

First off, I would like to apologize for the lateness of this article. At this juncture, the draft has been hashed and rehashed so many times that an article of this nature is about as useful as teats on a proverbial bull. But such is life.

Unfortunately for all involved, I have spent most of this week in and out of hospitals and doctor's offices because my wife-to-be contracted a staph infection. And, as we all likely know from one experience or another, there is nothing urgent about Urgent Care. I have become a connoisseur of daytime TV the last couple days (and I am a lesser human being for it).

Witnessing first hand the evil destructive power of the dreaded staph has been eye-opening. The stuff multiplies/reproduces faster than teenagers in a trailer park. There is now a small crater in her body from where they lanced the infected area, not dissimilar in appearance to that volcano in Iceland.

Like so many before her, my girlfriend's football career is likely over.

And I was so looking forward to a free ride.

---

**Regarding Draft Grades**

Draft Grades are generally stupid things, since they're so subjective, done so lazily, and really are completely invalid because you can't honestly evaluate a draft class until at least 3 years have passed. But people like giving/reading them anyway. It gives them a sense of closure to the drafting season.

I perused a couple of national sites to see what their opinion of the Browns' draft was, and here's what I found:

[CBS Sportsline](#) (Rob Rang) - *B+, Mike Holmgren is known for his ability to build an offense, but he started the draft working on improving the defensive side of the ball, securing the draft's best cornerback in Joe Haden (Florida) and following that with the hardest-hitting safety in the country in T.J. Ward. The pick that will get all of the attention -- quarterback Colt McCoy, who has enough arm strength, accuracy and intelligence to perform well in the West Coast offense. Running back Montario Hardesty (Tennessee) could emerge as the team's most impactful rookie on offense if he can duplicate his 2009 season and remain healthy. Shawn Lauvao (Arizona State) is a tough, versatile lineman who could become a valuable swingman in Cleveland. WR Carlton Mitchell (South Florida) and DE Clifton Geathers (South Carolina), who each left after their junior seasons, have the size and athleticism worthy of being development picks.*

He seems to like it just fine, but really... didn't... say... anything...

[CBS Sportsline](#) (Pete Prisco) - *Best pick: There was talk they would take Boise State corner Kyle Wilson, but they stuck with Joe Haden, who was the better player, with the seventh overall pick.*

