

Random Thoughts: Browns at Cardinals

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Mitch was off last week, as he headed west with his bride for a little fun, sun, and football out in Arizona ... taking this weekend's loss to the Cards in live from University of Phoenix Stadium. Predictably, Mitch is annoyed at the turnovers, penalties, and erratic play from Derek Anderson ... going as far as to mutter the words "Scott Mitchell" when assessing the Browns young signal caller. It's Wednesday night at The Cleveland Fan. It's Random Thoughts.



Back in the saddle again. As at least two of you noticed, I didn't have a column posted last week, but that had nothing to do with my Stalker Club from Western Pennsylvania, where men are men, and sheep are nervous. Nope, just a well needed vacation to the land of deserts, Grand Canyons, cacti, and the seventh ring of hell for fans of Ohio football.

Hey, at least the weekend wasn't a total loss. We've got the Buckeyes exactly were we want them: as underdogs in the National Championship Game.

So Much Stupidity In One Place, [Kellie Pickler](#) Looks Smart in Comparison

It is easy to blame the defeat of the Browns on Sunday on the officials. Make no mistake, they flat out blew that call at the end. Winslow would have come down in bounds had he not been leveled in mid-air, but for some reason the ref failed to make the call, nor consult with any other referee possessing two eyes and a brain that could have helped in making the right decision.

Maybe they just didn't like Winslow, as a few plays earlier, they ignored an obvious horse collar tackle on him as he was trying to get out of bounds.

But that's not what lost the game for the Browns. There was so much idiocy being shown on the field that I thought I might have stumbled into a Ben Stiller movie set. Let us count the ways.

- Leigh Bodden thinking that it would be a wonderful time to practice up his soccer skills by performing a Freddie Adu on a ball laying on the ground after an incompletion on 3rd and 4. Instead of a punt, the drive stays alive and the Cardinals eventually score a touchdown.

- Simon Fraser auditioning for his next job in the WWE by headbutting a Cardinal right in front of the ref, so the Browns started their final drive from the 18 and not the 33. Keep it up, Simon...you may be wearing spandex and popping steroids next year at this rate.

- Derek Anderson (so many gaffes, this will require its own section later on).

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Brodney Pool. Bad coverage followed by a hit out of bounds. Two negatives may make a positive in math, but not in football.

- Special teams sucking it up. This includes Cribbs' fumble, long returns by the Cardinals, penalties, and the fact that they almost allowed the Cards to recover a pop up kickoff.

- Romeo once again blowing a time out near the end of the game for a defensive "adjustment" (on a 3rd and friggin' 12!).

- A defensive scheme that called for not putting much pressure on a 67 year old QB with the mobility of a glacier and a documented history of coughing up the ball when under duress. Brilliant!

- Assorted other mental mistake penalties that continue to plague this team. Youth is one thing, but this continued problem points directly at deficiencies in the coaching staff.

- Being dominated in time of possession in the second half, 9:34 to 20:26. By a team with a washed up RB, an over the hill QB, and missing both of their playmaking receivers in the fourth quarter.

Derek Bueller's Day Off

By now, we're almost used to seeing DA stinking up the joint on the first few drives until he gets his rhythm. But it might have been the worst warning sign we've had when he managed to get an intentional grounding call on the first play from scrimmage...NOT because he was under pressure, but because of a miscommunication where he decided to throw the ball to the left, oblivious to the fact that there were no receivers in the same zip code. Now I understand the concept of "throwing to a spot", and assuming that the receiver would be there. But how in the hell can a QB take a five step drop, pat the ball, and not ONCE bother to check to see if there might be a single human being within forty yards of where you throw the ball?

For a man that often locks in on his receivers, I have no explanation for that gaffe.

Unfortunately, he later in the drive decided to make another long, lazy pass out to the side, which was taken in by Roderick Hood in one of the easiest Pick Six plays you'll ever see.

After two running plays by Jamal, Derek decides it's time to pass again...but he forgets how to receive a center snap, and fumbles the ball away, leading to a second Cardinals' TD...14-0, and I'm asking the beer man at the stadium for a keg and an IV.

