

## Final Thoughts on the Browns Week 2 Loss

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Monday, September 16 2013 11:00 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, September 18 2013 7:38 AM

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Some final thoughts on the Cleveland Browns Week 2 loss to the Baltimore Ravens, the 11th consecutive loss to Baltimore and the Browns fifth consecutive loss overall dating back to last season.

### Does it matter if Brandon Weeden doesn't start at quarterback? (Part 1)

Starting quarterback Brandon Weeden had an MRI on his sprained thumb this week and his status for Sunday's game against Minnesota is still in question.

"We're really waiting on Brandon to kind of see where he's at and make the determination in the next few days," [Browns coach Rob Chudzinski said](#) . "I'm going to keep all our options open right now. Obviously we have two options, and that's Jason (Campbell) and Brian (Hoyer) both."

Normally not having your starting quarterback available would be a problem, but with the way the Browns have played through the season's first two weeks, it may not matter who is under center.

Consider that the offense:

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- has scored one touchdown in 24 possessions
- has converted just 17 percent its third downs (five-of-29)
- has rushed for just 3.3 yards per carry
- has only outscored Jacksonville by five points – and the Jaguars only scored two points in their opening game
- has allowed Weeden to be sacked 11 times

On second thought, maybe Weeden will be happy to get a break this weekend.

### Does it matter if Brandon Weeden doesn't start at quarterback (Part 2)

A big part of the offenses struggles so far has come from an unexpected area – the offensive line.

For the second consecutive week the right side of the line had a long day. [According to Pro Football Focus](#)

, guard Oniel Cousins followed up his -7.0 grade in the opener against Miami with a -6.7 grade against the Ravens. He posted a -2.4 run block grade and allowed seven hurries – two more than against Miami.

Right tackle Mitchell Schwartz has also struggled to open the season. Against Baltimore, Schwartz allowed eight pressures that resulted in two sacks, two hits and four hurries. He has now allowed more pressure in the first two games than he did over the final nine games of his rookie season.

Left tackle Joe Thomas isn't even immune – he allowed five pressures for the second consecutive week, or as many pressures as he allowed in the first seven weeks of last season.

What the heck is going on?

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For starters, the Browns simply can't get anything going in the running game with Trent Richardson, who ranks 22nd in the NFL in rushing and has the fourth-worst yards per carry (3.4) among the top 25 rushers this season.

The inability to run the ball has forced the Browns into too many passing situations and left Weeden open to too much punishment.

"Part of it is we're playing some good defensive lines and some guys that can rush the passer,"

[Chudzinski said](#)

. "From a protection standpoint, that's an issue. The guys, as well, are outstanding defenses against the run. It's been very challenging games for our line. We just need to get better and keep grinding. Like I mentioned, there is some improvement and some signs that we're going in the right direction. We just have to continue to improve."

### The one bright spot on the defense

While the defense has struggled in the passing game, allowing Joe Flacco and Ryan Tannehill to complete 64.8 percent of their passes, the Browns have been solid when it comes to stopping the run.

The Browns are currently tied for first in the NFL, allowing just 2.0 yards per carry. That's a pretty amazing feat for a club that has been at the bottom of the league more often than not since returning in 1999.

Of course, it would be more impressive if the Browns could get off the field on third down. So far, they are allowing opposition to convert at a rate of 50 percent on third down, with the Ravens highlighting the issue on Sunday when they were seven-of-11 in the second half while coming back to win.

### Of course they are

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Browns assistant general manager Ray Farmer was in College Station on Saturday to scout the Alabama vs. Texas A&M game.

Farmer could have been there to see any of the 15-20 pro prospects that probably played in the game, but no, according to *Sports Illustrated's* Peter King, [Farmer was there to see Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel](#)

Because of course he was.

King also goes on to write that “Manziel, to many teams right now, would be undraftable because they’re scared of his mood swings and off-field questions. But it only takes one team out of 32 to fall for him. And some team will, unless he self-destructs between today and draft day.”

Yep, sounds like exactly the type of player to solve all the Browns problems.

### Alex Mack’s contract may not be a big deal

While center Alex Mack made it clear last week that he doesn’t want his contract situation to be a distraction, he also said he is happy in Cleveland.

“Really, just playing football (is my priority,” [Mack said on Friday](#) . “The team wins and I win if I play at my best level. So that’s my goal. I like it here. I like the people I’m with, I like my coaches and I’m happy as a Brown.”

We’re still holding out hope for a press conference during the bye week announcing a contract extension for Mack.

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Stay tuned.

### Until next time

The Browns travel to Minnesota on Sunday to take on the 0-2 Vikings.

*(Photo courtesy of BaltimoreRavens.com)*