

Not only have the Browns won two games in row, but this latest win over the Chiefs had some serious historical significance, as Jerome Harrison broke Jim Brown's single game franchise rushing record, and Josh Cribbs set the NFL record for most kick returns by one player. In this week's holiday Outsider, Chris hits on the win, talks about the looming Holmgren Era, theorizes on what the Holmgren front office will look like, gives us his thoughts on who will be coaching the team next season, and talks about a potential switch back to the 4-3 and the ongoing George Kokinis soap opera. ***A View From The Cheap Seats***

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through Berea

Everyone was stirring, worried 'bout their caree-ahs.

Cuz here comes the Big Show, the new tippety-top

Coming to Cleveland to make the misery stop?

His mustache before him, his glasses askew

We all hope Holmgren Claus knows just what to do.

And what to my wondering eyes should appear?

It's a future with promise, not one to fear.

Lerner finally learned, it's shocking, I know

He finally has done something other than blow.

Do whatever it costs, whatever it takes

To get Holmgren Claus in here baking the cakes.

Holmgren Claus flies in and nothing's the same

He's cutting the dead weight; he calls them by name!

"Bye Poteat, bye Stuckey, bye McDonald and Royal!"

"Bye St. Clair, Bye Lewis, your career's under soil!"

Then he thought about what he should do with Mangini

The odds of his staying are really quite teeny.

But stranger things have happened, we all know it's true

Our last football decade has balls that are blue.

He's coming next week to say what's what and who's who

He's coming and bringing with him direction that's new.

And I heard him exclaim as he rode into town:

"Merry Christmas to all, let's throw some shots
down!"

I spent most of Sunday traipsing between the households of 3 separate family units. I watched the game in chunks, and listened to the rest on the radio. I had no problem with this arrangement since I always tape the games anyway. It wasn't until I arrived home that I realized I had not set the timer.

What I gleaned from my inconsistent media experience is that it was a game of momentum swings. The Browns would go up, then the D would give up horrific chunks of passing yardage, make some mistakes (bad snap on punt leads to TD), and get down. Then Josh Cribbs would bail their ass out with a TD return, and Jerome Harrison suddenly went hog wild.

Entering one domicile, I walked quickly to the TV screen to see what was going on (this residence already had the game on, so it wasn't like the other one where I had to ask them to turn off a re-run of Law & Order), only to see them flash Harrison's stats: 191 yards rushing to that point.

"191 yards! Is that total yards?" I babbled at my girlfriend's 90-year-old grandmother.

"No, I think that's just rushing yards. Holy crap! Wow, huh?

"

She just smiled at me.

I was in a gas station parking lot for the final drive, pumping gas, listening through the car window which I had opened (freezing the unwilling occupants out). It must've been very exciting to actually see, as I know I was hanging on Jim Donovan's every word.

Jerome Harrison scampered on the winning TD run while my girlfriend was in getting a water and some cigarettes. "*To uchdown Browns!*

" I announced to my daughters in the back seat.

"*Yay!*" they responded, as I have programmed them to do, even though I'm fairly sure they don't really care either way.

The Chiefs final drive came on I-71. In and out it went as I went up and down the hills. Despite myself, I was convinced that Matt Cassel's final End Zone heave would end up being caught.

It wasn't. Browns win.

Final: Browns 41, Chiefs 34.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Cleveland - 34:25, Kansas City - 25:35

Total Yards: Kansas City - 491, Cleveland - 417

First Downs: Kansas City - 22, Cleveland - 20

The Browns gave up 491 freakin' yards, which makes it 7 times this season that they have surrendered 450 or more yards. That isn't good, no matter how much you like Rob Ryan's hair.

On the other hand, the Browns rushed for 351 yards, just one off the team record. They catapulted all the way up to 11th in the league in Rushing, which is even more impressive when

you consider the fact that they offer very little threat in the Passing game.

You might be tempted to credit Brian Daboll for the Run Game's gradual improvement. I'm not, but you might be.

