

## Ten Points: Browns/Vikings

Written by {ga=mrburns}

Thursday, September 17 2009 7:00 PM -

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We welcome Nick Allburn back to our front page for another year of Browns coverage as he unveils his new Ten Points column, where he makes, not surprisingly, ten points from the previous week's game. Nick was real happy with what he saw from new defensive coordinator Rob Ryan and new safety Abe Elam, who was all over the field. Brady Quinn, Braylon Edwards, and offensive coordinator Brian Daboll? Not as much. Nick hits on the Vikings game and looks ahead to the Broncos in this week's piece.



### 1. Rough day for Brady Quinn.

Sunday's game felt like the true start of the Brady Quinn era, and it didn't play out as most of us had hoped. There's no need to sugar coat it: Brady Quinn had a rough outing.

Quinn struggled to find a rhythm and was often erratic, although he didn't get very good protection and suffered from some questionable play calling.

Quinn finally got the Browns into the end zone on a late scoring drive when he hooked up with Robert Royal. Braylon Edwards had what appeared to be a touchdown catch in the second quarter, but the replay revealed that he went out of bounds and didn't re-establish himself in bounds, negating the catch.

Quinn's pass to Edwards on the deep sideline pattern was under-thrown.

In addition to his lone touchdown pass, Quinn threw one interception, along with several passes that were strong candidates to be picked off. In fairness, Quinn's interception was the result of miscommunication with Edwards, who Quinn thought was going to break outside.

When Edwards broke inside, Minnesota's Cedric Griffin had an easy pick.

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---

There's no way to know whether it was Quinn or Edwards who was wrong, but either way there's no excuse for that kind of discrepancy during the regular season.

Quinn's timing and communication problems can probably be partially attributed to splitting first team reps with Derek Anderson, and that's the risk you run with such a lengthy quarterback competition.

### 2. What about Brian (Daboll)?

It was just one game, but his play calling didn't do much to win me over. The early game plan seemed designed to keep pressure off of Brady Quinn, but it probably kept the Browns from building an early lead, so one could argue that it actually put more pressure on Quinn during the following quarters.

There were two early calls on 3rd-and-long (a shovel pass and a running back draw, both to James Davis) that were absolutely gutless. I understand wanting to put Brady Quinn in positive situations, but that's not always how things go in the NFL. You have to test a young quarterback to see how he handles adversity, too.

Third-and-long isn't a bizarre occurrence.

It's one thing if you're playing noodle-armed Ken Dorsey back there, but Quinn is a capable player, and Mangini must think so because he chose him to start.

Give the guy a shot!

The running game didn't seem particularly creative; we saw lots of mundane dives into the line, and Jamal Lewis is still too tentative looking for seams. Daboll needs to mix up the running plays and show more runs to the outside to keep the defense honest.

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And after seeing screen after screen in the pre-season, they seemed oddly rare in the opener.

One final comment on the offensive play-calling: Josh Cribbs needs to throw the ball. If Cribbs only runs the ball when he's on the field for the wildcat, defenses are going to get wise and stuff the box. There at least needs to be some shadow of a threat that Cribbs will throw, or he's going become less and less effective running out of the backfield.

### 3. Thanks for showing up, Braylon.

Once again, calling Braylon Edwards "uninspired" might be putting it lightly. Edwards only had one catch (to be fair, he had that touchdown called back), and wasn't exactly giving maximum effort on his blocks or on plays when he was less likely to get the ball. Particularly annoying were his two inexcusable penalties; a false start and a block in the back.

In Braylon's defense, he was seeing plenty of double coverage, but that doesn't explain the lackluster effort. All summer I kept harping on the fact that Edwards would kick things up a notch when the season rolled around and he was playing for his contract, but maybe I was wrong. Get it together Braylon!

[&quot;It's go time!&quot;](#)

### 4. Rob Ryan's a keeper.

It looks like we finally have a defensive coordinator who's willing to bring some heat on opposing quarterbacks! Ryan wasn't afraid to get creative with his blitzes, including several blitzes from the safety position.

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The blitzes weren't always effective, but that's the risk you run when you don't have great personnel.

Even with that in mind, I love the concept. Beating a good quarterback without pressure is almost impossible. It's difficult to cover for more than five or six seconds when you're dealing with good DBs, but when you have a dicey group like those on the Browns, you have to get creative finding ways to pressure the quarterback.

Romeo Crennel's defenses drove me nuts with the way they just sat back and let quarterbacks pick them apart.

As far as I'm concerned, Rob Ryan can be our DC as long as he wants the job.

