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What!?! Oh... I see Where You're Going

Step away from that ledge folks. This is an intriguing situation we have going on in Berea.

Honestly, when many of us were sitting at the Winking Lizard in Lakewood and the Browns traded down in the draft not once, not twice, but three times to accumulate extra picks and settle in at the 21st spot in the 1st round, the thinking was that they had masterfully manipulated the draft in order to take a certain USC linebacker at a spot in the draft more befitting his value. So when the selection was Alex Mack, a center from Cal, there was stunned silence in the room of a couple hundred people. That stunned silence almost immediately became outrage.

And that incredulous outrage was turned up a notch when the Browns selected Ohio State wide receiver Brian Robiskie with their first pick of the second round (36th overall).

When Mohamed Massaquoi was taken with the 50th overall pick, well, people just shook their heads, gathered their belongings and left.

Two picks later the Browns selected their first defensive player of the day, David Veikune, a DE/OLB from Hawaii. Kaluka Maiava, Rey Maualuga's running mate at USC was the next selection (4th round) and the Browns finished up by selecting a couple of cornerbacks in the 6

th

round, Don Carey from Norfolk State and Coye Francies from San Jose State, before closing things out by getting an intriguing running with their final pick, James Davis from Clemson.

What's more intriguing is that the Browns, and Eric Mangini and George Kokinis specifically, immediately served notice as to what kind of players and what kind of philosophy they are proceeding with. Looking at the scouting reports on nearly all of these kids you will see the words "intelligence", "high-motor", "aggressive", "fearless", and "tough".

The more you look at the draft as a whole, as well as the fact that the Browns picked up a

safety, a defensive lineman and a capable 3rd string QB in their trade with the Jets for the initial #5 pick and you're looking at a renovated, new-look squad come September. Mangini has brought in a number of Jets who he respected and who apparently are loyal to him and he has drafted a class of players who are smart enough to know what time it is.

He's also served notice that Brady Quinn is his starting quarterback.

It's not a stretch to see Robiskie serve a role similar to what Joe Jurevicius served here for Derek Anderson. One can see Robiskie, schooled if not coached by his NFL coaching father, running precise routes and being Brady's comfortable blanket that

he looks for when things get dicey. Neither Massaquoi nor Robiskie are regarded as big time home run threats but both are big enough (6'2" and 210lbs or so for each) to use their size and strength in the middle of the field (where Derek Anderson will again not be throwing in 2009) and you still have Braylon Edwards to provide the deep threat.

I'm also interested to see James Davis. This is a running back who was described by www.draftcountdown.com as a back who has excellent instincts and terrific vision and one who would have been a much higher pick had he decided not to return to a crummy Clemson team this past year. The same site said that Davis "hits the hole with authority and has a

burst".

Clearly there are no guarantees. Any or all of these guys could wash out and be horrible memories four years from now. That's the nature of the beast. But for all of us who have wanted to see this team develop an organizational identity, intelligent, aggressive and tough isn't a bad way to start.

Where's That 'Easy Button'?

How the mighty have fallen in Detroit. Not sure where they put their pride and

dignity in the Motor City but it clearly wasn't evident on the floor or in the Pistons locker room during their 4-0 sweep at the hands of the Cavaliers.

The Cavs had their way with Detroit in a series that concluded basically when pairings were announced but officially Sunday afternoon at the Palace of Auburn Hills. Whenever the Pistons tried to show backbone (and those occasions were few and far between) the Cavaliers simply ramped up their intensity and their game and beat the Pistons back down.

What it all means in the grand scheme of things is that the Cavaliers are just 12 wins away from glory and they can lounge in their easy chairs for a few days while watching to see who comes out of the Atlanta-Miami series and earns the right to face Cleveland in a week or so.

The 4-0 series sweep is what dominant, talented teams do to old, run down and disinterested mediocre teams. There was no drama, no close calls and the Cavaliers showed a focus in dispatching Detroit that has been lacking here in Cleveland in NBA seasons past. Even in that magical NBA Finals year.

What's heartening is that this Cavs team seems to get hungrier as they eat. LeBron James is on a crusade to get his first ring this season and he and Head Coach Mike Brown will have the Cavaliers focused and ready regardless of how long the layoff between series may be.

You know what they say: you can't win every series if you don't win the first one.

Mission accomplished in round one.
Let's move on.

There Seems to Be a Pattern Here

Thank God for Aaron Laffey.

The young lefty who was called up a week and a half ago is about the only bright spot thus far in a rotation that's gotten off to an uneven start to the 2009 major league season. The Tribe sits at 7-12 after Laffey, Tony Sipp, Rafael Betancourt and Jerry Wood combined to shut down the Minnesota Twins to salvage one game in the three game series from this weekend.

7 and 12. Another rotten start out of the gates under manager Eric Wedge. If this season is like many others under Wedge, the Indians will sputter for a few more weeks and get themselves buried. Typically, once they do, they'll then fire off a few weeks of solid baseball after the pressure is off, eking out just enough wins to save Wedge's job and provide us with another off season of pure torture.

I'm neither a Wedge friend nor foe, but it truly is time for this team and this regime to either whiz or get off the

pot. We've seen this movie before and it blows. I'm talking 'Gigli' blows.

Despite the lousy start it is encouraging and enjoyable watching Tribe catcher/first baseman Victor Martinez swing the bat thus far. #41 is as locked in as anyone in the game right now and watching him swing it is to watch a man who knows how to hit. He's hitting fastballs early in the count and when he's forced to go deeper he's spitting on close pitches or fouling them off until he gets something to hit. And he is hitting everything hard.

Now, if the rest of the fellas would get cracking and if the hitting and pitching could be made aware that combining offensive production with a well pitched game is in fact now allowable, well, that would be just swell.