



### **Week 7 – Cleveland at New Orleans**

Shocking. Stunning. Startling. Inconceivable.

These were the words used by the media - both national and local - to describe the Browns' win over the defending Super Bowl Champion New Orleans Saints. To hear their pontification, you would've thought Andy Dick just walked into the Octagon and put Brock Lesnar in the morgue.

I don't think it's a shocking win at all. There has only been one game this season (the Steelers game) that I didn't go into believing the Browns had a good chance to win, and that was largely due to circumstance. Cleveland certainly has less talent than most of the teams they've played so far this year, but they are still fairly solid, and if they play mistake-free, opportunistic football and their opponent does not... well, they can take anyone down.

Now, let's not jump the gun - needing to play perfect football in order to win is not a formula that leads to Lombardi Trophies. The Browns will still need an influx of talent before they're serious contenders. But there is no doubt that this team is on the path towards that goal, and there will be more "shocking" wins on the way.

The Saints undoubtedly have the better overall team, but they are also undoubtedly beatable. And not just in an every-given-Sunday type of way; I bet the Browns would beat them 4 out of

10 times.

They were beatable just the way the New England Patriots are beatable after the Bye and the New York Jets are beatable the week after that. There's not a game left on the schedule that they absolutely "can't" win. And the Browns know it.

That's not to say they will win them all. No, mistakes will be made and they'll probably lose at least half. But the most important goal the Cleveland Browns can reach this season is one they are well on their way to achieving: *They believe they can hang with anybody. They don't let themselves get pushed around. They don't hang their heads and they don't feel sorry for themselves.*

*They no longer lose games before they even take the field.*

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### Game Recap

The Saints got the ball first, but the Browns quickly evicted them from the field despite 2 dropped picks by our buddy Abe Elam. NO's punt forced Josh Cribbs back to the 12, where he caught the ball, ran up to the 20, and threw the ball laterally all the way across the field to Eric Wright Music City Miracle-style. Wright followed his convoy all the way to the Saints 19 where he "ran out of gas" and tripped over some dude's finger. Colt McCoy managed a First Down, but the drive stalled at the 4. *Browns 3, Saints 0.*

New Orleans went 3 and out again, thanks in large part to a nice Scott Fujita sack. After a more conventional punt return by Cribbs to the CLE 44, McCoy went deep a couple plays later, much to my shock (I didn't even know that was allowed!). It was a perfect pass to Cribbs, who didn't catch it because he was molested by the Defender, so the resultant penalty made it 1st and Goal at the NO 4. Peyton Hillis walked into the End Zone on the next play, and the "stunner" was on. *Browns 10, Saints 0.*

The Saints finally got on track Offensively, slowly but methodically making the way up the field as far as the CLE 11, where Drew Brees was so good as to throw a pick right to Fujita. New Orleans got back into the red zone a couple series later, however, and this time they managed to walk away with a FG (the TD pass past - guess who? - Eric Wright was nullified by offsetting penalties, sparing Easy E his 33rd TD allowed of the season). *Browns 10, Saints 3.*

Cleveland appeared to go 3 and Out again when, on 4th and 8 from their own 23, Reggie Hodges took the snap and ran through a gap in the middle so large that Rob Ryan could've rolled through it. He avoided the tackle "attempt" of Lance Moore around midfield and plowed all the way down to the 9. That's right, sports fans, a 68 yard fake punt. Surprise! *Browns 13, Saints 3.*

There was about 2 minutes left in the Half and the Saints were eager to shake off their funk, so Brees, accosted by Chris Gocong and Shaun Rogers, humbly tossed the ball to David Bowens, who bounced it off of a Saints' lineman's posterior before catching it and taking it 30 yards to paydirt (complete with a graceful flying leap!)