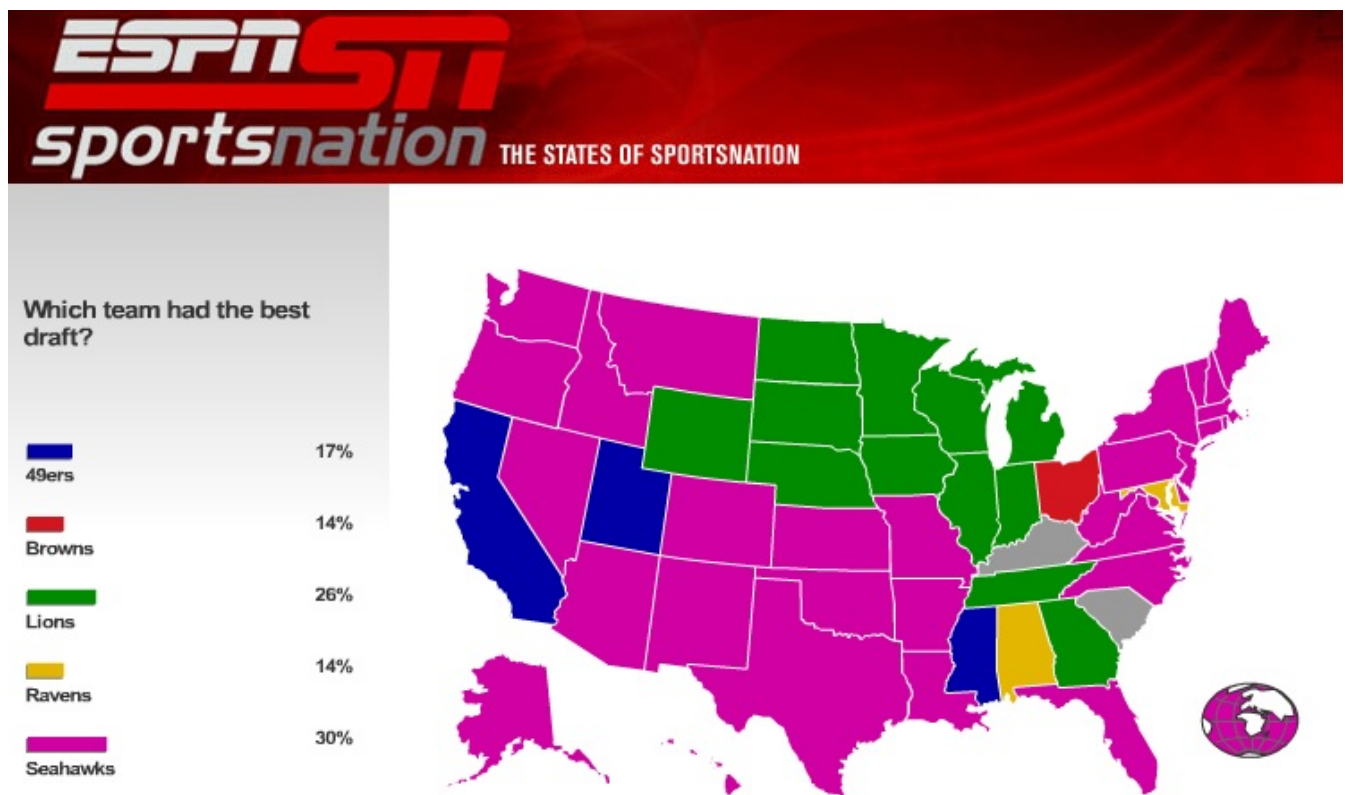
*Questionable move: Passing on Jimmy Clausen in the second round. They did get Colt McCoy later, but Clausen is a better player.*

*Third-day gem: Sixth-round pick Carlton Mitchell has good size and speed. He's a receiver who could challenge for time as a rookie.*

*Analysis: They landed good players in Haden and second-round pick T.J. Ward. But they waited too long to address the quarterback situation.*

*Grade: C*

Lazy and weak. The whole draft - apparently - was about Jimmy Clausen and Colt McCoy. Never mind the fact that people weren't falling over each other to nab either one of them. Like McCoy, Clausen was certainly a bargain where he was picked, but I hardly think the Browns' passing on him was some kind of cardinal sin. That, of course, could yet be disproved, but at this juncture I'd have to say that Clausen and McCoy are about even prospects.



TOTAL VOTES: 211,696

[ESPN](#) - Not too much in the way of grades (that isn't part of the Insider package, which I refuse to pay for despite making 95% of ESPN's content inaccessible to me), but there was a Sports Nation poll that asked which team had the best draft, and the Browns were one of the 5 choices.

So, obviously, someone at the Four Letter liked it.

The map is cute.

[CNNSI](#) (Ross Tucker) - *What I liked: Getting a potential starting quarterback for 2011 in the third round in Colt McCoy after resisting the temptation to take him earlier.*

*What I didn't: Both Joe Haden and T.J. Ward fill needs but the Browns likely could have traded down, picked up extra picks, and still gotten those players a little bit later if they were so inclined.*

*Moving forward: If Jake Delhomme can get back to his pre-2009 playoff meltdown form, the Browns have a chance to be a .500 team. If he can't, it will be Seneca Wallace time in the Dawg Pound.*

Oh no he di-int! Mr. Tucker, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THEY DIDN'T TRY TO TRADE DOWN? WHAT IF MABYE THEY TRIED AND THERE WERE NO TAKERS, OR IT WAS TOO FAR, OR THE COMPENSATION WAS A JOKE?

