



The Cleveland Browns' secondary is bad. If you watched them at all last season, you know this to be true. If you followed the team through the offseason, you also know that the addition of rookie cornerback Leon McFadden is not enough to turn this unit around. The Browns' secondary was bad last season, and in all likelihood, it will be bad again in 2013.

Which brings us to the [Kerry Rhodes situation](#) ([or non-situation](#)). Every year, usually between the start of training camp and the regular season opener, fans and media will take to the Internet to plead with Browns' management to add a veteran to whatever unit on the team is considered weak. It's a preseason tradition that ranks right up there with the [GLC](#)

. The last couple of years had featured fans and media clamoring for the Browns to [add to their receiving corps](#)

. This year, the focus has been on adding to what is sure to be a porous secondary featuring rookies and second-year players all around. But despite the calls of the fans and media, and despite whichever regime is in charge in Berea, the Browns have continuously resisted those urges to dip into the veteran pool for players, and with good reason.

First off, when the Browns consider whether or not to go after a veteran like Rhodes, they must also consider where they are as a team. Specifically, they must determine where they are in reference to the "process" or "win curve" or whichever other buzzword you want to use to explain just how far the Browns are from contending. And as it stands right now, the Browns are quite a ways away from contending.

This is a young roster with little depth that is learning a new system under a first time head coach with a quarterback that [management doesn't believe in](#) . They would never say this to the press, but nobody at Browns' headquarters believes this team has a serious shot at making the playoffs. Sure, they could win a couple close games and make it interesting, but ultimately this is a team that is (still) rebuilding. So when it comes to a guy like Kerry Rhodes, you have to ask yourself, how much better does Rhodes make the team? Is he worth an extra win? Maybe a few touchdowns saved? And more importantly, does the upgrade of Rhodes over Tashaun Gipson or Johnson Bademosi boost the team into the playoff hunt? With this roster, the answer

is most definitely no.

Secondly, the decision makers in Berea must consider the opportunity cost of signing a player like Rhodes. Kerry Rhodes is a known quantity at this point. He's certainly a solid regular when he plays (or at least he was. At 31, he may be slowing down). There is a lot of value in that for a team with a playoff-caliber roster. But for a team in the Browns position, adding Kerry Rhodes doesn't make the team appreciably better. At the same time, adding Rhodes takes away an opportunity for a young player to show himself.

That last point is a key one. Right now, the Browns have the flexibility to try some different guys at free safety and see if one of them can handle the job. It may turn out that none of the guys they put out there can make it in an NFL secondary, but if they do find a quality young player, they now have the free safety spot filled by a young, affordable player for years to come. That is how NFL rosters are built. When an NFL team is bad, they are best served by trying to find as many players as they can that will still be around when the team is good again (and I promise, the Browns will be good again someday). Regardless of whether or not they sign him, Kerry Rhodes will not be on the next Browns team that contends for the playoffs. If that's the case, then there's no point in signing him at all.

At the same time, fans and media may be disappointed that the Browns refuse to go after veteran stopgaps in free agency, as it could be seen as the team waving the white flag on the season. It's hard to blame the fans for wanting their team to do whatever they can to become marginally better in the immediate future (the media is a different story). But the Browns would be doing their fans a disservice if they pretend this roster is anything close to playoff caliber. The ultimate goal of any NFL franchise has to be to win the Super Bowl, and signing Kerry Rhodes does nothing to further that goal for the Browns. That's why he's still sitting on the free agent list.

Jeremy Klein is an unabashed Cleveland Sports fan who really enjoyed Kerry Rhode's [website](#). You can follow him on Twitter [@PapaBearJere](#)