And the Saints fans booed their team into the locker room, the finest music I've ever heard coming from the Big Easy (and I've heard a lot). *Browns 20, Saints 3.*

Not much happened Offensively until about halfway through the 3rd, when Marques Colston fumbled a 3rd Down reception and the Saints - who recovered - brought out their FG team on 4th and 3. Eric Mangini decided to challenge possession of the fumble, which isn't challengeable, which he should know, since the Saints tried to do it earlier in the game and were told the same thing (over the PA no less), which paused the game enough for the Saints to reconsider going for it (like I kept bellowing at Mangini whilst calling him mean names), which they did, which they converted, which they turned into an 11 yard TD pass a few plays later to start the 4th.

If the Saints had come back to win, you better believe I'd be crucifying Mangini for doing that. As it is, it denies him an Honorable Mention. Sorry, it's cruel, but that's just the type of guy I am. *Browns 20, Saints 10.*

The only good thing that came of the TD drive was that it took 8:33. The Browns didn't use much of the all-out blitz, seemingly fine with allowing the occasional Saints long, time-consuming drives here and there once the lead got up to 10.

Speaking of time-consuming drives, the Browns put together a really impressive one right after that. They started at their own 19 with 13:25 left and chewed up over 7 1/2 minutes - mainly on the ground via The Incredible Hillis - en route to a big 48 yard FG by Phil Dawson. It ate up time, changed momentum, and made it a 2 TD lead - a huge drive. *Browns 23, Saints 10.*

All day long, the Browns' use of the "UFO" Defense - a D package with no one playing with their hand on the ground, players wandering around the line of scrimmage, and often employing up to 7 LB's - confused Brees enough that he made uncharacteristic mistakes.

He made one on the ensuing drive with just under 4 minutes left, throwing a ball right to a leaping Bowens (whom he did not see), and Bowens ran it back 64 yards (with nary a Saint within 30 yards) for his 2nd Pick 6 of the day. And that, boys and girls, was all she wrote. *Browns 30, Saints 10.*

The Saints added a late TD to make it more respectable. Nice for them.

**Final: Browns 30, Saints 17.**

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### Conclusion

Time of Possession: New Orleans – 35:34, Cleveland – 24:26

Total Yards: New Orleans – 394, Cleveland - 210

First Downs: New Orleans - 25, Cleveland – 12

Looking at these stats, you'd think the Browns had their asses minced, fried, garnished with paprika, and served on a fancy silver tray.

These stats are clearly messed up by the big plays from the Browns D and Special Teams. If you get 2 Pick Sixes, maybe you run your Offense more conservatively. If you're up double digits, maybe you stop attacking and let them have the low-risk stuff across the middle that eats up time.

Taking the combined yards from all aspects of the game (Rushing, Passing, Punt Returns, Kickoff Returns, Interception Returns), the Browns had 492 yards to New Orleans' 496. And a lot of the Saints' 496 came from the 356 yards passing, a large chunk of which came after the game was comfortably in Cleveland's court.

So you chalk this one up as a statistical anomaly and say "*On the field, it was easy to tell which team was winning, and it wasn't the team that won the Super Bowl last year*"  
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### Gameballs

*Reggie Hodges* – This is the first time I've ever given a Punter 2 gameballs in a row, but it's not every week that your Punter runs for 68 yards on a fake, including eluding a tackler and actually *outrunning* a Defender. And his punting kicked patuti as well. Dave Zastudil better be scanning the want-ads.

*Scott Fujita* - Nice homecoming. The sack set the tone for the game, and that first pick was huge to establish some Cleveland confidence.

*David Bowens* - Duh. Love Bowens. Snow up top, but fire in the chimney.

*Brad Seeley* - Well played, sir. Well played.

*Rob Ryan* - Bucking for a promotion, are we?

*The Defense in general* - Never saw that coming.

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### **Honorable Mention**

*Phil Dawson* – You kick the 43 yard FG in a big stage of the game, and then Eric Steinbach False Starts. So you calmly nail the 48 yarder instead. Clutch.

*Peyton Hillis* – Maybe not his best performance, but was key to that clock-killing 4th Quarter drive that iced the game. And... nice pass.

*Ahtyba Rubin* – Key to shutting down the Saints' run game.

*TJ Ward* – Not such a gaudy stat sheet, but some nice pass Defense from the rook.

