

## Preview: Browns at Cardinals

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Saturday, December 01 2007 7:00 PM -

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4:05 PM out in the desert this afternoon. The Browns, at 7-4 on the season, head west to take on the Arizona Cardinals, who stand at 5-6 and are very much in the race for a playoff spot in the NFC. Last time these teams met, Kelly Holcomb lit up the cards for 392 yards and three scores in a 44-6 rout in 2003. The Browns enter this one as slight underdogs. Jesse Lamovsky previews today's tilt for us. GO BROWNS!!!



**Time:** Sunday, December 2, 4:05 PM

**Location:** University of Phoenix Stadium, Glendale, AZ

**Network, Announcers:** CBS- Greg Gum-Ball and Dan Dierdorf

**Line:** Cardinals by a point

**Team W/L Records:** Cleveland is 7-4; Arizona is 5-6

**Coaches:** Romeo Crennel is 17-26 in his third season with the Browns. Ken Whisenhunt is 5-6 in his first year with the Cardinals.

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**Last Week for the Browns:** Controlled both lines of scrimmage and dominated the second half- just like a good team should- in a 27-17 victory over the Texans.

**Last Week for the Cardinals:** Piled up 552 yards of total offense but still lost in overtime to the horrible 49ers, 37-31.

**All-Time Series:** 3-1 in favor of the Browns since the Cardinals moved from St. Louis to greater Phoenix prior to the 1988 season. Overall, Cleveland is 33-11-3 against the Cards in their Arizona, St. Louis, and Chicago manifestations.

**Last Meeting:** Week Eleven, 2003: Kelly Holcomb passed for 392 yards and three scores, Quincy Morgan and Andre Davis both topped the 100-yard receiving mark, and the Browns, in their most lopsided win since the return, rolled over the hapless Cardinals, 44-6.

**Out or Questionable for Arizona:** DT Ross Kolodziej (quad) and S Adrian Wilson (heel) are out; S Aaron Francisco (calf) and WR Jerheme Urban (heel) are doubtful; WR Larry Fitzgerald (groin) is questionable

**Out or Questionable for Cleveland:** DT Ethan Kelley (knee) and CB Eric Wright (knee) are doubtful; WR Braylon Edwards (hamstring), LB Antwan Peek (knee), and DE Orpheus Roye (knee) are questionable

**What to watch for the Cardinals:** How will they respond after last week? Arizona had a chance to go over .500, remain a game behind in the West, and seize command of an NFC wild-card spot- and only had to dispatch the reeling 49ers in the comfy confines of their home stadium to do it. They didn't get it done, and in fact they didn't get it done in just about as kick-in-the-nuts fashion as possible.

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The Birds aren't strangers to this type of setback. Last year they permitted the Bears to come from twenty points down to win despite not scoring an offensive touchdown. Dennis Green [blew up](#) and so did his team: the Cardinals scored a total of 33 points in their next three after the Bears fiasco, all one-sided losses. But there are two important differences between last year and this year. One- Dennis Green now coaches the Cardinals only in Coors Light commercials. Two- unlike last year, when the Cardinals were 1-5 after the Bears loss and virtually finished from a contention standpoint, the 2007 Cardinals are still very much alive in spite of nightmare ending against San Francisco. A win over the Browns combined with a Seattle loss in Carolina would give Arizona a shot at first place in the West when they play the Seahawks next week. To paraphrase Gwyneth Paltrow's husband, for the Cardinals, everything's not lost.

Ultimately, it's a supreme test for Ken Whisenhunt. The losing culture is as engrained in Glendale as it formerly was in Cleveland; Whisenhunt was brought in to change that culture, and he's done a pretty fair job of it so far, but losses like last week's have a way of sticking around, especially in a place where they're just waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Oh yeah- Arizona also had two starters in its secondary, including the excellent Adrian Wilson, placed on injured reserve this week. Just had to toss that in there.

***What to watch for the Browns:*** Will the circle be unbroken? Cleveland's receiving corps resembles a public building from the Old West. The façade is immaculate: Braylon Edwards, the newest elite split end in football; Kellen Winslow, the warrior with hands of legend; and Joe Jury, the consummate possession man. Between them, the three have accounted for 71 percent of the team's receptions, 81 percent of its receiving yardage, and all but three of its twenty-two passing touchdowns. They might be the best pass-catching troika in the league this year.

Behind them is the crude shack that is the team's receiving depth. Steve Heiden, Tim Carter, Darnell Dinkins, and Josh Cribbs have a combined seventeen

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receptions between them, including a single, solitary touchdown. The lack of depth hasn't been a problem thanks to the unusual spat of good health we've had, but it may become an issue now, with Braylon's questionable status for this Sunday's game.

So the questions become: will Braylon play on Sunday? If so, how effective will he be against the injury-depleted Arizona secondary? If not, how will Derek Anderson respond, in the first game he hasn't had both BE or Kellen Winslow as targets for his frozen-rope passes? Does C.H.U.D., after showing signs of conservatism last week against the Texans, go into full-on Goldwater mode and rely on Jamal Lewis and the ground game? We'll find out.

***Good Past Win over the Cardinals:*** Week Three, 1994: Cleveland 32, Arizona 0- In front of a less-than-capacity crowd at the Stadium (62,818), Bill Belichick's Browns led Buddy Ryan's Cardinals just 3-0 at halftime, but blew the game wide open after the recess with a series of big plays on offense and defense. Vinny Testaverde threw for a pair of touchdowns, including an 81-yard bomb to rookie Derrick Alexander, and the late Eric Turner provided the finishing touches to the rout in the fourth quarter with a 93-yard interception return for a touchdown.

***Bad Past Loss to the Cardinals:*** Week Six, 2000: Arizona 29, Cleveland 21- Playing in Sun Devil Stadium for the first time since 1988, the Browns jumped to a 14-0 lead early in the second quarter on a pair of Travis Prentice touchdown plunges- then the roof caved in. Arizona ripped off the next twenty-six points on two field goals, a Thomas Jones touchdown run, and a pair of Jake Plummer-to-Frank Sanders scoring passes and cruised to a win that was considerably more lopsided than the final score would indicate. Tim Couch didn't exactly stretch the field, accumulating just 138 yards passing on 16-of-22 attempts. The teams finished up tied for the second-worst record in the NFL at 3-13, and since neither played the team with the worst record- 1-15 San Diego- the Browns-Cards clash ended up being the worst match-up of the 2000 season.

***Next Week for Both Teams:*** Cleveland goes to the Meadowlands to take on the

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Jets; Arizona travels to Seattle.

**Trivia:** The Cardinals have had one winning season out of twenty since they moved to Phoenix- 1998, when they went 9-7 and upset the Cowboys in the first round of the playoffs.