

One Step Up And Two Steps Back

Written by {ga=jb}

Sunday, December 02 2007 7:00 PM -

Mansfield checks in on a Monday afternoon with his always anticipated look at Sunday's Browns game, and three things are aggravating him today: DA's inconsistency, stupid penalties, and the call on Winslow's amazing catch at the end of the game. Mansfield says he wants to see Brady Quinn the next time we see "bad DA". And says the Jets game can't get here soon enough after a loss like that.



Some y'all might call me fickle, crazy, or if you scored high enough on that SAT, mercurial. No, that doesn't mean I'm like a Montego, or Sable, or Mariner. It means that my takes reflect what I see, and inconsistent is as inconsistent does. Sunday's game in the desert is the stuff of off season "coulda beens"; There is a pretty good chance that we'll look back on the Arizona game as THE one we let slip away to cost us the playoffs, along with the still inexplicable tank job against the horrific Raiders. So if I call out the team and individuals as a fan after gushing at them for the previous weeks' victories, it doesn't mean I'm a bad fan or confused.

[It just means I'm keepin' it real.](#)

I know a lot of y'all see it the same way.

There's a justified set of goats all competing to see whose "mmmmmbaaaaaaahhhh" was the loudest on Sunday.

Derek Anderson, what are you doing? Can't you just take a damn snap after probably 20 years of playing organized football? There is a thread in the STO

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Browns Forum about whether a good team can live with wildly inconsistent play at the quarterback position. [You should join in and get some.](#) After almost a season's worth of playing time when you combine his first year, last year, and this season, his second year starting, the deep heaves into literally triple coverage, the fumbled snaps due to a lack of concentration, and the balls delivered wildly to open receivers for incomplete passes remain in abundance. Can those be fully off set by some crisp outs to the running backs that set them up in stride and the perfect strike to Winslow for the blown touchdown by the ref on the last play of the game? I don't completely know what you can and can't live with as an NFL team and be a true contender. But to me, consistency

and

playmaking has always been the hallmark of the successful NFL quarterback. You gotta have both to be great. Being good is fine if you have Charlie or Dorsey the Legacy behind you and you are chasing 8 wins. But when you have the first round golden boy (despite the fact he looks like he could use some

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in that inexplicable TV shot last Sunday) anointed franchise QB waiting in the wings, is that enough?

"The most important goal this season is to develop Brady Quinn." - Phil Savage, September 2007

. Those are his words, not mine. Look, DA's inconsistent play that stalled us in the second Pittsburgh game and in game two in Oakland, as well as this Sunday in half one, contributed mightily to "L's" in that column. Even the Baltimore, Houston and Seattle wins were closer than they should have been and required some heroics due to his slow starts or down quarters. For what he is, a

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we got for free from B-more, the guy is a steal who is overachieving on a remarkable level. I get that. He is good. But to throw a franchise tag at him and give him the job and never even take a decent look at Brady Quinn, who showed in

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big-time college ball as a one man gang that he has the qualities that DA lacks on too frequent occasion? Nahh. I want to see 'em both before I choose the man who will be The Man and shell out millions in cap space. DA's inconsistencies, his slow starts, his frequently poor decisions; to dismiss all of these as a product of too few starts seems implausible to me. It is too convenient and frankly, lazy analysis I heard the same thing about Frye through last year and he didn't improve one iota. As far as I'm concerned, DA is good. He can play on Sunday for a decade in some capacity. But I don't know if he's good enough to bet the farm on for the long haul. To me, he's still in an extended audition. And yesterday, once again, he hit notes so badly off key that he became the primary cause for the team's ruined performance. DA was the main goat for the loss Sunday.

I'm not saying throw him under the bus in final judgment, but I am saying I just don't know about him. How long you gonna live there as a franchise when you have a Brady Quinn sitting? The next time we see "bad" DA for more than a quarter, sit his ass down and play Quinn. Let's see what he has AND try to win. It doesn't mean DA is permanently benched. It does mean he's in a competition and has to get better and iron out his streaks of crap play. It shows he's accountable.