Unless you were in the War Room and witnessed Heckgren declining a valid trade-down offer, a critique like "they could have traded down" is STRAIGHT RETARDED.

[USA Today](#) (Jarett Bell) - *C+, Cleveland Browns: Offensive guru Mike Holmgren's first Browns draft began with defense. He picked the top corner, Joe Haden, then went for hard-hitting safety T.J. Ward. Quarterback Colt McCoy fell to the Browns in the third round, who might ultimately define this class. Second-rounder Montario Hardesty fits the profile of a between-the-tackles, cold-weather back*

A quick re-cap of the first three rounds, with absolutely no explanation for the grade whatsoever. THAT, my friends, is journalistic excellence.

There you go - a total waste of time. We read these because we're slightly curious to know what national pundits think about how our team did, and then as soon as we find out, we realize that about the only thing that we learned is that national pundits don't really pay much attention to the Cleveland Browns.

---

### Regarding Joe Haden - CB - Florida



[NFLDraftScout.com](http://NFLDraftScout.com) : Positional Rank - 1, Projected Round - 1, Drafted Round - 1

*Analysis - Read & React: Typically plays in press or off-man coverage, reading the receiver to gain an advantage on the route. Good straight-line for the deep route. Reacts quickly in zone coverage and when he's facing the quarterback in man coverage. Little wasted motion in*

*closing once he sees the ball in the air.*

*Man Coverage: Very strong in man coverage. Quick, active hands to provide an initial pop to the receiver in press coverage. Quick feet and loose hips for the transition to run downfield. Good balance and body control to mirror the receiver. Can plant his foot in the ground and explode out of cuts. Good use of hands downfield to prevent separation. Shows a legitimate late burst to close after the ball has been released. Good timing and hand-eye coordination to slap the ball away as it arrives.*

*Zone Coverage: Smooth, low backpedal out of his stance. Maintains cushion with his backpedal, keeping his eyes alert to receivers in his zone. Changes direction smoothly with no wasted motion. Plays even faster than he has been timed, a credit to his recognition and efficient change-of-direction ability.*

*Closing/Recovery: Among his best traits. Plants and drives back to the ball very well. Accelerates late and has the body control to contort in space and slap the ball away without drawing a flag. Good straight-line speed to run with any receiver and has a late burst to close if beaten initially. Locates the ball in the air. Good vertical and times his leaps to compete for the jump ball.*

*Run Support: Reads run and is quick to close toward the line of scrimmage. Evades blocks due to his lateral agility and anticipation and is willing to take on bigger ballcarriers. Understands his role on the edge and approaches it with a workmanlike mentality.*

*Tackling: Takes good tackle angles, going low against bigger ballcarriers. Isn't an explosive hitter. Grab-and-drag tackler more often than scouts would like, rather than wrapping up securely, but rarely has his tackles broken. Can be dragged a bit by bigger ballcarriers, but gets his man to the ground.*

*Intangibles: Signed with Florida as a standout prep quarterback and all-around athlete. Originally was expected to play slot receiver, but elected to compete for the starting cornerback position rather than back up Percy Harvin. Team-first player who is a standout special teams player despite his All-American status. Played in 2009 on the punt return, kickoff and punt teams.*

After the evil and disgusting Kansas City Chiefs thieved Eric Berry away from us at #5, the Browns could've gone so many different directions. Likely, they had a similar grade on several different players and decided to go with the position of greatest need (DB) with Haden.

There were many people that felt the Browns had a bigger need at Safety than Corner and should've taken Earl Thomas instead. However, I'm not surprised Heckert went Haden instead since he believes that Cornerback is one of the four most valuable positions on a team (QB, LT, and Pass Rusher being the other three).

Will he start? Hard to say. Perhaps by the end of the year. With Eric Wright and Sheldon Brown in the wings, it's likely that he'll play the Nickel as he breaks into the league. And Nickelbacks get plenty of playing time.

