

Lemmings, Again

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Monday, July 30 2007 7:00 PM -

Gary Benz makes note today of yet another example of journalist laziness. Braylon Edwards is in the image repair business and every single main stream media outlet took the bait, writing nearly identical pieces on the allegedly kinder, gentler Braylon. By now ... you should know you're not going to get that fluff from Gary. And you don't in this piece.



Braylon Edwards is officially in the image rehab business. I know this because the media lemmings who cover the Browns told me so. There was the [story](#) in the Plain Dealer by Mary Kay Cabot this Monday morning. Or the [one](#) by George Thomas in the Beacon Journal this Monday morning. Or the [one](#) by Steve Doershuk in the Canton Repository this Monday morning. Or this [one](#) from Steve Petrak of the Medina Gazette this Monday morning. Or this [one](#) from Jeff Walcoff on the Cleveland Browns official site this Monday morning.

Training camp is only one weekend old and already the "reporters" covering the Browns for most of the major print media outlets around town are already so bored and lack so little initiative that they end up writing the same story

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on the same subject on the same day. And if my guess is correct, as I'm sure it will be, at least two of the local television stations will run the same story today. Though technically not plagiarism, it has the same effect. Call it coincidence? I call it laziness.

It's not as if Edwards made any news this weekend, such as shooting off his mouth again about the state of the offense or even the weather. These were just profile pieces, remarkably similar profile pieces. Each featured nearly identical quotes from both Edwards and head coach Romeo Crennel and each with the identical theme.

A composite of these profiles said thusly: Edwards has matured because he said he's matured and that he is just, hey, an emotional guy. He's more misunderstood than anything else and it's frustrating to be young, rich and misunderstood. Lindsey Lohan has the same problem. He also knows that there are established veterans on this team who have been there, done that and should be the ones to talk for the team. Crennel agrees.

In other words, these were profiles that could have been written any time or never.

Edwards is, if nothing else, a compelling figure. But with Edwards the real test will come about three or four weeks into the season after another loss in which Edwards has caught two passes for 12 yards. The first person to ask him a question is likely to get an earful about the unnecessary complications in Rob Chudzinski's offense, or the fact that Charlie Frye or Derek Anderson or whoever is behind center taking snaps needs to start looking off the first option or the fact that head coach Romeo Crennel is losing control of the locker room, or whatever.

If Edwards can pass that test, all season, then maybe it will be time to stop thinking of him as the selfish misanthrope he's come off as the last few seasons and write a decent profile of him. But until then, let's just say the jury is out.

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As for the local media, however, that jury returned a verdict long ago. The fact that the profiles of Edwards all appeared the same day is not particularly unusual for this crowd, an observation I've offered previously. In fact, it wasn't even the first time it happened this past weekend. If you think you read the same story about Kellen Winslow, Jr. in several different papers this season, ostensibly written by different reporters, it's because you did. Point your browser over to the SportsTime Ohio web site (www.sportstimeohio.com) and, in particular, the "Morning Coffee" section. The folks behind The Cleveland Fan provide the wrap up of media coverage of all of the teams in this town each day. Pick a team. See a pattern? It will be repeated numerous times throughout the season. It's really about the only thing you can count on.

What makes this all the more frustrating is the fact that camp just opened and until now there has been precious little to write about. The number of players on the Browns is at its maximum and there are new coaches and increased pressures on this Browns franchise, any or all of which make decent fodder for the local media. Despite this, the media covering the Browns travel in a pack and pursue exactly the same stories at the same time, demonstrating an utter lack of enterprise among any of them. Certainly Edwards is just one of those stories just as is Winslow, but since they are likely to be on the team when the season opens, one would think that there is something else to write about for the time being. Apparently one would be wrong to think that.

Adding even more to this frustration is the fact that Clevelanders are rabid sports fans and will gobble up any and everything that is written or spoken about their teams. But when they are fed the same tripe in the same way on the same day by every media outlet, it's no wonder they stop paying attention. As newspaper circulation continues to dwindle (and it has, particularly in this market) maybe then the editors of these newspapers will start to look internally and understand why. If the sports pages are an accurate barometer, and they are because I read each of these newspapers every day and monitor their web sites, the folks in charge are either completely clueless or incompetent as to why they are failing. They can't begin to solve their problems until they actually begin to solve their problems.

But solving the problems would take an energy that none in this group have yet

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demonstrated it possesses. Frankly, this has been going on so long that it's beyond hope that anything will change with this group. As it stands, if you expect a diversity of opinions and perspectives about the subjects that interest you, don't look for the local media to provide it. That's because when it comes to sports the bar is lower. The "reporters" covering sports in this town demand little of themselves, the editors demand less and the readers demand the least of all. But it would be nice if just once, just once, a sports editor at the Plain Dealer or the Beacon Journal or the Canton Repository asked his or her reporter if there is any chance that one of the other papers will be printing a similar feature that same day. It hasn't happened yet. It likely never will.