Crappy passes were the story of the day for Anderson. The second INT that was thrown into triple coverage was the worst of them, of course, but he could have easily had three more picks, and missed a wide open Winslow at least three times. I haven't seen pinpoint control like that since before [Ricky Vaughn](#) got his glasses ("juuussttt a bit outside!").

Once again, DA was at the Mendoza Line of accuracy, a mere 1.2 points over 50% at 21 of 41. Worse still, he was only 8 of 19 in the second half, and 3 out of his last 10, when they needed yardage badly. On the other hand, four drops didn't help things either.

Maybe the [comments attributed to Phil Savage](#) regarding the Browns looking to trade Anderson at the end of the season was a distraction. If they were, I'd be even more concerned that DA was a potential Scott Mitchell. As stated numerous times by me and other writers at TheClevelandFan.com, eventually either Anderson or Quinn will have to go. IF the quotes from the Sun Times are accurate, it seems that Phil is in the same camp as many of us, attributing the gaudy numbers the offense has put up this year more to Edwards, Winslow, Joe J, Jamal, Chud, and the awesome O-Line than to Anderson.

Derek has four more games to prove himself (hopefully one or two more than that).

Defensive "Genius";? HA!

The Browns only dressed four defensive linemen for the game, with only one of them being a normal starter (Robaire Smith).

Think this might have been a bit of a problem later on when the Browns desperately needed a stop late in the fourth quarter, instead giving up the only Cardinal scoring drive of the day over 50 yards?

You do? Congratulations! You are smarter than a defensive coordinator!

FOUR linemen dressed? Who could see them running out of gas? And who could have predicted injury problems on the line? I mean, just because three of the six men originally slated to play D-Line for the Browns in 2007 were over the age of 30 and over the weight of 325 lbs, who could have possibly guessed that some of them might just get injured throughout the year?

I guess Grantham would also advocate buying a 1985 Chevy Cavalier with no spare tire, thinking it would be just fine for that cross country trip with the wife and kids.

In addition, finding replacements for these players isn't that easy, due to the Browns use of the 3-4. You can't just grab a traditional 4-3 DT and put him at DE and expect optimal results. Earlier in the year, I advocated the [scrapping of the 3-4 defense](#), primarily because of the difficulty in finding the right players for it. I stand by that opinion.

There Was Some Good

Braylon Edwards continues his amazing season. At this point, Braylon has amassed 1043 yards receiving, placing him currently in fifth place on the all-time Browns season record list, just 193 yards shy of Webster Slaughter's record of 1,236 yards in 1989.

His 12 TD catches currently ties him for second with Gary Collins (1966) and Paul Warfield (1968), one behind Collins' record of 13 in 1963.

Looking at the years the previous records were set, you can see how special this year truly has been for Edwards, and what a star he is turning out to be.

It has been mentioned earlier how much better he is due to the play of Kellen Winslow. Last week, Houston concentrated on shutting down the big plays to Edwards, leaving Winslow in one-on-one situations, resulting in Kellen snagging 10 catches for 107 yards and a touchdown, while Braylon

"only" made 4 catches for 57 yards (and a TD). This week; the Cardinals set up their defense to stop Winslow, sometimes having three defenders around him. This often led to Braylon having to only beat a single man, which he did to the tune of 149 yards, including the acrobatic catch, roll, and run for a touchdown in the second half.

When I think of the days of Quincy Morgan, Dennis Dropcutt, Andre Davis (the worthless receiver...not the worthless linebacker named "Andra"), Leslie Shepherd, Darrin Chiaverini, Frisman Jackson and even the best, Kevin Johnson, who would always fall down one yard short of the sticks after making a third down catch, it's enough to make a grown man cry.

And I still laugh my ass off regarding a "certain writer" who was pissed off at the draft party in 2005, telling us all how we'd rue the day they drafted Braylon instead of Mike Williams. How'd that work out for you, R.P.?

