

Browns Go All In...For 2014

Written by {ga=tommoore}

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The Cleveland Browns decided to go all in on Wednesday – toward giving up on the season – and traded starting running back Trent Richardson to Indianapolis for the Colts No. 1 selection in the 2014 NFL Draft.

Richardson leaves town after being in Cleveland for just a little over a year after being drafted out of Alabama. As a rookie, Richardson played through broken ribs to score 11 rushing touchdowns, a figure that only two players in franchise history – Jim Brown and Leroy Kelly (you may have heard of them) – ever surpassed.

Apparently in the new world of the Browns, touchdowns are an over-rated commodity.

In Richardson's place the Browns will roll out Chris Ogbonnaya (95 career carries in the NFL), Bobby Rainey (who, like a character in Animal House, has no NFL career carries) and possibly Willis McGahee, who the team is considering signing if he passes his physical after blowing out his knee last year.

Just for comparison's sake, McGahee has only rushed for more than 11 touchdowns in a single season once in the past eight years.

It wouldn't be a surprise if it turns out the Browns planned to trade Richardson from the moment that CEO Joe Banner walked into Berea. He reportedly doesn't believe that running backs should be drafted as high as Richardson was and, rather than let Richardson prove him wrong, Banner decided to move him out of town. Once the Colts lost Vick Ballard to a season-ending

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ACL injury, they became a good fit as a trading partner.

The Richardson trade ends a lengthy streak of moves that have signaled the Browns had no intention of trying to compete this season. It started with the trading of draft picks this year; continued with the front office's unwillingness to address holes at offensive guard, inside linebacker and corner back in the off-season; all the way through the [announcement](#) earlier in the day Wednesday that Brian Hoyer will be the starting quarterback on Sunday (and probably for the rest of the season).

"I feel like based on our current situation where we're at offensively as well as getting into the game planning for Minnesota that Brian's strengths are the best fit for this week and that he gives us our best chance to win," Browns coach Rob Chudzinski said. "The things that he does well fit what we need."

The things he does well? What exactly are those things? And can you really say a quarterback does anything well after throwing just 96 career passes over a four-year career?

"I think Brian Hoyer and Ryan Mallett are starters," Browns general manager Mike Lombardi said in December 2011 when he was an analyst with the NFL Network. "I've said this many times: If I would have taken the GM job of the 49ers, I would have gone after Brian Hoyer, because I think he has all the traits and characteristics. If I were the Cleveland Browns, I'd rather have Brian Hoyer behind center than Colt McCoy. I think he's got all the traits you need, in terms of leadership, toughness, the arm strength, the ability to move the team."

Ah, suddenly it's all becoming clear now.

The problem with this trade is that the people defending it are banking on the Browns using their stockpile of draft picks – they have two in the first round and 10 overall – to select a franchise quarterback in the 2014 NFL Draft.

But what has Lombardi ever shown anyone to give Browns fans the confidence that, even if the Browns find themselves in a position to make that pick, he will make the right decision?

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"We have to earn (the fans') belief and trust in the decisions we're going to make as a group, and I don't expect them to trust that until we prove that the trust is well placed," Banner said in talking about the trade. "So, I understand the skepticism for now. We have to do what we think is right, move the franchise forward and get it to where we want it to be.

"I'm very confident in the group of people who will be involved in that, which will include the coaches and the player-personnel department. Like every team, you'll hit on some picks, you'll miss on some picks; we'll be human. But I think collectively, we'll do a good job of it. I like to refer to it as having a better batting average than other teams. Eventually, that produces a winning team.

"I don't want to tip our hands about what we're going to do or prioritize in doing, but I think it puts us in a very good position to have made some real progress with the team this offseason, to be in very good cap shape going into next season. We have accumulated those picks. I think we're positioning ourselves to build that kind of team that is good and sustainable that we have talked about."

Don't worry about tipping your hand, Joe. We're pretty sure that right now the rest of the NFL doesn't give the Browns a second thought.