

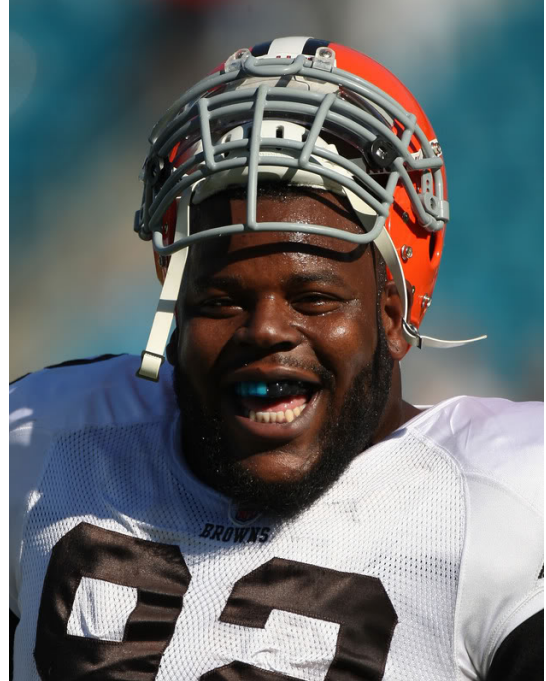
## Heroes & Zeroes: Week 8

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### ***This Week's Heroes***

#### **Five Gold Stars: Shaun Rogers**

Shaun Rogers just keeps topping himself. Phil Savage may want to double-check to make sure that Rogers' contract isn't purely incentive-based, because Rogers seems to be playing that way. The Big Baby was all over the field again Sunday, and Jacksonville quarterback David Garrard may have been less familiar with his

center's back side than with Rogers' front side when things were all said and done.

Nine solo tackles from the nose tackle position is pretty sick, but add to that a sack and the fact that Garrard was harassed by Rogers more than Rodney King, and you've got yourself one hell of a performance. Oh, and he blocked a field goal, too. That six-year, \$42 million contract is looking like a bargain all of the sudden. Do you want to see more of Shaun Rogers? Apparently the Browns are considering using him as a [fullback in goal line packages](#)

. I don't have to explain how cool that would be.

### **Four Gold Stars: Steve Heiden**

Heiden's been one of the Browns' real unsung heroes the last several seasons, particularly since Kellen Winslow arrived and started stealing his looks at tight end. But you never hear Steve Heiden whine. No, Heiden just shows up, does some solid blocking, occasionally has a pass thrown his way if Winslow needs a blow, and continually plays fundamentally sound football. The Browns could use a few more Steve Heidens.

Heiden led the Browns in receiving yards on Sunday, and his 51-yard catch on 4th-and-1 set up the Browns' second touchdown. Answer me this: would you rather have Heiden or Braylon Edwards catching that pass? Exactly. Heiden's not going to outrun anybody or get any airtime on SportCenter with an acrobatic catch, but if you put the ball around his numbers, he'll catch it, then he'll rumble up the field and drill a defender to pick up an extra yard or two.

Drafted in 1999 by the Chargers, Heiden landed in Cleveland in 2002 after a pair of disappointing seasons with the Bolts. He's been a fixture on the lake shore ever since. Heiden's never caught more than 43 balls in a season, nor has he caught fewer than 10. A solid blocker and an

overachieving receiver given his lackluster speed and athleticism, Heiden provides a reliable alternative to the flamboyant Kellen Winslow.

### **Three Gold Stars: Syndric Steptoe**

What a difference a year has made for Syndric Steptoe. A seventh round pick in 2007, Steptoe was buried on the practice squad last season after Joshua Cribbs won the punt returning job over the summer. But this year Steptoe has proven to be an adequate punt/kickoff returner in addition to a decent third/fourth receiver.

Steptoe has nine catches for 131 yards this season, and none was bigger than his 53-yarder in the fourth quarter of Sunday's game to set up Phil Dawson's go-ahead field goal. Steptoe doesn't have blinding speed or shake-you-outta-your-shoes (I'm out of control with hyphens) quickness, but he's got a good balance between the two, and there's a good chance that he'll be able to stick with the Browns as the third receiver for more than just this season.

### **Two Gold Stars: Nick Sorensen**

Not long after taking heat from myself and others for being a woefully ineffective blitzer, Sorensen saved the game in Jacksonville. The Browns had a six-point lead when Dave Zastudil punted and Maurice Jones-Drew returned the ball to the Jacksonville 30. The Jags had 70 yards to go, just 1:51 to do, and no timeouts. A tying touchdown seemed only a remote possibility.

But in yet another little case study of why the prevent defense sucks, the Browns allowed the Jaguars to drive down to the Cleveland 26-yard line. After throwing an incomplete pass on first down, the clock showed just :09, and David Garrard had no choice but to take another shot at the end zone. Garrard must have done a double take when he saw the 6' 6" Matt Jones in man coverage on the outside. And Garrard

probably licked his chops when he saw that Jones was being covered by the 5' 10" Brandon McDonald. Garrard got the ball to Jones, who bobbled the ball but appeared poised to haul it in. Then Sorensen followed the play and broke it up.

Also: I like Nick Sorensen's hair.

