

Buckeyes pull away late to beat down the Badgers. The Browns ... another ho hum 33 point performance from the offense en route to their third straight win and a 5-3 mark. Man do weekends like that make Monday mornings more tolerable! In "The Weekend Wrap", our guy Brian McPeck hits on the big wins for the scarlet and gray and the orange and brown, and also touches on the start of Cavs season and Curt Schilling's interest in coming to play for the Indians.



I Never Saw It Coming

I went to Browns Stadium late Sunday afternoon and a track meet broke out.

The Browns went to OT to beat the Seahawks 33-30 in an AFL shootout type of ballgame, and they improved their record to a surprising 5-3 in doing so.

Let's put aside for the moment the atrocity that is the defense. It's bad. It's really, really bad.

But the entertainment provided by the Browns offense is, dare I say, nearly worth the price of admission.

Derek Anderson and Matt Hasselbeck took turns delivering knockout blows to the opposing defense on Sunday. Each QB threw at least 45 passes. Each QB threw for over 300 yards. Hasselbeck probably could have played Sunday without a helmet, what with all the time he had to throw and how infrequently anyone came near him.

The Browns got down 21-6 relatively early. But as opposed to any year since this team came back in 1999, there was actually confidence that this team would come back and make a game of it. The fans' confidence in the offense was palpable.

We know how it turned out. The Browns won the thriller on the back of four Jamal Lewis rushing TDs and Anderson's 364 passing yards.

What I'm trying to figure out is how this happened in the first place. It was 10 weeks ago that Derek Anderson looked like complete trash in mucking his way through four of the most unimpressive preseason games in NFL history. He put no touchdowns on the board in those four games.

None.

Fast forward to Sunday and Derek Anderson looks like a seasoned, confident NFL quarterback who owns the huddle and has confidence that every drive he leads is going to result in a score. Gone are his multiple mistakes in regard to clock management and throwing into coverage. Instead Anderson is making all his reads and progressions and delivering the right throw to the right receiver far more often than not.

Braylon Edwards looks less like the diva he appeared to be his first two years and much more like a premier wide receiver each week out. Kellen Winslow continues to dominate on the field each Sunday and create mismatches that Anderson continually exploits. Jamal Lewis is fast becoming an indispensable cog in this machine who needs to be re-signed to a deal beyond this season.

What should scare the hell out of the rest of the league is this offense and its players are still evolving. Anderson has ten NFL starts. His offensive line has played eight meaningful games together. It's frightening to think how potent this offense could be with time and togetherness.

Now, unfortunately, it appears they're going to have to score 30-40 points each Sunday. Because, as I mentioned, this defense is miserable. Many people watch Leigh Bodden, Eric Wright, Sean Jones and Brodney Poole get beat all day long and incorrectly call those DBs out for poor play. I'm here to tell you, those guys are far better than what you see on the field. They are being victimized by a defensive line that may very well be the worst in all of professional football. I'm not kidding, there were a couple times when Hasselbeck dropped back and I went down to get a beverage, came back up and he was still standing

in the pocket directing his receivers toward open areas of the field. And he wasn't doing so hurriedly. He had time to actually set the ball down and use both his hands and occasionally draw an elaborate diagram of where he wanted them to run.

Phil Savage has a lot of work to do starting in February. His defensive front seven needs an overhaul. The good news is any improvement will help this team immensely. The other bit of good news is the defense probably can't get any worse. They do stiffen inside their own 20yd line and turned a couple potential Seahawk TDs into field goals, but they will cost this squad some games this season.

When that happens (and there is simply no doubt it will happen) take solace in the fact that this offense is quickly becoming able to carry a lot of the burden the defense heaps on them and help will most definitely come in the front seven next season.

Maybe The World *Is* Round

It's hard to say why the Cleveland media types feel a need to defend this Cavaliers organization. I read all the articles on this site as well as those from the various Cleveland papers and I have to tell you; the national media is spot on about the Cavaliers. They may very well be the worst team to ever reach the NBA Finals and they may very well prove it this season all over again, as if being swept by the Spurs last June wasn't confirmation enough.

I had to laugh when I read about how big a victory Friday night's 110-106 victory over the visiting New York Knick was for the psyche of the club.

Really?

Game 2 of the season was that important? For an NBA Finals team? If that's the case, then how can one argue that this team is not in bad shape?

This Cavaliers team is a one-trick pony. 92% of the roster is mediocre or worse.

Let's go ahead and remove LeBron James from the roster. Now look at what's left and realistically tell me who remains that other teams covet and have to have. There is not a single player on this club, other than LBJ, who is worthy of a lottery pick in next year's draft.

