

The Roundtable: Should Quinn Start Right Away?

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Saturday, May 05 2007 7:00 PM -

The Browns Nation is still euphoric over last weekend's draft. But as that buzz wears off, real debate about the 2007 version of this team will begin ... and expect the starting quarterback battle to dominate those conversations. Should Brady Quinn start right away for the team? Should Charlie Frye be behind center on September 9th when we host the Steelers? Or should it be Derek Anderson or a yet to be acquired vet? TheClevelandFan.com writers opine ...



"The Roundtable" is a regular weekly Sunday feature that will continue throughout the year covering hot topics surrounding the Browns, Buckeyes, Cavaliers, and Indians. One question. Several different answers from TheClevelandFan.com panel.

What a draft for the Browns last weekend. To get three top 15 talents on day one, and now have three building blocks for the future is just unbelievable. For many Browns fans, what happened last week now has us believing we are making progress and there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

While most people will agree that the Browns had an excellent draft, and the ones who don't agree the draft was excellent surely agree they at worst did a good job. There is not much debate there. But, now that the Browns acquired Notre Dame quarterback Brady Quinn, there is some debate on how to handle him going forward.

Quinn ran a pro-style offense in Notre Dame, and his mentor was Charlie Weiss who knows a thing or two about coaching offense and quarterback play in the NFL. It appears as if Quinn should be ready to step in game one at home against the hated Pittsburgh Steelers. But, should he even be considered as a starter for that game, and if not, when should he take over as the quarterback for the Browns? TheClevelandFan.com writers opine....

Mansfield Lucas: The watchword for the Browns in 07 is "patience". The drafts of last year and this year give us the impression that on paper this will be a better football team, perhaps even on its way to being a playoff contending football team next year after one

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more offseason. But as we know, games aren't won on paper. On paper, you don't lose seasons off your career by hitting a parking block in a community college parking lot while messing around on a crotch-rocket. On paper, you don't tear a patellar tendon on the first play of the first practice of training camp. On paper, an offensive line with 3 or 4 new starters at new positions may look good, but o-lines don't gel or block on paper.

The first few games of the Browns' schedule are brutal based on the teams' records last season. Game one is against the hated Pittsburgh Steelers, a team whose blitzing schemes confuse seasoned offensive lines and challenge quarterbacks to set the correct blocking schemes. Games four and five are against the Baltimore Ravens and the New England Patriots. Do I need to explain the obvious?

Look, did we or did we not learn from the past? The most important issue is that Brady Quinn must *earn* the starting position. Nothing should be given to him. I believe that Romeo will ensure that happens. The question will be whether Phil and Randy let him, as I fully expect this team to start off no better than 2 – 4, and perhaps even 0 – 6 isn't out of the question given the west coast trip and if the Dolphins sign Trent Green. Will we as fans be smart enough to recognize that 07 is still about patience? Will we understand that even as most of the gaping holes are filled on paper, assuming health, that it takes time for players to become teams and rookies to actualize? Or will we be wailing and moaning and calling for Romeo's head? I'm guessing it is the latter....

The "right" thing to do is this. Know that we are assembling a team to break out in a most beastie manner in 08, and build it right. That includes grooming a young QB the right way. Specifically, that he doesn't start until he's earned the position, and that he starts to play only when you set him up for success, not failure. Baptism by fire? More like craptism by fire. You paid heavy coin to acquire Quinn. I believe we'll still be drafting in the top 10, and it was still worth it. Don't waste your investment by destroying his confidence or the team's confidence in him.

If Quinn earns the position by a landslide, you use the bye week to make the switch before the Rams game. If Frye or DA step up and are as good as or better than Quinn by any close measure, Brady waits until he earns the job next training camp, if ever. And if you actually believe that playing at ND with Weiss means Quinn is more ready for the NFL than a guy who has seen 18 or so NFL starts, then you is a hype-believing sucka. As mediocre at best as Frye is, and as raw as DA is, they are still light years ahead of Brady as to being NFL ready. Give the kid a shot to be brought along right.

Hiko: Whoever wins the job should start the opener.

I'm all for bringing in a veteran QB to start the season, then easing Brady Quinn into the starting role around midseason (unless, of course, we're contending for a playoff spot, praise Buddha). Sitting for a half-season or a whole season always seems to be beneficial for rookie QB's.

But if we go into Training Camp with this current roster, I find it difficult to term either Charlie

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Frye or Derek Anderson as "veteran leadership". Those two guys are only slightly more experienced than Brady Quinn. What is Quinn supposed to learn from Frye? How to bail out on a play early, scramble around, and make ill-advised throws against his body? What is Quinn supposed to learn from Anderson? That 3 NFL starts does not a veteran make?

With only a slight edge in NFL experience and a perceived deficit in talent, I don't think Frye/Anderson should get a pass over Quinn just because he's a rookie. I think that all three should get their reps, and may the best man win.

Erik Cassano: An as-yet-unacquired veteran quarterback should start the Browns opener, and every game early in the season.

Along with drafting Brady Quinn comes the responsibility of making sure he has every necessary tool to succeed -- something the Browns very obviously didn't do for Tim Couch.

Phil Savage is off to a good start by rebuilding the left side of the offensive line with Eric Steinbach and Joe Thomas. But Quinn still needs to learn how to be a QB at the NFL level, and the best way to teach him is to bring in a smart veteran QB who can set a good example.

I don't have anyone in particular in mind, especially since it's now a near-certainty that the Browns are not going to make a play for Trent Green. But Quinn needs a mentor.

