



The night is always darkest just before the dawn.

Yeah, I know that's a terribly hackneyed quip, especially coming after the Browns shockingly dealt former third overall pick Trent Richardson to the Colts for a 2014 first round pick. But no other cliché better illustrates how Browns fans should feel after the team seemingly waved the white flag on the next fourteen games of the season.

For the Browns front office, the reality is this: The Browns have no shot at winning a Super Bowl this season. They knew this back in March when they decided not to pursue a veteran to compete directly with Brandon Weeden for the quarterback job. They knew this in April when they decided to deal some of their draft picks for picks in future seasons. They knew this in July and August when they [refused to pursue veteran stopgaps at problem positions](#). And they know now, after two abysmal games to open the 2013 season, that the team is better off long-term with an extra first round pick than Trent Richardson.

From just a pure value standpoint, this is a fantastic trade for Cleveland. Running back is the most dispensable position in football, and any time you can deal a back not named Adrian Peterson for a first round pick, you are generally better off doing the trade. Forget that Richardson was the third overall pick, that's a sunk cost that has no bearing on his current value to the team. As it stands, the Browns traded a running back whom no one is sure is actually any good for a first round draft choice. That's a win in my book.

Secondly, keep in mind where this Browns team is at in the rebuilding process. This roster is

broken. There are holes all over the place, and no depth of which to speak of. Even if Richardson was a great back, which he may or may not be, he has minimal value on a team that's clearly going nowhere any time soon. What good is having Richardson if the team has no cornerbacks to cover anyone and they're down two scores in every second half? What the Browns need right now is as many young players at premium positions (which running back is not) as possible, and trading Richardson for a first rounder better furthers the goal of filling out this roster with quality players that can compete at the highest level the NFL has to offer.

The fact is, Trent Richardson's trade value will never be higher. Every time he touches the ball his value decreases a tiny bit. Running backs are most valuable early in their careers, when they still have the burst that comes with having youthful legs. If the Browns waited until the offseason to do this, they probably would not have been able to wrangle a first round pick, especially if Richardson struggles like he did last season. And I wouldn't worry about finding a replacement either. [Look at the top rushers from last season](#) . Only three of the top twelve rushers (Peterson, Lynch, and Spiller) were selected in the first round. By the time the Browns are good again, they will have found another running back.

The fans won't want to hear any of this. They will perceive this deal as a slap in the face. They pay their hard earned money for tickets and memorabilia, and goddamnit they want to win now! How dare they trade our top running back in the middle of the season for a lousy draft pick!

There's just so much wrong with the above sentiment. The day the front office begins to make football decisions based on what the fans want is the day football officially dies in this city. Most fans are morons who don't know the first thing about building a football team (But not you, dear reader).

Seriously, should the Browns hold on to Richardson because fans bought his jersey? Should they only make trades and acquisitions that curry favor with the local fans and media? Or should they do whatever they think is best to get this team out of the doldrums and into the playoffs? I would be infinitely more upset if the front office was trying to please the fans in the short-term rather than trying to build something sustainable.

I want nothing more than to see this team win the Super Bowl. Not improve marginally over last season, not go 8-8, not barely squeak into the playoffs. I want them to WIN. THE. SUPER BOWL.

Right now, The Browns are so far away from winning a title they may as well be strapping up their shoulder pads on Mars. The best way for the Browns' front office to win the adoration of this town is to build a Super Bowl winner, and, despite what fans may think, trading Trent Richardson for a first round pick is a great step in that direction.

Jeremy Klein is an unabashed Cleveland Sports fan who is excited for the [Brian Hoyer](#) - [Willis McGahee](#)

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