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After 11 days and 15 practices missed, Quinn starts at the absolute bottom of the totem pole, behind all the other quarterbacks he'll need to inevitably pass if he is to make a full return on the large investment in draft picks and money the Browns made to get him.

A case could be made that more is riding on Quinn than was riding on Tim Couch in 1999. Couch stepped onto the field with an unknown quantity of a team in '99. He was starting out, the team was starting out, and if all went right, they'd grow together.

Eight years later, we know that maiden voyage ended only slightly more

successfully that that of the R.M.S. *Titanic*.

Now, Quinn steps onto the field as far more than a building block, which Couch was. Quinn must be the primary savior for a franchise that has been a garbage dump of missed draft picks, catastrophic injuries, off-the-field indiscretions and coaching meltdowns in the eight years since Couch first pulled on an orange helmet.

Quinn steps onto the field with a desperate franchise that is riding a streak of four straight last-place finishes in the AFC North. A team that hasn't had a double-digit-win season since 13 years and a franchise ago. A team that hasn't won a playoff game since that year, and hasn't contended for a Super Bowl since 1989.

You can search far and wide, through all the Notre Dame bowl implosions that you want, and you won't find a team or a fan base more shellshocked

, more gun-shy and more flinch-prone than what Quinn will encounter when he arrives in

Berea

for his first practice.

Quinn might think he's arriving as a conquering hero. He'll soon find out that the football-watching population of Northeast Ohio is going to want him to be something far more: The doctor who makes it all better.

Unfortunately, there is no real way for a player of any caliber to prepare himself for that. In many ways, your success or failure -- and by extension whether you are beloved or reviled in the history of Cleveland sports -- is out of your hands.

This is larger than Quinn could ever imagine. This is a team and a city in a life-or-death chess match with the demons that have plagued them for so many years. Quinn is the king piece.

Couch was greeted like Caesar returning from the battlefields. Five years later, he was crying in front of the cameras after fans cheered his post-concussion exit from a game against Baltimore (or the entrance of Kelly Holcomb, depending on which way the wind is blowing that day). Couch was metaphorically undressed that night, and never totally regained his dignity in Cleveland. Less than a year

later, he was gone.

Such is life in a desperate city. If the fans and media get even a whiff of failure from you, they will turn on you in less than a heartbeat. Since the departure of Couch, every Browns quarterback has become a negative figure in Cleveland to a greater or lesser degree.

Jeff Garcia never did fit in here. He whined his way out of Cleveland the way he whined his way out of San Francisco. Trent Dilfer was utterly mediocre, and was eventually phased out in favor of

Charlie

Frye, who has been nothing special in a little over a season as the starting QB. The only thing that gets him a mulligan is his native town of Willard, Ohio, and a little story about having a Bernie

Kosar

poster on his wall as a boy.

Frye can be the first to tell Quinn that being a native son and idolizing Kosar as a boy can get you far here in Ohio. Quinn should play up that angle as much as possible. It will make you the ultimate fan favorite, especially if you are riding the bench as the starter struggles.

But once you have to strap on the helmet and live up to Kosar's somewhat-bloated legacy, then the real test begins.

And the test for Quinn is more crucial than what any other Cleveland QB has faced since Kosar. Quinn can't fail. He can't even be passable or decent. He has to be great. He has to be the man that rescues the name of the Cleveland Browns from the lake of fire.

If he doesn't, the fans will turn on Quinn with the type of ferocity usually reserved for cheering Pittsburgh fans.

That's a gamble no sensible person should want to make. But with the ink still wet on his contract, that is exactly what Quinn is facing.

This week, Quinn begins to learn what greatness is all about in this town ... and whether he can make the grade.