*Chansi Stuckey* – Helluva catch on 3rd Down in the 4th Quarter on a bad throw. Missing that might've meant a pick in a REALLY poor situation for it.

*Colt McCoy* – Hardly gaudy numbers, but no turnovers, and he beat Drew Brees in New Orleans. Plus, you gotta get something for your first NFL win, and nothing is more prestigious than a Hutchison Honorable Mention. He'll probably have it framed.

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## Wall of Shame

*Eric Wright* – Even in a win, plays like fecal matter. Every open guy was his. Got beat for an easy TD, which was fortunately negated by offsetting fouls. Single handedly allowed NO to convert to 4th Quarter 4th Downs (missed a tackle, then got a Holding penalty). And, you ran out of gas on the punt-return-throwback? Really? The Punter gets to run out of gas. You do not.

*Abe Elam* - Finally got his name called - for dropping 2 early INT's.

*Solomon Wilcotts* – How hard is it to understand that if Stuckey was down by contact, the Browns would simply accept the Defensive penalty? Why did you waste my time with all the dramatics, especially when I was explicitly screaming at you what would happen? Do you not listen?

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As far as I'm concerned (and that should be all that really matters here), there is no reason for anyone not named Colt McCoy to start the rest of the season.

It's not as if his 74 yards passing were so scintillating that I just HAVE to have me some more Colt. But, with the way the game unfolded, he didn't need to pass for more than 74 yards. What he DID need to do was not commit any turnovers. Mission accomplished.



Colt was once again poised, accurate, and in control. His pass to Josh Cribbs that was called for Interference on their first TD drive was as nice a deep ball as I've seen a Cleveland QB throw along the sidelines since the early part of 2007 (before Derek Anderson realized he sucked). Really, those penalty yards should be tacked onto his totals, giving him a 10 for 17, 112 yard day.

That's a QB rating of... carry the 2... multiply by Avogadro's number... 233? Crap, that can't be right! Well... probably something in the 70's.

Which is still hardly orgasmic, but it's not like he had that many chances. The D scored twice. The Special Teams trickery shortened the field. They got up by a lot, and spent a great deal of the 2nd Half in Prevent Offense, trying to eat up the clock. The stats got skewered.

Colt was supposed to be red-shirted, to protect him from the big bad NFL and its big bad players, to foster his confidence and keep him from getting killed. But that red-shirt got thwarted. The Browns were forced to pull the in case of emergency handle, and trying to pretend like the alarm never went off serves no purpose. Now that McCoy has seen the field, what is he going to learn from watching? Now that he has shown he can handle the speed of the game, isn't playing time - real life experience - the most important lesson?

I submit to you that Colt McCoy is just as effective a starting QB as a 100% healthy Jake Delhomme (at this point of their careers). And I submit that he's better than a gimpy Delhomme. There is really no reason we should see Jake starting the rest of the year, and I think Jake knows it when he responds thusly [to a question](#) about when he would be ready to play:

*"We'll see. I do know I need to be right if/when I get back out there. I can't go in and hobble around. I might not be the fastest guy in the world, but I can't go in and hobble around. I have to be ready ."*

The key word in that statement is "IF". It seems as if maybe someone has already spoken to him, or he's intelligent enough to see the writing on the wall.

Seneca Wallace is another matter. At this point in time, Wallace is probably the superior QB. He's a little more mobile, he's got a better arm, he's got a lot more experience. If the Browns were making a playoff run, I'd say that Wallace was the better choice.

But they're not. The Browns have about as much chance of reaching the post-season as LeBron James has of not being self-absorbed.

One of the great tragedies of 2008 was that, when Romeo FINALLY benched DA and went to Brady Quinn, Quinn got hurt after only 3 games. It was imperative that he finished off that season so that the Powers That Be would have (hopefully) enough data on him to determine if he was a possible answer to the Franchise QB question. His injury would leave that question hanging through the offseason, dooming the 2009 campaign to answering it.

The 2009 season was toast because Quinn was unable to prove/disprove his potential in 2008. Had he stayed healthy and finished off 2008 like he played in 2009... well, the Browns very well might have selected Mark Sanchez in the draft.

