

Simply put, that was ugly. Since the arrival of Eric Mangini in Berea some eight months ago, the entire tone and atmosphere surrounding the team has been completely different. However, watching the Browns first-team defense last night, it wasn't even obvious that the team has a new head coach. And the offense? Improbably, as offensive as the last six games of last season, when the team failed to score a TD. Dave Kolonich recaps last night's mess. So, before I gather my life savings and take the ["under"](#), let's try to answer some questions that I posed in yesterday's column

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6. Despite the results of tonight's game, what will fans and media focus on more...the Browns defense, new offensive philosophy or the QB controversy?

Although the question was framed to poke fun at our insatiable desire to solve the quarterback quandary, who knew that most fans would be lamenting what looks to be another year of defensive misery?

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At times, it appeared that the stain of Romeo Crennel permeated through this team, as Green Bay's Aaron Rodgers had a full 7-8 seconds to make his reads. The Browns usual four-man rush failed to produce any real pressure and the corners were taxed much in the same ways they have been in the past.

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Written by {ga=davekolonich}
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Obviously, it's only preseason and the coaching staff is not going to show all of their schemes and packages on the first night. However, for a team that is seemingly intent on becoming more aggressive on the defensive side of the ball, last night's performance was an exercise in vanilla self-preservation.

As for some other areas of note...

5. Is the roster truly set? I will be intently watching the Browns safeties tonight to see how Abe Elam fares against a really good deep threat in Greg Jennings. The book on Elam so far is that he is great against the run, but struggles in coverage. His play tonight could force Mangini to dip into the free agent pool and maybe find some more help at the position.

If the Donald Driver touchdown reception is any indication, Abe Elam should prepare himself for a long year at safety. Again, it's only the first game of preseason, but let's hope the Browns will be watching some of the roster cuts around the league in the coming weeks. As Rob Ryan has already stated, depth at the safety position is a concern.

3. If the young wideouts fail to impress tonight, then expect to see a lot more of David Patten and Mike Furrey for the rest of camp.

I guess this one is a little more muddled, since the overall play of the quarterbacks was disappointing. Although I'm cringing while typing this, Furrey was probably the most consistent of the Browns receivers last night. Although there is a lot of promise at the position with Massaquoi and Robiskie, as I've stated numerous times...the learning curve for a rookie wideout is steep. Expect to see a lot of fans wearing Furrey jerseys at the Stadium this year...for a variety of reasons.

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2. If the starting offensive line unit plays well tonight, then that same unit should continue to progress together throughout camp. Or, in other words, whoever starts

tonight should remain a starter in the coming weeks. This could mean that Hank Fraley will continue to start over Alex Mack, and the days of Ryan Tucker as a Brown could be coming to an end.

Expect Alex Mack to run his share of laps on Monday. The rookie gave an uneven initial appearance and cost his team ten yards with a penalty. So it goes with a rookie lineman. As for the rest of the line, Womack and St. Clair looked decent, but the Browns run game was pretty much non-existent. Was this the result of poor blocking or poor depth at the running back position? Hopefully, this question will get answered in the coming weeks.

1. Nothing will be settled at the QB spot after this game. I doubt Eric Mangini will see enough to warrant choosing his starter for the year. Again, any gains the offense makes tonight could be more the result of playing against a defense who is trying to forge a new 3-4 identity.

