



Well, at least they didn't embarrass themselves.

Yes, I know this is a point of view which I am supposed to find abhorrent. *"How sad it is when we find solace in losing but not getting blown out!"*

" the Knights of Self-Righteousness tell us. "

This is a losing culture! The only mission is to win, and if you don't win, you fail!

"

Well, yes... in the end, winning is the goal. And to take that to its logical conclusion, winning the Super Bowl is the ultimate goal.

In order for a team to achieve that ultimate goal, they have to learn, they have to grow, they have to progress. It doesn't happen overnight.

So while a loss provides nothing in and of itself towards reaching that goal, progress in a loss does.

Let's be clear - the Browns Offense has played better this year (against Cincy). The Browns Defense has played better this year (against Philly). Yet this is the first game this year where both sides looked somewhat unrepugnant - OK, fine, decent - in the same contest.

If not for an alarming plethora of drops and the inability of any Corner to cover any Ravens Receiver, they very well could've won this game. It just seemed so unfair - every time Joe Flacco threw the ball up, his Receiver was making some fine play to pull the ball in, but every time Brandon Weeden threw the ball, his Receiver was seeing how small an "O" he could make with his hands that allowed the ball to fly right through without actually touching it.

The Browns Offense was again slow to start the game - probably under the unbearable burden of Pat Shurmur's "scripted" plays - but the Defense was more solid this week, holding the Ravens to several punts and an INT in the End Zone by Craig Robertson after Josh Cribbs fumbled while getting knocked da frack out on a Punt Return.

But this is still a Secondary that features Sheldon Brown, Buster Skrine, and Dimitri Patterson, so it was only a matter of time before they started giving up passing yards in chunks, resulting in a TD pass to Torrey Smith.

It wasn't until about 6:30 left in the 1st Half that the Browns finally converted a 3rd down, and it opened the flood gates for a 11 play, 94 yard TD drive right before Half to cut the score to 9-7 (Ravens botched an extra point and got a FG). That drive included a beautiful 43 yard throw and catch from Weeden to Greg Little, who proved on the play that he is truly a reincarnation of Braylon Edwards - he'll make the tough catches out of instinct, but he's dropping everything else.

In the 2nd Half, the Ravens, and in particular Anquan Boldin, began to own the Cleveland Corners, and in particular Dimitri Patterson, which manifested itself in a 89 yard TD drive to start the 3rd. Up 16-7, it felt like Baltimore might pull away and make this the laugher everyone expected it to be. But thanks to Phil Dawson and his magic leg (three 50+ yard FG's), the Browns were able to hang in there and were poised to take a lead with the ball around midfield down 16-10.

Then Weeden made his Typical Rookie Mistake, throwing an out pattern a little too late and a little too far to the inside, and bingo! Pick 6. 23-10.

One would assume that would be Game Over, but the Defense held just enough for Cleveland to hang around and move the score to 23-16 (let's at least give kudos to the Browns Run D). Still, with just 4:30 left in the game, it looked like the Ravens were going to safely run out the clock. They punted and left the Browns 90 yards from a tying TD with just a minute left and no time outs, which in the first 3 games would've been the cue for Weeden to go ahead and toss a pick right away to get the drama over with.

But this time he didn't. This time he drove the team quickly into Baltimore territory. This time he stepped up under pressure, directing Receivers, and threw a pass to Jordan Norwood that would've been the tying score had Ed Reed not barely nicked it away at the last second (assuming Norwood caught it, which is a questionable assumption). This time he got a couple more shots at the EZ as time expired. This time he got much closer to the clutch play that will finally propel this team over the cusp to victory.

Maybe next time he gets it done.

Stats

Time of Possession: BAL - 33:03, CLE - 26:57

Total Yards: BAL - 438, CLE - 357

Net Yards Passing: BAL - 337, CLE - 314

Net Yards Rushing: BAL - 101, CLE - 43

First Downs: BAL - 23, CLE - 20

Turnovers Forced: BAL – 2, CLE - 1

Sacks: CLE - 4, BAL - 1

Final Score: Baltimore 23, Cleveland 16

What this and Weeden's 52 attempts tell me is that the Browns are giving up on the run way too early. I have said that if teams are stacking the line then you have to pass out of it, but the Ravens weren't. Trent Richardson's runs were fairly effective. 14 rushes (47 yards) by him simply isn't enough. Not even close.

Oh, and the Browns are earning their 27th ranked Defense (31st against the pass).

Game Balls



Two Browns players celebrating on the field during a game.



A Browns player being tackled by Ravens players during a game.



A Browns player performing a backflip during a game.

...the performance, pressure on ... years, starting the year, how he prey

...the Browns' defense ... getting the ball, the results of the game to

...the Browns' offense ... forward completion. But it's him, ...



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