

Old Faces In New Places

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Friday, December 04 2009 7:00 PM -

A 1-10 start to the season, a roster with more holes than a William Green alibi, a remaining schedule that features three playoff contenders, the continued ownership of Randy Lerner and endless speculation regarding 2010 are enough to make most mortal Brown fans hide in their closets until draft day. However, the one thing we have remaining as a Browns Nation is endless hope ... and half-baked ideas so crazy that they just might work. A 1-10 start to the season, a roster with more holes than a William Green alibi, a remaining schedule that features three playoff contenders, the continued ownership of Randy Lerner and endless speculation regarding 2010 are enough to make most mortal Brown fans hide in their closets until draft day.

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[Why Not Try Cribbs at Running Back?](#)

In some minds, it is no harm to try Cribbs at running back. What does Cleveland (1-10) have to lose heading into Sunday's game versus San Diego?

Starter Jamal Lewis and rookie James Davis are on injured reserve. Jerome Harrison, whose contract expires after the season, has 10 carries in the last five games. Chris Jennings is averaging 3.4 yards per carry. The passing game rarely gets anywhere.

Cribbs is averaging 6.0 yards on 30 rushes this year, mostly out of the "Wildcat" formation in which he takes direct snaps.

He counts none of what he has done as equating to a conventional running back.

"Conventional is they know I'm back there, and I'm gonna run it and gain yards regardless," he said.

"I think I'd be a hell of an asset at that position - and any other one as well."

And really, what would be the harm? The most dynamic feature of Josh Cribbs' game is no doubt his hard-charging, straight-ahead running, as evidenced by his record-setting number of career kick return touchdowns. So, why not try him at running back?

We've already seen Cribbs at wide receiver, and the results were less than stellar.

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The much-rumored off-season transition to safety never manifested itself and I think even the biggest Browns homers would admit that Cribbs is not NFL quarterback material.

And with depth that is limited to just Chris Jennings and Jerome Harrison at the moment, the Browns may as well try out this experiment.

Which got me to thinking - why not use these final games of the season as a test kitchen of sorts for a variety of Browns players?

After all, what else do we have to lose?

So in the spirit of...well, desperation...I offer the following "suggestions."



Corey Williams

After hearing about this, [Corey Williams Not Happy Since Day One](#), the most logical move Eric Mangini could make would be to shift Williams back to his more natural tackle role. Of course, the Browns' usual 3-4 scheme does not exactly fit Williams' skills, but then again, even the ultra-talented Shaun Rogers has been something of a misfit inside for nearly two seasons.

Ultimately, the best fit for Williams in Cleveland would be as an inside tackle playing in a four-man front. However, this scenario is unlikely to happen, unless the Browns completely change directions in the offseason. And even if a new regime and schemes are installed, Williams' hefty contract will likely make him a cap casualty come 2010.

And sorry about your unhappiness, Corey. That mega-contract Phil Savage gave you - is that the basis of your sorrows?

Sticking with the defense, how about some other changes?

Eric Wright

Wright is by far the most talented, consistent and productive corner on the Browns' roster. But, saying all the above pretty much equates to labeling Michael Gaines as the team's best tight end since Kellen Winslow. Empty praise, indeed.

Wright is a decent cover man, but in no way does he resemble a true top-flight corner. At best, Wright could be a serviceable second corner, assuming that the Browns add some much-needed help in their secondary in coming years. So, before Wright continues down the path of Brodney Pool, Andra Davis and Daylon McCutcheon - i.e., Browns defenders whose jobs are kept strictly because of the lack of better options - let's try Wright somewhere else.

How about free safety?

This could work. Wright is rangy, can cover a lot of ground and is pretty much the only player who flashes ball-hawk skills on the roster. Line him up next to a veteran safety pickup, or even a top prospect, such as Eric Berry and Wright could flourish. Perhaps for the first time in over twenty years, the Browns could finally feature a game-changer in the deep secondary - or at the least, someone who

can keep receivers in front of him.

D'Qwell Jackson

I've gained a lot of respect for Jackson over the past two years, and obviously the Browns defense has suffered without him this past month, but the cruel irony is this - Jackson will never reach his full potential at middle linebacker. Because of the Browns' flawed defensive scheme and utter lack of playmakers at the linebacker spot, Jackson is destined to remain nothing more than an above-average player.

Consider that until the Browns find a capable middle linebacker partner for Jackson, the run defense will continue to struggle. Jackson is not the ideal run-stuffer, despite his progressive bulking up of the past few seasons. His style of play almost demands a burly, Ted Johnson-esque player to parter with. Otherwise, Jackson will continue to languish behind the Browns line.

And if a switch to a four man front occurs anytime in the future, Jackson is still not the ideal middle man. Simply put, while mobile - Jackson is not bulky enough to handle such a load. However, I can imagine Jackson playing an outside spot in a scheme that is more reflective of some Cover-2 fronts. Jackson's size is almost ideal for an outside spot in a more natural defense.

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Kamerion Wimbley

And if Jackson moves to the outside, why not move Wimbley back to his natural defensive end spot? Assuming again that the Browns morph into a more conventional defense, Wimbley could flourish as a defensive end, and not just because of his upbringing and natural pass rushing skills.

Perhaps the biggest improvement in Wimbley's game this year has come in run support. Wimbley has proven that he can be the player who sets the edge along the defensive front, as envisioned by the rare games where Willie McGinest was healthy in past years.

And much like Jackson, until Wimbley gets some help from the presence of an additional pass rusher, he will continue to be a nice player, but never anything special. Or, put it this way - would you rather have Wimbley dropping into coverage or pushing forward on each play?

Jason Trusnik

Trusnik's inclusion is solely designed to ruffle the feathers of Browns fans who view the Division III linebacker's tackle totals as some sign of team progress. So, having said that, the only natural position for Trusnik to assume is that of a special teams cover man. You know, like he would be now if the Browns had more talent.

Brian Robiskie

We already know about Mike Furrey's transformation as a legitimate nickel safety, so why not try the same with Robiskie? Obviously, he's never going to consistently take the field as a receiver, so what's the harm? And since we can't pretend that Robiskie never signed a contract and return him to the draft, we're pretty much stuck.

Jerome Harrison

After watching the past 5-6 games, I came up with a wild idea: why don't the Browns try Harrison at running back? I know it's crazy...

Brady Quinn

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Meet your new H-Back. Did you see Quinn's running and catching skills last week? Seriously - Lawrence Vickers, you are officially on notice.

Brandon McDonald

McDonald's play warrants the creation of an off-field position, that of tackling dummy. At the least, McDonald will now be involved in the process.

Ryan Pontbriand

And if you think all of my suggestions are completely off-base, consider that Pontbriand gives the Browns a best chance for a Pro Bowler this year. How about we just go ahead and make him the team's most valuable player?

After all, what do we have to lose?