

Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -

While the first days of Browns training camp have been encouraging, especially considering the roster overhaul and implementation of a demanding head coach in Eric Mangini, there is still plenty of work to do. The sad reality of training camp is a realization that the 2009 season is basically a work in progress. Despite the personnel turnover, the Browns still face shortcomings at several key positions. In Dave's latest, he takes a fun look at some of the veteran roster filler on the '09 Browns. While the first days of Browns training camp have been encouraging, especially considering the roster overhaul and implementation of a demanding head coach in Eric Mangini, there is still plenty of work to do. The sad reality of training camp is a realization that the 2009 season is basically a work in progress. Despite the personnel turnover, the Browns still face shortcomings at several key positions.

Unfortunately for Browns fans, there is only so much a coach/GM such as Eric Mangini can do in one year. While Mangini has unquestionably delivered some change to a franchise in turmoil, his initial moves are just that - only the beginning. Unlike the 1980's playoff teams, the current Browns do not have the luxury of picking from the best of rival leagues such as the USFL. In 2009, once the draft ends and after a few cap casualties are revealed in late August, the rosters are pretty much set.

So, what is the alternative to adding quality players?

When in doubt, always remember that the government will save you. Perhaps the NFL could become part of the latest effort to help rebuild the American economy. Imagine the following headline:

Browns to Participate in Cash for Clunkers

While it is likely that the wildly popular National Highway Traffic Safety Administration cash rebate program was designed solely with aging automobiles in mind, it is not a stretch to suggest some modifications be made. Currently, the program is struggling to find additional funding and if there is anything to be learned by living an American life, it is that anything and everything can be taxed.

So, why not NFL players?

Assuming that the NFL's version of Cash for Clunkers would have an age requirement of at least 5 years, or a comparable mileage equivalent, the following Browns players could qualify for the program.

Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -

Or, in other words - how much can we get for the following clunkers?



Rusting, Gas Guzzling, Rear Wheel Drive, No CD Player:

Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -

David Patten
Hank Fraley
Ryan Tucker
Corey Ivy
Hank Poteat
Eric Barton
David Bowens

These players are basically the Ford Taurus or Chevy Blazers that have run into the ground. While once a great car, you have noticed lately that your driveway is beginning to resemble a wading pool of automotive fluids. Certainly, you have encountered some strange looks when you fire up the engine in the morning, then chug your way down the road with the belts flapping and steering wheel shaking violently. The biggest question you ask yourself is whether to investigate the latest odd noise the car is making...or just turn up the volume on the radio.

In the Browns case, while none of these players will likely be a part of the long term vision of Eric Mangini, all unfortunately could play a major role in the team's success in 2009.

With the exception of incumbent left side starters Joe Thomas and Eric Steinbach, the Browns line is undergoing a transition heading into the near future. While center Alex Mack is undergoing the usual rookie struggles in his first camp, the right side of the line is a toss up between the likes of Floyd Womack, John St. Clair and George Foster. Not exactly a comforting thought for a team intent on establishing a running game.

While Mack struggles, the value of Hank Fraley increases. While not exactly a dominating center, Fraley brings a ton of experience to the position. Fraley can easily hold down a starting spot for another season until Mack fully arrives. As for Ryan Tucker, getting rid of this high mileage truck may be kind of painful. While Tucker's body has not held up over the past few seasons, his presence in the lineup has been a vital part of the team's offensive fortunes.

It may be a little easier to let go of Ivy and Poteat. Both could be considered the equivalent of a once sporty ride that has felt the effects of salt encrusted winter roads. While Ivy has been impressive in camp so far, continuing to rely on vehicles such as these is a risky proposition. Think about the consequences of relying on Ivy and/or Poteat on a cold winter morning when you're already late for

Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -

work.



Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -

The same could be said regarding David Patten. Although considering the limited depth at wide receiver in 2009, the presence of Patten is a bit of a relief for a passing game that will see its share of struggles. While not a complete junker like Poteat, you have to wonder how many miles are left on Patten. But then again, some day the *Car Talk* guys will get a call that begins like this:

Caller:

I have a 1974 Pontiac Trans Am with 308,000 miles on it...

As for the others on the list, Barton and Bowens could be the NFL version of keeping a car around for spare parts. Both could be viewed as more valuable in terms of teaching younger players, or at least serving as a model to emulate. While Barton is an upgrade over Andra Davis, your basic Chevette of middle linebackers, his odometer is close to turning over. However, with the likes of David Veikune and Kaluka Maivia learning the NFL game, Barton's presence is valuable. As for Bowens, perhaps he could show a struggling Kamerion Wimbley how to properly turn around the corner.

Reliable, Yet Starting to Cost Some Money to Keep Running

Steve Heiden

Jamal Lewis

Robaire Smith

The above players are not quite yet junkers, but could easily go at any time. In terms of cars, both Jamal Lewis and Robaire Smith are like early model SUVs whose time is rapidly expiring. While Lewis remains the key to the Browns' ground game, his recent history of foot injuries is alarming, considering the weak depth at the position.

Heiden and Smith are largely unnoticed in terms of the Browns 2009 fortunes, but still remain incredibly valuable. Heiden should see his solid all-around game utilized more under Eric Mangini, at least compared to his reserve role during the K2 era. As for Robaire Smith, his presence as a healthy contributor helps to further solidify what could be a team strength in 2009.

Although the deals are really good now, perhaps we should hold onto these three.

Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -



Impulse Buy

Mike Furrey

Did I really need to buy that 1977 Camaro I found in the *Auto Trader* magazine? It looked so good after I cleaned it up and put new decals on it...but I never even drive it anymore. It really needs a tuneup and I just don't want to spend the

Cash For Clunkers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Wednesday, August 12 2009 7:00 PM -

money. Plus, it's not even all that fast. You know what? I'm going to see what I can get for it.

Despite the lack of depth at wideout this year, I'm still not sold on Mike Furrey. What exactly does he bring to this roster? The "book" on Furrey is that he is sure-handed, a good route runner and a great chemistry guy...which of course, is the standard definition given to any white, veteran NFL receiver. But of the above qualities, it would appear that ideally Brian Robiskie would suitably fill this role, or at the least, the Browns could rely on the ageless David Patten.

Let's see what we can get for an old Furrey.

Nice Looking Pinto Class

Phil Dawson

So, here's a question for you. If you had the money, would you restore a 1975 Pinto? Or, is such a thing possible? Why not just take the money and spend it on upgrading your everyday car? Basically, if the Pinto is there - great. If not, whatever...no big deal.

So it goes with Phil Dawson. If Dawson is in camp and not complaining about an already generous contract for a kicker, things are good. If Dawson truly thinks he is worth more money, well...that's fine, too. Much like old cars, kickers are a dime a dozen.

And as it stands now, the Browns can use all the dimes possible. There is a lot of work to be done in Berea.