

Who WERE These Guys?

Written by {ga=godhatesclevelandsports}

Saturday, December 19 2009 7:00 PM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 2:38 PM

He might not have had a whole lot to do with the Browns' 13-6 victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers two Thursday nights ago, but Brady Quinn now gets a prominent spot in the annals of the rivalry. His 48.1 quarterback rating will soon be forgotten as we bask in the glory of a victory over the Steelers --- the first in six years and the first in Cleveland in nearly a decade. There have been some great starting quarterbacks in the 50-plus years of Cleveland vs. Pittsburgh. And there have been some real dogs, guys whose mothers barely even remember that they started a Browns/Steelers game. Which list will Brady Quinn join? While pondering that, consider this Top 10 list of the Most Irrelevant Starting Quarterbacks in the history of the Browns/Steelers rivalry.



He might not have had a whole lot to do with the Browns' 13-6 victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers two Thursday nights ago, but Brady Quinn now gets a prominent spot in the annals of the rivalry. In just [his first game against the Steelers](#) , Quinn completed just 6-of-19 passes for 90 yards. His big feats were not turning the ball over, taking just one sack, and providing a leadership role for a moribund team that needed it like most Clevelanders need a snow shovel. His 48.1 quarterback rating will soon be forgotten as we bask in the glory of a victory over the Steelers --- the first in six years and the first in Cleveland in nearly a decade.

It's been so long since the Browns beat the Steelers mainly because of the turnover at quarterback. The position has been as stable as a Jenga tower since the Browns returned. This is the fifth consecutive year that the Browns have used a different starter in each of the two Steelers games. Not since 2004 when Jeff Garcia started for the Browns has the team started the same quarterback twice against the Steelers in the same year.

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Since then it's been a revolving door of Charlie Frye, Derek Anderson, and Quinn with guys like Bruce Gradkowski and Trent Dilfer sprinkled in. Meanwhile, Steelers quarterback [Ben Roethlisberger is 10-0 against the Browns](#)

Does anyone really wonder why the Steelers won 12 straight in the series?

There have been some great starting quarterbacks in the 50-plus years of Cleveland vs. Pittsburgh. Roethlisberger is one of them. There have been Hall of Famers like Otto Graham and Terry Bradshaw, legends like Bernie Kosar, MVPs like Brian Sipe. And there have been some real dogs, guys whose mothers barely even remember that they started a Browns/Steelers game.

Which list will Brady Quinn join? Hey, he beat the Steelers. That's more than can be said for almost every quarterback the Browns have featured since their return. But Eric Mangini hasn't seemed especially fond of either of his quarterbacks all year long. Who knows if a few good games and a win over the Steelers will stop the Browns from spending a high draft pick on a quarterback next year.

While pondering that, consider this Top 10 list of the Most Irrelevant Starting Quarterbacks in the history of the Browns/Steelers rivalry:

10. TRENT DILFER

He's not irrelevant in the grand scheme of things -- after all, he did lead the Baltimore Ravens to a Super Bowl title -- but in Browns/Steelers history he barely merits a paragraph. Before riding off into the sunset after his one year with the Browns, Dilfer started one game against the Steelers. [It was, of course, a loss, 34-21.](#) Dilfer was just 17-of-34 for 253 yards with one touchdown and one interception. Dilfer's forgettable start against the Steelers, his overall blah year with the Browns in 2005, and his lack of a resume post-Cleveland land him on this list.

9. JEFF GARCIA

The beginning of the end of the Butch Davis era came with the signing of Jeff Garcia. Garcia brought more Playboy storylines to Cleveland than wins. First, he began dating Playboy Playmate and Avon Lake native Carmella DeCesare. [Then there was the catfight between Carmella and a former Garcia paramour.](#)

Then there was the Playboy interview where Terrell Owens insinuated that Garcia is gay. With all that, who even remembers that Garcia [started two games](#)

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against

[the Steelers in 2004](#)

? He went a combined 23-of-50 for 320 yards, one touchdown and one interception while suffering seven sacks. The Browns lost both games of course, holding only one 3-0 lead. The Steelers led by double digits for the entire second half of both games.

