

## BROWNIE BITS: WEEK SEVEN

Written by {ga=jonathanknight}

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

**OWNING BOURBON STREET:** While the Browns have had their share of struggles against numerous NFL franchises over the past four decades, the Saints aren't one of them. Sunday's win improved the Browns' lead in the all-time series to 12-4, including a remarkable 8-2 clip in New Orleans, where the Browns have won three straight. They haven't lost in the Superdome since a fourth-quarter rally fell short in a 25-20 defeat on Oct. 14, 1990. While satisfying, this particular trend turns a bit heartbreaking when you consider that in five of the Browns' playoff seasons since 1966, the Super Bowl has been played in New Orleans. Oh, what might have been.

**THROW THEM OUT THE WINDOW:** Just like the victory over the Bengals, it's tempting to look at the final statistics and conclude that the Browns were lucky to win. They were doubled in total first downs (25-12), nearly doubled in total yardage (394-210), quadrupled in passing yards (336-85), and time of possession was lopsided against them (35:24 to 24:26). But aside from the obvious four New Orleans turnovers, the Browns had an edge in penalty yardage (30-98), rushing yards (125-58), punt-return yardage (102 to minus-1), and sacks (3-1). Another statistic that redefines the dramatic difference in total yardage (and underlines the value of examining yards per play rather than total yardage): the Saints' advantage in yards per play was a much more modest 5.1 to 4.6.

**SIX FOR SIX:** By once again holding a lead, the Browns stretched their string to 12 consecutive games (including all seven this season) in which they've led at some point in the contest. They're on track to match the 2001 Browns' string of holding an advantage in their first 10 games.

**A NEW LOW DURING A NEW HIGH:** The Browns' 210 yards of total offense was by far their lowest output of the season, as was their number of total offensive plays (46) and first downs (12).

**SPECIAL ONCE AGAIN:** For the second straight week, the Browns' special teams were just that. Naturally, all the talk this week is about Josh Cribbs' cross-field lateral and Reggie Hodges leading the Israelites through the parting of the Red Sea in the New Orleans line, but even without those gems, the Browns were dominant. Hodges averaged a net of 42.3 yards per punt and placed two inside the 20, while Cribbs averaged a much more Cribbs-like 13.3 yards on a trio of punt returns. Saints wideout (and Columbus native) Lance Moore actually netted negative yardage on his pair of punt returns and Courtney Roby averaged a modest 20.8 yards on four kickoff returns.

**TOO WEIRD TO BE COINCIDENTAL:** Though they've now met only 16 times over the course of 44 years, the Browns have played the Saints in seasons in which they notched the five worst records in Cleveland history: 1999 (2-14), 1990 (3-13), 1975 (3-11), 2006 (4-12), and 1981 and 1984 (each 5-11). It would be comforting to think that Sunday's performance foreshadows that 2010 will not be included on this list.

**ALMOST MAKING HISTORY:** Drew Brees' 56 passing attempts tied for the second-most ever thrown against the Browns in a single game, matching Tampa Bay's Doug Williams' total in 1980. Pot-smoking Todd Marinovich of the Raiders holds the record with 59 attempts in Eric Metcalf's four-touchdown game in L.A. in September of 1992. Not surprisingly, all three games were Browns victories. Brees' 37 completions were also the second-most ever against the Browns, falling one shy of Tommy Kramer's 38 in the infamous Hail Mary game in Minnesota in 1980.

**IT'S ABOUT VALUE:** Though Colt McCoy threw 40 less passes, completing 26 less than Drew Brees for nearly 300 less yards, his quarterback rating for the day was actually higher than the fantasy football rainmaker. McCoy, keeping things close to the vest and avoiding mistakes, earned a rating of 68.2, while Brees scored a 65.8. Funny what four picks will do.

**NOT SO SUPER:** It's a tall order to defeat the defending Super Bowl champions on their home field, thus the Browns' all-time 5-10 record in these games isn't surprising. The quartet of

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victories against defending champs prior to Sunday came in 1971 (Baltimore Colts, 14-13); 1988 (Washington, 17-13); 1994 (Dallas, 19-14); and 2001 (Baltimore Ravens; 27-17).

