

Appalachian Week, Part II

Written by {ga=jb}

Thursday, November 08 2007 7:00 PM -

Browns/Steelers, take two, live from that stupid looking ketchup bottle stadium Sunday at 1:00 PM EST. And back with us to give us his thoughts on the state of the team and the looming matchup is our very own Mansfield Lucas. Mansfield sees some eerie similarities between this Browns team and the Kardiac Kids. An afterthought quarterback from the west coast. An electric offense. And a bad defense with a penchant for making big game saving plays late.



One of my favorite movie stars was 1980's Eddie Murphy. When he was 20-something, before he was the voice of a jackass and other cartoon characters, he was a cool-as-ice action and comedy film icon. Not only that, I also thought he hit .300 and nailed home runs until I found out that was "Murray", but I digress. My favorite Eddie Murphy movie was his buddy flick with Nick Nolte, "48 Hours". There's this one scene where the minor villain, Ganz, goes to retrieve a car that's been in a parking garage for seven years. When asked by the attendant why he didn't come back earlier, Ganz snarls, "I been BUZY!" in parking cat's grill.

So I bet there's a population out there that thinks I'm only happy when it rains and split when things started going well. Nuh - uh. I've been loving the two nail biters that have us at 5 - 3 and heading into Sucklers' week with something on the line for the first time since Bill B., Nick Saban, and Kirk Frenz were roaming our sidelines and a young scout named Phil Savage was getting his front office start. After the first 20 minutes of the season, you can knock me down with a feather.

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I'm having a hard time understanding how the Browns are doing it, really. The defense is absolutely painful to watch, and yet has managed to produce plays that have been nothing short of mammoth when the games have been on the line. Meanwhile, the offense is playing with lights out confidence that there is no deficit too large to overcome, and no way they can be stopped. This group is eerily similar to the Browns I fell in love with as a kid that made me a lifelong fan. A Kardiak Kid, that is.

Derek Anderson is a late draft pick afterthought from the west coast. He rode the modern day taxi squad for a year or so and started off playing inconsistently. He's now tossing touchdowns and making critical plays in the clutch with a consistency that has him among the league's leaders. While his physical talents are far superior to Brian Sipe's, their background's, style of play, and what they mean to their teams are very similar. They both have all-world tight ends that are similar in their ability to influence a game far beyond what you'd expect from the position, and their go-to security blankets are tall receivers with great hands with Joe J playing the role of Dave Logan. Reggie Rucker was a good receiver, but that team had nothing like Braylon Edwards and his ability to take over a game. Both teams had good big-backs, and offensive lines that feature a blend of talented young players and solid vets, although much like Edwards, Joe Thomas is on a level of his own.

The similarities are there in the games. Bottom line: if we don't outscore the opposition, we don't win. And yet the games are exciting and you believe that we'll outscore the bad guys in the end. The other thing they have in common is they have to face off with a Pittsburgh team that is a legitimate Super Bowl contender playing lights-out ball.

I have no idea what to expect on Sunday. There is literally no scenario that would shock me. I have seen too many Browns teams since the return too fragile mentally and in their physicality to match up get blown out, including this edition just eight weeks ago. While I'd like to believe that the team has grown enough in confidence and cohesion to finally stand up to the Inbred, I am Missouri. As a Cleveland Fan, I am always ready to lose a heartbreaker, especially at the Confluence. A close loss wouldn't shock me.

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On the other hand, this team is starting to impress me. I don't doubt its ability to keep up the Kardiac Kids imitation and win a thrilling game, but I also know this year's Stillers, fresh off opening a case of whup-ass on the Ratbirds, aren't the St. Louis Lambs. Lastly, while I'm not expecting it, this team has mad offensive ability and a whole lot of pent up frustration. If things break right, I can see the Browns doing to the Sucklers what Ralphie did to Scott Farkas when he finally snapped.

The keys to Sunday will be to not fall behind early and get under foot, and to take the best shots from Cletus and Jethro and get off the mat fast. If they do that and they show balance and poise on offense. They can win this thing and we'll see the Browns in a tie for first place in the division in the second half of a season for the first time in almost 20 years.

I told you in August, me the cynical one, [that this year was gonna be different](#) . This Sunday will tell us just how different. But rather than worry about what to do with both Quinn and DA, or lament how lame the defense is, take a minute to really enjoy this team and what they are accomplishing. It's special and it's going down right before your eyes. And like the Kardiac Kids who hold a unique place in our hearts and minds, this is finally a team you can love no matter what happens against the hill jacks this Sunday.