

Anderson, Edwards, and RAC ... Oh My!

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

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The Browns went 7-1 at home last season and still found themselves on the outside looking in when playoff time rolled around. With the team already at 0-2 at home, and with a much harder road slate this season, clearly they have their work cut out for them. In Gary's latest, he says that injuries have played a factor in the poor start, but what's hurting the team more are the ones still playing and the ones still coaching.



Here is what we know after two weeks of regular season football in Cleveland: quarterback Derek Anderson is regressing; receiver Braylon Edwards is still full of himself; and, head coach Romeo Crennel can't count.

Unfortunately, it didn't take Nostradamus to forecast any of it.

Last year Anderson had one of the great seasons that any quarterback in Cleveland Browns' history has ever had. But as the season was winding down, teams were catching up to him. In some ways he was like the rookie hitter who rips the cover off the ball the first time through the league.

Eventually the pitchers catch up and then it becomes the hitter's obligation to adjust.

It's a constant battle on both sides to stay one step ahead.

Anderson is there right now. The book is out on his tendencies and defenses have adjusted. He'll either make the next adjustments or he won't, but if he doesn't he'll soon find his and Brady Quinn's

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roles reversed.
Anderson hasn't made the adjustments.

To this point,

The critical interception to Pittsburgh Steelers' safety Troy Polamalu highlighted two of Anderson's basic decision-making flaws which are now being exploited by anyone that studies film, which would include pretty much every player in the league.

First, when pressured he tends to throw wildly.

Second, when pressured he tends to lose focus on the situation.

There were eight seconds left in the first half. Anderson only needed seven of them to still give his team a chance to get some points.

But without any timeouts, he had two main tasks: look quickly into the end zone to see if someone broke free and, if nothing materialized, throw it away.

Anderson handled the first part OK, but then he panicked.

Rather than quickly throw it away, he strangely threw short of the goal line.

That Polamalu was standing by to accommodate him is almost beside the point.

Had the pass been completed the Browns still would have ended the half with no points.

A veteran, which Anderson is at this point, shouldn't be making those kinds of mistakes. Big games need big plays from the big players. Anderson instead stayed small and played small when needed most.

That doesn't mean that all is lost with Anderson only that his development is not nearly as far along as last season's success would indicate. Development is rarely a straight line up anyway so it is not as if any of this should be a surprise.

But watching the Browns offense sputter, you get the sense that no one inside the Browns inner sanctum saw this coming.

The same holds true with respect to Edwards. For all the right reasons, Edwards decided last season to just shut up and play football.

It couldn't have worked out better for him and the Browns, at least for awhile.

Now it also seems to have turned into about the worst thing for Edwards and the Browns.

Already this season he has dropped more passes than he has caught. That's an irritating but tolerable situation when you're a number three or four receiver, but a problem when you are the team's number one target.

Edwards always has had a reputation for dropping passes.

In fact, he was second only to Terrell Owens in that category last season.

But the continuation of that trend when the opposite was expected is every bit as responsible for the offense not working as Anderson's struggles.

Couple that with the return of Edwards' petulant superstar schtick from two seasons ago and he's quickly putting himself in the "not worth the trouble" bin.

As for Crennel, it's almost like a broken record, but all he did in losing to Pittsburgh again was prove that he can't handle the pressures of being head coach, which is a tad unfortunate since he is, actually, the head coach. Risking repetition without addition, it's still worth noting that a lack of preparation is as much to blame for Sunday's loss as anything else.

A team with playoff aspirations and veteran leadership on and off the field is supposed to clearly understand how to manage a clock with under two minutes left in a half.

But there the Browns' offense was again on Sunday, acting as if the league changed the rules and no one sent them the memo.

Crennel will be stand up about it all with his usual the "buck stops with me" answers. But if he really believed it, he'd fix it. And if he does believe it and it's still not fixed, which it isn't, then what conclusions are there to be drawn?

If he was your employee what conclusions would you draw?

Thought so.

As hard as it is to believe, it turns out that the goofy field goal decision during the Dallas game was just a prelude to an even goofier decision about a field goal in the Pittsburgh game. Trying to squeeze one more shot at the end zone at the end of the first half on Sunday wasn't a wrong decision. Risky, but not wrong.

Anderson simply choked on it, that's all.

But kicking a field goal with just three and a half minutes left in the game and down by seven proves that either Crennel can't add or that he thinks field goals are worth 8 points.

It must have shocked him that the Browns were still down four.

While it is true that the Browns' defense played better, there wasn't a person in the Stadium besides Crennel, let alone a person watching anywhere in the country, that thought the Browns' defense had any chance of stopping Pittsburgh quickly enough to give the offense a chance at then scoring a touchdown. Not to get all factual about it, but despite giving up only 10 points, the Browns defense only held Pittsburgh to one three-and-out the entire game, and that was in the first quarter.

Indeed, on its previous drive, the Steelers held the ball for nearly seven minutes.

Given those trends, it's easy to see why Crennel thought his team would suddenly rise up at the game's most critical moment.

If Crennel was simply being unconventional, that would be one thing. The problem is that he's an old school by the book kind of person who seems to have missed some pretty critical chapters.

It's hurting the team week in and week out.

The way injuries are starting to shape this team, Crennel looks to probably escape a discerning microscope from the front office once again. The injuries may be stacking up like planes over LaGuardia but by far what's hurting the team more are the ones still playing and the ones still coaching.