As the season progresses, the situation can be re-evaluated, and depending on the progress of the team and the performance of the veteran QB, Quinn might be green-lighted to start at some point. But it shouldn't be right off the bat.

The Browns botched their handling of Couch by throwing him to the wolves. They don't need to be as careful in handling Quinn because they aren't a first-year expansion team now, but they still need to handle Quinn carefully at first.

John Hnat: The answer is "anybody but Brady Quinn." Not because I hate the guy. On the contrary, I think he is an excellent prospect and hopefully will be The Man in Cleveland for a long time. Rather, I do not want to see him rushed into play, particularly behind a line that potentially could have all five positions manned by a player who was not at that position last year.

Installing Quinn as the starter from Day One makes his road much more difficult. Four of the first five games this year are against powerful defenses -- Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Baltimore, and New England. That's not exactly friendly for a rookie QB. Start Brady from the get-go, and he could be in the Clinic undergoing a staph infection transfusion ... er, operation before the leaves start to turn.

Instead, let him sit and watch for a few weeks, no matter how ready he may be, and no matter how much better he may be than current incumbents Charlie Frye and Derek Anderson. Then (if he's ready), break him out on October 14th, when the Browns face the Dolphins in week six, and allow Brady to begin his NFL career against the team that most visibly dissed

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him in the draft.

Cris Sykes: Should Brady Quinn start on September 9, 2007? I think it should be a completely and totally open competition in training camp for the job. If he plays better in practice than the other quarterbacks, then let him play. This is not the 1999 Cleveland Browns, where you would worry about getting the kid killed. So if he is better than Frye/Anderson he should start.

The Browns have made great strides in the protection they can offer a quarterback. The left side of the offensive line will be better than it has in years. If Kevin Shafer sticks around to play right tackle, someone should be able to step up and be adequate at right guard. Hank Fraley is solid at center especially in pass protection.

Brady Quinn will also have a solid set of skill players to distribute the ball to. Braylon Edwards will be almost 2 full years off the knee surgery and entering his third season, which has traditionally been a big improvement season. Joe Jurevicius is a solid veteran option that can be counted on to catch everything thrown his way and be in the right spot at the right time. If Kellen Winslow can make a full recovery and duplicate last year's stats, that is a great option for a young quarterback to have. With Jamal Lewis in the backfield, the Browns should be able to pay in front of the chains, making the job of the quarterback a little bit easier.

Now, if Brady holds out or is slow to pick up the system during the training camp, or if Charlie Frye or Derek Anderson have an impressive camp, then you can work Quinn in a little slower. But if he is hands down, the best quarterback on this team, put him in. He has to learn sometime.

Tony Latoria: It is very tempting to anoint Quinn the starter for game one, or at worst to consider him in the competition with Charlie Frye, Derek Anderson, or whoever for the opening day job.

But, in no way whatsoever do I want Brady Quinn starting for the Cleveland Browns in game one against the Pittsburgh Steelers. I don't care if Quinn is the shiznit in training camp and preseason. I don't care who his coach at Notre Dame was or how groomed he is with an NFL-style offense. I don't care if Charlie Frye, Derek Anderson or whatever quarterback is on this team are clearly inferior to Quinn. I don't care if fans believe we can have a good season, possibly go 8-8 or better, and dare I say it could make a playoff push. Ptooeey.

We have to do this right. With what we invested to get Quinn, we cannot throw him to the wolves to start the season. Our offensive line is relatively new in that we will have at least two to three new starters, and others may be in new positions. Give the line time to gel before putting your franchise QB back there. Also, Pittsburgh is hardly the right opponent to break in a young QB against with their blitz schemes. Let the schmuck Charlie Frye get thrown around like a rag doll in the early going.

At all costs, you sit Brady Quinn the first several games. Then, when the bye week hits Week 7, we re-evaluate the quarterback situation and ONLY THEN consider him in the competition

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to be the starting quarterback in Week 8 (game seven) against St. Louis.

Jeff Ricket: There is no true veteran presence at QB for the Browns. Frye has the most starting experience, but he's not a guy that you would want to tutor Brady Quinn. Truth is, Quinn probably could teach Frye and Anderson a thing or two at the position. Barring the acquisition of a good veteran QB to start, I want Quinn to be the man who leads the offense for us against the Steelers on Sept. 9.

I can understand the trepidation that many Browns fans would have in regards to throwing Quinn out there due to recent history. We saw Tim Couch battered around by defenses, never given protection or enough assets on offense to do much. Frye has had better offensive tools, but the protection has still been lousy. Neither QB was really a "ready made" NFL QB, having enough experience in a pro-style offensive that immediately starting would be easier to handle.

Brady Quinn is the most "ready made" NFL QB since Peyton Manning. He's started for four years and played under QB guru Weis for two. He's familiar with a more complicated offense. With Joe Thomas on board, the Browns look to have the best line (on paper) that they've had since the late 80s/early 90s. Quinn played at ND with a mediocre offensive line, mediocre receivers, and a so-so running game (the OL didn't help the runners). The Browns offer an upgrade.

While the NFL will offer much more difficult competition, Quinn has the ability & intelligence to thrive. The Browns are not bereft of talent on the offensive side of the ball and, most importantly, they first sought to solidify the OL before thinking QB. I like Frye and Anderson and think both are great to have on the bench, but Quinn has more upside and is more advanced than either at this point. He needs to start the season as the starter at QB unless Frye or Anderson show tremendous improvement in the preseason.