Gameballs

Josh Cribbs - After announcing that Cribbs' 7th Kickoff Return TD broke the NFL record, I thought, "6 was the old record?" That's it? "

That just goes to show you how spoiled we are having Josh Cribbs returning kicks.

Jerome Harrison - The holes were bigger than the deficit, but Harrison was on a heater that was impressive as hell. And to think he was just sitting there on my fantasy bench, boosting my

reserve points...

Lawrence Vickers - Both Cribbs and Harrison attributed their huge days to Vickers in particular. A very underrated Fullback.

The Offensive Line - Starting to really gel, especially in the Run blocking schemes. Thomas is an All-Pro, and I think Mack has played great the 2nd half of the season.

And from the "You Gotta Be F-ing Kidding Me" department...

Randy Lerner - For finally hiring a legitimate Head of Football Operations. 7th time's a charm (let's hope).

Honorable Mention

Brian Daboll - At least he had the presence of mind to stop even bothering with Pass plays.

Matt Roth - 3 games, 3 sacks (well, 2.5 sacks, but who's counting?)

Wall of Shame

Brady Quinn - 10 of 17, just 66 yards, and 2 miserable picks (that 2nd one was particularly bad). At least he was good at handing off.

Derek Anderson - Because I have to see him play again.

The Corners - One week after thinking Eric Wright might be getting to 'elite' level, he goes and looks like crap.

Run Defense - Vomit inducing.

Rob Ryan - Resting on your laurels after the PIT game?

Ryan Pontbriand - Someone fooled you into the quick snap, Mr. P. That never works out well.

It would be silly to pretend that anything but the Mike Holmgren hiring should be this week's top story.

I've heard several people protest Holmgren's record as a GM. Others seem to feel that he's using the Browns for the money, for a golden parachute. It's almost as if now that we got him, there must be something wrong with him - all part of C-Town's inferiority complex (We don't want to belong to any group that would have us as a member).

Let's address those fears:

1. Holmgren's track record as GM came while he was also coaching. No one should do both jobs. They're both full time jobs that require full attention. With Holmgren not coaching, I'm confident he will be able to focus on building the team and he will do well. Not to mention that it is likely that he'll be bringing in one of his former personnel guys to act as GM, so Holmgren won't even be the end-all, be-all in that department. His main task will be to oversee the entire operation and ensure its success.

2. Holmgren's a West Coast guy and he's got plenty of money. If he's going to move to the bitter winters and endlessly gray sky of the Great Lakes region, it's because he sees the Browns as a great challenge, his final opportunity to solidify his legend and wrap up his (potential) Hall of Fame career. If you think Holmgren's huge ego will allow him to walk in here and have his reputation tarnished with abject failure for some dough, then you be crazy.

Here's what Holmgren does bring - Instant Credibility. He's a hugely successful football mind with a tremendous reputation. He's not going to be acting GM and he's not going to Coach (I am glad of that - I was not excited about him trying to run the whole show by himself), but he will have his fingerprints all over

every aspect of the Cleveland Browns organization.

Over night, the attitude around the NFL will go from "*I ain't goin' to stinkin' Cleveland*

" to "

They've got Mike Holmgren in charge - that's a team on the rise

." Not as many Free Agents will laugh in our face on their way to more desirable locations. Quality Front Office and

Coaching types will want to be part of the

Grand Rebuild

. Cleveland will be seen as a land of Opportunity.

There were several reasons that Holmgren turned down Seattle in favor of Cleveland. Money, power, and control were certainly among them. But I think Holmgren also saw Opportunity. The Browns have 11 draft picks. The Browns have a lot of cap space. The Browns have a loyal fan base that will rally at the slightest hint of improvement. The Browns don't have a lot of great players, but what they do have is invested in fundamental positions - O Line, D Line, Special Teams.

Even straight up, Seattle really might not have been more appetizing. Can you honestly say the Seahawks are in a better position right now? Their QB is ailing and past his prime. They'll need to replace him. They don't have much at RB, their leading WR has seen his best days, and their Defense is

suddenly porous. They have the feeling of a team that still has some free falling to do before they hit bottom.

