



I couldn't come up with an adequate story this week, so I decided to take the time to tackle the most pressing questions, issues, concerns, comments, beliefs—basically everything—Cleveland sports. To do this, I decided to throw together an all-inclusive, Cleveland mailbag; the first of its kind. Mailbags are hot, everyone's doing 'em. Unfortunately, my mailbox was completely void of any and all fan mail, so I had to improvise. It's a gimmick that is both cheap and sad and screams desperation. But it's a gimmick that I feel has some legs. To my knowledge, I don't know if it has ever been done. Ever. So let's do this.

The Cleveland Browns ...

You might not remember this, you may have blocked it out of your mind. □ But Josh Gordon was a supplemental draft pick. □ Those commodities don't typically pan out for anyone, let alone a team like the Cleveland Browns. □ Is this what it felt like to hit the PowerBall?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus □

I don't know, it's close. Here's something I never thought I'd hear a Browns fan say: *"Giving up next year's second round pick was worth it."*

For years and years this franchise has been defined by its epic run of failures in the draft. But over the last three years the Browns have drafted better than any team in the league, which is weird because they've made more seemingly "questionable" picks than any team in the league, too.

[Joe Haden](#)

,
[T.J. Ward](#)

, trading down with Atlanta,
[trading back up for Phil Taylor](#)

, Greg Little, a fuc*ing running back with the third overall pick,

[John Hughes](#)

,
[Mitchell Schwartz,](#)

The Cleveland Bag: Browns, Cavs

Written by {ga=noahpoinar}

Friday, December 07 2012 12:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, December 09 2012 7:43 AM

the now infamous

[28 year old quarterback](#)

, it's a rather large list. Tom Heckert has elicited more draft-day fury from this fan base than all of the previous regimes combined. Yet, it's December, the team is 4-8, and for some reason I'm not violently sprinting in the direction of the “

[Mike Lomardi” bandwagon](#)

. And naturally, for some reason, Joe Banner will likely give Heckert the boot.

Sidenote: did you know the Browns have a chance the become [the first team in NFL history](#) to feature a rookie 1,000 yard receiver, a rookie 1,000 yard rusher, and a rookie 3,000 yard passer? Go ahead and interpret that information however you'd like.

Who is the most underrated Cleveland Brown right now?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus



Phil Taylor. You always hear, "you can't teach height." But you also can't teach weight. Taylor has a lot of it. He's a round mound, 300-pound (fill-in cool rhyming noun of choice), and already one of the top three run stoppers in the league. He was dearly missed in the first half of the season. It's disconcerting to think what could have been, had Taylor and Haden been on the field all year.

Who is the most overrated Cleveland Brown right now?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

Joe Thomas. I don't know if anyone was aware of this, but the Browns are 32-60 when Joe Thomas starts at left tackle, which has been every game since 2007.

Ok, ok, that was just mean. I'm sorry, Joe. I didn't mean it, Joe. [I love you, Joe.](#)

Do you remember last year when we were blaming Colt McCoy's struggles on the offensive line, lamenting the defense's inability to stop the run, and wondering if any team in the history of the league had ever put together a worse receiving core? Well, I couldn't help but notice we're not doing that anymore. Are the Browns finally on the right track? (I honestly have no idea, I never watch the games, I just religiously follow team message boards.)

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

I can't say, only because I thought they were on the right track about 14 previous other times and I was wrong. But I've got to say that these last couple of weeks, I've actually been mildly frightened by the optimism of this team's roster; so much so that I'm prepared to say the following: The Cleveland Browns...(hold on, I need to make sure my fingers are capable of typing this. Ok, they are)... The Cleveland Browns have the look of a legitimate football team. Even if you can't help staring at the Browns sideline just to remind yourself, "Oh yea, this team has one of the worst coaches in football," it would appear this team is starting to form an identity, and for once it's on the defensive side of the ball. I'm looking forward to watching them this Sunday. I wouldn't normally say that this time of year. Their offense really isn't too shabby either.

And on that note, I'm prepared to say something absolutely absurd. Injuries aside, I think this is the best Browns team since 1994. Yes, better than the 2002 team and even better than 2007.

In full disclosure, the 2002 Cleveland Browns 'should' go down as the miracle in Cleveland the same way the '76 Cavs team is remembered for "The Miracle at Richfield." You won't see another 9-7 season like that again in your lifetime. I'm confident in saying that.

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The 2007 team, they were blessed to be ingratiated with one of the weakest schedules in the history of the current schedule format (2002-present), only defeating one team that finished the season with a winning record (Seattle).

Meanwhile this current Browns team we're watching has flat-out been the recipients of poor luck.

This season, the Indianapolis Colts, 8-4, have been outscored by a total of 41 points and sport a -16 turnover margin, which is the second worst margin in the AFC. Meanwhile, the Browns have been outscored by 36 points and have turnover margin of +7, which is fourth best in the AFC behind Houston (10-1), Baltimore (9-3) and New England (9-3). In games decided by a touchdown or less, the Colts are 7-1 and the Browns are 3-5. I don't know how else to say this but I'm starting to buy into [Chuck Pagano's chances](#) of winning Coach of the Year. Thoughts?
-N.P, Columbus

I'm afraid to even respond to that. But here's my overall assessment of the Browns: They've likely been the unluckiest team in the NFL this year, and I think that's what Noah was trying to get at when he posed this above-listed statement.



