

As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -

The following is Part Three in a series profiling the most essential positions that will determine success for the Browns in 2009. So far, our focus has been on the defensive side of the ball, as Linebackers and Defensive Line ranked first and second in terms of importance. Today, we shift away from the backbone of the team to profile the deliciously dandy fop encrusted wings of the roster, also known as the huge bag of hormones representing the wide receiver position. The following is Part Three in a series profiling the most essential positions that will determine success for the Browns in 2009. So far, our focus has been on the defensive side of the ball, as

[Linebackers](#)

and

[Defensive Line](#)

ranked first and second in terms of importance. Today, we shift away from the backbone of the team to profile the deliciously dandy fop encrusted wings of the roster, also known as the huge bag of hormones representing the wide receiver position.

Unfortunately for the Browns, the hopes of the passing game are not controlled by whichever quarterback not named Derek Anderson begins the year under center. Rather, they will be cradled in the hands of Cleveland's own bastard poetic spawn of W.H. Auden, Lord Byron and a young Amani Toomer. And yes, what a passionate night that was.

The further progression of Braylon Edwards as a game changing receiver, or perhaps the end of his 2008 arrested development is key to the Browns' offensive hopes in 2009. Considering the team will feature an untested quarterback under center and a very thin depth at running back, Edwards will be the focal point of the offense. The good news is that Edwards appears more focused and determined to prove himself in the eyes of his new coach, as well as in the esteem of teams around the league who may offer him a rich free agent prize next year. The bad news is that again, Braylon Edwards will be the focal point of the offense.

While Edwards certainly possesses top 5 receiver skills and natural ability, his consistency is frighteningly shaky. As potent as Braylon can be, he let the team down too many times with momentum-killing drops in 2008. Entering 2009, the Browns have to rely on Braylon making the routine catch, as in a bizarre twist of fate, or perhaps reflecting the more natural Browns cycle of installing a new coach every four years, Braylon finds himself as the veteran presence (under the age of 58) at his position.

As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -



Braylon's production in 2009 will likely determine the success of Brady Quinn, the development of secondary wide receivers, and also could dictate the potential for opening up the running game. In many ways, Braylon is the key to all facets of the

As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -

Browns' 2009 offense. And in case you were wondering...yes, I am very scared. If Braylon continues down the 2008 path to irrelevance, then the Browns offense will have to rely on one of the following players:

David Patten

Mike Furrey

Brian Robiskie

Mohammed Massaquoi

Josh Cribbs

Donte Stallworth

Paul Hubbard

Syndric Steptoe

Lance Leggett

Scared yet?

To further break down the secondary options at wide receiver, it is best to classify these players as one of the following:

Old

White

Rookie

Kick Returner

Criminal/Rich Professional Athlete

Project

Syndric

Camp Filler

So again, if Braylon cannot establish himself as a consistent target in 2009, then the Browns will need to rely on one of the above names. Or, if Braylon falls, then disaster follows. The problem here is that none of the secondary receivers are capable of becoming THE go-to guy. Obviously, Robiskie and Massaquoi's ceilings are undetermined, but becoming a productive rookie wide receiver is an almost impossible task.

So, if applying the "as Braylon goes, so goes the offense" theory, let's figure out who the best #2 option would be in 2009.

Starting with the rookies, it appears that Robiskie's intelligence, pedigree and

As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -

route-running skills would make him the natural fit across from Edwards. Of course, in a more ideal world, Robiskie could play the underneath, slot position and probably do pretty well as a rookie. However, since the Browns will feature the likes of slow-footed veterans such as Patten and Furrey, it would appear that Robiskie will start the year playing a more vertical role in the passing game.

