



Week 9 – Cleveland vs New England

The famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant once wrote: "*Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.*"

Which has nothing to do with the exhilaration we must feel in BrownsWorld after that rousing victory. Being philosophy, it probably has nothing to do with anything. It sounds like it should mean something, but I read it, and I think "*This crap makes no sense*"... and there's our segue.

The 2010 season also makes no sense. Another lost year has suddenly, inexplicably, been turned into the most encouraging campaign since The Return. Yes, more encouraging than 2002, when, even during a Playoff run, the Browns supposed Franchise QB (Tim Couch) was proven False. Yes, more encouraging than 2007, when the Browns beat only one team with a winning record and a paper tiger team with its paper tiger QB (Derek Anderson) was exposed at the end of the season.

The final record may not reflect it, and many things could still go wrong, but, as of today, the future is bright. So bright. And something about shades.

The main reason for the uncanny enthusiasm is the existence of a possibly real, bona fide Franchise QB. The controversy is over. The debate is over. There's really nothing left to discuss. Colt McCoy is the best option for this team. Now, tomorrow, for the rest of the year.

Mangini can claim that Colt is "[making the decision harder](#)". Who you trying to fool, ace? No one's buyin' that jive. Honestly, you trot Seneca Wallace or Jake Delhomme out there on Sunday and you will have just burned the hell out of all the goodwill you've spent the last year and a half banking. I know you wanna play your little head games, but Rex Ryan is in no way dumb enough to buy it. It's a waste of time.

You beat two Super Bowl contenders handily in consecutive contests, you get some pub. You unearth a diamond in the rough fantasy-god Running Back like Peyton Hillis, you get some pub. Your brand-name rookie QB comes in and looks like a seasoned pro, you get some pub.

Suddenly, the Jets-Browns game is one of the marquis contests of Week 10. Rob Ryan vs. Rex Ryan. Eric Mangini vs. His Old Team. Braylon Edwards vs. Ohio. The Cleveland Browns vs. The Same Old Result.

We're now looking at the biggest game in Cleveland since the Buffalo game in late 2007 (which ain't saying much, but that shouldn't downplay the importance).

A win, and the Browns are 4-5, including 4-3 in their 7 game gauntlet, having won 3 in a row versus teams that are all major contenders, their only losses to teams with winning records (28-12 combined), and looking at a remaining schedule dotted with games that they will probably *be favored in*.

A loss, and, well, you're 3-6 and everyone outside of Cleveland can forget about you again. You can still have a good season, sure, but you'll have no real playoff hopes and the rest of the contests will be mostly developmental for 2011.

The Jets game is certainly not life or death. But it's the biggest one of the season, and the idea of what the rest of this season could be like should the Browns take it... it makes me spastic just thinking about it.

Game Recap

The Browns got the ball first and put together a decent drive (Peyton Hillis hurdled some dude), working their way to a Phil Dawson FG. New England totally botched the following kickoff - one guy waived fair catch, then let it go over his head, where Sammie Morris muffed it, giving the Browns the ball deep in Patriot territory. Colt McCoy threw a jump ball to Evan Moore (a pre-determined jump ball, which is much better than a random jump ball) down to the 2, and Hillis banged it in from there (blowing up some dude). *Browns 10, Patriots 0.*

The Defense held Tom Brady to a 3 and Out, and Cleveland looked on the verge of blowing the game open after converting a 4th and 1 when Hillis fumbled after a long gain to the NE 36. But, shockingly, the Browns were able to minimize the damage by forcing another quick punt.

The teams traded possessions until the Pats finally mounted their first drive of note when they switched to a Hurry-up Offense in the 2nd Quarter to prevent Cleveland substitutions (it worked for New Orleans 2 weeks ago as well). After converting a 4th and 1 at the 24, Brady threw a TD pass (sort of) to Aaron Hernandez, who made a beautiful leaping catch after the ball ricocheted off a well-covered NE TE Rob Gronkowski. *Browns 10, Patriots 7.*

Here's where the old Browns would fold. But not the Colt McCoy-led Browns. He led them on a brisk 60 yard drive, converting two 3rd Down passes, capped by a 11 yard TD run by Chansi Stuckey on a trick play called the "Brownie", where Josh Cribbs lined up under Center with Stuckey next to him, the Linemen all standing and looking confused, and Cribbs taking the quick snap and secretly handing the ball to Stuckey while dashing right, leaving Chansi to wait... wait... wait... GO! Student body left, Patriots don't know what the hell is going on, Chansi dives for the pylon... Touchdown. *Browns 17, Patriots 7.*

New England drove the ball again via Hurray-up, looking to narrow the deficit just before Half, but Gronkowski caught the ball at about the 6, was hit and held up, and Abe Elam wisely latched onto the ball and ripped it from Gronko's grasp. A huge play to deny the Pats any points as they went to the locker rooms.



