



Week 11 – Cleveland at Jacksonville

There's the Browns I know and loathe.

I haven't been angry enough this year, but the Browns finally took care of that on Sunday, blowing a game where they were gifted 6 turnovers, scored a Defensive TD, and led pretty much throughout. That disgusting display cured me of my optimism.

Yes, it's been a while since I got to yell at the TV some of the lyrics from one of my favorite Eminem songs (*Kim*): *I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU! I SWEAR TO GOD I HATE YOU!*

About time that my blood pressure medication was useful for something.

This season was confusing me, but now the stars have re-aligned: The Browns couldn't run the ball. The Browns were horrible on Offense. The Browns couldn't stop the run. The Browns were horrible on Defense (except for all those nice - wasted - donations). The Browns blow a

late lead. The Browns fall short on a last-second comeback attempt. The Browns lose badly against a mediocre team that outplays them in every facet of the game.

That's the Browns I know and loathe.

ATTENTION! YOU ARE THE CLEVELAND BROWNS. YOU HAVE NOT "ARRIVED" YET. DON'T YOU DARE PLAY LIKE YOU HAVE.

However, my anger didn't last beyond that day. Let's be practical, people. Cleveland isn't going to the Playoffs, so while I will never root for the Browns to lose, the losses certainly can't hurt their Draft Position (sitting pretty at #7 - only 4 teams have a worse record). I know, I know, what a horrible thing to call a silver lining. Sorry, can't help it. If they're picking that high and they have another draft like last years', the jump from 2010 to 2011 could be astronomical (assuming there is a 2011 season).

Think about it: Montario Hardesty will be back and hopefully healthy, giving the Browns a 1-2 punch at RB which is woefully lacking right now. Colt McCoy will likely have the entire offseason as the designated starting QB to work with his Receivers (whomever they might be). Another draft of young talent, another crop of veteran Free Agents from winning programs.

Yes, 2011 should be very interesting indeed.

Sadly, that leaves the remainder of 2010 as just filler. At 3-7, what purpose will the rest of the season serve?

Well, I suppose there's more snaps for McCoy (hopefully), which can never be a bad thing. There's Joe Haden starting at Corner (inevitable), and TJ Ward/Shawn Lauvao getting more experience. Maybe Carlton Mitchell will actually see the field (although the fact that his rookie season is following the Robiskie Arc is not promising).

And I guess there's always the omnipresent battle for Eric Mangini and his staff's jobs. That at least should be interesting.

There's also the importance of ending the season strong to propel us into next year, the same way that last year's 4-game winning streak propelled the Browns to... uh... 3-7 so far...

(Damn, I guess I can't sell that one.)

How about the possibility of knocking either the Ravens or Steelers down a Playoff peg - or even out of the Playoffs altogether - in those last 2 games of the season?

Ah, yes. THERE'S the reason to keep watching.

Game Recap

I can tell you kids that watching the game tape on this one was no Holiday treat.

The Jags struck first on a decent drive early the 1st, nailing a FG to take an early lead. But then Colt McCoy led the Offense on a masterful 92 yard TD drive, which featured decent production both running and receiving from Peyton Hillis and some key receptions by Mo Massaquoi and Chansi Stuckey. The drive was capped by one of those Holy Shit type plays where Colt squirmed out of certain destruction and shoveled the ball to Hillis, who took it the remaining 11 yards to paydirt. *Browns 7, Jaguars 3.*

Jacksonville went 3 and Out on the next drive, which was followed by a 47 yard screen to Hillis down to the JAX 30. But Brian Robiskie made his presence known with an Offensive Pass

Interference penalty, and the drive sputtered and died as Phil Dawson missed a 51 yard FG after a deep 3rd Down pass to Mo Mass was misinterpreted by someone (he ran an out, whereas McCoy read a go).

And, to paraphrase Don McLean, that's the Play the Offense Died.

