

Pat's Last Gasp

Written by {ga=riverburns}

Friday, November 02 2012 6:00 PM - Last Updated Friday, November 02 2012 11:46 AM



You'll have to ask Pat.

From the President, right down to the players gutting it out on the field through the official half-way point in this 2012 season of Cleveland Browns football, Pat Shurmur must have all of the answers because all of the questions are being deflected his way. However, my question might not be all that complicated.

According to my pre-season prediction, the Browns are ahead of schedule and over-achieving with two victories in their pocket and eight opportunities to add to that total. 2-14 only happens if they've put their winning ways behind them, and yes, I am referring to winning of two out of three as winning ways.

We all know that the bar has to be set low, and I'd say that the primary objective for the season, at least win a single game, was achieved on October 14

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Beyond getting into the win column again, how do we gage success in the second half of the season?

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Near Failure



If we see any of what we saw from Brandon Weeden in Week 1, and that includes struggling to make it through the pre-game festivities, that's a step in the wrong direction. Frankly, there are many ways for the Browns to fail at this point, but it starts with Weeden.

Trent Richardson, sans a few nice moments, wasn't able to do much in the opener either, but the Eagles teed off on him because the passing game did nothing to keep them honest about it.

Pat Shurmur made some questionable decisions as well, but I don't want to imply that sentiment be quarantined to one particular game; this isn't Shurmur's first barbeque, even if Holmgren wants us to think in the terms of it being his 2

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first barbeque.

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The new rookies bounced back well a week later against a Cincinnati defense that is fairly comparable to the scout team that Weeden and Richardson see in practice. Before I can even catch my breath to praise Dick Jauron's defense for the dominating play in Week 1, they lose Joe Haden, and look completely lost in every way against a good Cincinnati offense that actually isn't good at all.

It had us all thinking, maybe they can put forth a good effort on both sides of the ball; they might just pull one of these out at some point in the season.

Instead, it was just more inconsistency, a symptom of being a bad team that's poorly coached.

In the games that they won, they were able to overcome adversity. They didn't run away with either of their victories, but they fought to the end and walked away with wins.

That probably isn't going to be enough every week, because they do lack talent, but I'd hope to see some consistency on both sides of the ball.

If they can't do that, they fail; that's regression.

To be blunt, that result feels like the inevitable end of The Shurmur Dynasty in Cleveland.

Striving for Mediocrity

But, maybe they don't have to fail. Maybe Haden will avoid whatever it is that kept him off the field for 4 of the team's 6 losses, and with Phil Taylor, maybe Jauron's unit will perform well at full strength.

Maybe Pat is better than what we give him credit for; now that the rookies have their sea legs underneath them, this would be a good time to prove everyone wrong.

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How About Boring Old Greatness?

No matter how much you loathe the notion of going forward with Pat Shurmur as the Head Coach of the Cleveland Browns after this season, there's one thing that would make for a tough case against it. What if the Browns don't lose another game? 10-6 starts here, right?

The thought of too much success scares me half to death. We know it could happen because it happened to us in 2007. Romeo

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Crennel chose Charlie Frye as the starter, and the Steelers got their pound of flesh from Frye and the Browns in Week 1.

Then, the front office sent Charlie as far from Cleveland as they could, and Derek Anderson took the reigns and won as many games as he could without winning a meaningful game.

For once, the fear of winning was not about a draft pick, Dallas owned that for giving Phil Savage the privilege of drafting Brady Quinn.

The issue was that it gave Crennel a second lame duck season, and 2008 was brutal.

We don't recall how bad 2008 was because 2009, 2010, 2011, and the first half of 2012 have all been equally bad, except for that tremendous finish in 2009.

If you want the truth, I can give you the truth. The Browns can't win 6, 7, or all of their final eight games. They could very easily pull a [Blutarsky](#) down the home stretch.

I don't even need to explain how that happens; if you've watched more than few Browns games since 1999, you understand how this happens without explanation.



If you don't mind me lying through my teeth, I can tell you that they can win every game except one, and they can win that game if they're facing Brock Osweiler in Denver in Week 16. Peyton Manning against the Browns, who will have their share of injuries on defense by then, it's a recipe for the unpleasant.

What matchup do the Browns win, Manning versus Jauron or Fox versus Shurmur?

There's good news on the horizon if you can accept a loss there. It means we aren't holding our breath, hoping the Browns close out the season with consecutive road wins in Denver and

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Pittsburgh. Before that, Kansas City and Washington appear to be very winnable, but that's assuming Bob Griffin is physically unable to perform for the Redskins.

If he plays, karma is in play, and we can expect to be reminded that Mike Holmgren didn't do what it took to secure his services every four years on the schedule rotation.

Based on what the Chiefs have done, I'm comfortable saying the Browns have a shot in that one, even if they sleepwalk through it.

Then again, Kansas City can sleepwalk and wipe the floor with the Browns. As we saw when the Titans visited last season and when the Bills came to town September, Shurmurball yields ways for the least common denominator, like this year's Chiefs and Raiders, to find success without effort.

We never like to rule out the Browns stealing one or two in a season, but must also factor the inevitable give-away game, where they steal defeat from the jaws of victory.

As far as Shurmur is concerned, for Mr. Halsam and (Team President) Mr. Banner to even consider anything beyond this year is going to require 8 wins; that's 6 more. If he gets there, he probably deserves consideration for 2013 and beyond.

It starts Sunday against the Ravens. Reality check: is there any way on Earth...

You'll have to ask Pat.