Jamal Lewis also had another excellent game. Despite the fact that the Browns had to almost completely abandon the running game in the second half, Jamal rushed for 62 yards and had another 24 yards in receptions, including a "did you just see that?!" moment when he hurdled Roderick Hood for a touchdown.

If I'm seeing something as big and fast as Lewis going airborne, I'm looking for the number on the tail fin, and trying to find a nice place to hide.

The Spaceship in the Desert

University of Phoenix Stadium.

The place where Ohio football dreams go to die.

I've got to admit that I was very impressed with the stadium itself, other than the fact that it looks like a spaceship out of a cheap Sci-Fi movie. Great amenities, awesome site lines, and a retractable roof that allows for that non-dome experience while still giving fans the ability to escape triple digit heat or surprisingly cold winter evenings. The coolest aspect of the stadium is the fact that the grass field actually slides OUT of the stadium when not in use, allowing for adequate sunlight and watering. Too bad the morons that designed that quagmire field in Pittspuke didn't think about that.

The only problem is that it really is out in

the middle of nowhere...almost reminding me of the old Richfield Coliseum in that regard.

But parking was free, as were the shuttle buses to and from the stadium. And most importantly, there was a wide selection of beer, at prices slightly below that of Cleveland Browns Stadium. A nice place for probably about 30,000 Browns fans to gather for an afternoon of ineptitude.

It's just too bad that it's a stadium that I now hate, as it has been bad luck to the Browns, and the site of January's

Debacle in the Desert between the Buckeyes and that loathsome team from the Florida swamplands.

But I'm not sure about naming a stadium after a cheesy Internet University, where you can buy a "college degree" for only \$5,000 - \$15,000...and then get laughed at by any self respecting recruiter in America.

It could be worse...they could have named it after a condiment.

Blurbs From an ADHD Mind

~ Great Offensive Play Calling, Part I...the two point conversion. Now that Chud has FINALLY allowed Cribbs to throw out of a direct snap, you can hear the sound of defensive coordinators from NY, Buf, SF, and Cincitucky pissing themselves trying to figure out how to defend it.

~ Great Offensive Play Calling, Part II...3rd and 1, and DA fakes the handoff to Vickers up the middle (the usual play in that situation), and then

throws an eight yard pass backwards to a sweeping Jamal who turns it into a 9 yard gain. Imaginative stuff that really has me looking forward to the rest of this year, and next year as well, when the team will be even more comfortable with the offense.

Phil...you need to extend Chud's contract immediately, and make him an assistant head coach, before someone steals him.

~ Steve Heiden caught a pass. Is that allowed?

~ Ralph Stinking Brown was in the game, and not only didn't the Browns attack the Worst CB in Browns' history, they allowed him to recover a fumble. The shame...the shame.

~ This habit of NFL teams dressing in the same colored jerseys and pants has got to stop. Seattle is to blame for starting all of this, as there isn't a single team that looks like anything other than an XFL team by dressing that way. The only monochrome that should be

allowed is the classic white on white (provided it's not as boring as Penn State). The Cardinals and their all red outfits reminded me of the ["Human Blood Clot"](#) uniforms of the Indians in the 70s.

~ I'll give Dan Dierdorf some props, both for his eloquent comments about the late Bill Willis, and his statement that it was ["a conflicting game for me today. The team I played for versus the team I worshiped growing up."](#) I wasn't much of a Dierdorf fan

before...I am now.

~ Does the fact that I don't fast forward through any commercials featuring Beyonce Knowles make me a dirty old man?

~ There was a Luke McCown sighting this weekend! And he finally won a game that he started! In all fairness, that's another ex-Brown that I wish nothing but success for. It's too bad he's once

again stuck behind the egotistical jackass Jeff Garcia. Let's not forget the other matchup this last weekend between ex-Browns Vinny Testeverde and the Panthers against Trent Dilfer and the 49ers. Rumors were that Matlock was calling the game, and the winning coach got drenched with Metamucil.

~ The Travis Wilson Inactive Watch is now going into it's 13th hit week.

~ The Jets game this week has pretty much been elevated to Must Win status. And that scares the hell out of me. Let's just hope the Lessons were learned this week.