

It's official. Jamal Lewis is a Cleveland Brown. The deal is just for one year, and is reportedly for between three and three and a half million dollars. It will now be interesting to see if the Browns pay Reuben Droughns the 1.75 million dollar roster bonus he's due a week from now. If so, think Brady Quinn at #3. If they release Reuben, it could be a Jamal Lewis/Adrian Peterson duo toting the ball for the Browns at running back next season. Analysis inside ...



The Browns have done a little sleeping with the enemy in free agency, signing running back Jamal Lewis away from the hated Baltimore Ravens. The deal [has been confirmed](#) by John Clayton of ESPN. Terms were not disclosed, but it's being reported as a one year deal.

Lewis is just 27 years of age and is the Ravens all time leading rusher. He was not himself last year, struggling with an injury (bone spurs), and appearing tentative in averaging just 3.6 yards per carry ... well below his career average of 4.3 yards per gain. He was released by Crackmore just prior to the start of free agency in a cap cutting move. Lewis was due a five million dollar roster bonus in mid-March that the Ravens did not want to pay.

In 2003, Lewis nearly broke the NFL single-season rushing record by rushing for 2,066 yards. He finished second all-time, to Eric Dickerson, and joined Dickerson, Terrell Davis, Barry Sanders, and O.J. Simpson as the only backs in NFL history to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a single season. During that season, Lewis also broke Corey Dillon's single game rushing record of 279 yards by running for 295 yards against us in a game that all Browns fans likely remember. Lewis was rewarded by being named NFL Offensive Player of the Year by the Associated Press that season.

At 5'11, 245 pounds ... Jamal is a lethal short yardage runner that was very powerful and punishing when at his best. He clearly fits in with the identity that the Browns want to establish, and along with the recently signed Eric Steinbach, should go a long way towards helping repair the Browns perennially pathetic red zone and short yardage rushing attack. If they want to, the Browns could have some serious girth in their backfield next year as Lewis, Reuben Droughns, Lawrence Vickers, and Terrelle Smith are presently under contract with the team.

Prior to the '04 season, Lewis was charged with attempting to distribute coke. The charges stemmed from a federal sting initiated prior to Lewis being drafted by the Ravens. Since Lewis violated the NFL drug policy, then-commissioner Paul Tagliabue suspended Lewis for two games in the 2004 season. Lewis later plea-bargained to reduced charges and on January 26,

2005 Lewis was sentenced to four months in prison, two months in a halfway house, and 500 hours of community service.

The signing brings some serious questions to the forefront for the Browns. Chief amongst them is whether or not the team will pay Droughns the 1.75 million dollar roster bonus that he's due a week from now. If they do pay Reuben, one would have to think that drafting University of Oklahoma running back Adrian Peterson would appear unlikely, and Brady Quinn would likely be the frontrunner to be the team's selection at #3. If they waive or trade Droughns as opposed to paying him, and the deal with Jamal is indeed for one season, a Jamal Lewis-Adrian Peterson running back tandem appears likely for next year.

On the team's official website, [Phil Savage commented](#) on the signing, saying "We are pleased to add Jamal Lewis to our team. He is a proven NFL back who brings a toughness and demeanor to the game that his teammates and our fans will appreciate."

Of course, Savage was with the Ravens when they made Jamal the fifth overall pick of the 2000 draft. This is a boom/bust signing for the team. Lewis is still in the prime years of his career, and is a scary threat when healthy and running on all cylinders. He's the type of back that could add a dimension to this offense that we haven't seen here in close to twenty years. However, the version of Lewis we all saw last year was not the same back I just described.