

Preview: Bengals at Browns

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Friday, December 19 2008 7:00 PM -

It just doesn't get much better than this. Browns/Bengals down on the lakefront. The Battle of Ohio, before what is likely to be tens of crazed fans on a blustery mid-December day in Cleveland, Ohio. Gridiron legends Ken Dorsey and Ryan Fitzpatrick going head to head in this colossal battle for state supremacy (and a top five draft pick). Jesse previews this Sunday's epic tilt.



Time: 1:00 pm, Sunday, December 21, 2008

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers: CBS- Kevin Harlan and Rich Gannon

Line: Browns by 3

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 4-10; the Bengals are 2-11-1.

Coaches: Romeo Crennel is 24-38 in his fourth season with the Browns; Marvin Lewis is 44-49-1 in his sixth season with the Bengals.

Last Week for the Browns: Made it sixteen straight quarters without an offensive touchdown in a 30-10 Monday Night loss in Philadelphia, their fourth consecutive defeat.

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Last Week for the Bengals: Jumped out to a 17-0 lead early in the second quarter and hung on for victory number two on the season, 20-13 over the fading Redskins.

All-Time Series: Tied, 35-35.

Last Meeting: [September 28, 2008](#) - The Browns tripped, stumbled, and lurched to their first victory of the season, 20-12 over a Cincinnati team newly deprived of the services of Carson Palmer.

Out or Questionable for Cincinnati: Tackle Levi Jones (hamstring) and quarterback Carson Palmer (right elbow) are out; running back Kenny Watson (hamstring) is questionable.

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: Tight end Kellen Winslow (ankle) is out; defensive tackle Shaun Smith (calf) and linebacker Leon Williams (knee) are doubtful; defensive tackle Shaun Rogers (neck), defensive end Corey Williams (shoulder), guard Eric Steinbach (back), running back Lawrence Vickers (ankle), punter Dave Zastudil (right ankle), special-teams monster Joshua Cribbs (back), and running back Jerome Harrison (ribs) are questionable.

What to watch for the Browns: The Browns have turned shame, degradation, and misfortune into an art since coming back to the league, and they've reserved their finest masterpieces of misery for the fans at CBS. The opening-night slaughter in '99, Orlando Brown's near-blinding, Bottlegate, Dwayne Rudd's helmet toss, the Eve of Destruction against the Steelers in '05, Charlie Frye's opening-day meltdown in '07, the nine losses in ten season openers since '99- all have taken place in front of the home folks, who have been forced to take their team's ineptitude straight with no chaser. For the first six seasons of their renewed existence, the Browns had a worse record at home than on the road, and in 2002, when they made the playoffs, they still limped to a 3-5 record at CBS, while going 6-2 away from home.

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The home maladies were chased away last year, when the Browns rolled to a 7-1 mark at CBS, but they roared back this year with a vengeance. Cleveland is 1-6 at home, the lone win being the Monday Night robbing-and-rolling of the Giants, and once again, the Browns have saved their most tragic performances for the eyes of their own fans. In fact, the wheels came irrevocably off the season during the five-game November stretch in which they lost four times at home, twice blowing double-digit second-half leads.

With a hopeless away finale at Pittsburgh, the Browns will have one more chance to salvage a shred of dignity from this miserable campaign, at home against the Bengals. Yes, the game is essentially meaningless, "essentially" meaning "utterly and entirely." But it'd be nice to see the team win, if only to give the hardy, shivering folks at CBS a chance to experience some joy that doesn't get served off a charcoal grill or gulped from a twelve-ounce can. Some people are driving a long way for this game, like they always do. Send them home happy.

And eff losing for draft position, or losing for any reason. The Browns have lost 104 games since coming back to the league. Do let me know what good has come out of any of those 104 losses, draft-or-otherwise. Just win the damn game.

What to watch for the Bengals: Eff them too.

Good Past Win over the Bengals: [November 23, 1975](#) - The Browns were 0-9 going into the home half of the Battle of Ohio, and for three quarters it looked as if 8-1 Cincinnati was going to keep them winless. Behind Ken Anderson scoring passes to Bob Trumpy and Cleveland nemesis Isaac Curtis, the Bengals had a 23-15 lead after three. But scoring passes by Mike Phipps to Oscar Roan and Greg Pruitt put Cleveland in the lead, and the Browns salted away the stunner when safety Jim Hill picked off Anderson's backup, John Reaves, and raced 56 yards for a touchdown. The 35-23 Cleveland victory was the last game Paul Brown coached at Municipal Stadium.

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Bad Past Loss to the Bengals: [November 29, 1981](#) - Cinderella Cincinnati moved to 10-3 and extinguished the playoff hopes of the 5-8 Browns with a decisive 41-21 victory. The Bengals jumped out to a 28-7 halftime lead as the ubiquitous Ken Anderson threw three touchdown passes, two to Cris Collinsworth and another to M.L. Harris. Former Ohio State fullback Pete Johnson slammed out 105 rushing yards and two touchdowns for the Bengals, who also took advantage of three turnovers and seven penalties by the error-prone Browns.

Next Week for Both Teams: Cincinnati hosts the Chiefs; the Browns go to Pittsburgh.

Trivia: Ken Dorsey's last touchdown pass in the NFL came on November 27, 2005, as a 49er, when he hit Arnaz Battle from 17 yards out in the fourth quarter of a 33-22 loss to Tennessee.