



Take a second to list all of the “elite” quarterbacks in the NFL, however you define elite. Here’s my list, in no particular order:

Aaron Rodgers

Drew Brees

Tom Brady

Peyton Manning

Now, make another list of the quarterbacks that have either led their team to a Super Bowl or could conceivably lead their team to a Super Bowl in the near future. Here’s what I came up with:

Eli Manning

Ben Roethlisberger

Matt Ryan

Joe Flacco

Cam Newton

Jay Cutler

Andy Dalton

Tony Romo

Matt Stafford

Andrew Luck

Matt Schaub

Alex Smith

Phillip Rivers

Colin Kaepernick

Russell Wilson

Robert Griffin III

If your lists look anything like mine, there should be a large discrepancy between the quarterbacks considered “elite” and the quarterbacks considered at least good enough to get to a Super Bowl.

There are 32 franchises in the NFL, which means there are 32 starting quarterbacks on any given Sunday. As the above lists show, there simply aren’t enough good quarterbacks to go around. Even in what is considered a “golden age” of quarterback play, roughly a third of the league is without a signal caller that can get them to a Super Bowl, and that’s before considering that I was very generous with my second list. There are about six quarterbacks on the second list for whom it’s debatable whether or not they can win a Super Bowl.

Which brings us to the Cleveland Browns and Brian Hoyer. Hoyer’s play through two starts has been a revelation. It cannot be overstated just how big a difference competent quarterback play has been for this team. The defense is playing faster and looser knowing that the offense can score more than two touchdowns a game, the offensive line looks like a completely different unit protecting a quarterback with a quick release, and the skill players on offense look like some of the best in the league with a quarterback that can throw the ball accurately with touch.

Despite all this, the conversation amongst fans and media regarding the Browns quarterback keeps coming back to whether or not Brian Hoyer is the long-term answer at quarterback. It’s hard to blame the fans for this. This franchise has been looking for [their own Keanu Reeves](#) since the team returned in 1999. After enduring 14 seasons of ineptitude, even two games of

competent quarterback play is enough to whip the fanbase into a frenzy.

At the same time, asking whether or not Brian Hoyer can be our Keanu Reeves is not the right question. There are only so many “savior” quarterbacks to go around; the rest of the teams are relying on the Matt Schaub and Andy Dalton of the league to help them reach the promise land.

In the aftermath of the Trent Richardson trade, it is widely assumed that the Browns will do whatever it takes to nab the guy they think will be the quarterback for the next decade. Unfortunately, this type of thing doesn’t always go as planned. Cleveland fans know better than anyone that just because a quarterback is highly regarded on draft day does not mean he is guaranteed to be successful on Sundays, let alone be a franchise quarterback for a decade.

In the past two games we witnessed what can happen when a team has just decent quarterback play. The Browns are downright *competitive* right now, a far cry from where they were just two weeks ago.

Therein lies the importance of Brian Hoyer to this franchise. Sure, it would be great if the Browns can land Teddy Bridgewater (or whomever is the top quarterback) and he goes on to lead the team to multiple Super Bowls. But right now, that’s pie-in-the-sky thinking. That scenario relies on the Browns somehow trading up to get the top pick (it doesn’t look like they’ll finish in the bottom five), drafting the right quarterback, and keeping him healthy for X amount of years. All of that comes before factoring in that the likelihood of success in drafting a quarterback is really just a coin flip proposition.

That’s why Brian Hoyer’s development is so critical for the Browns, even if he never joins that elite group of quarterbacks listed above. If Hoyer can prove the rest of the season that he can be a consistent NFL quarterback, it gives the Browns a lot of options.

If Hoyer pans out and the Browns don’t see a quarterback they like in the 2014 draft, they can forgo selecting one and go with Hoyer. If they do select a quarterback, having Hoyer keeps them from rushing a rookie quarterback into the starting lineup before he’s ready. Worst-case scenario, if they pick a quarterback that doesn’t pan out, they can rest easy knowing that they have a guy in Hoyer who can keep the chains moving and the team rolling. And if the Browns

do find their own Keanu Reeves, they can gain valuable draft picks by trading Hoyer, a la the 49ers and Alex Smith.

Right now, no one knows what kind of quarterback Brian Hoyer can be. He looks promising right now, but this wouldn't be the first false dawn since 1999 (Hi Derek Anderson!). For now, let's quiet all the talk of whether or not Brian Hoyer is "[the one](#)". Brian Hoyer doesn't have to be Keanu Reeves; he just has to be the best Brian Hoyer he can be.

Jeremy Klein is an unabashed Cleveland Sports fan who suggests you watch the [full Keanu Reeves South Park Episode](#) when you have some free time. You can follow him on Twitter [@PapaBearJere](#)

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