

## Same Old Song & Dance

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Sunday, September 09 2007 7:00 PM -

---

Well, so much for that. In a season that many fans felt would finally mark the beginning of something new, something different, there was an amazing sameness to the debacle that took place on Sunday at Cleveland Browns Stadium. In analyzing the debacle, Gary says that the Browns looked unprepared and overmatched. And that any thoughts of contention on any level are over. I need a(nother) drink.



Well, so much for that.

In a season that many fans felt would finally mark the beginning of something new, something different, there was an amazing sameness to the debacle that took place on Sunday at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

Let's see, the Browns lost, again, to the Steelers in, again, blow-out fashion. Not only does that mean that head coach Romeo Crennel hasn't yet beaten the Steelers, it also means he hasn't beaten anyone in the entire Central Division. Ever. The Browns, predictably, went three and out on their first possession. And let us not forget everyone's favorite statistic: Crennel lost two more replay challenges, making him 0-9 for his career.

## Same Old Song & Dance

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Sunday, September 09 2007 7:00 PM -

---

But what is most disturbing beyond these irritants is the fact that, again, a Crennel-coached team looked completely unprepared, which is understandable since they had only nine days to ready themselves.

No one seriously questions whether or not the Steelers have better players than the Browns. They do, in spades. But what is hard to fathom is how the Browns could look so dismal out of the gate. Not only did they fail to get a first down in their first possession, which isn't necessarily a portent of anything, but on their very first punt of the day they had four separate penalties, which was a portent of all that followed. Four penalties on one play is not something you'll see very often. It makes you wonder what the heck were the other seven guys doing, taking the play off? Oh yea, make that six other players since replacement punter Paul Ernster was busy running for his life after fumbling a perfectly-snapped ball. At least Ernster got the ball back. Maybe Crennel will let him keep it as a memento of his short-time with the Browns. Goodbye Paul, we hardly knew ye. But fret not for Ernster, he's one of the lucky ones.

The usual suspects were also having their typical day. Charlie Frye threw his usual interception and so did Derek Anderson, who fumbled for good measure. Jamal Lewis, rendered essentially moot when the Browns predictably fell behind early, fumbled as well. So too did the always mercurial Braylon Edwards. In all, five turnovers. Yet, somehow, despite the rocky beginning, it was only 17-0 at halftime, not a completely insurmountable lead.

But as poor as Crennel is in preparing a team for a game he's even worse on game day. If anyone thought that the Browns might come out differently after the half, then you're just not paying attention. Whatever he said at halftime couldn't have landed with more of a thud as the Steelers took the opening drive, predictably, for the touchdown that ended any fleeting thought that the game might get competitive.

In surveying the wreckage, about the only positive was Crennel's strategy in keeping secret until game time who the back-up quarterback would be. Crennel

## Same Old Song & Dance

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Sunday, September 09 2007 7:00 PM -

---

didn't want the Steelers to be able to prepare for the Browns' second stringer, which is a good thing. You'd hate to think what the Steelers would have done had they had a chance to prepare for Anderson.

Perhaps Crennel actually knew something we all didn't about his starting quarterback. But it was revealed soon enough. Charlie Frye couldn't have looked less like a third-year player in a make or break year if he had tried. Instead, he was shakier than Don Knotts. You could see the indecisiveness in the way he held the ball for so long, so intent was he on not making a mistake that all he could do was make mistakes.

But like Ernster, Frye's probably one of the lucky ones. The only chance he has, or should have, of entering a game from this point forward is if Anderson and Brady Quinn both get hurt.

And in this regard, there is some slight hope, assuming you're a long-term thinker. On the heels of this dismal day, Brady Quinn undoubtedly moved up on the depth chart. While it's doubtful he'll start next week that is only because Crennel is stubborn and doesn't want to look like he's abandoned all hope going into the second game of the season. He'll start soon enough.

But if Crennel is waiting to make that move because he's worried about the fragile psyche of his team, he need not. Ill-prepared though they might have been, that is absolutely no reason for their playing without any pride whatsoever. The offensive line essentially refused to hold a block, the defensive line refused to push back and the defensive backs looked like tackling was a second language. In other words, this is a group that has proven to be particularly resilient to being motivated by embarrassment save for, maybe, Kellen Winslow, who caught four passes for 83 yards and actually threw a few hard blocks and Antwan Peek, the newly-acquired linebacker.

## Same Old Song & Dance

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Sunday, September 09 2007 7:00 PM -

---

As for the rest of the misfits, whatever positive scraps you can find are far outweighed by the negatives. One particular image should suffice and that was of defensive back Sean Jones throwing his hands up in disgust at fellow defensive back Brodney Pool for letting Santonio Holmes blow by him for the Steelers second touchdown, a 40-yard toss from Ben Roethlisberger. Way to have your teammate's back. Oh yea, for good measure there also was rookie Eric Wright covering receivers like he was Owen Wilson in "Wedding Crashers" trying to cover Zack. It may be a bit soon to nickname Wright "Toast" but let's put it this way, the bread is warming.

Which gets us back to Savage and his barometer for Crennel. Savage has been definitive in support of his head coach, allowing himself only the slightest of outs by saying he'd reconsider if the Browns lost a bunch of games 50-0. Well, that's looking less like an out for Savage and more like a prophecy. Frankly, the only reason the score wasn't worse was the fact that the Steelers themselves looked a bit rusty. Oh, and it rained, too.

There is no doubt that Savage and Crennel will say the usual stuff about looking at the films and having some work to do and getting things corrected. And they'll also caution that it is too soon to write off the season. But that's what Lloyd Carr told his team and fans after their loss to Appalachian State and look how that turned out. At least the Michigan Wolverines can still win their conference. The Browns have been all but mathematically eliminated. In week one.