Larry Hughes? Please. \$13million in wasted cash. A 'slasher' who can't slash because no defender is dumb enough to honor his pathetic jump shot.

Daniel Gibson? Nope. Gibson is a small shooting guard without the requisite skills or mentality to run the point and who is completely reliant on James's effectiveness to get his open looks.

And we can stop right there with arguing about the roster. The rest of it is made up of aging players whose years are advancing while their skills diminish. Sprinkle in a couple guys who are projects or cast offs from other organizations and you have your 2007-2008 Cleveland Cavaliers.

The good news is James is still on this roster. At least for the time being. And he's capable of taking over any given game and elevating his rag-tag bunch of teammates to the point they can jump up and win any game they play. But when he's just ordinary, or teams like the Mavericks, Spurs or Suns limit his effectiveness and require the 11 other Cavs to contribute and beat them, this team is in bad, bad shape.

LeBron needs to run this offense until somebody who is capable of doing so steps up and takes control. When LBJ is controlling the pace and the offensive flow, open guys will get the ball and LeBron isn't relegated to bailing the club out as the shot clock ticks down. Until you can fix this stagnating offense with a viable option at the point, James needs to play the Magic Johnson role and run it himself. It's not the ideal situation, but

it's the one the Cavs find themselves in as of today. Give him the ball, let him dictate the flow and get his points and allow him to set up his 'support' crew as he sees fit.

Without James this is a rudderless, 20-win team.

Headed Down the Stretch

Ohio State again took care of business in Columbus this past Saturday against Wisconsin. The Buckeyes, trailing the Badgers 17-10 early in the 3rd quarter, did what good teams do and scored 28 unanswered points to roll up a 38-17 win at the 'Shoe.

Chris Wells was extraordinary in the 2nd half, racking up over 100yds rushing and three TDs after halftime. Brian Robiskie caught a couple TD passes from QB Todd Boeckman and the Ohio State defense made life difficult for Wisconsin for the better part of the day.

The Buckeyes go into Saturday's home

finale against Illinois with a perfect 10-0 record. Perhaps most impressive, the Buckeyes win Saturday was their 20th straight Big10 victory. Say what you want about the strength of the Big10, but 20 straight major conference wins is rare territory in college football.

This Buckeyes football team, despite what you might hear out of SEC country, clearly deserves their #1 ranking. They've beaten every team that's stood in front of them on Saturdays thus far and they've rolled up victories with a stingy defense and an explosive offense.

So, with all due respect to those fine southern football fans that continue to complain about the BCS rankings, quit your whining and take care of your own business. We Yankees understand the fact that the SEC is a meat-grinder and that there are some fine football teams playing out of that conference. But if you want to continually complain about a pretty good football team from Columbus, you do so at the risk of underestimating an impressive and qualified national title contender that has done nothing but win impressively.

Week after week the pretenders (South Florida, West Virginia, Boston College, Louisville, etc) and contenders (Florida,

Oklahoma, LSU, etc) continue to stumble or fall. Ohio State rolls merrily along, content to win football games and let the votes fall where they may. Two difficult games with quality opponents remain and OSU could eventually fall by the wayside. But unless and until that happens, the Buckeyes deserve their ranking and the opportunity to play for the national championship.

Please God. No.

Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling has listed the Indians as one of the

teams he'd be willing to pitch for next season.

I can't recall if he made this declaration on his blog (www.38pitches.com), on one of his frequent calls into a sports talk show, on YouTube, by a full page ad in USA Today or through a formal UN document, but its out there and being debated by message board users and Hot Stove fans unwilling to take a moment's break from discussing the Tribe.

Stop the madness.

This guy is basically Bill Maher or Rush Limbaugh with a slightly worse fastball at this point in career. He's a clubhouse lawyer and a shameless self-promoter. At \$11 million for a year of a glorified 4th starter, the Indians would be better off spending that money almost anywhere else in the organization than on Schilling.

Aside from the fact that he believes his opinions on all topics ranging

from the designated hitter rule to the Iraq war need to be expressed and acted upon, he's not the same pitcher who helped lead the Diamondbacks and the Red Sox to World Series titles a few years back. I understand that the collapse of CC Sabathia and Fausto Carmona are still fresh in the minds of Tribe fans. But to believe Schilling would be a greater benefit than detriment to the Indians staff in 2008 is wishful thinking and way too expensive a risk. The fact you'd have to endure his tiresome act all season to maybe see him take the ball in 2-4 post-season games as

the 4th starter isn't worth the money
or the aggravation.