

Loving the Browns, Knowing Little Else

Written by {ga=samamico}

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When it comes to the Browns, I'm no different than you are. I'm just a fan.

Those of you who read my stuff with any regularity know me from my [coverage of the Cavaliers](#). I don't claim to be an expert on them either, but at least I have a press pass.

As for the Browns, I've never even been to a game at the new stadium. Or at least it's still seems "new" to me.

That's because the Browns of my youth played at old Cleveland Municipal. They featured names like Brian Sipe and Bernie Kosar, Ozzie Newsome and Reggie Rucker, Hanford Dixon, Clay Matthews and Frank Minnifield, oh my.

Those Browns won. A lot. They beat the Steelers at least half the time. They came THIS CLOSE to reaching the Super Bowl at least twice.

These Browns? Well, I don't even feel like getting into it. I mean, why rehash the same nightmare over and over and over again? And seeing them live would be too much for thine eyes to take.

Instead, I watch the games just like many of you do -- sitting in front of the television, stuffing my face with snacks, wearing a Browns T-shirt and hat, and living and dying (and too often crying) with every snap.

So when I say I think the Browns can be halfway decent this year, just know that I am speaking from the heart. A lot of that has to do with the fact my head gave up on them years ago.

Anyway, my analysis of this year's Browns can be broken down this way:

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Their first game will go a long way in determining how this year will go.

Yes, I'm talking about the season-opener Sunday in Tampa Bay, against a Buccaneers team that finished 3-13 last year.

Yes, I'm referring to a game that no one outside of either city will pay the least bit of attention.

And yes, losing to the Bucs will mean the Browns are likely in for a LONG season ... again.

Losing to the Bucs also turns the home-opener against Kansas City into a must-win. Because after facing the Chiefs, the Browns' schedule quickly turns into pro football's version of the Bataan Death March.

Among the highlights are games at Baltimore, at Cincinnati, at Super Bowl champion New Orleans, and New England at home.

In other words, starting 0-2 against two of the NFL's worst teams is the equivalent of applying for admission to the Arena League. It just can't happen.

Anyway, I'm rambling. I'm allowing the past decade of Browns football to ruin my positive thinking. And I really do have some positive thoughts.

For one, I really like quarterback Jake Delhomme. Not because he's Tom Brady or Peyton Manning (or anything close), but because for most of his career, he's been solid. He's a veteran who stayed composed and looked like a nice fit in coach Eric Mangini's offense during the preseason.

I know, I know. Delhomme was awful last season in Carolina. But so what? Sometimes a veteran QB only needs a new scene -- sort of like Kerry Collins received a few years ago in Tennessee, or even Kurt Warner in Arizona.

I also like how Mangini utilized backup QB Seneca Wallace in the preseason, even moving Wallace to wideout in the Wildcat scheme featuring Joshua Cribbs.

Finally, the offensive line is sturdy, the kicking game is fabulous, and the running backs have potential.

Granted, if the defense is able to hold anyone under 20 points it will be seen as a major accomplishment, but ... well, never mind. There are no buts. The bottom line is the defense will need to exceed our biggest dreams for the Browns to have any shot at finishing .500.

But what do I know? I'm just a fan.

All I really know is I can't wait for the first kickoff -- when I will sit in front of the TV and again hope the best NFL Sundays of my life won't always be dominated by thoughts of Bernie Kosar, Kevin Mack and Gerald "Ice Cube" McNeil.

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Otherwise, I'll just have to go back to pretending I know what I'm talking about when it comes to the Cavs.

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