Cleveland's already hit bottom. They are now in the process of dragging their bloody broken carcass off the floor and trying to see if there's a way out of this abandoned well.

What will the Browns' Front Office look like under Emperor Holmgren? My guess is that he will assist on personnel decisions, but will allow a trusted personnel man essentially run the show, likely with a GM title.

Scouring the interweb for clues, it appears there are 4 men that will be highly considered for such a role: [Reggie McKenzie](#) (Green Bay Director of Football Operations), [John Schneider](#) (Green Bay Director of Football Operations), [Lake Dawson](#) (Tennessee Director of Pro Scouting), and [Will Lewis](#) (Seattle Director of Pro Personnel).



McKenzie



Lewis



Dawson



Schneider

The info on these men is sparse, but it appears that most of these guys specialize in Pro Personnel (which isn't necessarily bad, it's just a fact). As such, looking at the drafts of the teams they have worked for is not a great measuring stick. I did find some information, such as this article from the [Green Bay Press Gazette](#)

that summed up the Schneider & McKenzie:

Hired this week as president of the Cleveland Browns, Holmgren is looking for a general manager and almost surely a new coach. The Packers have two men whom Holmgren surely will consider for GM: John Schneider and Reggie McKenzie, their co-directors of football operations.

Both Schneider and McKenzie make a lot of sense - they have

histories with Holmgren, and Holmgren is known to think well of them. One source who knows Holmgren considered Schneider and Dawson the top candidates; another thought it would be McKenzie.

Schneider's history with Holmgren goes back to 1992, when he was a summer intern for former GM Ron Wolf in Holmgren's first year as Packers coach. It also includes one season working for Holmgren in Seattle in 2000, when current Packers GM Ted Thompson hired him as the Seahawks' director of player personnel, before Schneider took a promotion with Washington in 2001.

One of Schneider's greatest assets is his deep involvement in both pro and college personnel starting in 2000. Since that time, he's been heavily involved in the scouting and administrative duties that go with evaluating college players. Also, he's headed up an NFL personnel department, as vice president of player personnel for Marty Schottenheimer in Washington, though that was only for the 2001 season because owner Dan Snyder fired Schottenheimer and his football staff after one year.

McKenzie has less history with Holmgren and never has worked for him but is as likely to receive serious consideration. He's worked for the Packers since 1994 - Holmgren left in 1999

- and has moved up the Packers' chain of command, to director of pro personnel in 1997 and to a director of football operations last year. His bosses have been Wolf and Thompson, both of whom know Holmgren well.

The bulk of McKenzie's experience has been in pro personnel, though he's also evaluated players for the college draft since the early 2000s. He has an added asset as a recruiter in free agency, where his seven-year career as an NFL linebacker and personable manner carries weight with prospective players.

One source who knows Thompson well said the Packers' GM almost surely would allow them to interview with Holmgren out of respect for them and their careers.

The most important thing to know about any and all of these guys is that Mike Holmgren has worked with them before, knows them, and trusts them.

I'm not sure whom the Browns interviewed to comply with the Rooney Rule, but I can safely say it wasn't me.

The other matter of business that I'm sure Holmgren will deal with quickly is the Head Coaching decision - should Mangini stay or should he go?

Despite Holmgren's history as a Coach and the idea that that might make him more sympathetic to Mangini's plight, I really doubt he'll opt to keep Mangini around. It's not a slam on Mangini, per se. Holmgren will just want to re-organize the franchise the way he feels is best.

Mangini is not of the Walsh/Holmgren tree. Mangini swears by the 3-4. Holmgren likes the 4-3. Holmgren runs the West Coast offense. Mangini doesn't. It just doesn't make sense to think that Holmgren will "give Mangini another shot" when they have such fundamental disagreements about the system in which a team should run.

That, and the idea that Mangini would be able to totally swallow his power castration.

