

Browns Season in Review: Receivers

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Saturday, January 09 2010 7:00 PM -

Dave Kolonich continues his position by position look at the 2009 Browns, this morning focusing on the wide receiver position ... clearly not one of the strong points of this year's team. It was pretty evident at the beginning of the year that this unit would go as far as Braylon Edwards took them, and well, we know how that all turned out. There was one bright spot at the position, and that was second round pick Mohammed Massaquoi, who became a viable threat as a rookie, and looks like a fixture at the position going forward. Dave takes a look at the Browns receivers in his latest column for us.



Following is the third installment in what will likely be an 8,000-part series, highlighting the best and worst of Browns football in 2009.

For the Browns in 2009, there was bad and then there was bad. And no, this time I'm not referring to the quarterback play - instead, the play of the team's wide receivers seemed to also reflect just how inept this offense was in 2009.

[As I stated a long time ago](#) - seemingly years removed from the early part of 2010 - the Browns' 2009 offense would go only as far as Braylon Edwards would take it. And while this prediction was not a glowing endorsement of Braylon's consistency, it was made with the idea that the Browns' offensive talent was incredibly raw.

Much like the winner of the QB debate ultimately became [the loser in the end](#) ... eventually - the Browns' offense suffered early and often after their only viable offensive threat - during the pre-Jerome Harrison productivity era - was subject to double and triple teams.

Because of this blanket attention and Braylon's own starcrossed demeanor, the early season productivity at the wide receiver spot was virtually non-existent. Until the first Bengal game, where Mohammed Massaquoi enjoyed his NFL coming out party, the Browns wideouts were essentially non-factors in a depressing check-down offense.

And after Braylon's exodus from Cleveland - following Massaquoi's breakout and

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a midget punching incident - the team's wideouts continued to struggle for the remainder of the season - enjoying only occasional blips of success, such as in the loss to Detroit and....well, that's about it.

Outside of Massaquoi, there's little to discuss at the position. That is, unless you want to revisit the alarming number of dropped balls that plagued the unit in 2009. Speaking of which, Chanci Stuckey arrived midseason and contributed some down the stretch. In fact, his greatest contribution to the team probably came in the form of providing a veteran shadow for Massaquoi's continued development.

And speaking of the rookie - Massaquoi - not the other one who never played - it is quite remarkable that the team's "other" second-round pick accomplished as much as he did in 2009. Playing without another quality starting wideout and catching passes from two of the most erratic quarterbacks in the league, Massaquoi managed over 600 receiving yards within a most historically inept passing offense.

This is no small feat considering that Massaquoi accomplished such feats as the only viable, post-Braylon threat on the offense - and he did so as a rookie. And considering the horrid level of play at the QB position, Massaquoi's rookie campaign was nothing short of sensational.

As for the rest of the team's performers at the position...exactly. Stuckey was there, Robiskie was not, Furrey played safety, Royal couldn't catch anything and then we all learned who Evan Moore was. Ladies and gentlemen - your 2009 Cleveland Browns.



The Best

This was not exactly an easy list to put together. However, in terms of material, the only two games worth considering from 2009 would have to be the first Bengal game and the heartbreaking loss to the Lions. And since I still view the Lion loss as the lowest point in franchise history, I have to automatically disqualify any performances from that game.

1. Massaquoi against Cincinnati

This one's easy. Massaquoi's NFL coming out party occurred at a moment in the season when the team couldn't generate a first down, let alone a touchdown. And although the team eventually lost a marathon contest to the Bengals, the actual game proved to be among the most entertaining performances in recent memory.

Massaquoi played a major role on this afternoon as he caught eight of Derek Anderson's passes for close to 150 yards. However, more significant was the manner in which he made plays - as Massaquoi used his size and strength to muscle away catches from the smaller Bengal defenders. And in a most revelatory manner, Massaquoi displayed the kind of hands that have eluded Browns receivers in the recent past.

And although Massaquoi would never come close to repeating this performance again in 2009, Browns Nation at least gained a glimpse of what could be.

2. Braylon against Cincinnati

And in mentioning Massaquoi's brilliant game against the Bengals, credit has to be given to Braylon Edwards - for simply being there. In perhaps his greatest contribution to the Browns in his starcrossed career, Braylon commanded constant double-teams and rolled coverage throughout the afternoon, which allowed Massaquoi to consistently make plays.

And while Braylon's stat line in what proved to be his final Cleveland performance - zero catches, one drop - summed up his arrested development as a potential superstar, his reputation alone allowed Massaquoi to prove himself as a legitimate starter. But of course, one punched midget later - Braylon, much like his Cleveland legacy, proved to be a most elusive phantom.

3. Moore against San Diego

Speaking of which, if Mangini's first season in Cleveland will be remembered as anything, it will be as the year of the salvaged star...or at least, the recycled contributor. Either way.

Perhaps the best example of Mangini's eye for scrap heap talent could come in the form of Evan Moore, a most unique pass-catching tight end from Stanford. Moore was signed later in the season and did not debut for the team until the San Diego game, where he caught six passes for 80 yards. And in perhaps the most unintentionally funny moment of the season, Browns Nation immediately burned up a serious amount of bandwidth trying to figure out who this guy was.

As it turns out, Moore is a huge middle-of-the-field target with good hands. Which in 2009 Browns lore means that he is instantly the team's best offensive weapon.

Unfortunately for Browns Nation, Moore's performance against San Diego remains the stuff of legends. Dominant early in the game, Moore was merely pedestrian for the remainder of the season. As the Browns shifted to a sometimes dominant rushing attack, Moore's production suffered. But at least for three quarters of a game, it appeared that Mangini had unearthed yet another rough gem.



The Pick

In many ways, it's almost pointless to analyze the team's receiver play in 2009. Because of the absolutely horrid QB play, any Browns wideout suffered from circumstances far beyond their control. And when things were finally turned around in December, the team's success was a direct result of taking the ball out of the QB's hands.

As for 2010, the Browns will enter the offseason much in the same shape they were in a year ago. Simply put, the wide receiver position does not offer much in the way of promise for the future. Certainly, Massaquoi is a player worth keeping around, but it's hard to project him as more than a complementary receiver in the future.

The rest of the depth at the position is murky, at best. Stuckey is nothing more than a slot receiver and Brian Robiskie looks to either be a complete NFL bust, or the most misunderstood player in the league. For undrafted rookies such as Jake Allen to get more playing time than the team's high second-round pick announces that something is seriously wrong with either Robiskie's talent level or work ethic.

Certainly, the team needs to address both the receiver and tight end positions in the coming offseason. While Evan Moore offered one half of promise in November, the rest of the position features a variety of roster castoffs and too-small tackles.

For the Browns to truly compete in 2010, the entire offensive unit needs to be upgraded. Perhaps the arrival of an offensive-minded "czar" will help matters, but ultimately more talent is needed - and fast.