

Curious Generosity

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

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Oh to be young, rich and a bundle of contradictions. In the last week or so, Cleveland Browns wide receiver Braylon Edwards has spent a great deal of time trying to repair a shaky and deserved reputation as a selfish malcontent. Of course, he spent nearly as much time also doing what he could to keep that reputation in tact. Gary comments on the Browns enigmatic young wideout.



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Last Tuesday, Edwards was the prize of sorts in a contest run by the American Dairy Association and Giant Eagle named "Take Braylon Edwards to School." As a result, there he was at Nordonia Middle School talking to a rapt young audience about the merits of drinking milk and working hard to achieve your goals. (See story [here](#)) While Edwards is no doubt a paid endorser for the sponsors, it still was a nice gesture and according to the report, Edwards was generous with his time while at the school. For someone like Edwards who has earned mostly bad publicity, it was a nice, feel good sort of story.

Edwards also has been generous with his money. According to a [story](#)

published this morning on ESPN and elsewhere, Edwards has pledged \$1 million of his own money to fund a college scholarship program for Cleveland city school students who maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average through high school. The official announcement and the remainder of the details are

expected to be announced on Wednesday. Again, this is more good publicity for someone who clearly needs to repair his image in this town.

Too bad Edwards' generosity didn't stop with his time and his money. Unfortunately for his fellow teammates and even Head Coach Romeo Crennel, Edwards was just as generous with his opinions, none of which could have made any of them particularly happy. In Sunday's Plain Dealer, Tony Grossi [reported](#)

on an interview Edwards recently gave to a show called "Movin the Chains" on Sirius radio. Among the pearls tossed by Edwards was his declaration that the Browns needed to go 10-6 in this next season to be considered a success.

Most assuredly, a 10-6 season will be considered a success. In fact, it is difficult to understate the seismic shift that would take place in this town if, indeed, the Browns were to miraculously post a 10-6 record next season. But Edwards feels as though even an 8-8 record, which would be a 100% improvement over last year, shouldn't be considered a success. He cites an

improved offense based on recent acquisitions (Joe Thomas, Kyle Brady, Jamal Lewis, Eric Steinbach) and the schemes of new coordinator Rod Chudzinski as the reason that expectations should be higher.

It's hard to quibble with Edwards on this score and certainly having any player set the bar as high as possible makes great sense. And while it is as tempting as it is easy to detail for Edwards why the Browns would be lucky and hence extremely successful if they could double last year's win total, particularly since, if the trends set in Crennel's tenure hold, the Browns are due exactly two victories, we can leave that alone for now.

But if Edwards has any hope of being one of the reasons why the Browns ever win more than they lose in a single season, he's simply going to have cease his annoying tendency of throwing teammates under the bus. In that same interview, Edwards was complimentary of the play of his quarterback Charlie Frye in the same way one is complimentary of a woman by saying "for a fat girl, she doesn't sweat much."

He admitted that Frye was put into a bad situation last year, which is an extreme understatement. With a wildly ineffective offensive line, an uninspired and ineffective running game, and an offensive coordinator situation that really put the function in dysfunctional, the Browns set the standard for placing quarterbacks in bad situations last season. But Edwards doesn't necessarily attribute all or even most of Frye's struggles to the "situation." Instead, it's an issue of pedigree.

According to Edwards "I saw some growth, but I still saw a kid that was coming from an Akron or a [Mid-American Conference] school and didn't necessarily have the knowledge or preparation of a Brady Quinn-type of collegiate QB. So I saw a guy that's still learning, still has a long ways to go."

You have to admire all that Edwards accomplished with that nugget. Utilizing an economy of words that has never suited him well, Edwards trashed Frye and kissed up to Quinn, even before Quinn has thrown his first pass in a pre-season game. It's clear that Edwards isn't a

Frye fan and may never have been. But the truth is that Edwards is an Edwards fan first and foremost and he undoubtedly sees it in his self-interest to trumpet the arrival of Quinn if only for the belief that Quinn may be able to get the ball to Edwards more frequently than Frye.

Frye has many flaws, but attacking his pedigree as the basis for them is just more of Edwards talking first and thinking second. Frye is from the University of Akron, which is certainly not in the Big Ten. But it is in the MAC, a conference with a knack of producing NFL-caliber quarterbacks like Chad Pennington, Byron Leftwich and Ben Roethlisberger, among others. So it is not as if Frye was plying his trade at Ohio Wesleyan. And while the Big Ten and major independents play, generally, a tougher schedule than any MAC team, their schedules often overlap. Moreover, it's not as if coming from the Big Ten or Notre Dame offers any greater chance of success in the NFL either. There have been dozens of wash outs at quarterback from virtually every kind of school and conference. Look at the starting quarterbacks in this year's college National Championship Game. One quarterback, the Heisman Trophy winner, wasn't drafted until the 5th round and the

other went undrafted.

While it may be politically astute for Edwards to build a relationship with Quinn given how Edwards trashed his relationship with Frye for good during last year's Cincinnati game, Edwards wasn't nearly as astute when he also tossed a few bricks at Crennel, even if Crennel isn't in it for the long run, either.

Of Crennel he said "I think Charlie Frye and Romeo Crennel are in similar situations. The reason I say that is they both got thrown in situations where it wasn't fair to assess them at that point, especially Romeo Crennel. You give him a team that is starving at different positions, it's starving for an identity or even a framework. Now that we have the frame, now that we have what we believe to be our identity, now you can begin to assess this man.

This is the year that you can look and assess his game.”

It's rather nice when one who has accomplished so little himself is putting his head coach under the microscope. Crennel has his faults, many of which have been chronicled here and elsewhere. But the man is not lacking in accomplishments even if what made him accomplished is what prevents him from being a good head coach. Wherever one falls on the Crennel question, this much is certain, a player like Edwards who consistently over promises and under delivers should be the last one to call him out, particularly since Edwards is one of those who will help make or ultimately break Crennel's career in Cleveland.

This off-season, both General Manager Phil Savage and Owner Randy Lerner have said that

Edwards will be fine, that he learned a lot from his several outbursts last season and that he really is a good teammate. Maybe that was said in a preemptive way in order to get Edwards back on the reservation. If it was, then it worked, but only to a degree. The gestures Edwards made in being a good citizen this past week do go a long way to building a better relationship with the fans, something he sorely needs. But his takes on Crennel and Frye clearly underscore that Edwards hasn't gotten the message completely and likely never will. The indifference toward his teammates that caused Edwards to be late for several meetings and to act like a petulant child for all to see during the Cincinnati game is still on display for all to see or hear, or at least for those with a satellite radio.

In many ways, the fact that Edwards isn't afraid to speak his mind is a positive because it makes excellent fodder for columns like these. But for the Browns and their fans, that's really the last thing they need. While this may not be a make or break season for the franchise, it's close. And with all of

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the good will coming out of the draft last month, the last thing that anyone needed was for Edwards to continue to drop turds in the punchbowl.