Let's face it - Mangini is hardly irreplaceable. I know a lot of you

are geeked that the Browns have won 2 in a row and are playing hard. The team has played hard all season, even in games where they got obliterated, and that is a compliment to Mangini. However, the last 2 wins came against a crappy PIT team and an even worse KC team. Getting all excited about beating the Chiefs is strange to me. Yes, they beat a team just as bad as they are. That's good, but it's hardly like they beat the Colts.

And it's hardly like it necessitates another year for Mangini.

Unfortunately for Mangini, he's probably the victim of himself. If he hadn't forced his will upon Kokinis, then Kokinis wouldn't have been fired, then Holmgren wouldn't have been hired, then Eric would be coaching again in 2010.

Is firing Mangini after only one season fair? Who knows? Probably not. But this is the NFL, and winning trumps fair every friggin' time.

Assuming Mangini is on the night train to Dumpsville, who will

take his place?

Many former Holmgren protégés have been cited: Jon Gruden, Steve Mariucci, Mike Sherman, and even (gag!) Marty Mornhinweg. But I personally don't think any of those guys are real candidates.

No, I think Holmgren will want to bring in someone fresh and energetic, someone that he knows and feels is ready to blossom into the lead role.

Someone like Leslie Frazier.



Frazier, 50, is currently the Defensive Coordinator of the Minnesota Vikings. He's been a name mentioned as a potential Head Coach for years, ever since his days with the Colts. He's been the DC in Minny since 2007, where they led the league in Rush D for both his full seasons. He hasn't worked directly with Holmgren, but he worked for Andy Reid in Philly for 6 years, and Reid is a direct descendant of Holmgren. It's safe to assume that Frazier and Holmgren already have at least a cursory relationship and would mesh well philosophically.

Plus, Frazier played the game professionally at a high level. If you're a man/woman of a certain age, you will remember him as a DB from the 1985 Chicago Bears. His career was derailed by an injury he received in that Super Bowl, but players will respect the fact that he has been in their position and succeeded.

Just throwing that out there - I'm not afraid of a guy that hasn't had any Head Coaching experience when he's got a very experienced support group sitting behind him.

I can hear it now: *"OH MY GOD! They're switching back to the 4-3! Oh my dear lordy dear baby Jesus help me! Not*

another scheme switch! We just got the 3-4 in place! This will set the franchise back decades! Please lord STRIKE ME DEAD! AARRRRRGGGGHHHH! "ot;

And once the hissy is done, hopefully the individual(s) will realize that:

A) If this is your idea of having the 3-4 "in place", you must not have very high standards.

B) Switching back to the 4-3 wouldn't be that big a deal. It might actually help some of the players. Shaun Rogers has played effectively in a 4-3. Corey Williams was much more effective in a 4-3 (probably why he was chanting "Holmgren!" the other day). Kam Wimbley might actually be more productive as a straight DE, not wasting time dropping into coverage.

The Linebackers might not be ideal for a 4-3, but they're not ideal for a 3-4 either (or any pro system that requires good players). This definitely isn't like taking the 2008 Steelers and randomly converting them to a system that doesn't fit their personnel.

When your Defense has been ranked in the bottom 2 most of the season, you really don't have to worry about "messing things up";. They're already messy. Used baby diaper messy.

In case you hadn't [read about it](#), former GM George Kokinis is going to arbitration with the Browns, trying to get more than \$4 million in compensation and damages.

He contests that the Browns promised him full control over the roster/player decisions but had no intention of ever honoring that promise (despite the fact that it was written into his contract).

Now, when Kokinis was fired, even his supporters stated that they thought that Mangini had bullied George, forced his will upon him, and that Kokinis wasn't the kind of person that was contentious, so he let Mean Mr. Mangini dominate him. Then he was fired as a "scapegoat"; for Mangini's mistakes.

I would bet the farm that Kokinis was fired because he **WASN'T DOING HIS JOB**. It was in his contract that he had control over player decisions. If he let Mangini push him around, then that's his fault. If he didn't stand up and fight for his contractual rights, then that's his fault. Everyone spoke of how Kokinis didn't know what was going on, how he became depressed, how he stopped talking to people, how he stopped showing up for work on time. That's not a man fighting for his career, that's a man accepting his doom.



