

Get blown out by the arch-rival Steelers in the season opener. Trade the starting quarterback two days later. Replace him with a guy who has zero wins in three NFL starts. Predict calamity as the high-powered Bengals visit town for Week 2. Then watch as the single most improbable outcome this side of aliens landing on the 50-yard-line unfolds. Papa Cass doesn't know what to think about this Browns start. And writes about it in his latest column for us.



Ever since the Browns re-entered the league eight years ago, I've been searching for my own version of the Holy Grail.

I want to see the Browns, someday, field a team that is capable of controlling the clock, imposing their will on another team and winning predictably, the way teams like the Patriots and Colts do.

I want to see a team that looks like it has its collective head screwed on straight, that doesn't look unstable and violently manic-depressive.

Unfortunately, the Browns of the past seven days are the Browns at their best since 1999: The kings of chaos.

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Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer passed for 401 yards and six touchdowns. R

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Johnson, who always saves his best 2003 Jamal Lewis impersonations for Cleveland, rushed for 118 yards. Chad Johnson and T.J.

Houshmandzadeh

had two touchdown catches apiece. Johnson made good on his promise to leap into the

Dawg

Pound.

The Bengals scored 45 points as the Browns defense -- supposedly the team's strength heading into the season -- laid an ostrich egg for the second straight week. And the Bengals lost.

How? Apparently Doc and Marty McFly managed to get the flux capacitor up and running and beamed the Browns back to 1989, the last time they scored 51 points in a game.

Apparently Derek Anderson drank some MarinoAde. Unfazed as the dropsies plagued

Braylon

Edwards, and at one point Lawrence

Vickers

, Anderson shrugged off weeks and weeks of inconsistent passing with an out-of-nowhere 328 yards and five touchdowns.

Which begs the question, "Where the bloody hell was this in the preseason?" If Anderson is capable of throwing like this, he should have buried Charlie Frye on the bench by the second week of August. Maybe last week's debacle against the Steelers wouldn't have happened if Anderson would have found the light switch a month earlier. Because you know and I know that the full resources of BALCO couldn't engineer a performance-enhancing drug potent enough to allow Frye to pass for 328 yards and five touchdowns in a single game.

But before we get too carried away, we need to rein in our adoration of Anderson right now. Sunday's win was just one game, just like the loss to the Steelers was just one game. Cincinnati's pass defense revealed exactly why, no matter how potent the Bengals offense becomes, they are going to stay a paper tiger (no pun intended) in the playoffs.

But even more than that, Sunday's game was so freakish, how can we possibly look upon it as a building block? Sure it was a win, but a win that's not likely to be replicated anytime soon. Chances are, the Browns aren't going to suddenly find their niche as an offensive juggernaut and win a bunch of 38-33 games.

Chances are, next week against the Raiders, who defend the pass far better than Cincinnati, it will be right back to scoring in the teens and the burden will be on the defense to come up with a few stops, which they have been utterly incapable of providing thus far -- game-clinching interceptions excluded.

This has been the story of the Browns' life for way too long now. It definitely feels good to get a win, especially a divisional win for the beleaguered Romeo Crennel. But if you're looking for something that the 2007 Browns can hang their hat on, this isn't it. This week's strengths tend to be next week's weaknesses, and vice versa

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Despite all the effort that has gone into fortifying the offense and defense, the Browns have become well-versed in only one thing since returning to the league: Flying by the seat of their pants. Sunday's improbable win is Exhibit A.