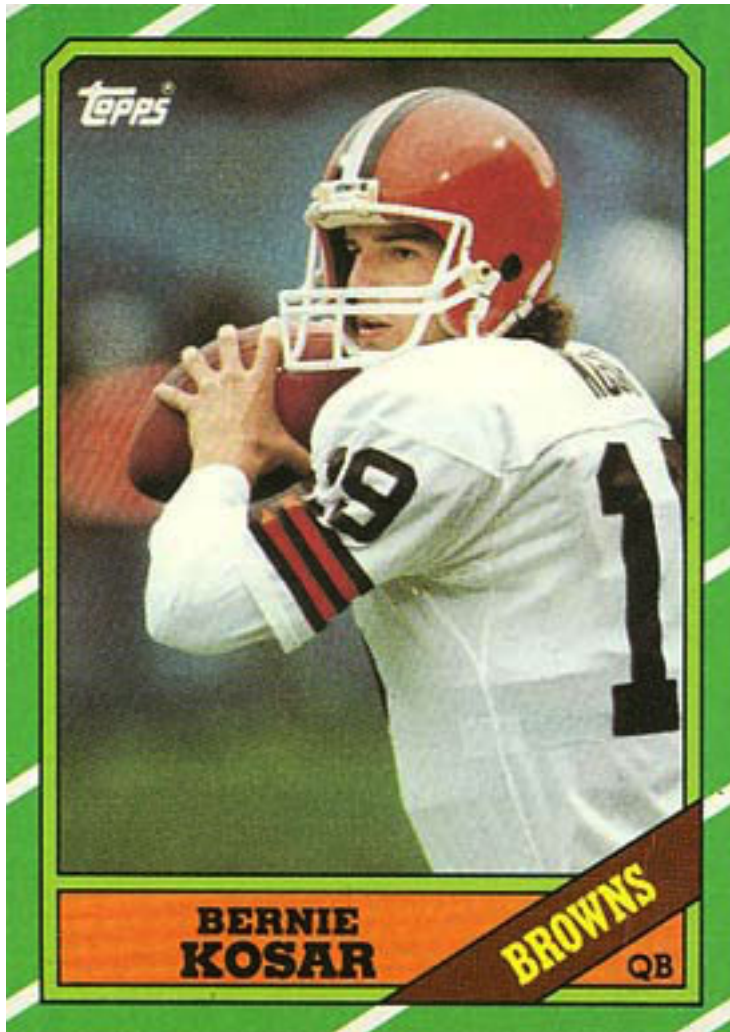


Finding a Job for Bernie

Written by {ga=jerryroche}

Wednesday, March 31 2010 9:00 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, March 31 2010 9:50 AM



You would think that the Browns' new management team could find a place for Bernie Kosar, wouldn't you?

Kosar, one of the most beloved professional athletes ever to don a Cleveland uniform, seems to be just sort of hanging around the sports scene, waiting for the Browns to take advantage of his singular football knowledge.

Since last fall, he has served as a team consultant, thanks to the largess of Browns owner Randy Lerner. He's watched Lerner sweep the front office clean. People have been brought in from all over the country, but new management has not been able to find a square hole in which to fit Kosar's square peg.

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According to news reports, Kosar still lacks a job title and any official duties. He certainly deserves a better fate than to be left teetering on the precipice of *persona non grata*.

"I'd like to still stay involved," Kosar told PD reporter Bill Lubinger a few weeks ago. "I'd be happy to do whatever they want."

From the standpoint of Cleveland sports fans, Kosar has always been the most winning loser in the storied franchise's history.

It all started at the University of Miami in 1984, when his Hurricanes were victimized by Boston College's Doug Flutie, who threw a 48-yard "hail Mary" pass to Gerard Phelan to win a nationally televised game, 47-45. That one play was a harbinger of things to come.

Entering the NFL via the long-gone "supplemental draft," Kosar directed the Browns to the playoffs in each of his first three years. He was at the reins when they lost "The Drive" and "The Fumble," both of which destroyed their chances to appear in a Super Bowl.

On Nov. 8, 1993, while still at the top of his game, Kosar was unceremoniously given his release by then-head coach Bill Belichick, who cited "diminishing skills" -- a phrase that has since become entrenched in national sports lore. But his playing career was hardly over.

