need. Reviews from [NFL Draft Scout.com](http://NFLDraftScout.com).

**Jarvis Jones**, OLB, Georgia (6'2, 242, 4.74) - *Far from just a pass rusher, Jones proved capable of playing the run as well as dropping back into coverage, demonstrating the combination of instincts, passion and physicality to catch the attention of scouts despite the fact that 2011 was his first season as a starter.*

*Despite the fact that he likely would have earned a high grade from scouts, Jones elected to not even request a grade from the NFL Advisory Committee. Now that he has returned to Georgia for his redshirt junior season, Jones has the burden of proving that his spectacular first campaign with the Bulldogs wasn't a fluke. Based on the agility, power and hustle with which he played a season ago, that shouldn't be a problem.*



**Barkevious Mingo**