Not to mention that I think Haden will get some snaps as a quasi-Safety, as per Mangini in his [post 1st Day presser](#) :

*"We're probably going to be in multiple-defensive-back sets, so whether that's three corners or some combination of that. I have used corners in the past to play safety that have then come down to cover slot receivers so you don't have to substitute in when you are playing multiple-receiver sets, so that's a possibility."*

Now, Haden converted from QB/WR to CB in college, so he's still fairly new to the position. In that light, his ceiling is pretty high. The more he learns the position, the better he'll get. And he's already a Top 10 selection.

But at #7 overall, you'd like your Corner to be the next Darrelle Revis. You'd like him to be a perennial Pro Bowler.

There's a good chance he won't be.

However, if he just becomes a solid starting Corner for the next 6 or 7 years (which I think he will), then I'd say he was a good pick that justified his draft position a helluva lot better than many a waste that's wandered into Cleveland Browns Stadium over the years. No problems with this draft selection from me.

---

### Regarding T.J. Ward - S - Oregon



[NFLDraftScout.com](http://NFLDraftScout.com) : Positional Rank - 2 (as Strong Safety, Free Safety is separate),  
Projected Round - 3, Drafted Round - 2

*Read & React: Quick to diagnose the action. Closes quickly in run support and is an intimidating hitter over the middle who times his hits just as the ball arrives, resulting in some of his more impressive pass breakups. Aggressive and can be beaten deep over the top against good*

*play-action.*

*Man Coverage: Former cornerback with experience dropping down to shadow the slot receiver. Bit high in his backpedal. Has to gather himself a bit, but accelerates quickly and has good straight-line speed for safety. Only adequate hands for the interception.*

*Zone Coverage: Instinctive and experienced in zone coverage. Reads the quarterback's eyes and reacts quickly. May lack the speed to cover as a true centerfielder.*

*Closing/Recovery: Among his better traits. Reads the action and has a quick burst to accelerate. Seems more interested in timing his leap for the violent collision than to go for the interception. Only three career interceptions and never more than one in a season.*

*Run Support: Despite a lack of preferred size, this is one of Ward's stronger areas; a reason some will view him as a better fit at strong safety rather than free in the NFL. Quick to read run. Good agility to elude blockers, but willing to take them on and shows good, explosive hands to disengage. Can break down in space to make the effective open-field tackle against elusive athletes. Fearless. Will take on and take down the bigger ballcarrier.*

*Tackling: Explosive hitter who can be a truly intimidating force over the middle and in run support. Closes downhill quickly. Likes to lead with his shoulder and explode into the ballcarrier. Has nearly twice as many forced fumbles (five) as interceptions (three) over his career. Though known for his explosive hits, is also a reliable wrap-up tackler in the open field. Runs through the ballcarrier by bringing his hips. Standout special teams performer on kickoff duty.*

*Intangibles: Former walk-on approaches each game with a chip on his shoulder. Standout special teams player. Very strong; equaled the program's best power clean lift ever (330 pounds) among defensive backs during 2008 winter testing, in addition to posting the position's top squat mark (495 pounds). Has a history of injury. Missed nearly half of his senior season with an ankle injury. Recurring knee injuries in 2006 which kept him off the field for nearly the entire season despite his earning a starting position as a redshirt freshman. Was dropped by many recruiters due to a season-ending knee injury in 2004.*

No one saw this pick coming and, consequently, this selection was met with initial disdain. I must admit that I felt at first like this was a desperation pick, that the Browns had targeted Nate Allen (S - South Florida) and had panicked when the Eagles took him the pick right before them.

An injury-prone Safety that can't cover and was projected to go in the 3rd or 4th Round?  
Egads.

However, after some further study, this guy grows on you. I feel his coverage weaknesses are overblown. Just because his strength is making huge hits in run support doesn't necessarily mean he can't cover, and he has the speed and experience to be more than adequate in that area (though I doubt he'll spend a ton of time doing it).