You see him here? He was trying to suck in his own face in an attempt to hide. He wasn't happy and he wanted out of there. Maybe he saw Mangini bullying him as the organization "not letting him make decisions", but I think it's

pretty clear by Lerner's reaction after the Bears game that he had expected Kokinis to do the job he was hired to do.

So, the man that couldn't stand up to anyone as a GM has finally hired a lawyer (Jeff Kessler) to do the standing up for him. And a loud-mouthed one, at that (although finding a lawyer who isn't a loud mouth is like finding a hooker who's a virgin). Per lawyer:

"It's George's contention that a variety of promises were made to him about the authority he would have even outside of the contract because he was concerned about that issue. It's one of the principal issues he raised before agreeing to move to Cleveland and leave the Ravens.

"There are a lot of representations they made about that and we now believe that the team knew it was not going to honor those representations. They were just made because that's how they induced him to leave the other team."

This is naïve. Why the hell would you go to all the trouble to "induce" someone away, pay him all that money, and then not allow him to do his job? If all the Browns wanted was a figurehead, it would've been a helluva lot easier to

promote some scout.

"We're going to try to not try this matter in the public. But if they come up blasting George and make false allegations, you can bet that we'll respond and you can bet that we have a lot to respond that we've been holding back on."

We're going to try to not try this matter in public by making it public. Brilliant.

"It's remarkable to me that a team that so badly needs to get itself straightened out would want to send a message that they're not going to honor their contracts. I don't think that's a message that any NFL team should be sending to others in the future, but apparently that's where the Browns are at the moment."

Dude, you don't know freaky shit about what messages should or shouldn't be sent. You know what message you're sending? Your client is a pansy-ass tool that can't fight his own battles, and you don't have jack-crap so you're talking big.

For all his faults, Lerner has always taken care of the guys he's

fired. Every one of them. Why would he be playing hardball with just this one guy, just this one time, especially if he somehow violated Kokinis' contract? If you're doing "wrong", then you'd be more than eager to pay the schlub. Georgie, don't go away mad. Georgie, just go away.

This lawsuit smells worse than Detroit after a sewage leak.

Quinn Watch

As you know, Brady Quinn somehow hurt his foot on his scramble during the game winning drive (the scrambles were the most effective plays directly involving him). He will spend the last 2 games on IR, where he'll finish for the 2nd straight season.

This will deprive us the opportunity to see if Quinn can progress during the last 2 games, and, even worse, it will subject us to further Derek Anderson torture. My Xmas Wish to never see him throw a pass in a Browns uniform will not be realized.

I think there's little doubt at this point that Quinn is the better QB for this Offense. His numbers are not stellar (more like "cellar"), but he runs the no huddle efficiently and doesn't make that many mistakes/turnovers. DA... well, his QB rating (something in the 30's) speaks for itself.

However, please don't read that as an endorsement for Brady Quinn. I had high expectations for Quinn before the season, and I am sorely disappointed in him. Worst of all, I see his major issues as being inherent, problems that further "experience" cannot help. Accuracy is the foremost of my concerns. Passes are consistently behind or over the head of Receivers. And it seems that Quinn checks down so often because he has no confidence in said accuracy, especially over 15-20 yards.

I don't see him as a Franchise QB, and I will not cry if he's replaced.

As you know, I have followed draftable QB's with great interest throughout the season. For the record, however, I want to state that I am not married to the drafting of any one position in any one round. This team has needs out the ying-yang and desperately needs a talent infusion. I want the Power That Be to draft the Best Available Player, whomever that may be.

If that Best Available Player happens to be a QB, so be it.

When you don't have a Franchise QB, you need one.

One thing that Holmgren has been famous for everywhere he's gone is finding and developing QB's. He worked with Steve Young in SF. He traded for Brett Favre and turned him into a Hall of Famer in GB. In Seattle, he traded for Matt Hasselbeck and turned him into a Pro Bowl player.