Garcia started just one more game for the Browns after his second Steelers loss. Then Garcia won just one of his next eight starts after leaving Cleveland. It of course was AGAINST the Browns while Garcia was with the Detroit Lions in 2005.

Garcia's the best overall quarterback on this list. But in the storied history of this rivalry he's merely noise.

8. BRUCE GRADKOWSKI

Well, he's certainly not irrelevant to the Steelers, not after leading the Oakland Raiders to a last-second 27-24 victory over Pittsburgh two Sunday's ago. He of course is irrelevant to the Steelers when playing for the Browns, though.

In the last game of 2008 Gradkowski passed for just 18 yards as the Steelers whipped the Browns 31-0. The only intrigue surrounding the game was wondering if Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger would make it out alive. He nearly didn't, suffering an injury toward the end of the half that sidelined him for the rest of the game. No matter -- Gradkowski was quarterbacking the Browns. It took almost 27 minutes of game time for Gradkowski to complete a pass, although Steeler defensive back Tyrone Carter did return an interception for a touchdown. Gradkowski finished 5-for-16 with two interceptions and a 1.0 quarterback rating.

Only Derek Anderson is jealous of those stats.

7. CHARLIE FRYE

Three starts against the Pittsburgh Steelers, all losses, not a single touchdown pass, and the

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Browns were outscored 99-27.

And he only ranks seventh on the Most Irrelevant Starting Quarterbacks list.

Well, you haven't seen the rest of the list yet.

At least Charlie Frye lasted long enough to start three games against the Steelers. Two of them were disasters, [especially the 34-7 season opening loss in 2007](#) which saw Frye quickly benched and then immediately traded to the Seattle Seahawks .

[The Browns also lost 41-0 to the Steelers](#) with Frye in 2005 and suffered [a heartbreaking, last-second, 24-20 loss in 2006.](#)

Looking back on the Charlie Frye Era all that comes to mind is what were they thinking?

6. TY DETMER

Not only is Ty Detmer the sixth most irrelevant starting quarterback in the Browns/Steelers rivalry, but also one of the most irrelevant NFL players of all time. He has 15 years of NFL experience but threw only 946 passes. That's just 63 per year! Quinn has thrown at least 31 passes each of the last four games. Not only is Detmer one of the most irrelevant starting quarterbacks in the rivalry, his start was also one of the most ignominious. [He started the Browns very first game in their return to the NFL in 1999](#) , a 43-0 whitewashing by the Steelers. Detmer went 6-for-13 for 52 yards with one interception and two sacks.

Head coach Chris Palmer deemed Detmer so bad that despite the fact that the new Browns had never played a game, Detmer needed to be benched in the fourth quarter. Enter Tim Couch. Ty Detmer wasn't seen again until the final three games of the season, and barely at all after leaving Cleveland. He started just four more games in his career.

5. KENT GRAHAM

For some reason the Steelers thought Kent Graham would make a good quarterback in 2000,

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after the New York Giants and Arizona Cardinals already decided he wouldn't. And the Giants had decided it twice. But there was Graham under center for the Steelers in Week 3 of 2000, taking a sack inside the 10-yard line with his team out of timeouts and down by three points. The clock ran out before the Steelers could attempt a game-tying field goal, [and the Browns had a 23-20 victory](#)

Graham is saved from a higher place on the irrelevancy list by Kordell Stewart. Graham got another start against the Browns in Week 8, but was yanked after going 3-of-12 for 46 yards. Stewart finished the game, [which Pittsburgh won 22-0](#). So even though Graham was pathetic in two starts, he actually gets credited for starting a victory. But he was totally irrelevant to the rest of the league after that second Browns game; he threw just 24 more passes for the rest of his career.

4. DOUG PEDERSON

And here's another reason Graham is saved from a higher spot on the irrelevancy list. Remember this guy? In the runaway-train season of 2000, Doug Pederson actually played more games than any other Browns quarterback. He was predictably awful, throwing two touchdown passes and eight interceptions.