I feared that the Patriots had found their Offensive rhythm at the end of the 1st Half, but their first drive of the 2nd was stopped, and the Browns went to work with a heavy dose of Hillis mixed with a dash of very nice McCoy passes. On 1st and 15 at the NE 16, Colt dropped back, didn't find what he was looking for, scrambled to his left and turned it up towards the End Zone. He would've gotten caught, but Cribbs just lit up the poor dude at the last second and Colt was able to dive for the pylon and get it. The rout was on. *Browns 24, Patriots 7.*

The Pats responded by doing nothing, so the Browns got the ball back and went on another long, impressive, time-consuming drive that dug into the 4th Quarter and produced another FG. By that point, down 20 with just over 10 minutes left, it didn't look good for Dr. Mumbles and Mr. Wonderful. They did manage another TD, however, converting on a 4th and 10 (pass interference in the End Zone) and cutting the lead to not-as-comfortable-as-I'd-like-it-to-be 13 with 6:37 left. *Browns 27, Patriots 14.*

You knew what was coming next. The Patriots knew it too - they just couldn't do anything about it. Yep, a heaping spoonful of Hillis. NE's D Line just wanted to crawl into a dark place and hide at the juncture, and Hillis ran the ball 6 straight times, including the last one, a 35 yard sprint up the right sideline (outrunning some dude) to put the cherry on top of his 184 yard, 2 TD sundae. Game over. *Browns 34, Patriots 14.*

With just over 2 minutes left, Belichick raised the proverbial white flag, putting Brian Hoyer into the contest for Brady. He was gracious enough to throw a pick to pad Eric Wright's stats.

Final: Browns 34, Patriots 14.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Cleveland – 38:08, New England – 21:52

Total Yards: Cleveland – 404, New England - 283

First Downs: Cleveland - 22, New England – 19

And it wasn't even that close.

The numbers don't lie - that was a total domination. The Time of Possession is particularly telling - if you control the ball for nearly 40 minutes, you'll win almost every time.

(I think. I didn't do the research.)

It also shows me, at least, that the Patriots were soft, just as I suspected. They have a HoF Coach and a HoF QB, and that keeps them in most contests, not to mention the fact that they

win a couple just from the Patriot "aura". But they would not enjoy a season in the AFC North, and their talent level is on serious decline.

Maybe it's best not to give guys like Bill Belichick and Eric Mangini (and let's throw Josh McDaniels into that mix too) personnel powers. They seem to be so obsessed with getting "their" guys that they ignore other aspects of a player's game.

Gameballs

Peyton Hillis – Welcome to the Holiday Season's #1 Best-Selling jersey. Love the facemask.

Chris Gocong - Seems that every week a different member of the LB Corps steps up. This is part of the concept that, as individuals, there are no stars, but, as a whole, they can certainly be effective.

Colt McCoy - Continues to amaze me. It's not like he's wowing the world statistically, but have you seen this team managed better on Offense - ever - since 1999? Example - Colt's best throw of the day? 1st Quarter, up 10, 3rd and 12 at the NE 44, McCoy rolls left out of trouble, looks, looks, looks, and then throws the ball out of bounds just as he gets nailed from behind. Pass Rush awareness, decision making... you just know Derek Anderson throws that into triple coverage or fumbles when he gets hit from his blind side.

Brian Daboll - Don't look up, pigs are flying. Under fire all season, you could easily see how excited Daboll was at the Offensive success. Two calls in particular impressed the hell out of me: the Stuckey "Brownie" play and the 4th Down play where the team shifted from a power formation to a spread and had Colt wait just long enough to get the D thinking he was just trying to draw them Offsides before snapping it and running the sneak. I'm not sure if the dynamics of that play were more Daboll or McCoy, but that was just brilliant conception/execution.

Eric Mangini - Could be emerging from the hurricane all the stronger for surviving.

Offensive Line - When Porkchop Womack moves to RT, this is one of the best Run-Blocking lines in all the NFL.

Honorable Mention

Abe Elam – The strip of the Patriots TE and the 2 just before Halftime was a great heads-up play.

Mo Massaquoi – We have a WR sighting, folks. That was a shoelace catch on McCoy's first throw, and important to establishing the tone early. Could've been a totally different game had he dropped it.

Mike Adams – In on at least 2 or 3 breakups. Guys like Adams have been getting a lot more PT in the last couple weeks in the extravagant schemes Ryan has been producing.

The Defense – Not a dominating performance, but shut the Pats Run game down and confused the bejeezus out of Tom Brady.

Chansi Stuckey – Getting more and more productive as the season goes on.

Blake Costanzo – Nice fake cramp there during the Patriots last TD drive. It didn't quite work, but it was a good idea, trying to slow down the NE Hurry-Up.

Wall of Shame

No One - There's a first for everything.

Two things happened within the last week that may drastically change the landscape of Cleveland Browns football within the next year:

1. The Dallas Cowboys fired Wade Phillips, opening up a very desirable Head Coaching position.
2. Mike Holmgren seemed to somewhat express a desire to return to the sidelines.