Aggressive penalties are one thing. While you want a disciplined team that plays smart, sometimes things happen. In the new NFL where you can't hit like a man anymore, but apparently if you play for Pittsburgh you can cheap shot with

impunity like a bitch, that stuff is going to happen. You can make a case that while Cribb's muffed punt return was foolish in that he should have let it go; he was trying to make an aggressive play to save field position. But what the Browns do on a regular basis is just inexplicable. What Leigh Bodden did in kicking a dead ball after a 3rd and out stop was no more justifiable than Dwayne Rudd taking off his helmet. It just came earlier in the game. Give us a stop there on that drive and mathematically we win on Sunday. Edwards throwing footballs, Frazier responding to cheap shots with his own to cost dozens of yards on the last drive of a game, Dinkins clipping. It's all stupidity. There is only one man accountable. Romeo, man, what is up with this and why can't you get these cats to recognize? Like you, I know they know, but please. That is all a direct reflection on you. Do you fine them? Do they run? Or do you just hug 'em and smile like you did when Edwards took off his lid on the field?

In this day and age, intelligent courage in the face of mass opinion is a waning quality. We see stubbornness. We see recalcitrance in the face of overwhelming factual evidence spun as moral courage like an Orwellian badge of honor. But what we rarely see is an individual standing up and doing the correct thing with the assistance of empirical evidence. Such is the case with the ref blowing the call on the last play of the game. That the NFL cherry picks what is and isn't reviewable as if each and every

call isn't a judgment call on some level, I guess I understand as a scope of fact even as I can not intellectualize it as rational. I mean, isn't possession of a ball or a fumble or dropped catch a judgment call? That said, why a single ref chose to rush into a wrong call without so much as a conference is inexplicable unless it is solely a matter of venue. While some Browns' fans debate this for reasons I can not explain, the rule is cut and dried. If a receiver catches the ball and would have come down in bounds, and he is forced out by a defensive player, it is a catch. [Thanks to "Dozen" on the boards, you can see for yourself and judge.](#)

The ref blew the game. This should have been a Kardiac Kids II signature win like Dave Logan beating Green Bay in the day, but the ref was inept. All the errors, all of the turnovers, all of DA's hot and cold play notwithstanding, if the ref does his job with any degree of skill and courage then the Browns are 8 - 4. There's no way to spin that fact.

It isn't hard to have a "half empty" feeling as a Browns' fan on this butt cold, dark, snowy Monday in northeastern Ohio. These are the kinds of losses that dictate your mood on Monday and Tuesday until you start to get over it. In the long run, I suppose we still have our

fate in our hands and if we take care of business against the teams we should be favored to beat we'll be a wild card team. And even if we tank, I didn't think we'd win more than six this year, and I had us losing 12 following the opening day fiasco. We've seen some quality football and more importantly seen some real growth. We know that we're a few defensive linemen and maybe one slobber knocker playmaking linebacker away from being a pretty damn good football team. So I guess we ought to all buck up and that sorta crap. But today? After that? Dang. That was a set back. There's no way to polish that. Get yourself two-bits and call someone who cares with your "young team learning the hard way" rap. I'm keeping it real. The better team pissed away a game they couldn't afford to piss away in a playoff chase. Go on Romeo, stop with the lame expectations management and get these dudes to understand that they ARE in a playoff race and they need to play like it. In fact, given the wild card birth tie with the Oiltans of Tenntucky, the playoffs start this Sunday against the resurgent Jets.

Playoff teams don't lose to the Cardinals in that manner. Yeah, yeah, Pittsburgh lost to them too, blah freakin' blah, etc. etc. But not like that. Not on 21 points off of three turnovers. Not on your quarterback going completely belly up for a half. Not on dumb football and

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mistakes that appear to happen over and over and over without coaching correction. And unfortunately, you DO lose when you put refs in the position to hose you over on the road when one blown call can put an "L" in that column. This one is gonna stay with me for a while.

The Jets game can't get here fast enough.