### **5. The defense: a pleasant surprise.**

Like I mentioned earlier, the Browns were able to get some pressure on Brett Favre with various aggressive blitz packages, and they managed to record four sacks. If you just looked at the box score, you'd think the Browns' defense was thrashed, but that really wasn't the case.

The defense hung tough for more than a half, until they eventually wore down and Adrian Peterson had his way with them. The end result is hardly satisfactory, but there were some good things to take away from the defense's performance, first and foremost the tackling. We saw better tackling than we've seen from a Browns team in years.

That's not to say that guys didn't get beat every now and then, but even when they did we saw a little bit of extra effort to grab the ball carrier's leg and trip him up, or at least make him change direction and slow down so another defender could grab him.

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After just one week, at least we know how well this defense is *capable* of playing.

Now it's just a matter of doing it for a full game.

The offense can help the defense out by keeping them off the field for awhile, too.

The Browns lost the time of possession battle by almost seven minutes, and the defense was definitely sucking wind in the second half, contributing to their collapse.

### 6. Big Baby, ready to roll.

Apparently Shaun Rogers wasn't feeling the effects of any rust or any lingering effects of his mysterious pre-season injury (read: he was never really hurt in the first place), because he made four tackles and recorded a sack. As we've come to expect, Rogers made life tough for Minnesota's interior line.

Considering the drama Rogers tried to concoct with Mangini over the winter (I, among others, called it), this is a great sign. It's nice to get one right now and then.

### 7. Abram Elam, playmaker.

Abram Elam didn't look very good in the pre-season, and in fact he was burned a couple of times. But Eric Mangini must have felt a little vindicated by Elam's excellent play on Sunday.

Elam made a very heads up play to grab the opening kickoff when Minnesota attempted a goofy squib/onside kick. He also added a sack on one of the aforementioned safety blitzes, and led the team in tackles with seven.

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It is less than ideal to see a safety lead your team in tackles, but at least Elam had a good game.

Given the way the Browns crashed and burned in the second half, I'll take it.

### 8. ["You know that I could USE somebody!"](#)

My group and I heard that Kings of Leon song approximately 27 times between tailgating and driving home, and it became a running joke. The Browns could use somebody too, namely a number two receiver.

I wasn't very complimentary of Braylon Edwards, but even when he's not on his game his mere presence is a threat that the defense has to respect. But when there's nobody on the other side of Edwards, he's going to see too many double teams to have a productive game, and that's what happened in the opener.

Josh Cribbs and Mike Furrey combined for 6 catches for 38 yards.

That's fine if you're platooning those two as the slot option, but the Browns need to put somebody opposite Edwards who's a legitimate threat, and who (hopefully) can take some of the heat off Edwards.

(Mo Massaquoi, I'm talking to you.)

### 9. **We need some perspective.**

Considering how the Browns crashed and burned in the second half, we naturally left this game feeling pretty down. That said, the Browns are not as lousy as they played in the second half. The flip side is that they probably aren't as good as the first half score would indicate, either.

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Minnesota has a strong club again this season, and their strengths (running game, defensive line) matched up well against the Browns' weak run defense, questionable offensive line, and inexperienced quarterback. Full disclosure: I had myself psyched up that the Browns could win this game based mostly on the "any given Sunday" concept that's often true in the NFL.

But if I had been an objective outsider, I would have bet heavily against the Browns, due to the way the Vikings' strengths took advantage of their weaknesses, and because the Vikings are simply a much more talented team this season.

### 10. Up Next: at Denver Broncos, 4:15

There aren't going to be lots of games this year when the Browns are equal to or superior to their opponents, talent-wise. In my estimation, this is one of those weeks, and the Browns need to take full advantage.

I expect to see a heavy dose of Jamal Lewis this week, as Lewis was quietly effective against the Vikings. If James Davis has totally recovered from his head injury (car crash), he should look better this time out.

Champ Bailey will provide a serious challenge for Brady Quinn and Braylon Edwards, and it will be interesting to see if one of the other receivers will step up and make an impact.

Because week three pits the Browns against the Ravens (in Baltimore), this game becomes crucial to maintain fan and player morale. If they win this game, then there's a pretty solid chance that the Browns could open 2-2, as they have the Bengals (home) in week 4. B

ut lose to the Donks, and you're staring down the barrel of 0-3 with tons of pressure to win that fourth game against the 'Nati.

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Three words have me picking the underdog Browns for the win: Kyle freaking Orton.

**Prediction: Browns 20, Broncos 16**