

The Aftermath

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Tuesday, March 16 2010 4:00 AM - Last Updated Tuesday, March 16 2010 4:25 AM



Let me start by saying this – LeBron James is the best thing that has ever happened to Cleveland sports in the contemporary era.

Yet, how is it that a sports city such as Cleveland – one who has the greatest player in his profession – can spend the last 24 hours talking about the following subjects...rather than celebrating this once in a lifetime talent?

The answer is simple – this is a football city.

Instead of just taking a moment to realize LeBron's greatness, here are the three most discussed sports topics currently found in the city...

1. Jake Delhomme

2. Brady Quinn

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3. Kamerion Wimbley

In case you still need convincing, Cleveland is still firmly a football town...for some ungodly, yet wonderfully satisfying reason.

After all, when the offseason moves of a 5-11 team dominate media bandwidth, you know you're dealing with a hardcore fan base.

Having said all that, let's take a deeper look at last night's Kamerion Wimbley trade.

But first, a final word on the quarterbacks – for now, at least.

Here's my [pre-emptive obituary on Brady Quinn](#) .

And why I think the Delhomme move could work - [at least for 2010](#) .

And here's [Cleveland Frowns' take on Delhomme](#) .

Now on to Kamerion...

Labor Abyss

First, the immediate popular opinion regarding the move focuses on Wimbley's impending free agent status next year. With a new set of bosses in town, this thought is valid, except for the

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fact that Wimbley could have been re-signed to a fairly reasonable contract, assuming that 2010 was not a monster season for the four-year veteran.

However, the other side of that coin would find Wimbley right where he is now, meaning that the Browns would be facing a decision on whether or not to re-sign a productive, but not dominant player. Assuming that Wimbley played much to the level of a year ago, would he truly be worth a future investment?

Throw in the common knowledge that any new NFL boss isn't a huge fan of inheriting players that he has no prior relationship with, and the writing seems to be on the wall. Also, if you factor in Holmgren's strategy of building through the draft – which in case you haven't realized has rapidly escalated over the past day - along with the uncertainty of the league's new labor deal, and yesterday's move begins to make more sense.

Core Players

If you choose to ignore all the above, then think about this: who are the Browns' core players? If you compiled your list yesterday morning, would Wimbley be one of those guys?

I did this last summer and came up with two names: Joe Thomas and Josh Cribbs. I'll admit to being hesitant about adding Cribbs at the time. So, what does this say about Wimbley? Or, really about everyone else on the roster?

The conclusion is simple. With new management in place and a looming labor impasse on the horizon, combined with an underachieving first-round pick and a desire to load up on draft picks, the incentive to get something for any non-core player now is understandable.

Ghosts of Phil Savage

This section isn't so much relevant as it is interesting...and frustrating. Thanks to the past five

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months or so, think of what has happened to Phil Savage's legacy in Cleveland. Starting with Mangini's trade of K2 and Braylon last year, and with the release of Donte Stallworth, Rex Hadnot, Corey Williams, Derek Anderson and Hank Fraley, combined with yesterday's trades of Quinn and Wimbley, the Browns have effectively left the past behind.

In fact, the only Savage draft picks still on the roster are 2006 selections D'Qwell Jackson, Jerome Harrison and Lawrence Vickers, combined with Thomas, Eric Wright, Brandon McDonald and Ahtyba Rubin. Throw in Eric Steinbach and Dave Zastudil and that's the list.

Some legacy indeed.

However, the relevance here is that Holmgren is simply finishing – albeit in a different manner – what Mangini started this time last year. If the Savage era was marked by undisciplined players – no doubt enabled by Romeo Crennel – the new era of Browns football is trying to reverse this trend.

Just look at the recent acquisitions by the Browns. Starting with Mangini, some tough-minded players such as David Bowens, Kenyon Coleman, Abe Elam and Floyd Womack were added. Holmgren and Tom Heckert have countered with polished veterans such as Tony Pashos, Scott Fujita, Ben Watson and love him or hate him, Jake Delhomme. These players are a far cry from free agent projects such as Corey Williams or Kevin Shaffer.

Who's Next?

If we're combining the twin forces of executive housecleaning with the lack of established core players, then the next question is simple: who's next to go?

This time last year, Shaun Rogers may have been added to the "core" list, but two realizations have manifested since then. First, the Browns defense survived and basically improved during Rogers' absence. Second, there is a big reason why Wimbley and Quinn were just traded.

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Simply put, they were two of the few tradeable assets we currently have.

Think about this – who else on the current roster – excluding Thomas and Cribbs – would bring some trade value?

Other than Rogers, I can think of three: Harrison, Vickers and Jackson...or five, if you include Mack and Steinbach.

Of all those names, who would be the closest to being considered a “core” player? Based on last December, you could make a case for Harrison and/or Vickers. Based on this time last year, Jackson could make the list. However, considering the eventual shift to more of a West Coast based offense, what does this mean for the likes of Vickers?

Unfortunately for Vickers, he is beginning to excel at what has become a dying position – that of a blocking fullback. On a very related note, was anyone else intrigued by Peyton Hillis being “thrown into” the Quinn trade?

Identity

It wouldn't be the first time that I've overanalyzed a move by the Browns, but the Wimbley trade has sent my mind racing...and perhaps for good reason.

If Holmgren and Heckert just traded the only legitimate pass rushing threat (excluding David Bowens), then does this signal a shift away from the 3-4 alignment of the past five seasons? Or, am I just projecting Wimbley as something that he never quite realized?

Much like an eventual Vickers trade, Holmgren could easily be laying the groundwork for the future of the team, at least scheme-wise. Although more NFL defenses are starting to blend alignments, the Wimbley trade could just be the surface of something far deeper. Looking at the Browns' current defensive roster, would it take much to switch schemes again? Who else

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would need to be moved – of those who haven't already been let go?

Which brings me to this...what is Eric Mangini's role in all of these moves? The Wimbley trade could ultimately prove one of several things:

1. This team is slowly being taken away from Mangini. Which would mean....
2. In 2-3 years time, it's likely that Holmgren will hire a new coach, or assume the duties himself.
3. I have way too much time on my hands, which translates to...
4. Maybe Marcus Benard and Matt Roth will be twice as effective than Wimbley ever was. Which equates to...
5. Two "Mangini guys" will be playing prominent roles on the 2010 defense, which virtually contradicts everything I stated above.

Get It Right the First Time

The end result of yesterday is this: the Browns, under the guidance of Mike Holmgren and Tom Heckert, now have a boatload of draft picks to use over the next couple seasons. This is wonderful news for Holmgren, who has already signalled that this team has to be rebuilt through the draft. Actually, that's even better news for Browns Nation.

However, the downside to having a lot of draft picks is this:

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First, you actually have to pick good players. Second, there will be a great temptation to package a lot of picks together in order to get one player. Third, see "First."

If at any stage of next month's draft, Holmgren and Heckert decide to get cute and "go all Dwight Clark on us", then as a franchise we will be further set back.

But then again – didn't we just finish 5-11?

In the end, the question comes down to this: As a fanbase, can we support yet another reboot?

Or, are you okay with this mantra for the next 2-3 years?

"In Holmgren We Trust."

Or, in other words – what can you do?