

## Farewell To Field Goals

Written by {ga=riverburns}

Thursday, September 20 2012 10:00 AM - Last Updated Friday, September 21 2012 11:57 AM

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Sometimes, even if the writing isn't exactly on the wall, we just know that we're destined for better things. On the outside looking in, it might be obvious, but when we get a little too familiar with our own routine, our own comfort may make it impossible to notice. Pointing these things out to our friends and loved ones isn't a simple task, so we tend to grow complacent about blowing the whistle to our friends working dead-end jobs or going through the motions in bad relationships.

Things are okay, but they should be better.

That's where I've finally landed with the sight of Phil Dawson.

Of course, it's true in our part of the world, the Browns kicker from the University of Texas basically puts the "foot" in football. He's been there since Day 1 in 1999, sure enough, hitting the OT game-winner in the New Browns inaugural pre-season game in Canton, as the third-string kicker. He stayed with it that first season, hitting one of the more memorable field goals of his 14-year career in Pittsburgh, [a 39-yard boot at the gun that gave the Browns a 16-15 victory](#)

Those would be the last three points the Browns ever scored at Three Rivers Stadium.

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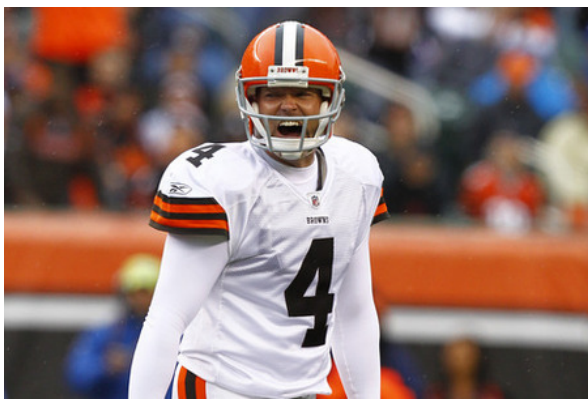
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In 201 games, you don't really remember Dawson missing too many big kicks. He did miss a potential game-winner in Oakland in 2007, but only after Lane Kiffin's shenanigans with the timeout as the ball was being snapped led to Dawson's second attempt being blocked.

Later that season, he missed a 52-yard attempt in the final minute at Heinz Field, but it was Heinz Field, and they lost the game 31-28.

In a season where the 10-6 Browns missed the playoffs by a tie-breaker, where one more win would have put them in, you'd think those misses would be under the microscope, but not with Dawson.



When Browns fans think of the 2007 Phil Dawson, they remember that he drilled the [strangest kick in NFL history to tie the Ravens in Baltimore](#), and then followed it up with the game-winner in OT.

They remember the 8-0 win over the Bills, where [Phil was good from 35 and 49 in snow that was measurable by the meter](#), in a game that should have essentially clinched a playoff spot that year.

Honestly, when it comes to kickers, that's what we should remember, but fatigue sets in when it comes to how often he's out there attempting the three pointers.

We'd much rather see the 37 year-old West Palm Beach native anonymously nail that singular Point After Touchdown, but we certainly can't put that on #4.

By the way, it's probably debatable that he should be the last Cleveland Brown to wear that number, even though it is far from a slam dunk call.

The problem with the kicker position is that we don't really recognize them as "football players", especially when speaking of the all-time greats, you just don't see them on the lists. That sentiment is a bit misguided; a serviceable kicker is obviously an imperative element on a successful football team.

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As good as Tom Brady was in the last decade, there's no question that he needed the foot of Adam Vinatieri to put those rings on his fingers.

In fact,

[Ryan Isley](#)

mentioned (on the

[MTAF Podcast](#)

this week) that with his game-winning kick for the Colts last weekend, that Vinatieri has won games for Brady, Peyton Manning, and now Andrew Luck.

A follow-up conversation on

[Twitter](#)

suggested he might be responsible for Hall of Fame careers.



You'll have to forgive me for not quickly recommending space be reserved in Canton for Andrew Luck, but our ring-obsessed world definitely has to think that there are some Patriots, and maybe some Colts, who owe their borderline legacy to the 39 year-old from South Dakota. But, I was thinking about the flip side of things, guys denied by Vinatieri's right foot.

