

Some Good, Some Bad as the Browns Down Detroit

Written by {ga=tommoore}

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The Cleveland Browns are now halfway through the preseason and there is a lot for Browns fans to like, at least when it comes to the actual on-the-field product.

But there are also some items to be concerned about following Thursday night's exhibition win over the Detroit Lions.

Let's start with the good parts first, with the understanding that everything that follows is prefaced by the fact that this is only the preseason.

In the two games that he has been on the field, quarterback Brandon Weeden has looked more comfortable in Norv Turner's offense than we can remember looking at any point last season. Against Detroit, Weeden played four series and looked crisp, completing eight-of-12 passes for 117 yards and two touchdowns.

While there was some talk that Weeden's performance against St. Louis in the opening preseason friendly was aided by the Rams playing a vanilla defense, the Lions front seven were active on Thursday night, although the Browns line did a nice job of handling them. The Lions defensive linemen may run around a lot, but that doesn't mean anything if they are not making plays.

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“I was pleased with Brandon,” [Browns coach Rob Chudzinski said after the game](#) . “He was efficient out there, accurate and had a couple of really nice throws where he was able to get into some tight areas. He looked comfortable out there.

“(The Lions) were getting some pressure on us and (Brandon) was able to step up a few times and make some plays and adjust in the pocket, which is what you have to do in this league.”

Chudzinski nailed it with his comment on Weeden looking comfortable. The more the coaching staff can build a game plan around Weeden that not only accentuates his talents, but also helps build his confidence, the better chance the Browns have to find some on-field success this season.

Weeden’s two touchdown passes went to tight end Jordan Cameron, who’s talent has never been a question; rather it has been his ability to stay healthy and on the field.

“(Jordan) is such a big target that he can just jump out of the stadium,” [Weeden said](#) . “You just throw it up high and let him go up and get it. He had a big night for us and I’m excited to see that for Jordan.”

Cameron is one of those players that the Browns need to be able to count on this season. Turner loves to use the tight end in his offense and Cameron gave fans a nice teaser against the Lions of the potential he has to be a playmaker.

Running back Trent Richardson saw his first game action of the season and picked up 33 yards on six rushes. The running game just looks different when Richardson is on the field as it seems like he is willing to punish the defense when he has the ball.

“I was pleased to see (Trent) had a couple of really nice runs,” Chudzinski said. “He showed his physicality, got in there and mixed it up a little bit.”

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The Browns defense also had a nice night, holding the Lions to three-and-out on their first four series of the game and not letting Detroit cross midfield until midway through the second quarter.

“It felt good to get out there and have some success,” linebacker Paul Kruger said. “They are a tough team and we came into this week knowing that they had a good offense and a lot of talent. We did some things well and I think we’re pleased with the game. Definitely still some things to work on. So we’ll see some of the corrections that we can make.”

It’s worth mentioning that the Lions were playing without Calvin Johnson, but the Browns were still active when Detroit had the ball.

OK, so before we start printing the playoff tickets, not everything is sunshine and rainbows, especially when it comes to injuries.

Starting offensive guard Jason Pinkston left the game with an ankle injury, running back Dion Lewis left with a broken fibula, linebacker Barkevious Mingo went out with a bruised lung (dude may need some meat on his bones), tight end Gary Barnidge with a sprained shoulder and kicker Brandon Bogotay with a groin injury. (Maybe it would have been quicker to just list who is not hurt).

Pinkston’s injury is probably the most significant, as the Browns are already thin at guard after Shaun Lauvao underwent surgery on his left ankle and is expected to miss at least the first two weeks of the regular season.

It looked bad when Pinkston went out of the game after John Greco rolled up the back of Pinkston’s leg, but he “only” has a high ankle sprain and will reportedly be out two to four weeks. (Anyone want to take the over on that injury?) The biggest blow is the fact that Pinkston need time on the field to get back into game shape after missing the final weeks of last year with an injury.

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Next on the list is Lewis, who was handling the kickoff return duties and was making a strong case to be Richardson's back-up at running back. Before being injured, Lewis ran for 33 yards on five carries (although 31 of them came on one run) and added four passes.

The Browns don't yet know if they will lose Lewis for the season, or if he will be a candidate to be placed on the shorter injured reserve list, which would mean he could return after Week 8. The injury to Lewis may give running back Montario Hardesty, who underwent arthroscopic knee surgery on Thursday.

As for Mingo, he was spending a second night in the hospital Friday night and is expected to be out another week, which means we probably won't see him on the field again until the season-opener against Miami. While disappointing, outside linebacker is one of the areas that the Browns can at least afford to have someone miss a limited amount of time.

"It was a tough night from an injury perspective, obviously," Chudzinski said. "We made some strides from a performance standpoint. I was happy and pleased with the performance. That's the game. Guys get injured and other guys get opportunities and have to step up. That's what good teams are able to do and find guys who make good with their opportunities. That's what we will have to do."

The Browns also committed six penalties against Detroit, a week after having seven against the Rams, something that did not please the coach. The biggest penalty of the night came against Joe Haden, who committed a blatant hold in pulling a Detroit player to the ground, to wipe out a punt return for a touchdown by Travis Benjamin.

Even though Benjamin's return was wiped out by the penalty, he showed once again that he can be a threat in the return game because of his speed. It will be interesting to see how long it takes for opposing teams to stop kicking to him once the regular season starts.

Other than the injuries, there was a lot of positives to take out of the game for the Browns. It's only the preseason, but the defense is running around making plays, the offense looks functional, and the return game looks like it can be a weapon.

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The Browns are back in action a week from Saturday, when they travel to Indianapolis to take on the Colts in the final preseason friendly that will feature the starters.

(Photo by The Associated Press)