

The Hippie vs. The Alpha Male

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Friday, August 14 2009 7:00 PM -

The pre-season kicks off tonight at 8 PM in Lambeau Field, and with it, so does the annual quarterback soap opera here on the north coast. In one corner stands the strong armed, laid back, late round draft pick from Oregon State who found his way onto Phil Savage's practice squad and then later rose to brief stardom in 2007. In the other corner stands the good looking, #1 draft pick from Notre Dame with the Adonis body that grew up rooting for the Browns. Dave K sizes up the combatants for our readers as we get ready for kickoff tonight. In a further sign of the apocalypse, I was the featured guest on Sports Jabber Radio's Wednesday night NFL show,

[Episode 40](#)

, which focused on the AFC North as a whole. Thanks to the wonderful people at [SportsJabber.net](#) and host Mark Randa, the entire experience was a most welcome change, considering my main source of communication most days is yelling into a garbage can.

While the show covered many areas of the AFC North, the primary focus was on the Browns current rebuilding project helmed by Eric Mangini. After discussing the vast differences seen in training camp under Mangini, compared to Romeo Crennel, the talk naturally shifted to a very familiar topic buzzing around the Cleveland sports community...

"So, who's going to be the quarterback?"

Of course, much like anyone else not named Eric Mangini, I can only offer speculation. However, thanks to TheOBR.com's Steve King, at least I now have a new way to frame the QB debate.

[As The Signal Caller Turns...](#)

Browns Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Jim Brown, now back with his old team as executive advisor, once called quarterback Derek Anderson "a hippie" for his laid-back approach to things.

Thank you Steve King and thank you Jim Brown.

Coming from the legendary running back who played a major role in the seismic 1960's social and cultural shift, this labeling certainly carries some authority. While Brown helped to revolutionize his position on the football field, his work in trying to build more self-sustained and prosperous black communities is probably even more remarkable, considering the racial and socioeconomic climate at the time.

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Or, in other words...if anyone has the credibility to make such a cultural statement, perhaps it is Brown. Brown's post NFL and Hollywood career has been devoted to transforming inner cities into more liveable areas. Disagree if you like, but would anyone want to challenge a man like Jim Brown? Even in his seventies, Brown

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still looks like he could handle 10-15 carries a game.

Anyway, as it relates to the current Browns situation, perhaps a new labeling of the QB battle could be viewed as this:

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In one corner stands the strong armed, late round draft pick who found his way onto Phil Savage's practice squad and then later rose to brief stardom in 2007. Anderson's laid back nature served as a great backdrop to the Browns surprise run of a few seasons ago, as he rode along with a mega-personality laden offense to the brink of the playoffs. According to King, DA's hands off approach proved successful, at least back when the team wasn't facing huge expectations.

But if he wants to win the open competition with Brady Quinn for the starting job, then he has to make sure that "peace, love and togetherness" keeps resonating through his helmet microphone when he gets a chance to play in the preseason, beginning with Saturday night's opener against the host Green Bay Packers.

For when Anderson is a hippie - when he throws caution to the wind and just lets 'er rip without a care in the world - then he's at his best. He said as much after Wednesday's training camp practice.

"I was pressing in the spring for a lot of different reasons," Anderson pointed out. "But now I've figured out that I've got to look at it as whatever happens, happens. I'm just going to put my best foot forward and not get caught up in everything.

"When I take myself too seriously, things don't go too well."

For Anderson's sake, and potentially in the better interests of the offense as a whole, let's hope he's taking the initially brutal Camp Mangini with a grain of salt. If 2008 showed us anything about Anderson, it is that he tends to wilt under the pressures of success.

The Plain Dealer's Mary Kay Cabot also seems to have noticed...or perhaps she is just well-read.

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Fresh Attitude Keeps Cleveland Browns Quarterback Derek Anderson Smiling at Camp

Derek Anderson's scowl has been replaced with a grin and his limp with a spring in his step.

The downtrodden Browns quarterback who already looked defeated in organized team activities and minicamps in May and June is gone, and the goofy, happy-go-lucky guy who surprised the NFL with nine victories and 29 TD passes in 2007 is back.

Anderson admitted Wednesday that he showed up for training camp July 31 with a different mind-set than when he left in June.



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Although despite the obvious examples of Anderson not handling pressure well over the past two seasons, you have to admit that if he is relaxed during what it is a fairly intense QB competition, it signals one of the following:

1. Anderson is the most laid back player in the history of the franchise.
2. Anderson knows something about the QB competition that the rest of us don't.
3. Anderson has achieved a Bill Walton level of Zen.

Or, perhaps this ["conspiracy theory."](#)

4. Anderson is really a "square" working deep undercover as a spy.

As for Quinn, his personality seems to be miles apart from Anderson's. So far in his short NFL career, Quinn appears to be the model modern NFL QB in terms of his study habits, workout regimen and overall demeanor. On the surface, Quinn emerges as the more natural leader of the two, but of course, his limited body of work has left his potential frustratingly undefined.

Continuing the vintage Jim Brown analogy, perhaps we can suggest that Quinn represents more of the clean cut Johnny Unitas to DA's Broadway Joe...or perhaps an early Terry Bradshaw.

In viewing the intangibles that the current great NFL QB's bring to the position, which include a mastery of offensive schemes, workmanlike preparation and unflinching demand for perfection in their teammates, it is not a stretch to suggest that Quinn has already won the starting job in Cleveland.

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However, as Anderson admits, perhaps overdoing it creates the biggest barrier to success.

In Quinn's case, it is easy to envision the young QB being too stuck in the playbook to actually make plays. Or, in terms of his intense workout sessions, it is possible that Quinn could easily snap a biceps tendon by merely throwing a 15 yard out route. When seeing Quinn play, I have discomfoting visions of a player suffering from information overload...kind of like Peyton Manning so concerned about confusing the defense that he forgets which play he actually called.

Perhaps Brady could learn something from the Tao of DA.

So, here is the new choice - same as the old one - just repackaged. Who will lead the Browns offense out of the darkness of 2008 and into the limits of mediocrity. Will it be the Hippie or Alpha Male?

Well, I still don't know. Do you?

So until science...or perhaps Eric Mangini...can figure out how to fuse the best qualities of both Quinn and DA into one uber-quarterback, it looks like the debate will continue on into September.

But at least now, we have a new way to label the drama.