

Lingering Items - Draft Edition

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

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Gary Benz checks in to his usual late week spot with his NFL Draft edition of Lingering Items. In it, Gary talks about all the rumors we see emerge in the week leading up to the draft, and the new found furor amongst teams and media outlets to put things out there. Gary also hits on Mark Sanchez, Brady Quinn, and a potential Braylon Edwards trade. Draft Day Saturday! Join us at the Winking Lizard in Lakewood!



The first casualty in the run-up to the NFL's annual draft is the truth. With so many media outlets gunning for a competitive edge over each other, it's no wonder that rumors float out from unnamed sources at about the same frequency as an Indians' batter strikes out.

Whether or not any of these so-called rumors are true is almost beside the point. What's far more fascinating is to watch amateur propagandists exploit gullible reporters to the point where the Plain Dealer, for example, simultaneously reported that the Browns were ready to get hitched to Texas Tech wide receiver Michael Crabtree and that they were so turned off by his diva attitude that they were looking elsewhere for receivers.

Go figure.

The shadowy team officials that are often cited as the basis for these rumors are simply following a well-worn script by this point. Knowing the voracious appetite reporters have for easy information, these so-called team officials, which probably run the gamut from the kid cataloguing video tapes to the guy emptying the trash, are part of each team's plan to float out enough misinformation to make sure no

one knows their plans.

It has two purposes. First, it keeps other teams from finalizing their plans. If a team drafting below Cleveland really wants Crabtree, it might consider either trading with Cleveland or someone above them to ensure they get their man.

When that happens, the desperate team usually overpays.

If you're the Browns in that scenario, that's a good thing.

Don't get your hopes up.

But the second reason this happens, and a reason that is as least as important as the first, is that it provides the kind of cover these team officials need to keep them from offending whoever it is they do end up drafting. "Clifford Charlton? He was always number one on our draft board."

These are the kinds of things you usually hear from teams like the Browns after they just polished off another disastrous draft.

While not giving into the very tempting proposition to analyze each and every rumor concerning the Browns, the one that still makes me scratch my head is the one putting Mark Sanchez squarely in the cross hairs. Under this scenario, the Browns would move Brady Quinn to make room for Sanchez and in the process gain additional draft picks.

As I've said previously, of the two quarterbacks on the Browns' roster, Quinn has the most trade value. But the underlying premise of the rumors is that Sanchez is already a better quarterback than Quinn. To which I then ask: based on what? Both Quinn and Sanchez sport the right pedigree.

Quinn has seen limited action in the NFL but there is enough to know that he belongs.

Sanchez is still a leap in that regard, even if it isn't a tremendous leap.

But more broadly, what exactly is the fascination with Sanchez, at least as compared to Quinn? Is it just a matter of a new regime putting its own stamp on the franchise by ushering out the previous administration's signature acquisition?

I suppose we'll know the rehearsed answer to all of that if this does indeed take place.

Right now, I'm not convinced.

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The other significant rumor about the Browns, and maybe it's related, is the possible trade of receiver Braylon Edwards to the New York Giants. To a certain extent, the genesis of this rumor simply stems from the fact that the Giants have a spot open for a new prima donna.

The last one they had, Plaxico Burress, not only shot off his mouth one too many times but also nearly shot his own leg off.

Right now, that deal is supposedly dead, or alive, depending on whether you want to monitor the ramblings of Fox Sports or ESPN. Whether this, too, is mostly smoke and mirrors probably doesn't matter.

When it comes to Edwards, if he's not gone sooner he will be later.

If you think Jay Cutler got his panties twisted up in a knot about being the subject of trade rumors, wait until an Edwards trade doesn't happen. He'll make Cutler seem positively statesmanlike by comparison.

If the Browns come out of the draft and Edwards is still on the team, they'll be facing a far bigger issue than they did with Kellen Winslow.

With Winslow, the issue was always money. Edwards, of course, will say it's about respect or, more accurately, the lack thereof.

Rule #1 in pro sports: the word "respect" is pronounced "muhn-ee."

However characterized, Edwards will be a problem and that will be long before he drops his first pass of the season somewhere around the 14:22 mark of the first quarter of the team's first game, assuming the Browns win the coin toss.

Frankly, I just don't see how Edwards can survive with the Browns another year, a conclusion that new head coach Eric Mangini probably has reached as well. Whether he's moved on draft day or not, he'll be moved.

It's just a question of when.

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With all the rumors about Edwards bouncing about like another dropped pass, it was somewhat amusing to listen to ESPN's Colin Cowherd extol the virtues of Edwards and question the Browns' sanity. Cowherd is a contrarian to begin with so the fact that he is zagging when everyone else is zigging is mostly expected.

It's just that his arguments were so ridiculous it made me long for the days when I used to argue with my daughter when she was 6 years old.

Basically, Cowherd said that Edwards' dropped passes were no big deal. I guess that's an easy conclusion to make from the comfort of a hermitically sealed studio

in Bristol, Connecticut.

If you were, say, Derek Anderson, a shoulder shrug and a "stuff happens" pat on the back to Edwards gets a little harder to do after the fifth drop in a third straight game.

There was more. Cowherd likened Edwards' drops to Kobe Bryant only hitting 50% of his shots, suggesting that nobody in their right mind would get rid of Bryant under those circumstances. Take your time and mull that around a bit. Ready to shoot the fish in the barrel?

First of all, if Edwards were actually dropping 50% of his passes, no one would need worry about the trade market. He'd be out of the league, if he ever got there in the first place, and trying his hand at broadcasting, settling for doing color commentary for a local junior college. Second, if Bryant only took 6 shots a game and missed 3, no one would even know his name.

He wouldn't be in the NBA.

He'd be playing in some church league on Sunday nights.

Bryant actually averaged a little more than 20 shots a game and made around 10.

That's a significant difference.

Moreover his presence on the court, his ability to get rebounds, dish out assists and play defense makes his contributions far more than the sum of his missed shots.

Edwards, on the other hand, does little else. He is an extremely mediocre blocker (and there I'm being generous) and that's when there's a play in his direction.

When the play is away from him he does virtually nothing but run a meaningless pattern.

Obviously he doesn't play defense.

Thus, the sum of his contributions is two-fold, his presence as an offensive threat and his ability to actually make plays.

When he can't catch the ball, he ceases to be effective in either department.

Thus where Bryant can and does contribute every second he's on the floor, Edwards does not.

The broader point to all of this, though, is that comparing Edwards to Bryant on any level is ridiculous. Bryant is one of the top two basketball players on the planet. Edwards is one of the football players on the planet. The other main point Cowherd misses is Edwards' attitude and presence. If Mangini and company were indeed put off by Crabtree and his diva like attitude, wait until Edwards starts hanging around the Berea complex on a regular basis after the draft.

A receiver, like a cornerback, needs to have a certain swagger.

Sooner or later, though, he is going to have to back it up.

Edwards takes that concept and turns it on its ear.

His attitude is accomplishments notwithstanding

On nearly a daily basis for the last 10 years, fans have had reason to question the sanity of Browns management. Trading Edwards, no matter what it yields, will never be one of them.

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As you watch this week's NFL draft, the question to ponder is, which phrase scares you more, "with the 5th pick the Cleveland Browns take..." or "We have a trade, the Cleveland Browns have sent..."?