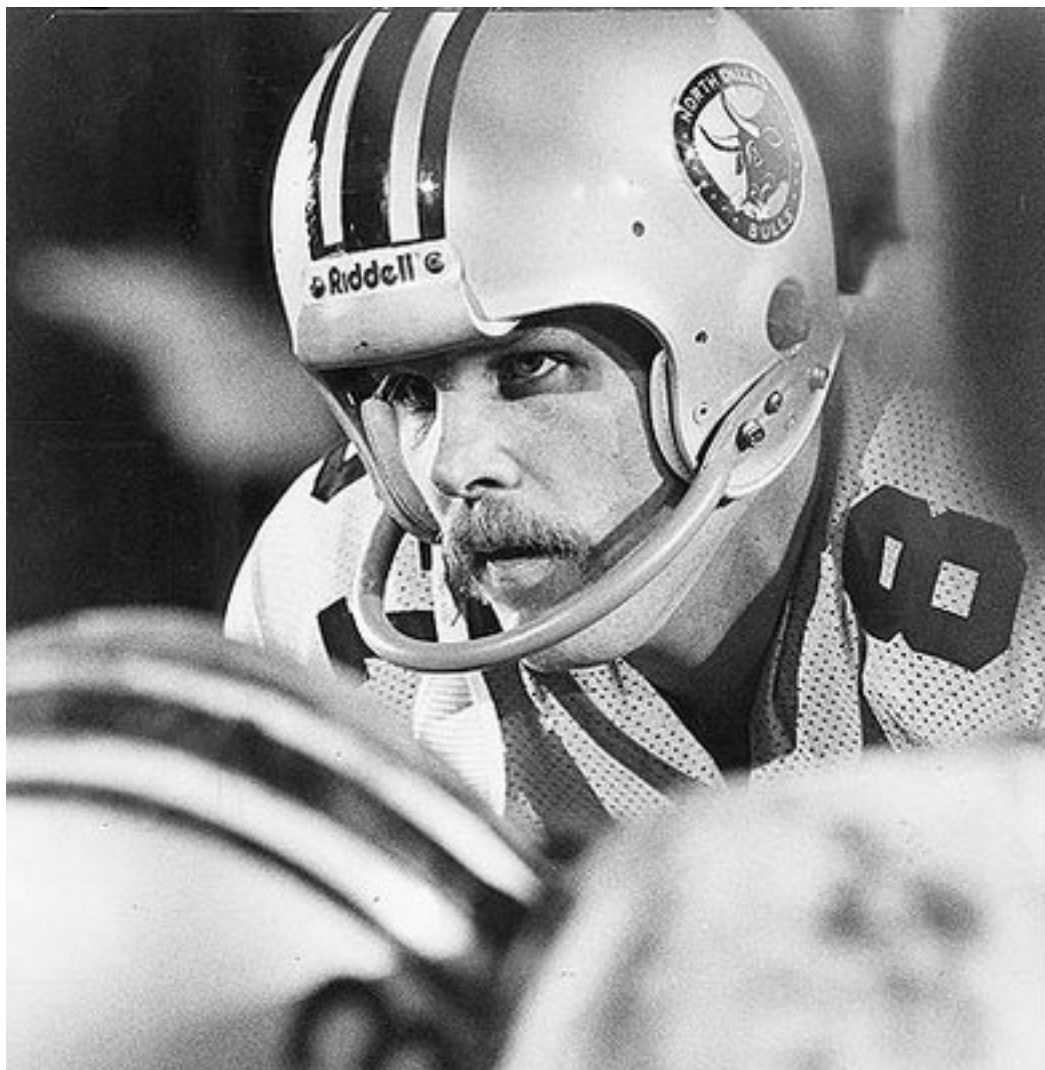
The same could be said for Massaquoi. Massaquoi has a fairly similar skill set when compared with Robiskie, and it is possible that he is the more athletic of the two. However, in terms of 2009, it is likely that he may plummet into the depths of the bench, assuming again that Braylon and Robiskie establish themselves, leaving one of the veterans to man the slot positions. Unfortunately for the Browns, Massaquoi's rookie season may be more of a Romeo Crennel-authorized learning process.

The signings of David Patten and Mike Furrey were basically the offensive equivalent to bringing in Corey Ivy and Hank Poteat on defense. Neither of these two wideouts will be on the 2010 version of the Browns, however they could play a pivotal role in 2009. I have always been a fan of David Patten, as he has a knack for finding holes in the defense's coverage and has proven to be an effective pass catcher.

However, Patten's success usually is the result of coverages that focus on more skilled wideouts...which unfortunately, the Browns do not currently possess. The exact same attributes could be given to Mike Furrey. In a sense, Patten and Furrey are pretty much the same player...which may result in one of the two not making the final roster. Of course, if the Browns were to comply with league rules requiring at least one white skill position player per roster, then the choice is obvious.

As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -



As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -

The rest of the depth at the position is a mixture of camp bodies, undefined potential and a depressingly vast, soulless, cap-sucking hole who wears #18.

Paul Hubbard, who cost the team a 5th round draft choice a few months ago, will be a good indicator of how much Romeo Crennel's refusal to play rookies cost the team over the past few years. Or, of course, the eventual release of Hubbard will vindicate Crennel's actions, as the ingredients given to him by Phil Savage were not exactly inspiring. Hubbard has great NFL size and decent speed, but will have to quickly prove to Mangini that he is worthy of a roster spot. Although Josh Cribbs has a sterling special teams resume, the same thoughts can be applied to him in terms of developing an all-around game...and justifying a new contract.

As for the rest, Syndric Steptoe and Lance Leggett are mere camp bodies, but considering the porous depth at receiver, one of the two could possibly make the roster. Further complicating matters is the backwards system of law currently in place in Florida. Although Donte Stallworth drunkenly killed a man with his car, it is a safe bet that one of his friends will be driving him to Berea starting sometime in early October.

America...Love it or Leave it.

IDEALLY...

Braylon Edwards puts his disasterous 2008 season behind him and becomes both a consistent third-down target as well as a big play threat for a rebuilding Browns offense. Braylon's presence allows Brady Quinn to flourish in his first season under center, while one of the two rookies establishes himself as a viable #2 option. Josh Cribbs receives some reps at wideout and contributes some game-changing plays throughout the season. David Patten/Mike Furrey contribute in 3 and 4 receiver sets, giving Quinn a comfort option on long passing downs.

BUT REALLY...

Braylon's ankle injury lingers through training camp, leaving him unprepared to start the season. His slide continues after suffering some early season drops, then is followed by another emotional breakdown. Robiskie and Massaquoi are overwhelmed trying to adjust to NFL play, and are not helped by trying to assume the role of featured receiver. Josh Cribbs again reminds us why he is strictly a kick returner. David Patten's calcium deposits limit his mobility and Mike Furrey

As It Stands Again - Wide Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Wednesday, June 17 2009 7:00 PM -

realizes that he is a 32-year old white guy playing in the NFL. And in yet another sign of the apocolypse, Syndric Steptoe starts a game for the Browns in December.

I don't enjoy being the bearer of bad news, but all hopes for a marginally successful 2009 offense center around Braylon Edwards. If Braylon cannot prove himself in 2009, then all the dominoes will crash. The Browns simply do not have much depth behind Braylon, and the players that are on the roster are merely complimentary. Braylon's 2009 will likely be a reflection of Brady Quinn's first full season as a starter....and if Braylon is ineffective, the Browns running game will not stand a chance in 2009.

As Braylon goes, so goes the rest of the position...and the offense.

What a cruel fate.