Which is not to say I wish we had The Sanchize. The book's still WAY out on him. All I am saying is that, knowing what we know now, different choices would've been made. In order to make an informed decision, WE NEED TO KNOW.

We need to know if Colt McCoy can be The Answer (all apologies to Mr. Iverson, who is currently wowing audiences in Turkey and likely skipping practice). We need to know if he has weaknesses that other teams can exploit with a little game film (See: *Anderson, Derek*). We need to know if his arm can hold up in November and December Ohio winds. We need to know so much more than what we do know if we (meaning, they) are going to be able to make an accurate estimation of his skills and potential.

Because we're likely going to be in position to pick a QB pretty high in the draft, and should we or shouldn't we is an essential question. Maybe THE essential question.

Why wait until 2011 to see what Colt's really about when we can find out now?

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There's only one reason: *The Head Coach fears for his job, and doesn't see any advantage in getting the rookie QB experience if it's just for someone else's benefit. He needs to win now.*

It's difficult to say which way Mangini's leaning on this matter, which is the way he wants it. Keeping the world guessing about his starting QB is his Thang. He'd do it every week if he could. Let's look at some of his random quotes:

*"The play time that [McCoy has] gotten has been great. The things that he's shown has been really positive. But we're always gonna try to play the guys that we think give us the best shot to win on Sunday ."*

*"I've been encouraged by what [McCoy's] done... The poise he's shown at two really difficult,*

*loud environments has been great. But there's a lot of things that he can improve and there's a long way he needs to continue to come ."*

*"How healthy is [Wallace] going to be? Is he 100 percent? Is he perfect? There are ranges of injury. He could play, he could be the 2, he could be the 1 at 80 percent. There's a lot of mitigating factors ."*



Yep, Mangini must be in his own personal Valhalla. That's 3 QB's that he might viably start! Poor Belichick won't be able to sleep sweating out who will be throwing to... throwing to... someone.

I'd listen to cases for either McCoy or Wallace, but if all 3 QB's are healthy and Mangini puts Jake Delhomme out there against the Patriots, it's simply the wrong choice.

I'm not saying I know more than the coaches... oh, wait, if they do that, yes, that's what I'm saying.

What I think, of course, does not matter. But what Mike Holmgren thinks does. [From the PD](#) :

*In an interview in Sunday's Plain Dealer, Holmgren indicated a desire and responsibility to evaluate McCoy to make a conclusion on whether another quarterback needs to be drafted next year. He said he would have a better idea on McCoy "if he were able to play four or five games."*

Let's see if Mangini understands "subtle hints". My guess is he does, and McCoy takes on his third Super Bowl winning QB in a row a week from Sunday.

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Maybe Mangini ought to leverage his position by simply telling Holmgren, "*I'd be delighted to let Colt start the rest of the year, if you could be so good as to just sign this here piece of paper.*"  
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Another aspect of keeping McCoy as starter - [national attention](#) .

Right now on CBS Sportsline.com, there are 3 main headlines: The World Series starts, the Heat lose, and Colt McCoy. It's hard to wrap one's mind around.

It shouldn't be a reason for starting him, nor should it be something the Browns should seek/care about. But it is interesting.

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The Browns waived James Davis on Monday to make room for Thomas Clayton, a RB that was most recently with the Patriots.

I, for one, will freely admit that - coming into this season - I did not foresee a RB corps of Peyton Hillis, Mike Bell, and Thomas Clayton by the Bye Week, especially minus injury.

This one has me a bit stumped. Davis looked good during the Preseason, and I've been campaigning for him to get some PT in relief for weeks. He had some speed, some shiftiness, some (at least I thought) potential - a good change of pace from Hillis. Yet the coaching staff couldn't see fit to even give him a shot.

It's not like I'm going to throw a fit about this. If he wasn't playing, he wasn't contributing, so his departure is really no loss. It feels like there's more to this story, such as Davis was a malcontent or couldn't block or wore a pink speedo around the locker room that made the other guys uncomfortable. We may not ever discover what it was - maybe it was as simple as he just wasn't cutting it in practice. Whatever.

