

It Takes a Team: Browns Lose to Detroit

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Sunday, October 13 2013 6:41 PM - Last Updated Sunday, October 13 2013 6:42 PM



We all knew that the Cleveland Browns were not going to close out the season with a 14-game winning streak and that, eventually, they would lose a game.

But when the end came, did it have to be in such a predictable fashion?

The Browns lost to the Detroit Lions on Sunday, 31-17, in the best example of a team loss that you will probably ever see.

The loss ends the Browns three-game winning streak and, combined with Cincinnati's overtime win against Buffalo, Cleveland's share of first place in the AFC North.

We may as well get this out of the way early as it is all anyone will be talking about this week. Quarterback Brandon Weeden was one of the reasons why the Browns lost, but he was not the primary reason.

Weeden was good in the first half as the Browns built 17-7 lead and had 250 yards of offense. Weeden threw touchdown passes to Chris Ogbonnaya and Greg Little in taking the Browns to the locker room with that 10-point lead.

But the second half was a different story.

It Takes a Team: Browns Lose to Detroit

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Sunday, October 13 2013 6:41 PM - Last Updated Sunday, October 13 2013 6:42 PM

The Browns punted on each of their first four second-half drives, totaling just 18 yards and running just 13 plays.

While the offense was busy embarrassing itself, the defense allowed the Lions to get back into the game. Matthew Stafford hit Reggie Bush for an 18-yard touchdown pass and then Joseph Fauria for a 23-yard pass (one of three touchdown passes that Fauria, who came into the game with four receptions on the year, had on the day).

The defense would give up 24 points in the second half as the Browns allowed the Lions to do pretty much what they wanted on offense. Stafford finished with four touchdown passes and Reggie Bush finished with 135 yards on offense and a touchdown.

But despite all that, the Browns had a chance to tie the game when the offense took the field with 6:04 remaining in the game. If Weeden could drive the Browns 84 yards for a game-tying touchdown, everything that went on in the second half up to that point would be forgotten.

The drive started off well, with Weeden hitting tight end Jordan Cameron for 15 yards and seven yards, then Josh Gordon for 18 yards, setting the Browns up with a first-and-10 on Detroit's 44-yard line.

Weeden then made the signature play of the weekend (and not in a good way), throwing what could generously be called a pass but more resembled a pop-up in the direction of Chris Ogbonnaya that was intercepted by Detroit linebacker DeAndre Levy to shut down the Browns final chance of the day.

Weeden, who finished 26-of-43 for 292 yards and matched his two touchdown passes with two interceptions, said after the game that he was trying to pitch the ball out of bounds rather than take a sack (why he thought that was a good idea is anyone's guess). He will take all the blame from fans for the loss, and while he does deserve to carry his share of the water for Sunday's performance, he was far from the only problem.

It Takes a Team: Browns Lose to Detroit

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Sunday, October 13 2013 6:41 PM - Last Updated Sunday, October 13 2013 6:42 PM

Once again, the Browns could get nothing going in the running game – even though they were facing a Lions run defense that entered the game 31st (there are only 32 teams in the NFL) in yards per carry. The three primary running backs – Willis McGahee, Bobby Rainey and Ogbonnaya – combined to rush for just 61 yards and averaged only 3.81 yards per carry as the Browns continue to not even come close to resembling an NFL rushing attack.

The Browns ran for 115 yards in the first half – a number that was highly inflated by Travis Benjamin's 45 yard run – but they could get nothing going in the second half. In the third quarter, Cleveland rushed for five total yards, four from McGahee and one from Weeden on a scramble. They upped that in the fourth quarter with a six-yard run by Ogbonnaya.

All told, the Browns rushed five times in the second half for a grand total of 11 yards – in a game that they either lead or trailed by no more than seven points until there were two minutes remaining.

It sure would have been nice in the second half, as Weeden was starting to struggle, to have a running game to turn to, but that is simply not a realistic option for the 2013 Cleveland Browns. The coaches clearly know it – see the five second-half rushes – and it's beyond time that the fans start to accept it as well.

We are now six games into the season and four games into the post-Trent Richardson era of the running attack. Far too many fans still want to paint Richardson as the worst player to ever wear a Browns uniform when the reality is the rushing game is worse now that it has been in a long, long time.

McGahee continues to look like a player in his 12th year and coming off a major knee injury as he now carries a 2.8 yard per carry average after Sunday's game. He "leads" the Browns in rushing with 164 yards but if the team gives Benjamin a few more carries that may not be the case for much longer.

As bad as the offense was in the second half, that is no excuse for the defense to give up 24 second-half points.

It Takes a Team: Browns Lose to Detroit

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Sunday, October 13 2013 6:41 PM - Last Updated Sunday, October 13 2013 6:42 PM

The Lions had scoring drives of 79 yards, 67 yards and 49 yards in the second half, so it was not like they were working from a short field. The Browns put little to no pressure on Stafford, sacking him just once and only hitting him two other times.

It was a bad performance all the way around and closes out what had been a fun and successful three-game home streak on a sour note. A win on Sunday would have kept the Browns on pace with the Bengals in the division and, more importantly, may have finally given fans the confidence to truly believe that this year's team is different.

But that is not the way things work with this team.

The Browns now go on the road for games against Green Bay and Kansas City, meaning we won't see the back home until the calendar turns to November.

Maybe by then they will have found a running game and a way to consistently hold on to a second-half lead.

(Photo courtesy of The Plain Dealer)