Plus, his huge hits weren't overstated. If you haven't [seen this hit on Oklahoma State's Zac Robinson](#), check it out via that link. That hit is almost criminal. Robinson probably flirted with charging him with Assault.

If Ward does that one time to POS (that Steeler QB), I'll build him a freakin' shrine, complete with a shot of rum and a cigar.

Really, the only thing not to like about Ward is his injury history. His knee has known war - he's had surgery on his patella tendon and his MCL. He missed a large portion of last season with a high ankle sprain (although that's not anything to worry about on a go-forward basis).

In essence, he's almost 4 years removed from his last major injury.

The more I study him, the more I like him. And he will probably start at one of the positions that the Browns most needed to address. The Browns fans' draft day whipping boy will probably end up being one of their favorite picks (at least in 2010).

However, Ward will be judged career-wise directly against Taylor Mays, the much more famous

USC Safety that the Browns passed up in preference of Ward. It will be interesting to see that comparison 4 or 5 years from now.

---

**Regarding Montario Hardesty - RB - Tennessee**



[NFLDraftScout.com](http://NFLDraftScout.com) : Positional Rank - 5, Projected Round - 2-3, Drafted Round - 2

*Inside: Classic one-cut runner who presses the line of scrimmage and attacks the hole when it is there. Runs a bit upright, but lowers his pad level when in traffic and keeps his feet churning to generate as much positive yardage as possible. Good forward lean. Good vision and has the*

*burst to take advantage of cutback lanes.*

*Outside: Lacks elite straight-line speed, but can beat the linebacker to the edge and turn the corner. Can stick his foot in the ground and accelerate quickly to get past the initial wave of defenders and get into the open field. Not a naturally elusive runner, but has deceptive speed due to his upright running style and good power.*

*Breaking tackles: Among his best attributes. Good balance to keep his feet and fight through arm tackles. Very good spin move. Keeps his feet churning in traffic and can sneak through the pile and break away to gain yardage in chunks.*

*Blocking: Willing pass blocker with the size, strength and technique to face up the oncoming defender. Cognizant blocker who keeps his head on a swivel and looks for someone to hit. Inconsistent effectiveness as a cut blocker as he drops his head and lunges. Good effort downfield. Looks to help out his teammates.*

*Receiving: Good receiver used on a variety of routes in this offense, including the basic screens and dump-offs, but also more complicated wheels and was even split out wide and used on slants. Reliable hands. Shows the ability to extend, make the reception and secure the ball quickly. Good ball security. Didn't fumble the ball once in 285 touches in 2009.*

*Intangibles: Characterized as the consummate teammate. Twice voted team captain, including in 2008 when he wasn't a starter. Convinced team to let him play special teams against Wyoming despite his injuries being too much to allow him to suit up as a running back. Surprised and disappointed scouts with his decision to pull out late from the Senior Bowl, but impressed them with his sub-4.5 speed and athleticism at the Combine.*

This was probably my favorite pick of the draft. Graded down because of knee injuries, I think he was one of the top Running Backs in the draft, a big, powerful runner that also has speed and moves. A very good compliment to Jerome Harrison.

The Browns traded up into the end of the 2nd to get this guy, and I'm more than fine with that.

Hardesty stayed healthy all of last season, and rushed for over 1300 yards and 12 TD's in 12 games at Tennessee. That's about 109 yards and 1 TD per game, boys and girls.

I dispute the above assertion that he's not elusive - he's got a mean spin move, and he's not afraid to use it. Just [watch this video](#) , which, I believe, contains every single 2009 Hardesty carry (yeah, it's long).

It's hard to call any RB a "starter" in today's NFL, but I see Hardesty sharing carries 50-50 with Harrison a few games into the season, and probably getting the majority of carries by the bad weather months. So I'll just go ahead and categorize him as the 2nd Starter from the Browns draft (so far).

---

**Regarding Colt McCoy - QB - Texas**









