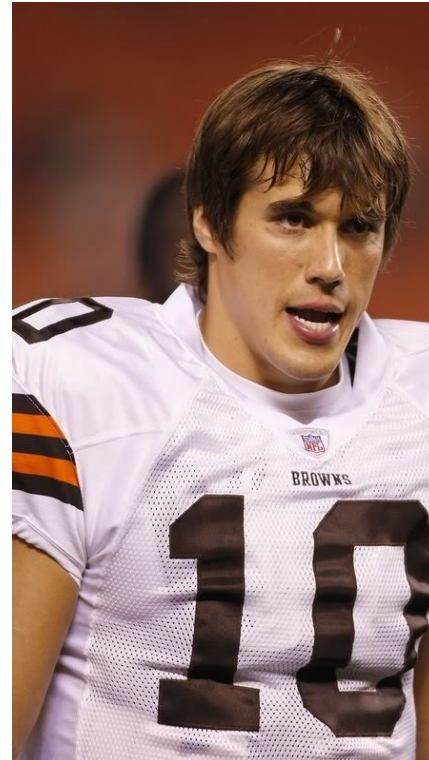


Back for another season of breaking down Browns games for us, Erik Cassano checks in with his first installment of "The Morning After". In it, Erik looks back at the Chiefs game, and makes an interesting prediction on who he feels may be starting at quarterback for us in the opener against the dentally challenged Appalachians on September 9th.



Welcome back to another season of "The Morning After," my weekly Browns recap. Join me as I chronicle another season of valleys (and maybe even some peaks) for your Cleveland Browns.

Browns 16, Chiefs 12 **Preseason record: 1-0**

It's time to unveil my first official bold prediction of the 2007 season: Don't be surprised if Ken Dorsey enters the starting quarterback picture before the end of the preseason.

Dorsey is still riding third, and might be bumped to fourth once Brady Quinn gets in the race next weekend, but Dorsey is a definite dark horse candidate to be under center when the Browns play the Steelers in the Sept. 9 season opener.

Dorsey's stat line from Saturday's win looks kind of so-so, but he did complete 6-of-9 passes for 52 yards, which places him second behind Charlie Frye's 12-for-15 for 122 yards.

Frye had statistically the best game of any of the three Browns QBs that saw

playing time, but he sabotaged any chance he had of solidifying his standing as the team's starting signal-caller with a couple of bush-league plays that are now famously infamous around Northeast Ohio: The botched lateral to Jerome Harrison that was returned for Kansas City's lone touchdown, and the unsuccessful decision to tuck and run for the end zone as the second half drew to a close.

Those two plays were devastating to Frye's momentum, and once again raised questions about Frye's ability to make sound decisions in pressure situations -- which is really what is going to save or kill Frye's chances of becoming a full-time NFL starter.

Combine Frye's gaffes with the fact that Derek Anderson (7-for-16, 76 yards) looked like a glorified Arena League QB, and it doesn't seem that far-fetched to say Dorsey is going to start climbing the charts in the coming weeks if he has more efforts like he had in holding down the offensive fort in the second half Saturday night -- getting stripped of the ball in the end zone for a safety notwithstanding.

Dorsey is what passes for a veteran quarterback on this roster right now, and might end up being the best combination of leadership and smart decision-making that Romeo Crennel has available to put under center. Think I'm crazy? Wait three weeks and see how many touchdown drives Frye and Anderson have led. If the number is less than two, I rest my case.

Right now, Crennel doesn't have a truly good option at quarterback. It's a shame, because the rest of the team looked like it was actually starting to fall into place, if first blush means anything.

Jamal Lewis looked as new-and-improved as advertised, and if he can stay on the field for most of the Browns' 16 games, might actually give this team its first dominant, tempo-setting rusher since returning to the league. And I write that with Reuben Droughns' 2005 campaign in mind.

The offensive line, even without Eric Steinbach, looked much improved over any previous model the Browns have trucked out. Frye and company had time to find receivers, and running backs had room to run. Linemen were even throwing some blocks downfield.

Granted, it was against Kansas City's defense, not Pittsburgh's or Baltimore's, but by the end of last year, I'm not sure the Browns offensive line could have stopped Mount Union's defense on a blitz.

And let's talk about that defense. This is going to be the manna that sustains the Cleveland Browns from week to week. Todd Grantham's unit is going to keep the Browns in a lot of games, as they did in the first half of last year before injuries started to mount. It's all going to be a matter of whether the offense can take advantage of it, or whether the Browns are going to be losing a lot of 17-9 games because the offense can't get the ball into the end zone.

To that end, the results of the first preseason game were not promising. Despite that fact that Kamerion Wimbley once again showcased his goose-bump-producing ability as a pass rusher, despite the fact that cornerback

Eric Wright looked about as good as any player probably can look in his first-ever NFL action, despite the fact that the defense basically controlled the game for 58 minutes, the Browns still fell behind late because the offense couldn't muster a touchdown drive.

Thanks to Chris Barclay's running, and a lot of Chiefs scrubs on the field for the kickoff that followed Kansas City's go-ahead field goal, Cleveland escaped with a win and preserved an overall positive feeling from the night. Of course, it took a goal-line stand on the ensuing drive and a fumble recovery on third down to really put the Chiefs to bed.

There was definitely more good than bad to this game from the Browns' perspective. Every unit was solid with the exception of the quarterbacks, who are under close scrutiny anyway.

But the quarterback troubles loom large. The Browns simply cannot head into the season with the most important position on the roster in a state of limbo. Somebody needs to step up and disarm this grenade before it has a chance to blow up the September portion of the Browns schedule. The solution might not currently be on the roster.

Up next: Detroit, Saturday, 7 p.m. at Cleveland Browns Stadium