

## Browns Open the Season in Familiar Fashion

Written by {ga=tommoore}

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Well, that certainly did not go the way the Cleveland Browns drew it up.

The Browns lost their season-opening game on Sunday against Miami in a very familiar fashion. The loss was the team's ninth consecutive to open the season – the longest current streak in the NFL – and the Browns are now 1-14 to open the season since 1999.

After a complete off-season of working with new offensive coordinator Norv Turner, the offense came out and looked just like the same offense we saw in 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2009.

The first offensive drive ended in an interception when wide receiver Travis Benjamin did not fight hard enough for the ball; second series was three-and-out; third series ended in an interception when Greg Little could not catch a ball that hit him in the hands; fourth drive was stalled by an Oniel Cousins penalty; the fifth drive was another interception on a bad Brandon Weeden pass; and, well, you get the idea.

On the day, the Browns were just 1-of-14 on third down, which, even for them, is really bad.

Despite all of that, the Browns defense was making plays and bringing pressure on Miami quarterback Ryan Tannehill, helping to hold the Dolphins to just two field goals in the first half and keeping Browns in the game.

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Because of the defense's efforts, when Weeden hit tight end Jordan Cameron with a seven-yard touchdown pass just before halftime, the Browns went into the locker room somehow leading, 7-6. The touchdown drive consisted of 11 plays and covered 48 yards, which may not sound very impressive until you realize that on their four previous drives, the Browns ran 10 combined plays for 60 total yards.

The second half played out the way so many games did in the past few years as the offense sputtered and the defense finally wore down, giving up 10 points in the fourth quarter, with the killer being a 10-play, 85-yard touchdown drive by the Dolphins to give Miami an insurmountable 10-point lead.

There is a lot of blame to go around for the Browns, starting with Weeden.

Many will focus on the three interceptions, giving Weeden seven interceptions in two opening-game starts, but two of the picks were not really his fault. But Weeden still made enough bad plays to keep the Browns from really getting back into the game.

"They were able to get pressure and affect Brandon's throws," [Browns coach Rob Chudzinski said after the game](#). "He was harassed quite a bit. We'll go through it, look at it and correct it."

The play calling on offense may not have helped, either.

By our count, Weeden was in the shotgun and/or pistol formation 32 times\* (not counting plays after they fell behind 23-10) and the Browns only ran three times out of that formation. The same disparity happened in the preseason and we chalked it up to the Browns just working on things; but if that is the way it is going to play out now that the games count for real, that kind of predictability is not going to help matters.

The real problem areas were at two positions that everyone outside of the Browns front office

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knew were going to be an issue – right guard and corner back.

Cousins was simply horrible on Sunday, with four penalties and several other plays where he allowed pressure. Combined that with a rough day from right tackle Mitchell Schwartz, who really struggled against Miami defensive end Cameron Wake (2.5 sacks), and it was a long day for the Browns and Weeden, who went down six times and was hit on several other throws.

“(Oniel) is the best we’ve got, and Oniel will make the improvements and he will get better,” Chudzinski said in a comment that surely sent chills through not only Weeden but Browns fans everywhere.

You would think that a talent evaluator with the scary skills of Mike Lombardi would have seen enough tape on Cousins from prior seasons to know that counting on him on game day is not a good idea.

On the defensive side, corner back Buster Skrine was every bit as bad as Cousins, and newcomer Chris Owens was not much better. Miami wide receiver Brian Hartline, an average receiver at best, abused Skrine and Owens (mostly Skrine) for nine receptions, 114 yards and a touchdown.

Joe Haden did his part, holding Mike Wallace to just one catch for 15 yards, but that doesn’t do much good if opposing quarterbacks are just going to throw at will to the opposite side of the field.

Again, the Browns could have done something about this prior to Week 1, but, here we are.

Things were not totally bad, of course.

The defense held the Dolphins to just 20 yards on the ground; Davone Bess did Davone Bess-type things, finishing with five receptions; Jordan Cameron had nine catches for 108 yards

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and a touchdown; and the defense was active for the most part, getting two sacks from Desmond Bryant, one from Paul Kruger and one from Quentin Groves.

But it was not enough because these are the Browns, and on opening day nothing is ever enough.

So now that the Browns have the opening day loss out of the way, they can get down to business and work to make sure this season doesn't turn out like so many before it.

"The first game out of the box is the hardest game of the year," Weeden said (and he should know). "I'm confident in this football team and this group of guys. Last time I checked, we're guaranteed 15 more games, so we'll get back to work and get better."

Complicating matters is the fact that the Browns hit the road for Baltimore to take on the Ravens in Week 2. Baltimore is coming off an embarrassment at the hands of Peyton Manning and will be celebrating their Super Bowl win in their home opener.

So that should be fun.

"It's just the first game," [Browns running back Trent Richardson said](#) . "We're going to come back and play hard. This season ain't over with."

No, it's not. But if the Browns don't play better than they did today, the end may be nearer than anyone wants to admit.

*\*We may be off by a snap or two, but the point is still a valid one. The Browns can't have that kind of imbalance and hope to have success on offense.*

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*(Photo courtesy of ClevelandBrowns.com)*