

More Inglorious Bastards

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Sunday, May 31 2009 7:00 PM -

Been a rough start to the year for Cleveland fans. And also film enthusiasts. But Dave Kolonich is fired up for Quentin Tarantino's Cannes award winning WWII epic, "Inglorious Basterds". The premise is simple: a team of WWII soldiers hunt and kill Nazis. And Quentin is the director. I know I'm there. The release of the film brings Dave back to my beloved Browns. With a title such as that, how could you not think of our own Lakefront Basterds ... figuratively, from the ownership and pesky new coach down to the literal interpretation represented on the field.



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After watching the abomination that was *Terminator 8: Salvation Day*, I realized a few things. First, Christian Bale's cancer-choked, gruff superhero voice barely works in the

Batman

movies, let alone for a character that is pretty much not a robot or an emotionally scarred crusader with a tool belt. Much as he did in

The Dark Knight

, Bale pretty much ruined the newest

Terminator

, or at least finished a close second to the overwhelmed McG.

Second, this is not going to be a great summer for movies. Besides *Star Trek*, which I hear is good...which must make it so...there are not many quality offerings.

I've already written off

Transformers 2: The Further Rape of my Childhood

and

GI Joe: Let's Sell Some More Toys

, which leaves the promising, but most likely to be disappointing

Public Enemies

and probably some others that I won't see.

However, the salvation of the summer for me lies in the twitchy hands of the great Quentin Tarantino, and his Cannes award winning WWII epic, *Inglorious Basterds*. The premise is simple: a team of WWII soldiers hunt and kill Nazis. And Quentin is the director. Enough said. If this movie were a Cambodian mail order bride, the check would be in the mail and the pillowcases in the dryer.

Finally, the release of *Inglorious Basterds* brings me back to my beloved Browns. With a title such as that, how could you not think of our own Lakefront Basterds...figuratively, from the ownership and pesky new coach down to the literal interpretation represented on the field. I guess there's a reason no athlete ever thanks their fathers on camera.

Anyway...surly me has already visited [Inglorious Basterds](#) among the Cleveland roster before, but in the spirit of Quentin's recent Cannes triumph (I'm ignoring the fact that he didn't actually win) and the recent activity from Berea, I now present:

Part Two: More Inglorious Basterds.

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Although Part One focused on players who defined the dirty, yet necessary underbelly of the roster, More Inglorious Basterds features three established players who will not likely survive Camp Mangini and could be cut before September.

Basterd #1: Shaun Smith

If TV folk still made sitcoms today, the following situation comedy could be a ratings hit. Take an overweight, mouthy, somewhat entitled defensive tackle and match him up with an overweight, secretive and powerful head coach...then let the hilarity ensue. Imagine the episode when Shaun decides to eat the entire Thanksgiving Day turkey, then crushes the chest cavity of the coach's starting quarterback by sitting on him in the weight room. Or the season finale when Shaun is pushed around by an offensive guard a hundred pounds lighter than him, then Mangini accidentally swallows his whistle while undergoing cardiac arrest.



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From the moment Mangini was hired in Cleveland, you had to sense that this epic clash was forming in the football heavens. Smith's ego and production are not in the same universe, and not coincidentally, Mangini is inheriting one of the worst run defenses in the league. Obviously, Mangini can't be impressed by Smith's conditioning, which ranks among the worst on the roster. Watching the massive Smith get dominated by linemen, combined with Mangini's acquisition of younger, more athletic D-line help clearly signals the end of Smith's tenure in Cleveland.

Although it is possible Smith receives a wake-up call and arrives at training camp in peak condition...which for him would be like 350 lbs..., it is more likely that Kenyon Coleman and C.J. Mosley will take most of the practice reps away from Smith. Also, considering the financial investment the Browns have made in Corey Williams and the return of the ultra-professional Robaire Smith, I feel that Smith will not survive until September, which reduces the chances of Brett Ratliff being cornered in the shower.

Basterd #2: Hank Fraley

I've written several times about my respect for Fraley. Although he is not a premier offensive lineman, his presence in 2006 made a horrific situation manageable. Fraley is a smart, sound center who gives great effort on every play. Having him in the middle of the line the past few seasons has mostly been a positive for the Browns. However, the Browns' running game regression of 2008 can be partly traced back to Fraley's deteriorating body and inability to match up with the likes of Casey Hampton and Haloti Ngata within the division.

Throw in top draft pick Alex Mack and Fraley's future in Cleveland becomes a little murky. Although there has been talk of playing both Mack and Fraley at center and right guard, I'm a little skeptical of this actually happening. First, if Fraley can not physically hold up at center, his life will become a lot tougher at the guard spot. Second, if Mack is capable of starting in his rookie year, why would the Browns not play him at center?

So far during OTA's, Fraley has done everything a new coach could ask of a veteran. He is reportedly showing Mack the ropes of the position that he is about to lose. In the capitalistic frenzied society of the NFL, such gestures are rare. However, without personally knowing Fraley's natural generosity, I have to suspect that he knows that his time in Cleveland is drawing to a close. With the exception of an injury along the line (or until Ryan Tucker is suspended again), I

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feel that the days of Hank Fraley being driven off the line in Cleveland are over.



Basterd #3: Leon Williams

In many ways, Leon Williams is the perfect symbol of the Phil Savage era. Williams is athletic, has good size and possesses decent quickness for a linebacker. However, like many of Savage's draft picks, the ideal role for him could never be fully determined. What was he, exactly? He wasn't physical

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enough to play inside linebacker and wasn't the kind of outside pass rusher that the 3-4 defense demands. Adding to the ambiguity is the fact that Williams just never caught on to what the Browns were doing defensively.

Much like Brodney Pool is kind of a safety and Melia Purcell is not a defensive lineman, Savage picked Williams based on his athleticism, which often translates to unknown potential. After three years in the league, Williams remains an unknown quantity.

Enter Eric Mangini and his band of ex-patriate Jet linebackers and it appears that the writing is on the wall for Williams. Of course, David Bowens and Eric Barton do not signal a polar shift in production for the Browns, but these two veterans offer loyalty, familiarity with the system, and most important...loyalty. Throw in rookies David Veikune and Kaluka Maivia and it appears that Leon Williams will be watching NFL games from another team's sidelines in 2009.

Of course, I've been wrong before. Shaun Smith could finally wake up and realize that with a little work, he could become a productive member of a surprisingly deep defensive line rotation. Hank Fraley could plug away for another year, before Alex Mack takes over for the future. And of course, Leon Williams could....well, he'll be cut.

After all, Lt. Aldo Raine is no match for General Napoleon Bonaparte.