But while here, he put up a forgettable performance. And it just happened to be in the most irrelevant game in Browns/Steelers history -- that Week 8 game where Kent Graham saw his Steelers career shoot up in flames. Kent Graham vs. Doug Pederson? No one would even turn out to watch that in a high school game. But where Graham was bad, Pederson was worse. He was replaced by Sperguson Wynn! In that 22-0 Steelers victory, Pederson went just 9-of-20 for 61 yards with 3 interceptions.

As soon as the season was over Pederson went back to carrying Brett Favre's clipboard, throwing just 54 irrelevant passes over his final four years.

3. CHUCK ORTMANN

Ortmann played just one year for the Steelers and two in the NFL. He played 12 games in 1951, the second year of the Browns/Steelers rivalry. One of those games was against the Browns, [a 28-0 loss](#)

. Ortmann's irrelevant stats: 13-of-27 for 136 yards. He may not have much of a place in history in this rivalry, but many Ohio State/Michigan followers know him as the record-holder for most punts in a game for the Wolverines. He booted the ball 24 times in Michigan's 9-3 Snow Bowl victory against the Buckeyes in 1950.

Perhaps the Browns were paying him back.

Ortmann moved on to the Dallas Texans in 1952 and played just three more irrelevant games

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before fading into obscurity.

2. ERIC ZEIER

If you remembered that Eric Zeier played for the Cleveland Browns, you're a true fan. If you remembered that Eric Zeier [once started a game against the Pittsburgh Steelers](#), you're a Browns diehard. If you remembered that Eric Zeier went 7-for-19 for 67 yards with an interception and a lost fumble and was sacked four times in a 20-3 loss to the Steelers during a Monday Night Football contest on Nov. 13 of 1995, well, you could probably use a few sympathy cards.

What you probably remember most about that November 13, 1995 game is that it came on the heels of [Art Modell announcing the Browns were moving to Baltimore](#). Just a week earlier, the day after the Browns lost 31-20 to the Green Bay Packers to fall to 4-7, Modell stood along with then Maryland governor Paris Glendening at the site of what now is the Baltimore Ravens' stadium and broke Clevelanders' hearts by confirming that the Browns were moving.

That you remember.

A week later Zeier made just his third career start. He had been drafted by then-coach Bill Belichick in the third round in 1995. Zeier showed promise in his first start two weeks earlier, throwing for 310 yards and a touchdown in a 29-26 overtime victory against the Cincinnati Bengals. But that was pretty much his career highlight. By mid-November, the Browns were on their way to Baltimore and the Steelers were on their way to the Super Bowl. Zeier threw for just five yards in the second half and received just one more start as a Brown. He did start eight more games for the Ravens and Tampa Bay Buccaneer over the ensuing four years, winning three of them.

Today, [Zeier works as a color analyst for Georgia Bulldogs football games](#).

1. DON GAULT

Former nongreat Don Gault started a 1970 game for the Browns that goes down as one of the most irrelevant in the rivalry's history. [The Browns won the game 15-7](#), but it had nothing to do

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with Gault. He etched his place in the record books by going 1-for-16, setting a record that still stands for most pass attempts in a game with just one completion. Even Derek Anderson completed two passes against the Buffalo Bills earlier this season.

While Gault is long forgotten, the game is remembered as Mike Phipps' first appearance for the Browns and Terry Bradshaw's first start in the storied rivalry.

There's a few other quarterbacks who just missed the list. There's Dr. Dave Mays, who went on to become a dentist. He led the Browns to victory in the famous 1976 game where Turkey Joe Jones dumped Terry Bradshaw on his head. But Mays didn't start that game; he replaced an injured Brian Sipe midway through. You've got Cliff Stoudt who quarterbacked the Steelers in 1983, but they (A) made the playoffs and (B) split with the Browns. Todd Blackledge quarterbacked one game for the Steelers against the Browns, winning it in the next-to-last start of his career. And of course there's Derek Anderson who could end up on the list. He's not completely irrelevant just yet as he's still on the Browns. But a Frye-like 0-3 record against the Steelers have him vying to break into the top 10.

No matter what happens for the rest of Quinn's career, he's off this list. The Browns may have 99 problems, but an irrelevant quarterback in the rivalry with the Steelers isn't one.