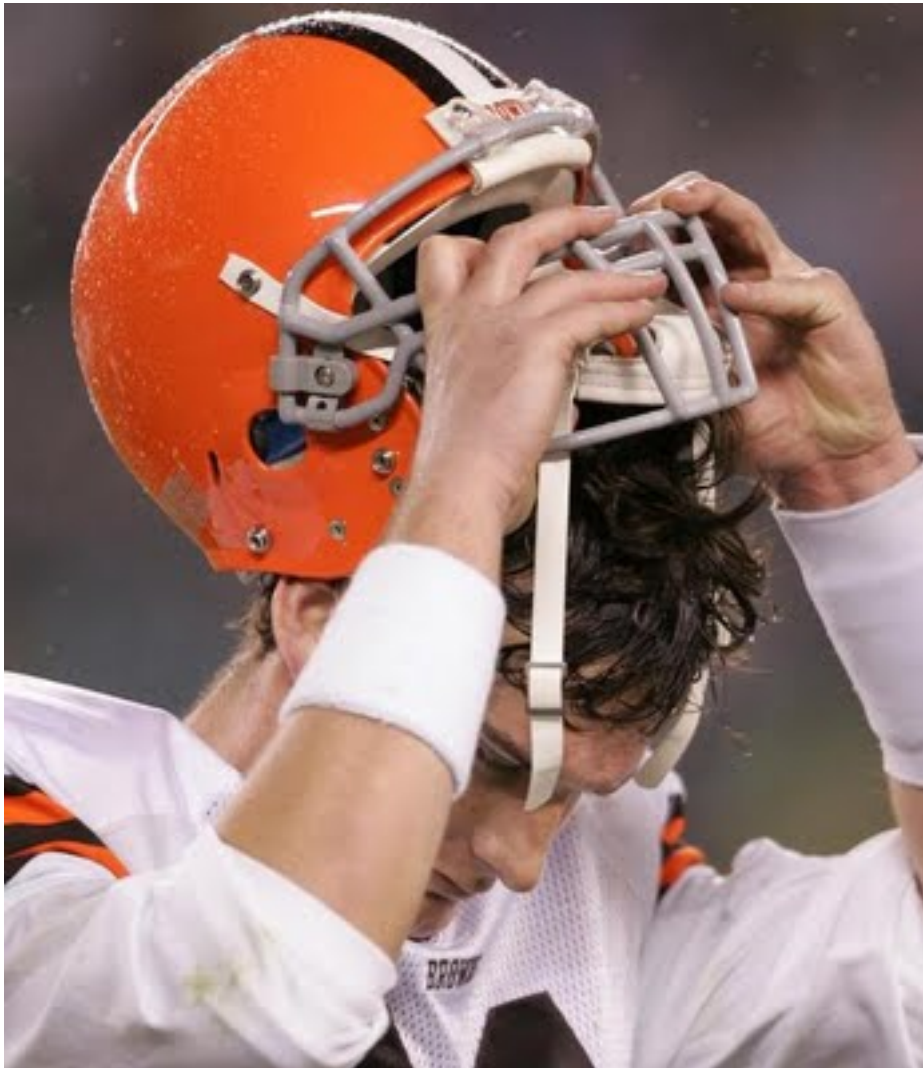
On the surface, it looks like I was way off on this pick. Instead of the Browns offense making gains against a transitioning Packer defense, the exact opposite occurred. Since the Packer defense held the inept Browns offense scoreless, now it's the Packers who should be confused about their own legitimacy.

As for the million dollar question, Quinn would appear to be the leader based solely on his receiving more snaps than Anderson. While Quinn was not dominant, he appeared to be poised in the pocket and showed some good footwork. His underneath throws were largely on target and his only mistake came when he tried to force an endzone throw...one play after Braylon Edwards dropped a touchdown pass.

It's hard to truly evaluate Anderson, since he barely played. He did look kind of rattled on a couple plays, but again, who can really make such a claim based on very little evidence?

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However, one truth that revealed itself last night is the incredibly raw nature of Brett Ratliff as an NFL quarterback. Ratliff struggled mightily in the second half and never looked comfortable in the pocket. While I had fanciful offseason visions of Ratliff asserting himself as the #2 quarterback, thanks to a trade involving Derek Anderson, it now appears that neither quarterback is going anywhere...and that may not be a comforting thought.

The Pick - Part 3

So, while it is a little too early to panic, it's never too late to reflect upon how this year's Browns are eerily similar to last year's model. Going back to November, the offensive drought continues. The Browns have not scored a touchdown in almost one full calendar year. Just think about that statement. Alright, that's enough - stop thinking about it.

Now the question that needs an immediate answer regarding our Browns is how Eric Mangini and his staff responds this week. I can only imagine that training camp will become a house of horrors for the players who put on last night's dismal performance. While running laps will be the first order of the day, let's hope that the coaching staff begins to further unravel what went wrong in Green Bay.

The optimist in me feels that perhaps Mangini didn't want to reveal much more than a basic offensive and defensive package last night. Call it the Romeo Crennel Approach, but I got the feeling that we haven't seen half of what Mangini will bring out for the regular season. Hopefully, this explains the vanilla defensive approach and lethargic offense.

Otherwise, we're in for another long year.