It might be that foot that keeps

[Kurt Warner](#)

,

[John Fox](#)

, or

[Donovan McNabb](#)

out of the Hall.

Some pretty big shoes get filled by those smaller feet, but you have to play in games that matter for people to remember those so-called non-football players.

In order to play in games that matter, a kicker is probably better off scoring fewer points. When you're attempting one-pointers more often than triples, it means the team is scoring more

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points, and probably winning more often.

Even the inept Browns are 5-2 when Dawson attempts at least 3 extra points in a game since Romeo Crennel was given the boot.

Unfortunately, that's only happened 7 times in the last 50 games.

Dawson has only attempted more extra points than field goals in 4 of the last 13 seasons (not counting this very young season).

In 1999, he kicked 24 PATs versus 12 FG attempts (he made 8), in a season that was very difficult to explain on many levels.

If you throw out the enigmatic exception to the rule that was the touchdown to field goal ratio in 1999, the other seasons where Dawson attempted to make 6 points into 7 more than trying for just 3 of his own were the moderately successful 2001, 2002, and 2007 seasons. If your memory doesn't serve you properly, those would be the three seasons that the Browns did not reach the 10-loss plateau.

Vinatieri and his replacement in New England, Stephen Gostkowski have been lining up for PATs more than FGs for the better part of the Browns post-Modell existence.

Gostkowski attempted 40 PAT and 40 FG in his only season without Tom Brady; every other season has been overwhelmingly imbalanced towards extra points. Vinatieri tried three fewer extra points than field goals than extra points in the Curtis Painter/Kerry Collins debacle of a season last year, but you have to go back to the Drew Bledsoe days in New England to find a season where he was lining up for field goals more often than his team was scoring touchdowns.

After kicking three field goals and an extra point in Week 1, things might be looking up for Phil Dawson's chances to score one point at a time more often in 2012.



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On the season, Dawson is a perfect 5-for-5 on field goals, but 4-for-4 on extra points, after the Browns offense found the end zone 3 times in Week 2. Look, it isn't that I don't like seeing Dawson on the field, or that I doubt him from any spot on the field whenever Pat Shurmur sends him out there, it's just the damn field goals, and how they represent the failures of the offense.

It's a little bit like Ben Affleck and the other Boston flunkies that do hard labor for an honest day's pay with their genius buddy Matt Damon in *Good Will Hunting*; they don't want their life for their prodigal friend.

It's that brutal honesty he had; going as far as to state it was his dream for Will (Damon) not to be there one morning, to escape from that paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle. I'm right there with seeing Dawson on the field as much as I do.

Really, I'm over the field goal attempts.

Frankly, the fans deserve better results, and Dawson should demand more single point opportunities from his teammates.

Seeing that come to fruition might be my dream.

For the Cleveland Browns, the red zone needs to be more than just that place that drives go to die, that place where they make it easier for Dawson to put a meaningless three points on the board.



With Trent Richardson's nose for the end zone, what we saw in Cincinnati should be what we expect from the Browns, not just the occasional nice surprise. It isn't all Richardson either; this is a collaborative effort from every player on the offense, which scored every which way on Sunday at Paul Brown Stadium.

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There's much to be said about a few of the individuals on the offensive side of the ball, positive things for a change, that Phil Dawson isn't the focal point of the game recaps any more.

As much as I like Dawson, as much as I've come to appreciate what he does represent in Expansion Lore, my favorite part is not seeing him. They should be saving the best for last, because there is a good time for field goals.

Game on the line, I trust the guy, and I want to rely on him to put it through the uprights for the win.

On the first drive of the game, the first drive of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

quarter, and any drive that takes place while the Browns have a double-digit deficit (not counting Sunday's need a TD and a FG situation) are times when I'd rather keep Dawson out of sight and out of mind.

There's a time and a place for Phil Dawson, and it shouldn't be as often and omnipresent as the Browns have made it in Dawson's NFL career.