**SIZZLING FUJITA:** Scott Fujita may have played the best game of any Browns defensive player all year: 11 tackles (10 solo) with an interception, a sack, two tackles for a loss, and a pass defended. He's now the team's second-leading tackler (44, 30 solo – trailing only T.J. Ward) and also No. 2 in sacks (3.5 – trailing only Marcus Bernard).

**DOMESWEET DOME:** The Browns all-time record in domed stadiums (including retractables) now stands at 32-36. Aside from the Superdome (5-2), the only indoor stadium in which the Browns hold a winning record is the Houston Astrodome (16-10).

**WHAT CAN BROWN DO FOR YOU?:** This was the first time the Browns had ever worn brown jerseys for a game in the Superdome.

**IT'S NOT HOW YOU START...:** After another quick start Sunday, the Browns have now allowed only 13 points in the first quarter all season and have scored 26. Combined with their second-quarter advantage (55-47), the Browns have outscored opponents 81-60 in the first half. The trouble is, they've been outscored 82-37 in the second half.

**GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION:** With one carry (the 68-yard fake punt), Reggie Hodges became the Browns' third-leading rusher in 2010 while accounting for 32.4% of the Browns' total offense for the game and 9.6% of the Browns' rushing yardage for the season.

**BIG LEAD IN THE BIG EASY:** The 20-point advantage the Browns held in the fourth quarter was the largest they'd enjoyed all season and their biggest since last November in Detroit when they surged to a 21-point lead over the Lions in the first quarter, only to completely squander it by halftime.

**FINALLY OUR TURN:** Prior to David Bowens' unlikely double-dip, the Browns hadn't returned an interception for a touchdown since Dec. 15, 2008, when Brandon McDonald picked off a Donovan McNabb pass and returned in 24 yards for a score in Philadelphia. In between,

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Browns opponents returned six interceptions for touchdowns.

**TWICE THE FUN:** Bowens became the first player in Browns history to return two interceptions for touchdowns in the same game. He was the second defensive player to notch two scores in one day, joining linebacker David Grayson, who returned an interception and a fumble for touchdowns within minutes of each other in the 51-0 lobotomy of the Steelers in the 1989 season opener.

**THE KIND OF DROUGHT WE LIKE:** The Browns held the Saints scoreless for the first 24:28 of the game - the longest scoreless stretch to start a game all season for the Browns defense.

**GO FIGURE:** In their first six games of the season, the Browns had intercepted just three passes - a total they matched in the first half in New Orleans. With a total of four picks on the day, it was the most turnovers the Browns had collected in a single game all season and the most interceptions in a game since Nov. 25, 2001, when they swiped a total of five passes from Bengal quarterbacks Jon Kitna and Scott Mitchell in a shutout win over Cincinnati. Their turnover ratio (which was minus-12 in 2009) is now dead even for the year.

**HELLO, BYE:** Since the bye week was implemented in 1990 (and including the double-bye-week farce of 1993), the Browns hold a record of 6-12 in games played immediately preceding their week off.

**P-H BALANCE:** Chugging and slugging his way to 69 rushing yards against the Saints, Peyton Hillis has topped the 450-yard mark for the season – already surpassing his previous career-best year – is still on pace to top 1,000. He is currently the NFL's 17th-ranked rusher and fourth in touchdowns (five). And as it happens, following his trick-or-treat toss to Colt McCoy in the fourth quarter, Hillis is also now the Browns' top-rated passer with a rating of 118.8. Meanwhile, McCoy became the 13th different Browns player to catch a pass in 2010.

**KILLING TIME:** The Browns' clock-milking drive in the fourth quarter that led to Phil Dawson's final field goal – and erased seven minutes and 34 seconds – was their longest of the season. Their previous best was their opening drive in Baltimore (6:36).

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WHERE WE STAND: Now averaging exactly five yards per play, the Browns' offense has dipped to 26th in the NFL, while the defense comes in at 21st, allowing 5.6. Yet the Browns' D currently ranks higher than league darlings Dallas and New England and is quickly closing in on Indianapolis.