

Hide The Women & Children

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Sunday, October 11 2009 7:00 PM -

So, Browns Nation, which is better? An inspiring moral victory, such as the one we witnessed last week against Cincinnati, where the offense clicked and the team showed the energy of a real live football team, or an actual victory, such as the one the Browns just experienced, in which the entire contest resembled a turn of the century 108 round boxing match where neither contestant can truly claim a legitimate win? The answer is simply this: Who cares? At least we now know that this team is not going 0-16. Dave K hits on the Browns 6-3 victory over the Bills in his latest column for us. So, Browns Nation, which is better? An inspiring moral victory, such as the one we witnessed last week against Cincinnati, where the offense clicked and the team showed the energy of a real live football team, or an actual victory, such as the one the Browns just experienced, in which the entire contest resembled a turn of the century 108 round boxing match where neither contestant can truly claim a legitimate win?

The answer is simply this: Who cares? At least we now know that this team is not going 0-16.

And despite the fact that Browns fans are now punch drunk after witnessing perhaps the ugliest win in franchise history, the team finally has a win after nearly a year of fitful slumber, and perhaps some momentum, however wobbly it may be, headed into the heart of darkness portion of their schedule.

So, with a lot of ugly tattooed to my heart, let's break down what just happened.

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The Braylon Conspiracy

Now, I've figured out the real reason why Mangini shipped Braylon off this past week. Just ignore all the obvious reasons, such as Braylon's "me-first" attitude, horrendous inconsistency, hefty contract, propensity for punching nightclub owners, or even his alleged incident with Derek Anderson after the Bengals game - after witnessing the Browns revert back to the golden days of Army football, circa 1930, I can only assume that Mangini is up to one of the following:

1. He now views Jamal Lewis as the next in line for dismissal. However, the means of ridding the hard working veteran back from the roster is to simply destroy him on the field, rather than risk acquiring more negative press. And 31 carries is a good start.
2. The whole Braylon trade was a smokescreen for eventually justifying Mangini's first true love, which is taking delight in humiliating local media, who were forced to actually watch this alleged display of modern football.
3. Mangini is already lining up his next reconstruction project, which will occur in Toronto, by forcing Buffalo fans to begin a bloody coup against the ageless Ralph Wilson.
4. Being a coach who values team-first, ego-free football from his players, Mangini is clearly sending a message to potential standout receiver Mohammed Massaquoi to come back down to Earth. Call it the Nip it in the Bud Theory of Player Management.

Whatever true design Mangini has for this team, I will gladly accept a hard-fought win and quietly move on. Before pondering whether Mangini has virtually no confidence in his passing game, or was simply playing to what he felt were his team's specific gameplanning strengths against a banged up Bills defense, let's at least acknowledge the throwback effort shown by Jamal Lewis and the Browns defense.

Although never spectacular, Lewis carried the Browns' offense for an entire afternoon, which is no small feat, considering both the veteran back's brittle body, as well as the dismal current state of the passing offense. And before anyone begins serious lamentations regarding Jerome Harrison's lack of touches, let us

consider again that the Browns completed just two passes this afternoon.

Two. In one game.

If any modern football team accomplishes only this with their passing game, you better hope that your running game and defense shows up - along with a little luck.

Speaking of which...

God Bless You, Roscoe Parrish (and Dick Jauron)

And we all thought Braylon Edwards had some issues hanging onto the ball. While I'm certain that this didn't actually happen, Mangini should have left the Browns locker room and gave Parrish a game ball for his contributions today. While the left leg of Dave Zastudil certainly contributed to Parrish's problems - along with a nasty wind - the Browns wouldn't have sniffed the end zone without the diminutive one's help.

And for the record, the Browns still did not sniff the endzone.

Speaking of more game balls, Mangini would also be remiss to not offer Bills coach Dick Jauron a similar award. Only a team with the discipline issues that the Bills possess could have kept the Browns in this game for as long as they did. Although this may be a bit of a stretch, teams that commit 13 penalties and turn the ball over three times normally don't win many games.

Or, keep an emotionless coach around for much longer.

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The Defensive Massaquoi Effect

In searching for something to take from today's performance, other than a badly needed win, the defense rose to the occasion against the Bills' scattered, but still remotely dangerous offense. Although the Browns' special teams play, combined with the wind at Ralph Wilson Stadium, helped to pin down the Bills, the defense

turned in an ugly, yet surprisingly stellar performance.

For the second week in a row, the Browns defense showed further improvement on third downs, stalling Bills drives throughout the afternoon. The Browns showed brief flashes of a pass rush and generally covered the Bills bigger receivers well. And in a trait that is certainly a throwback to the Bill Belichick brand of football that this team is trying to emulate, the defense bent against the run, but never allowed the Buffalo backs to break off any huge gains.

Unlike the offensive "explosion" of a week ago, perhaps the Browns defense has finally reached a level of consistency under the leadership of Rob Ryan. While there were no particular breakout performances this week, unlike the emergence of Massaquoi last week on offense, the quiet resurgence of Kameron Wimbley continues, while the likes of D'Quell Jackson and Eric Wright continue to provide quality play.

What Now?

Considering the turmoil that this franchise has experienced over the past calendar year, any type of win - albeit a historically ugly one - should be cherished. And considering that the Browns are headed for matchups with the Steelers and Packers in the coming weeks, a win now is monumental in terms of the franchise's overall health.

More specifically - and on a more optimistic note - the Browns have flashed some potential in a variety of ways over the past two games. While the Bengal game revealed that the team may have some offensive weapons lurking, today's win showed that this team may finally be reflecting some of the mental toughness acquired during the long weeks of training camp. To gut out an ugly win is both a mental and physical trait that successful teams must possess in order to compete.

And now that I think about it - I'll take a real win over a moral victory any day.