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Now having said that, here's my overall assessment of the NFL: Eighty percent of the teams are on the same mediocre level, and the rest are either elite or downright terrible. If you're in the "mediocre" group, which the Browns are, the success (or failure) of your season comes down to 1) the number of elite teams that are on your schedule, 2) the number of terrible teams that are on your schedule, 3) the number of catastrophic injuries you avoid, 4) the number of catastrophic injuries your opponents incur, and 5) the frequency with which your opponents decide to gift-wrap you wins by mismanaging games down the stretch.

Boys and girls, the National Football League. (see: the previous two Super Bowl Champions)

If there's a Browns fan out there who can adequately explain why we're lambasting this team for snaking out a win over the Pittsburgh Steelers, by all means, please educate me?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

On the Browns opening drive the Steelers returned a Brandon Weeden interception for a touchdown. So the Browns spotted the Steelers, the league's no. 1 ranked defense, seven points before Charlie Batch even set foot on the field.

Cleveland's odds of winning the game at this point were [less than 16%](#)

I'm about to do the improbable and make a (subliminal) case for keeping Pat Shurmur. Are you ready? Ok, here it is. Pretend you have two options: You can either keep Shurmur, wait it out for one more year and see how things go. Or, you can fire Shurmur ... but the consequence of doing so is that you have to replace him with one of the four previous coaches from this team's expansion era. What do you do?

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-Noah Poinar, Columbus

I choose to move to the Cavs. ☐

The Cleveland Cavaliers

You'd have to be an idiot not to appreciate what Anderson Varejao is doing right now. ☐ I know we have the term "making the leap", but in this instance wouldn't it be "making the hop?" ☐ How many other NBA player(s) have made a spasmodic, mid-career surge like this?



-Noah Poinar, Columbus ☐ ☐

I'm sure if I spent an hour scraping through data sets on basketball-reference.com I could find a

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couple names to throw out there for you. Then again, maybe I wouldn't. If collecting excessive rebounds were synonymous with the use of PED's, and the Cavs weren't a 4-15 team, you can bet this would be a bigger story. What he is doing right now is unprecedented. Never in my wildest dreams did I think he would develop a consistent, mid range jumper. This is the same guy we nearly lynched after game 3 of the NBA Finals. He was the last guy anyone would want shooting a jumper. Now, get ready because I'm about to compare him to a dihybrid cross between Kevin Garnett and Dennis Rodman. He's a dihybrid cross between Kevin Garnett and Dennis Rodman.

I might be the only Cavs fan on the face of the planet who actually likes Tristan Thompson. What's wrong with me? Is my brain functioning properly? Am I watching the same games as everyone else?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

I ... I don't know.

Are we sure that title contenders are the only teams who would be willing to trade for Varejao? Wouldn't every team like to have one of the league's top-five centers? Isn't that why the Cavs appear to be leaning towards keeping him, abandoning the former logic of "he's no use to a lottery team?"

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

There's a ton of flawed logic going around about Anderson Varejao and the decision to trade him. The age argument is the most flawed of all. Yea, Andy is 30 going on 31, but is that old? Is this the NFL. Is Andy's "reckless" style of play really a concern in the grand scheme of injury? Let me throw out the names of a few guys who were 30 years old about a decade ago: Kobe Bryant, Tim Duncan, Kevin Garnett, Steve Nash, Dirk Nowitzki, Ray Allen, Paul Pierce, Jason Kidd.

I've seen the new ["Uncle Drew" video](#) ; I loved it. After weeks of fighting off the urge, I crumbled and I did what I promised I would never do. I engineered a

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Kevin-Love-to-the-Cavs trade. Tell me what you think:

Cavs receive: Kevin Love and Luke Ridnour.

Grizzlies receive: Luke Walton, Daniel Gibson, Tristan Thompson, Omri Caspi, and the Cavs 2014 first round pick.

Timberwolves receive: Dion Waiters, Zach Randolph, and the Cavs latter 2013 first round pick (via Lakers) and one of their second round picks.

Keep in mind that the Grizzlies won't be able to keep their current trio of Gay, Randolph and Gasol together--that's just a fact-- and if you're the Timberwolves, what's not to like about a Rubio/Waiters backcourt with Randolph in the post?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

I like it. But yea, the Timberwolves aren't trading Kevin Love.

When the Cavs drafted Dion Waiters, we started trying to compare him to James Harden. In reality, its Russell Westbrook who he compares to, and this isn't a stretch comparison, either; like, he really compares to Westbrook. Minus the pull-up jumper part.

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

Interesting.

Last week against the Suns, if you recall, there was a stretch of four straight possessions where Anderson Varejao connected on four consecutive baskets—three of them being 17 foot jumpers. When Phoenix finally called a timeout, I honestly thought they were going to have to stop the game and mop up what was left of Fred McLeod's head. It's a tragedy that I can't find the video on youtube; but nevertheless, it got me thinking, do Cavs fans appreciate what they have in Fred McLeod?

-Noah Poinar, Columbus

Yea, that was as rowdy as I've ever seen Fred McLeod get. I've thought about this and eventually determined that Austin Carr is hurting Fred's chances to become a member of Cleveland's Mount Rushmore of sports announcers. We love Austin, his likability is off the charts, and his patented one liners never get old (I think???), but he's been stealing Fred's thunder for years and I'm not sure how I feel about it.