"Bernie Kosar didn't look like a quarterback with diminished skills," reported the Associated Press the following week. "With only four days of practice after his release by the Cleveland Browns, Kosar completed 13 of 21 passes for 199 yards. He also threw for a touchdown while directing the Dallas Cowboys to a 20-15 victory over the Phoenix Cardinals."

And two months later, fabled sportswriter George Vecsey of the *New York Times* wrote this: "Bernie Kosar came off the bench to play quarterback for the Cowboys when Troy Aikman suffered a concussion yesterday, and he held the team together for a 38-21 victory over San Francisco. The Cowboys were up by 21 when he came in, and they won by 17, so he did his job. He completed 5 of 9 passes and handled the ball flawlessly, and when it was over, he said: 'I've been blessed to go to the Super Bowl. I thank the Lord for that, for ending up in Dallas.'"

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That season, Kosar did indeed win a championship ring, but it was bittersweet because it wasn't as a member of the Browns.

Since his playing days ended in 1996, Bernie (1) was part owner of Scout Media when it was purchased by Fox Corporation; (2) sold an 800-unit real estate project in Florida; (3) owned the now-defunct Bernie's Steakhouse in South Florida; (4) published "Bernie's Insiders" magazine; (5) hosted the Nestle/Bernie Kosar Charity Classic at Tanglewood Country Club; (6) established his own charitable trust that funded programs for children and young adults; (7) was part owner of the of the NHL's Florida Panthers; (8) was a partner in Cleveland Pacific Equity Ventures; and (9) was part owner of the Cleveland Gladiators of the Arena Football League. But two months ago, a federal bankruptcy court ordered him to sell all his assets to pay off millions of dollars in debt that included \$9 million for bad real estate deals.

The former QB who threw for more than 25,000 yards in his pro career has had his ups and downs, to be sure. Not too long ago, Rick Reilly of SI.com said in a television interview: "To me, [Bernie] is Charlie Brown. The football always gets pulled away by Lucy as he's about to kick it. That's his lot in life. He doesn't get the Elway ending, he gets the Bernie Kosar ending."

Yet he always seems to come back to his first loves -- the U of M Hurricanes and the Browns. As far back as 1996, rumors were circulating that Kosar might be named general manager of the "new Browns" after Art Modell took the "old Browns" to Baltimore. He's currently a regular guest on local radio, and for the past two seasons he's been a color commentator on WKYC-TV during the pre-season. In 2009, rumors circulated on a major sports Website that Kosar would be hired as the Browns' new "football czar" -- but that job went to Mike Holmgren.

Bernie-Bernie, his place in Browns history intact, certainly deserves an avenue by which he can share his vast storehouse of football wisdom with the current incarnation of the Browns. But whether or not he is given the opportunity, you won't find him feeling sorry for himself.

"I always try to take a negative and turn it into a positive," he's said many times. "I don't like to dwell on the bad things, and I don't like to feel sorry for myself. I don't like excuses for failure. When defenses were blitzing, that was my chance to go for a home run and score a touchdown. When I saw the all-out blitz coming, no matter where it was, when it was, I was taking a shot."

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My Favorite Quotes About Bernie

>> PD columnist Bill Livingston: “He was the typical guy that the city would fall in love with. Not John Elway, not a great athlete, but smart, hard-working, courageous, maximizing his ability.”

>> *Sports Illustrated* writer Rick Telander: “Kosar [is] the storklike helmsman whose work afield reminds one of a gangling surgeon methodically carving some poor chap to shreds.”

>> Former QB Boomer Esiason: “He looked like a praying mantis out there. I mean, he was all over the place.

>> *L.A. Times* columnist Jim Murray: “Kosar doesn’t throw the ball, he just lets go of it like a guy losing a bar of soap in the shower. It looks more like a complicated fumble than a pass.”

>> Former head coach Jerry Glanville: “He had the worst stance. He looked like the ugly duckling. Nobody in the history of football looked so far opposite of where the ball was going.”

>> Former head coach Marty Schottenheimer: “The ball would be coming out of his hand, and I’d be saying, ‘No, Bernie ... No, Bernie ... Great throw, Bernie.’ He had a great feel for the anticipation of those throws, and that’s really the reason he was so effective.”

>> *SI.com*’s Don Banks: “I always thought the guy was going to fall down as he came away from center. He always looked like he was one step from losing it and falling right on his tush.”

>> NFL Films president Steve Sabol: “If the NFL awarded style points, Bernie Kosar wouldn’t have gotten any. He was the master of the unorthodox.”