

The Fan Experience Is Different For Every Fan

Written by {ga=tommoore}

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We have to say we were a bit surprised by the push back from some fans over the announcement that the [Cleveland Browns are working to try and improve the game day experience](#) at home games.

We know (hope?) some of it was general snark, but we read and head enough that it makes us wonder, with the biggest complaint being, of course, that the Browns should "just win more games."

We're fairly certain that the people on the business side of the franchise can effectively do their jobs without interfering in the more-important football side of the operation. As fans, shouldn't that be what we want? Let team president Alec Scheiner and the marketing people handle things like game day DJs, music (we like AC/DC; we don't near to hear *Thunderstruck* before a kickoff ever again), and hot dog races. That frees up CEO Joe Banner and general manager Mike Lombardi to focus on more important things, like acquiring good players, extending Alex Mack's contract, you know, the type of things that will make the enhancements everyone is currently talking about superfluous.

Like any right-minded Cleveland fan, we have fond memories of going to Browns games in the late-1970s through the early 1990s at Municipal Stadium, even though we knew it was a dump. We also enjoy seeing highlights from games during that time period even though we still know the stadium was a dump.

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But those memories are embedded in us because we were watching a winning football team (for the most part), not because the experience at the stadium was wonderful. So, on a basic level, we can understand the "just win more games" argument. But that is taking too simplistic of an approach.

The current mess the Browns find themselves in - one playoff appearance since 1999, five consecutive years of five wins or less, two winning seasons, you know the drill - is 14 years in the making. No one is going to be able to turn this thing around in one season, so why not have part of the organization focus on the things that they can actually change now?

It's hard to see how improving cell phone service and making it easier for fans to get into the stadium and actually watch the game can be a bad thing.

We also understand that times are changing and, ultimately, there's probably no harm in what the Browns are trying to do. The one complaint we do have is that they are really just copying what other NFL teams are doing rather than coming up with something different; something that the fans could truly take ownership of.

To do that, the Browns should look to European soccer for ideas.

On the list of things that former owner Randy Lerner did wrong with the Browns, the fact that he never tried to replicate the fan experience of a European soccer match during a Browns game has to be on there somewhere. Especially as Lerner witnessed it himself in person at Aston Villa.

Near the end of the Premier League season in May, Sarah Lyall of The New York Times traveled to England to [try and capture some of the atmosphere that surrounds game day in the Premier League](#). Read this paragraph from the article and tell us it doesn't sound like a typical Browns game:

"It will be noisier than you are used to. Emotions will be higher than they are at home. The food will be awful. People will be drunk. The weather will be bad. Many of the supporters, even the

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ones cheering the loudest, will not appear to be having fun as we know it, and will be expressing their feelings in novel combinations of swear words. The discomfort, the din, the rudeness, the cleverness, the chanting, the verbal abuse, the unalloyed ecstasy, the abject despair, the love, the hatred — all these are part of the ritual, essential to even to the most meaningless, late-season, non-standings-affecting match."

While we can do without stadiums segregated by fans with police officers forming a protective ring around the fans of opposing teams (at least for non-division games), everything else from the singing, to the banners and the scarves would translate so well to a Browns game at the stadium.

Forget fireworks; how cool would it look if a [Tifo like this](#) - featuring the Brownie Elf - rose out of the Dawg Pound during player introductions?

Sure, most of the songs and traditions seen at European matches have been developed and nurtured over decades and if the Browns did anything it would, at first, be manufactured by a marketing department. But is that any more contrived than trying to create artificial enthusiasm by employing a DJ to play music during a game? Or run a hot dog race with actual dogs?

Plus, once they get rolling, these things would take on a life of their own with Cleveland fans and grow organically. We're fairly confident that Browns fans could come up with some pretty clever chants and/or songs about players like Ben Roethlisberger or Ray Lewis.

While we have nothing against drum lines, those types of things don't appeal to us as a fan - that's not why we follow the game.

At best, all the extra noise and hoopla is an unnecessary distraction (like when the Cavs were winning 60-plus games and going deep into the playoffs); at worst, it's irritating (like when the Cavs are losing 60-plus games a year).

The circus-like atmosphere that the NBA rolls out on a nightly basis may play differently in the NFL, which has more stoppages in play and downtime than an NBA game, so the Browns have

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that going for them.

So let the marketing people do their job.

Because if Banner, Lombardi and the coaching staff do theirs correctly, the game day experience will take care of itself just fine.