### [Thomas Clayton on YouTube](#)

Davis is 5'11, 218. Clayton is 5'11, 222. From watching what little video can be gleaned (above), Clayton has a similar running style to Davis. Maybe the Powers That Be figured that - all things being equal - go with the guy with the better attitude.

And the fact that he might be able to divulge a New England secret or two? Well, that might've helped a bit too.

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And now we must consider the 2009 Draft an abject disaster. With Davis gone, only 4 of the 8 players taken are still on the roster: Alex Mack, Brian Robiskie, Mo Massaquoi, and Kaluka Maiava. That's one starter, one #2 or #3 Receiver, one backup LB that's currently on IR, and one complete waste of a pick.

I'll let you figure out which is which.

That's a draft where you had three 2nd Round picks - and none of them is a viable starter in any sense of the word (not to mention that one is already out of the league). Egads! The Horror!

What makes me even sicker to my beer gut is thinking about what Tom Heckert would've done had he been given those same 3 picks, and how much further along the team would be because of it.

Watch out, here comes lunch.



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Speaking of the 2009 WR class (both of whom are "starters"), one (Mo Mass) missed the Saints game with concussion-like symptoms.

He missed the game. Did you miss him?

If so, how can you tell?

Here are the stats of our "starting" WR's through 7 games:

Mo Mass - 9 catches, 115 yards, 1 TD, 12.8 yard average

Brian Robiskie - 8 catches, 61 yards, 0 TD, 7.6 yard average

Between them, that's 17 catches for 166 yards and 1 TD.

There were like 9 Receivers that had a better game last week than the 2 of them have had combined *for the year*. And that's not just a few contests, boys and girls. That's 7 games - almost a half a season.

Awesome!

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James Harrison was so upset about being fined for his helmet to helmet hits last week that he contemplated retirement.

Yeah, and I contemplated shaving off my eyebrows with my bandsaw.

High school proms are envious of the melodrama in today's professional sports.

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Attention Miami Heat: Have you noticed how the national media has gone from adoring the Dallas Cowboys, their Preseason darling, to crucifying them?

Let's hope that's you.

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PS - Hello, NBA, you might well be reaping the benefits of early season anticipation. But this will come back to bite you in the ass big-time.

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## Next Up

*The Bye Week (7-0).*

For the first time in years, I do NOT predict the Browns will lose the Bye Week.

It will be a tie.

*Browns 20, Bye Week 20.*

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### **Person That I Dislike More Than Aaron Goldhammer**

*Brad Childress*

I'm not entirely sure why, but this guy just rubs me the wrong way. Earlier this week, he publicly criticized his QB, Brett Favre for playing like Brett Favre, even though he begged Brett Favre to come back all offseason and held his own team hostage by allowing Brett Favre to hem and haw and hesitate. Yes, Childress sold his soul to the Mississippi Devil, and now he's complaining about the terms.

I'm no fan of Favre, but Brett oughtta just kick this guy's ass and be done with it. You know it's coming, and you know Childress deserves it. I'm not sure how a guy with his clearly flawed leadership skills gets to be a Head Coach in the NFL. What with that sniveling demeanor and his smart-ass comments - he's like the neighbor kid that would call everyone names then run inside his house and make faces at you from the window after you walked over to stuff your foot in his ear.

Then his mom would call your mom and complain that you were bullying her poor son, and you would point out that it wasn't bullying if he precipitated it, and he wouldn't come to the bus stop until right as the bus came, and his mom would say something to you in the lunch line because she was the lunch lady, and you'd tell her to mind her own damn business and let her son fight his own battles, and she'd call your mom again and tell her you said that, and then your mom

would ground you from cartoons for 2 weeks and make it 2 months if you touch that boy.

And yet, it's still worth it when you finally get that little weasel someplace nice and private and give him the beating he so richly deserves, even if it does result in Superfriends going off the air before you're allowed near a TV again.

I predict someone on the Vikings decides the same about their Head Coach before it's all said and done.

