

Just about every single Browns fan I've talked to this off-season is thoroughly convinced that Charlie Frye is no longer the guy to lead this football team. And I think most of those people felt that way even before we dealt back into the first round to select Brady Quinn. The Rhino says ... not so fast my friends. And makes the case for Charlie in his latest column.



According to [this article](#) in Thursday's *Beacon Journal*, Brady Quinn is apparently going to be very disappointed if he isn't in the starting lineup for the Browns this season. There's nothing wrong with a little competitive fire, and I'm glad that's how Quinn feels. Nevertheless, I'm going to be very disappointed if he is the starting QB this season. That's because I don't think he'll give the team as much chance to win as a guy that a lot of fans consider yesterday's news. Yes, I'm talking about Charlie Frye.

I know that most fans are ready to consign Frye to the ash heap of Cleveland Browns history, but I think that it's way too soon to pull the plug on him. Sure, his stats were pretty unimpressive last year, and his decision making left a lot to be desired, but the guy is mobile, tough, and a leader. Let's also not forget that we're passing judgment on him based upon his performance with the steaming pile of manure that he was given to lead last season due to bad luck and the ineptitude of the Browns' front office and coaching staff.

We all know about the bad luck. It started with the LeCharles Bentley situation and went downhill from there. The offensive line, which was no great shakes to start with, was decimated by injuries. The running game was nonexistent, and for the first half of the season, Frye was saddled with implementing the brilliant schemes of offensive genius Maurice Carthon, better known as the "Father of the Fullback Option Pass."

Not only that, but [thanks largely to Carthon](#), the team also lost Trent Dilfer, the

guy who was expected to serve as a mentor to Frye. Instead, Frye had to rely on Ken Dorsey, a guy whose only possible value as a mentor was that he was slightly less likely than Charlie to get carded when buying a six pack of beer.

So, Charlie Frye was thrown to the wolves last season in just about every way imaginable, and it showed in how he played. Frye was asked to do too much, and he responded by trying to do just that. Frye is a gamer who never gives up on a play. That kind of tenacity is a fine quality, but it was also Frye's greatest weakness. Crushing fourth quarter turnovers and overall poor decision making became the guy's trademark. As a result, a lot of people are ready to throw in the towel on Frye. In fact, going into training camp, there are some in the [national](#) and

[local](#)

media who say that the QB job is Derek Anderson's to lose.

In a sense, who can blame the Browns for looking elsewhere? I mean, the numbers for the guy's first two seasons as a pro speak for themselves:

	G	Comp	Att	PCT	YD	Y/A	TD	INT
Rookie year	11	155	293	52.9	1749	6.0	9	18
Second year	15	226	399	56.6	2579	6.5	11	18

The bottom line is that there's nothing in those numbers to suggest that Charlie Frye is going to develop to a quality NFL QB, so why waste another season on him? Those numbers for his first two seasons are pretty hard to argue with, except for one thing -- they aren't his numbers.

They're [Troy Aikman's](#) numbers for his first two years with the Cowboys. Here are Frye's statistics:

	G	Comp	Att	PCT	YD	Y/A	TD	INT
2005	7	98	164	59.8	1002	6.1	4	6
2006	14	252	392	64.3	2454	6.3	10	17

Am I saying that Charlie Frye is the next Troy Aikman? No, all I'm saying is that not every guy who turns out to be a decent QB takes the NFL by storm early in his career -- particularly when he's playing for a team that's flat out terrible. Aikman's far from the only example I could cite. Take a look at the numbers on guys like [D](#)

[an Fouts](#)

or

[Terry Bradshaw](#)

. They each have a bust in Canton, but for the first few years of their careers, they just looked like busts, period.

Charlie Frye made the best of a terrible situation last year. He took unrelenting punishment on almost every passing play and never once complained about it. He has a decent arm, and has shown some ability to escape the rush and to run with the ball. I think his decision making will improve when he has better protection and a viable enough running game to keep defenses from bringing the house every time he drops back to pass. I also think that he's got the respect of his teammates and has the potential to be a leader on a team that desperately needs one. Finally, he has more NFL starts under his belt than any other QB on the roster, and I think that experience matters a lot.

Am I rooting for him? You're damn right I am. I think he gives the Browns the best chance to win.