### **One Gold Star: Joshua Cribbs**

Joshua Cribbs hasn't busted off a return touchdown yet this year, but that doesn't mean that he hasn't been valuable in coverage. And to be fair, I think there have been some lingering effects from Cribbs' high ankle sprain that have sapped some of his explosiveness on returns. At any rate, Cribbs recovered a fumbled Jacksonville kickoff return with under 5:00 to play that set up Phil Dawson's third and final field goal. Without that field goal, which gave the Browns a six-point lead, the Jags could have kicked a field goal to tie the game on their final drive, and we may have been looking at an overtime game.

### ***This Week's Zeroes***

#### **Five Demerits: Brady Quinn**

If any Brown lost as much as the Jaguars did on Sunday, it was Brady Quinn. This seemed like the game when Quinn might get his shot. The Browns had just fallen in embarrassing fashion to the Redskins during which Derek Anderson posted a 57.9 passer rating. In fairness, Anderson actually played worse than that rating.

A DA turnover or two in the first half combined with the threat of going 2-5 might have tempted Romeo Crennel to finally pull the trigger and make the switch many Browns fans had been waiting for. It never happened. Anderson finished 14-for-27 for 246 yards, a touchdown,

and no interceptions, although he did lose a fumble (DA also had an interception wiped out by an offsides penalty).

DA didn't replicate his terrific performance against the Giants, but he did play well enough to earn himself at least another pair of starts. Plus, the Browns now have an outside shot at the playoffs which gets more realistic if they knock off the Ratbirds this week. As long as the Browns are in the playoff picture, Romeo Crennel seems determined to stick with the incumbent Anderson. And as long as that's the case, Quinn will continue to rot on the bench.

Sometimes life's unfair, Brady, but you're still arguably the most popular Brown in town, and I'm willing to bet there's are tons of fans who'd be happy to buy you a Myoplex shake at a local watering hole. *Now I'm done.*

### **Four Demerits: Joe Jurevicius**

This isn't as much a rip on Jurevicius as it is on fans, media, and folks in the Browns organization who shrugged off the problems at receiver, using the "we'll be fine when Jurevicius gets back"; defense. This week it became clear that [the cavalry ain't comin'](#). Jurevicius appears to be out for the season, and not to toot my own horn, but I've been saying since summer that it was unrealistic to expect a contribution from Joe this season.

Last season Jurevicius became a key target for Derek Anderson, who looked to the sure-handed Penn State product on many a third down. This year Jurevicius hasn't been there for DA, and it hasn't helped that Braylon Edwards' hands have never found their 2007 form, either. Unlike Willie McGinest, Jurevicius provided not only "veteran leadership" but also some clutch catches, and his absence means that the Browns will be thin at receiver for the remainder of the season, especially if Donte Stallworth catches the injury bug again.

## **Three Demerits: Jaguars Fans**

Can the NFL just acknowledge that putting a team in Jacksonville was a mistake and move this franchise to Los Angeles already? Not only is the Jags' fan base one of the least enthusiastic in the league, but they also don't draw. For instance, Jacksonville Municipal Stadium has a capacity of 76,867 which can be expanded to 84,000 for college or Super Bowl games. When the Jaguars play, they cover sections of the stadium (a la McAfee Coliseum for A's games) to reduce the seating to 67,164. The Jags still can't fill the place. Sunday's game in Jacksonville brought in only 64,775 fans.

When you're an NFL team that has trouble drawing fans, you're in trouble. When you're a warm weather team that doesn't draw, you're in big trouble. And when you're a competitive team that doesn't draw, you're completely screwed. Mr. Goodell, it's time to stick a fork in the Jags.

## **Two Demerits: Rob Chudzinski**

Chud actually didn't call a bad game, but his offense made an unforgivable mistake midway through the fourth quarter when they had a 1st-and-goal from the Jacksonville 1-yard line. The Browns had four chances (three plus one more for a defensive 12 men on the field penalty) to put the ball into the end zone and take a 7-point lead, and they failed. Out of those four plays, they ran with Jamal Lewis only once. What's more ridiculous: not scoring a touchdown in four chances from the one, or only banging your 245-pound running back up the pipe one time? It's a rhetorical question.

Chud better come up with something new from inside the five, because kicking field goals instead of scoring touchdowns from that spot on the field could be the difference between winning and losing.

## **One Demerit: Dave Zastudil**

Okay, we're reaching a bit now; Zastudil's been very solid overall this year. The D-Zaster's averaging 44.5 yards per punt and has done a good job pinning opponents inside the 20-yard line. But Zastudil had a punt in the third quarter of Sunday's game from the Jacksonville 40 that had the potential to bury the Jags deep in their own territory. Instead, Zastudil botched the kick and hit it only 15 yards to the Jacksonville 25. That field position almost cost the Browns points, as the Jags drove down to the Browns' 20 and attempted a field goal that was ultimately blocked by Shaun Rogers. Had that field goal been good, the Jaguars would have needed only three points to tie the game in the waning seconds, yet another scenario that could have led to overtime.

## ***Up Next: 11/2, Baltimore Ravens, Cleveland Browns Stadium, 1:00***

The Browns can get back into the thick of the playoff picture if they win this one, and it's a winnable game. Baltimore is one-dimensional on offense and Joe Flacco will make some mistakes. The key to this game is Derek Anderson. If DA can hang onto the ball then he doesn't need to have a great game for the Browns to win. But if Anderson blows up and the Browns lose the turnover battle, this will be a tough game to win. Field position will be crucial in a relatively low scoring affair, but the Browns will prevail.

**Prediction: Browns 19, Ravens 10**