

With Trent Dilfer now in San Francisco, the Browns are left with just a relatively untested Ken Dorsey backing up Charlie Frye. Romeo Crennel hinted that the team will look to bring in Vinny Testaverde later in training camp, and Papa Cass likes that idea given the alternatives. In this opinion piece, Cassano argues that Charlie needs a veteran influence in his life, and bringing back Vinnie also makes peace with the past after his first go round here led to the departure of Bernie.



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The departure of Trent Dilfer was definitely addition by subtraction. But it still opened up a big hole on the Browns' bench.

Dilfer whined his way out of Cleveland this spring when it became apparent he was going to be backing up Charlie Frye. The trade that sent Dilfer to San Francisco left the Browns with little-proven Frye as the starter, and Ken Dorsey as his primary backup.

The last time I checked, Dorsey was still picking grass out of his teeth from the 2002 national championship game. Based on his NFL performance so far, he is still having nightmares about the Ohio State defense. If he's going to remain in Ohio for any length of time, I suggest weekly therapy sessions.

So it doesn't take a clairvoyant to see the Browns could really use a veteran to back up Frye. Don't say "Kerry Collins." He's holding out for a starting job until the last minute. If I'm the Browns, I'm not about to wait until the last days of summer for a walking interception machine to make up his mind, take my money, and sit on the bench for 16 games.

No, if the Browns are going to sign a walking interception machine, I want it to be the man that made throwing the pickoff an art form. I want the man who once chucked the ball away on fourth down during a last-ditch drive against Pittsburgh in the playoffs.

I want the man who scored the first touchdown in Baltimore Ravens history, then handed the ball to a fan in the stands, reportedly saying after the game, "If I would have known it was important, I would have kept it."

I want Vinny Testaverde. And apparently, so do the Browns.

Nothing is set in stone, and Testaverde, 42, probably wouldn't seriously consider signing until near the start of the season, but The Plain Dealer reported today the seeds are being sown. Testaverde might join the exclusive club of players who have played for both Browns franchises. And, all poking fun aside, he might actually be able to help.

Unlike Dilfer, who rode a dominant Ravens defense to a Super Bowl title but has little else to show over his career, Testaverde has been a productive quarterback for two decades. He has suffered through the bad times in Tampa Bay and Cleveland, and has risen to the cusp of the Super Bowl with Bill Parcells' Jets.

He can't lace up his cleats and take a beating over the course of 16 games anymore, but he can join an accomplished group of veterans who have joined the Browns as player-mentors.

What Willie McGinest can be to Kamerion Wimbley, what Ted Washington can be to Babatunde Oshinowo, Testaverde can be to Frye, and maybe even Dorsey.

Veteran stability is something that has been lacking for the Browns ever since they re-entered the league. Testaverde, now something of an elder statesman, can add just that.

You might not think much of Testaverde. I might get a cheap laugh pointing out his various errors in judgment throughout his career. But when Parcells seeks you out not once, but twice, to quarterback his team, that speaks volumes in NFL circles.

A return to Cleveland would be an appropriate way for Testaverde to end his career. We have some patching up to do. Testaverde was under center for the dark days leading up to the Browns' move. He was the beneficiary of Bernie Kosar getting released. In a lot of ways, he was unfairly tied to the fan-alienating disaster the Browns became in the early '90s.

To have Testaverde back for the beginnings of what will hopefully be a great resurgence in Browns football would be a nice way to make peace with the past.