

Brownie Bits: Week4

Written by {ga=jonathanknight}

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Useless nuggets of information from Sunday's Browns game that you can certainly live without...

CLOSING THE GAP: The Browns' victory narrowed the Bengals' lead in the all-time series to 38-36. Going in, the Bengals had won three straight meetings and nine of the last 11. Cincy hadn't lost in Cleveland since the 51-45 shootout in September of 2007. Carson Palmer's record against the Browns now stands at 8-3.

A DAY THAT ALMOST LIVED IN INFAMY: The Browns narrowly avoided making history. Had they lost after holding a lead in the fourth quarter, it would have marked their fourth consecutive loss after leading in the final period. This would have been the first time in team history the Browns had accomplished such an incredibly embarrassing achievement. Prior to this, the closest they'd come was in 1984, when they lost five straight close games, four of which they'd led in the fourth quarter. The lone exception, the fourth loss in the string, was barely an exception – the Browns were tied with Cincinnati in the fourth quarter before the Bengals won on a last-second field goal.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS: This is one of those rare games in which you look at the stats, then look at the final score and ask yourself, "How in the hell did the Browns win this?" The Bengals rolled up 413 total yards – out-gaining Cleveland by more than 100 – including 371 through the air, more than twice the Browns' passing total. The Browns' turnover advantage was only plus-1 and their special teams didn't score a touchdown – two factors which can dramatically aid a

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team being outplayed at the line of scrimmage. In addition to what in retrospect turned out to be the huge blocked field goal, the Browns won two key statistical areas: they rushed for 116 yards while holding the Bengals to 67 and accumulated 30 less yards in penalties. Despite the Bengals' clear statistical advantage on offense, time of possession was nearly equal (Cincinnati 30:46, Cleveland 29:14).

AGAIN WITH THE SECOND-HALF OFFENSE: Say this for the Browns offense – it's ridiculously consistent. For the fourth straight week, the Browns regularly cruised through the opposing defense in a nice first half, then ran out of gas in the second. On Sunday, the Browns rolled to 194 yards in the first two periods, then hit exactly their season average in the second half with an anemic 101.

ON THE OTHER HAND...: The Browns showed improvement on third down in the second half, converting on 3 of 7 opportunities, identical to their ratio in the first half. They'd converted on only 3 of 19 third/fourth downs in the second half of their three previous games.

LIVING LARGE – ALBEIT BRIEFLY: Following Phil Dawson's short field goal midway through the third quarter that made it 23-10, the Browns held their largest lead of the 2010 season. It lasted all of five minutes and 18 seconds before the Bengals cut the lead back to 10. The Browns' previous high-water mark had been the 11-point advantage they held over Tampa Bay in the second quarter in Week One.

ONE CARRY SAYS SO MUCH: Peyton Hillis' signature final carry of the afternoon – the 24-yard bounce-out with two minutes left that clinched the game – turned an admirable-but-not-all-that-impressive effort into a statistical exclamation point. Prior to his final carry, Hillis had huffed and puffed for 78 yards on 26 carries – an average of exactly three yards per rush. With one play, he topped the century mark and increased his average per carry by nearly a full yard. For what it's worth, before that last run he'd rushed for 41 yards on 15 carries in the second half (an average of just 2.7 yards per rush) and his longest carry in the final two quarters had been eight yards.

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS: The Browns defense allowed their first 400-yard game of the season and has surrendered more yards in each game than it did the week before. The good news – after four games last year the Browns were allowing an average of more than 400 yards per game. Opponents would top the four-bill mark seven times against the Browns over the course of the 2009 season.

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MAKING HISTORY: Terrell Owens' 222 receiving yards marked the second-best receiving performance ever by a Browns' opponent. Buddy Dial of the Steelers holds the record with 235 receiving yards on Oct. 22, 1961, while Owens topped Terry Glenn's 214 total during a New England win over the Browns exactly 11 years to the day prior to Owens' performance Sunday.

ANOTHER QUIET DAY FOR CRIBBS: Josh Cribbs continued to be bottled up on Sunday, rushing for just nine yards on three carries, catching two passes, not returning a single punt, and averaging a modest 21.4 yards on five kickoff returns.

GIVING UP THE BIG ONE: For the fourth straight game, the Browns defense allowed a touchdown play of more than 25 yards. For the day, the Bengals had four plays of 25 yards or more, the Browns none.

ON PACE: Now with 322 rushing yards on the season, Peyton Hillis is on pace to rush for better than 1,200 yards in 2010. He's currently ranked No. 8 among the NFL's top rushers – just behind LaDainian Tomlinson, tied with Maurice Jones-Drew, and just ahead of Steven Jackson. Granted, it's early, but is anyone second-guessing the Brady Quinn trade right now?

YOU MAKE THE CALL: As impressive as Carson Palmer's day was – resulting in a 121.4 quarterback rating – he was actually less impressive statistically than Joe Flacco in Baltimore the week before (128.7). This actually serves as a good case study for the relevance of the quarterback rating system: Palmer threw for 109 more yards and averaged more yards per attempt, but Flacco tossed an additional touchdown and had a slightly higher completion percentage. Discuss.

SAY WHAT?: For all the Browns' troubles at wide receiver and all the interest in Mohamed Massaquoi going into the season, he's only caught three passes in the last three weeks. Surprisingly, after Josh Cribbs, the Browns' leading receiver at wideout at this point is Chansi Stuckey – who caught as many passes on Sunday as Massaquoi has all season.

ANOTHER CLOSE CALL: This was the 10th time the Browns have defeated the Bengals by three points or less. Overall, 16 of the teams' 74 meetings (22%) have been decided by three

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KISS OF DEATH: In each of the last 12 seasons that the Bengals lost at least one game to the Browns, Cincinnati failed to post a winning record for the year. Along the same lines, not only have the Bengals never won a division title in back-to-back seasons, but only once in their history have they ever reached the playoffs two consecutive years (1981 and 1982).

PROGRESS REPORT AT THE QUARTER POLE: The Browns defense has twice as many sacks as their opponents (8-4) on essentially the same number of passing attempts (123 for the Browns and 124 for their opponents). The Browns have forced as many turnovers as they've given up and have accumulated more rushing yards (466-435) as well as a better average per rush (4.1-3.8).

A BIT MORE REALISTIC: With 25 percent of the season gone, the Browns' general statistical standings are starting to look a little more like what we expected. The offense is tied for 16th

in the NFL, averaging 5.2 yards per play, which may not sound like much, but actually still tops the AFC North (the Bengals, for all their explosiveness, are averaging 5.1). Meanwhile, the Browns defense has slipped to 22nd

, allowing 5.6 yards per play, last in the division by a good distance. The Ravens (4.4), Steelers (4.5), and Bengals (4.9) are all ranked in the league's top six.