Will he trade for a QB here? He seems more apt to do that than draft (although 2 opportunities is hardly a huge sample size).

But a safe bet is that Holmgren feels the QB position is VERY important, and he won't be inclined to just "let it be". I don't know what Quinn's survival chances are, but I wouldn't be at all shocked to see both he and DA gone next season.

NFL Bottom 10

Hark! The herald angels sing! Glory to the teams that mean Nothing!

1. *St. Louis (1-13)* - There isn't enough deodorant in Missouri to mask the stench.
2. *Kansas City (3-11)* - That's an awesome Run D the Chiefs have got there.
3. *Detroit (2-12)* - Played tough against a good team, but did what the Lions do.
4. *Tampa Bay (2-12)* - Taking down Seattle should get them higher, if the Seahawks just didn't suck so much.

5. *Chicago (5-9)* - Another franchise that looks poised for a free fall.

6. *Seattle (5-9)* - Lost to Tampa Bay and got jilted for Cleveland all in one week. Not a happy holiday in the Northwest.

7. *Cleveland (3-11)* - Consistency is still as foreign to this team as Martians, but at least they're finding ways to win now.

8. *Washington (4-10)* - That Monday night game was awful. Just awful.

9. *Oakland (5-9)* - Feeling confident and heading to Cleveland.

10. *Buffalo (5-9)* - Watching the Bills is more potent than Ambien.

Reader E-mail

From Nick Doe, Sharon, PA: *"How about Harrison, huh? I know that you've been on that guy's jock for a while, do you think he could be a feature back for the Browns?"*

You're right - I have been *"on his jock"* for a while. His skills as a Running Back are obvious to anyone not determined to try and make some kind of point by making him inactive. I was of the mind that he should have been starting with Jamal Lewis being HIS change of pace back.

Now, whether or not he's good enough to be a real honest-to-goodness feature back on the NFL level... well, I'm guessing he'll get a chance to show us the next 2 weeks.

My guess, however, is no. He's probably no better than a complementary back that can get on a roll. I'd love to see Jerome back on the roster in 2010 (he'll be a Restricted Free Agent), but I'd have to think that the next Browns starting RB isn't currently on the roster.

From Orenthal Doe, Las Vegas, NV: *"I don't know why I'm supposed to be happy about this win. It's just the Chiefs, and now our draft position is worse ."*

I think people still labor under the idea the higher the draft pick, the better. This is a misconception. We've already played our way out of the Suh Sweepstakes, so the best thing that can happen is for the Browns to keep winning and get as far from #1 as possible.

Most of the guys in the Top 10 are probably pretty similar talent-wise, so the less gargantuan a contract that you have to pay to them, the better. Those huge, Top 5 contracts really hamstring organizations, especially if the draft pick doesn't pan out.

When the Rookie Pay Scale gets here, then those Top 5 picks will be a lot better to have.

Next Up

The Oakland Raiders (5-9). Offense - 32nd, Defense - 27th.

(The Browns are 31st in Offense and 31st in Defense).

This game may well come down to the Browns now 11th ranked Rush Offense vs. the Raiders 28th ranked Rush Defense. The Raiders do actually have a decent D, anchored by shut-down Corner Nnamdi Asomugha. And since he'll easily take away Mo Mass, the Browns will have trouble moving the ball through the air. Expect DA to force something and toss a costly pick (I know, I know, real bold prediction.)

The contest will also be decided by the Browns awful Run D against a decent Oakland rush attack, since the Raiders' Pass Offense is awful. The only one worse than it is... the Browns.

Oakland is playing some decent ball these days, winning 3 of the last 5 against playoff caliber teams such as Cincy, Denver, and (technically) Fixburgh. Couple that with DA in being ineffective AND turning the ball over (as opposed to Quinn just being ineffective), I'm afraid that our boys won't make a great argument for retaining Mangini.

Raiders 20, Browns 10.