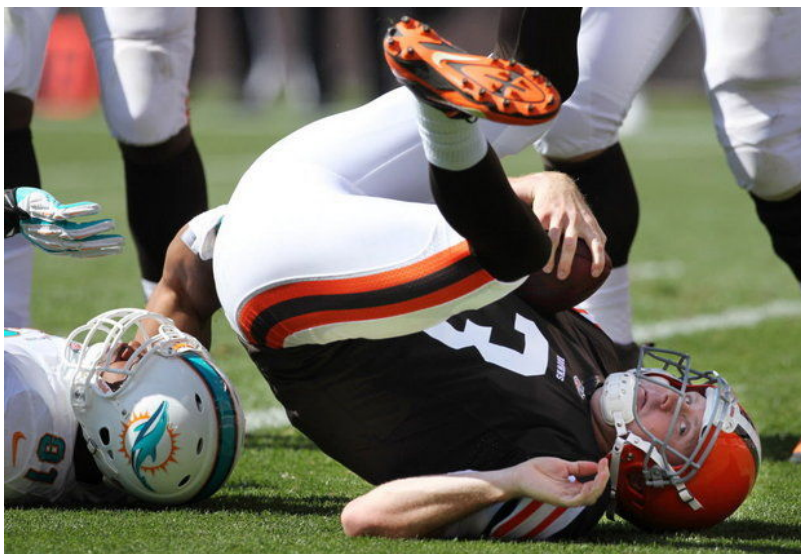


Final Thoughts on the Browns Week 1 Loss

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Tuesday, September 10 2013 3:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, September 10 2013 1:24 PM



Some final thoughts on the Cleveland Browns opening-day loss to the Miami Dolphins, the ninth consecutive season-opening loss for the Browns and the 14th since the team returned in 1999.

Stop us if you've heard this one before ...

Running back Trent Richardson ran the ball just 13 times against Miami – and just five times in the second half as the Browns repeatedly neglected Richardson so they could have Brandon Weeden throw the ball more.

“It was just the course of the game,” [Browns coach Rob Chudzinski said on Monday](#) . “Trent is a critical part of our offense. We want to give him the ball as much as we can. I thought in the first half we had a pretty good mix going there into the third quarter. We had a lot of two-minute situations yesterday, at the end of the half and then obviously as we got into the fourth quarter there. The real key is on third downs; we have to convert on third downs. We’ll get plenty of opportunities to get the ball to Trent as well.”

That is a refrain we heard repeatedly last year and it’s getting tiresome. Richardson may be the team’s best offensive weapon and for the Browns to continue to refuse to use him – especially on a day when Weeden was just 26-of-53 and took six sacks – is just baffling.

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Of course, that pretty much sums up the Browns game day experience most weeks.

Oneil Cousins was really bad.

Anyone who watched the game knows that right guard Oneil Cousins had a very, very bad day.

But when you look at the actual numbers, it gets so much worse.

[According to Pro Football Focus](#) , Cousins' grade of -6.5 was the lowest on the team. He allowed five pressures in pass protection, resulting in two sacks and three hurries on Weeden, and picked up four penalties – two holding calls, a false start and one for illegal use of the hands.

The “highlight” came during the fourth quarter when he allowed a sack and committed two of his penalties all within a four-play sequence.

“His pass protection was OK,” Chudzinski said. (No, it wasn't). “Oniel has worked and improved and we need to have him continue to improve. He has gotten the majority of the reps (and) it's important that the guy getting the most reps gives you the best chance.”

Right tackle Mitchell Schwartz had a rough day as well, but we're not as concerned as he was going up against Cameron Wake, who has made more than one tackle look silly.

But it would have been nice to see the Browns slow Wake down at least a little. Wake finished the game with three sacks, two hits and five quarterback hurries.

It's not all Weeden's fault ... but, still.

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We've already covered the struggles of the offensive line, which helps explain, in part, the day that Weeden had.

The second-year quarterback was hit 16 times, sacked six times, and completed just five-of-24 passes for 76 yards when he was under pressure.

"The protection issues were there," Chudzinski said. "That's something that you have to contend with. I thought Brandon had some ups and downs. There were some throws and some reads that he would like to have back. But the one thing you saw yesterday was what I talked about: Resiliency. You saw his resiliency and his toughness. If anybody had questions about that prior to this game, you look at the game, and he's pretty tough and kept bouncing back and coming back."

Maybe if the Browns handed the ball to No. 33 a little bit more, Weeden would not face so much pressure. Just a thought, really.

Mike Wallace thought he was escaping.

When wide receiver Mike Wallace signed with Miami as an off-season, he was probably happy that he would no longer have to face Joe Haden. Imagine his surprise when the schedule came out and the Dolphins were in Cleveland for Week 1.

Haden did his usual job on Wallace, holding him to one catch for 15 yards and leaving Wallace crying about it afterward.

"I was on him," Haden said after the game. "Like I always talk about, our front – they're getting up there. They're getting pressure, making plays, making sacks, hitting the quarterback – just getting him uncomfortable."

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“I don’t want to talk. I don’t feel like talking about it,” [Wallace told reporters after the game](#) .
“Ask coach. It’s not my game plan.”

Poor baby.

Alex Mack’s contract could be a big deal.

Word came out shortly before game time that [Alex Mack, the best center in AFC North, will play out his rookie contract](#) rather than try to negotiate a new deal during the season.

While it has been reported that this is a “common practice” for players, it is still cause for some concern.

Of course, it is still possible that the Browns could be holding an Alex Mack contract extension press conference during the bye week in November. But it is also just as likely that general manager Mike Lombardi has gotten into Joe Banner’s ear about a center riding the bench at some Division 3 program that is so awesome that only a nuanced talent evaluator like Lombardi can appreciate his greatness and that the Browns don’t really need Mack.

We’re going to hold off on worrying until there is something tangible to worry about, but this being Cleveland, which scenario do you think is most likely to play out?

Moving on to Baltimore

The Browns will have their first road game of the year on Sunday, when they head to Baltimore for the Ravens’ home opener.

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(Photo courtesy of The Plain Dealer)