

## The Blueprint: Part Three

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Friday, January 29 2010 10:00 AM - Last Updated Thursday, February 04 2010 12:55 PM

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In the past few days, myself - along with legions of other Browns faithful - have begun to chart an offseason course of action for our beloved franchise. Using both the team's recent history, including its current limitations and holding up our flawed model to those with championship pedigree, one thing has become abundantly clear...

Although the organization has finally gained some solid footing with the arrival of some competent front-office personnel, there is still a lot of work to do...

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Or, as it has already been written...

1. The NFL is a league that rewards solid quarterback play.
2. Speaking of #1, the NFL of 2010 and beyond has essentially become a glorified version of flag football.
3. Speed - or at least the threat of speed - is essential to employing a truly balanced offensive attack.
4. One-dimensional offensive attacks can only take you so far.
5. Because of all the above, the key to successful defensive play is an ability to disrupt an opposing passer.
6. Our current Browns do not easily fit into most of these categories.
7. I have another reason to support the Holmgren hire.

...and so it shall be...

### Biggest Team Needs Heading Into 2010

Quarterback

Wide Receiver

Right Tackle

Right Guard

Inside Linebacker

Outside Linebacker

Cornerback

Safety

Nothing that eight dead-eye draft picks won't solve, right? Right?

Here's where the real dilemmas begin. Regardless of the seemingly positive momentum that has embraced Berea in the past weeks, Holmgren and his new regime are going to have to make tough decisions in the coming months. Solely identifying the team's problem areas is one thing, yet trying to prioritize needs is quite another.

Of course, actually finding some quality players is a completely different story.

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But to get back to the dilemma, consider that the Browns' seventh overall draft pick could come down to a choice between a top-flight corner, inside/outside linebacker, safety, right tackle or quarterback. All five are pressing needs for a franchise that has some serious holes within it - so the question is simply this: what to do?



Here are a few scenarios...

### 1. Follow the Andy Reid Model

Say what you will about Andy Reid's clock management skills or penchant for ignoring his running game for crucial stretches, but one thing is obvious about the venerable coach - he loves to draft linemen. Considering that Tom Heckert, raised under Reid's wing for the past several years, is now the Browns' new GM, a similar strategy could be employed.

If so, let's throw out the names of Trent Williams, Bryan Bulaga and Russell Okung. None of the three appear to be mortal locks for NFL stardom, but at least all offer some quality size and mobility - and a major upgrade over 2009 starters John St. Clair and Floyd Womack.

Speaking of which, spending a first-round draft pick on an OL would essentially free up the team to improve other areas of the roster. For example, adding a potential starter at right tackle could virtually strengthen the situation at right guard, alleviating the team's overall need to upgrade their line on days one and two of the draft.

Which unfortunately plays right into the hands of every Browns pseudo-GM of the past decade. However, considering the bounty of overall roster needs and Heckert's upbringing, 2010 can

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serve as the anomaly.

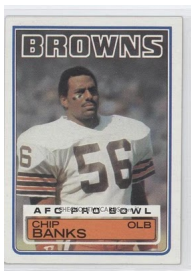
### 2. Darrelle Revis Envy

I've said it for over a year now. Until the Browns upgrade their defensive backfield, their entire defense will suffer. For most of 2009, this was the case - and until the Browns find a legitimate top-flight corner, history will again repeat itself.

In most seasons, such a strategy would be considered a prudent, almost boring approach to improving a roster. However, after the ascension of the Jets' Darrelle Revis to football saintdom, there could be an early run on the top corners coming out in 2010...all four of them.

Considering that the Browns sit at number seven this April, which is a prime location to take a top cornerback - trade possibilities could be swirling around Holmgren. Nearly all of the franchises in the league need some kind of upgrade at the position and the Browns could serve as the conduit for the draft's first real shakeup.

Or...it's more than possible that Holmgren locks onto what he thinks is a franchise cornerback. If such is the case, the possibilities of Florida's Joe Haden or FSU's Patrick Robinson lining across from Eric Wright are most appealing. But then again, coming off a season where Mike Adams was at times the best corner on the roster, perhaps some better perspective is needed.



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### 3. Making up for Last Year

This time last year, I was terrified that the Browns were about to draft yet another outside linebacker/defensive end "hybrid", while the rest of the roster continued to wither away. At the time, history - and Kamerion Wimbley - were proving to be too much of an irresistible force. Much to my delight, the Browns abstained from adding another project.

Then of course, the rookie campaigns of Brian Orakpo and Clay Matthews happened. Both players, along with more traditional types such as Brian Cushing and Rey Mauluga, were players the Browns could have drafted - roughly eight different times, as it turns out.

Anyway, what's done is done - meaning that as of now, Matt Roth and Kamerion Wimbley would enter 2010 as the team's starting outside linebackers in a 3-4 base set. And anyone who is comfortable with this arrangement must not have very high expectations for the team's future.

But, then again a Wimbley/Roth combo could serve as a stopgap for 2010 until some better talent is added in the future. If so, then the priority becomes middle linebacker, where last season David Bowens rescued the middle of the defense after D'Qwell Jackson was injured.

Simply put, the Browns feature one of the slowest sets of linebackers in the league - Jackson included. Although last year's contributors at the position held up better against the run, the lack of athleticism was apparent in the team's inability to cover underneath, or even to stretch plays wide.

Sitting at number seven could deliver the likes of Alabama's Rolando McClain or Florida's Brandon Spikes to the lakefront. If you plug in Spikes next to Jackson, or McClain next to Bowens, then things could get interesting on the defensive end in 2010. However, in terms of a difference maker - does the priority shift to linebacker or defensive backfield?



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### 4. Let's Hope Not

So, for the past few days I've been stuck in this glorified zone of the NFL playoffs, where the last teams standing feature some of the most potent passing attacks in the history of the league. And because of, or in addition to - depending on your perspective - the NFL's evolution into a non-contact sport, the two main priorities in fielding a championship team are found at the quarterback and wide receiver position.

Which means I am now convinced that the 2009 Browns featured the worst passing offense in the history of the league.

So, naturally the plan would be to quickly address these areas.

However, looking at the 2010 draft, I'm getting another feeling of terror - one altogether different than my innate fear of defensive hybrids....that is, the Browns might just draft a quarterback with the seventh pick.

Which wouldn't be a horrible thing, considering our current options. But then again, have you seen these guys?

Sam Bradford reminds me of a more injury-prone Graham Harrell....and surprisingly enough, that is not a good thing. Colt McCoy is tiny...and brittle. No surprise that both QB's come out of the Big 12. As for the other available candidates at number seven - it just feels like we've already been down the Jimmy Clausen path.

And Tim Tebow? Please.

### The Pick

We've only just scratched the surface. There is no telling which way the Browns will go with their first pick...and really, it's difficult to even make a suggestion. Because the Browns have so many needs across the roster, taking either a defensive back, linebacker or offensive lineman makes total sense. But then again, not really...

Perhaps the bigger question to be asked is this: Just how deep is this draft?

For example, if the Browns go with a corner in Round One, then what becomes of their later round options regarding linebackers, or even a quarterback? Or vice versa, are we stuck with another Brandon McDonald solely because we wanted to upgrade the middle of the defense? And of course, if a quarterback is the choice in from the beginning, then the entire draft is thrown into chaos.

So at this moment in time - and acknowledging that a lot more analysis is still to come - the first round choice is Joe Haden.

Which is a pick I instantly dislike...