The Browns got a turnover on an INT by Abe Elam on a Halfback pass, but the O did nothing with it, and the Jags marched the ball fairly easily down the field for a TD. When watching the Browns, one can get a sense when they're in the game and when they're being overpowered, and this game felt like the latter. *Jaguars 10, Browns 7.*

Cleveland held JAX to a 3 and Out to start the 2nd Half, but did little with the ensuing drive. After a punt, the Jags took over at their own 10. Maurice Jones-Drew plowed ahead for 8 - like he'd do most of the day - but Elam met him, stripped him, and took the fumble in for an 18 yard TD. Ah, yes, good feelings. How fleeting thou art. *Browns 14, Jaguars 10.*

Thus began the most bizarre turn of events I have seen in quite some time.

1. David Garrard threw another INT, this one by a ball batted up into the air by Sheldon Brown to TJ Ward. Browns take over at the JAX 48. They go 3 and Out, losing 4 yards on the drive.
2. Garrard threw another pick, this one a beautiful play by Joe Haden, returned to the JAX 19. The Browns managed -1 yard, barely avoiding an INT of their own. Dawson kicked a FG. *Browns 17, Jaguars 10.*
3. Garrard decided to run on 3rd and 5, but got nailed by Ray Ventrone and fumbled, recovered at the JAX 43 by Chris Gocong. The Browns get all of 1 yard and punt.
4. Another pass batted up by Brown and snatched by Ward, this time returned all the way down to the JAX 35. The Browns respond to this 4th opportunity in a row by netting 2 yards and

missing another long FG.

After making like a cats they are and using up 6 of their 9 lives, the Jaguars finally stopped shooting themselves in the groin and rather comfortably down the field, scoring the tying TD on a freakin' 14 yard pass on 3rd and freakin' Goal from the freakin' 14. At which point I decided the Browns DESERVED to lose the game. *Browns 17, Jaguars 17.*

Unerringly, the Browns finally concluded they needed to open things up a bit in a tie game with 3.5 left in the game. A roll out (shocking) led to a nice 38 yard pass to Evan Moore, and McCoy scrambled 18 yards for a 1st Down at the JAX 18 with about 3 minutes left. But the coaching staff felt that was "good enough" and got conservative again, trying to run time off the clock which the Jags wisely negated via Time Outs. Phil kicked a FG with 2:46 to give Cleveland another lead. *Browns 20, Jaguars 17.*

Well, those NoFla Cats had the ball at their own 24 with about 2.5 left when Garrard threw a little screen to MJD that resulted in a 74 yard tackle-free run down to the 1 yard line, where the one guy that apparently CAN tackle (Haden) did, which was unfortunate because all his effort did was run some time off the clock before the Browns succumbed to the inevitable. *Jaguars 24, Browns 20*

The Browns got the ball on their 20 with 1:16 left, needing a TD/Miracle. McCoy made some good throws and it looked interesting, but they opted not to spike the ball with 33 seconds left at midfield, and the resultant pass to Stuckey netted not only 0 yards but got stopped in play. By the time they finally DID spike it, there were only 18 ticks left.

Moore caught a ball down to the 29 with 13 second left, but McCoy's pass to Ben Watson over the middle at about the 4 bounced off his pads and was brought in by some random Jaguars Defender for a game killing pick, and, there you go. Worst loss of the season.

There's one thing to tough it out and lose a close one to superior talent. There's completely another thing to get 6 turnovers and still lose to the freakin' Jaguars.

Disgusting.

Final: *Jaguars 24, Browns 20.*

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Jacksonville – 31:28, Cleveland – 28:32

Total Yards: Jacksonville – 371, Cleveland - 283

First Downs: Jacksonville - 24, Cleveland – 15

I think this one's pretty obvious: Had the Browns forced/been gifted 6 turnovers, the Jags would've kicked their Orange asses all around NeverBank Stadium.

Gameballs

Abe Elam – Strange, but true. A nice awareness pick on the HB pass and a TD fumble return of his own making. Great game.

Sheldon Brown - Responsible for both TJ Ward picks.

Honorable Mention

Peyton Hillis – Not his best game, certainly, but I don't know what else he could've done against those 8-9 man fronts. Still super-effective in the passing game, still a major factor in the Offensive production.

Evan Moore – He's a match-up problem no matter where you put him. His size is problem for Corners, his mobility is a problem for Linebackers. Yet the Browns only remember him occasionally.

Joe Haden – Apparently it takes an injury for the Powers That Be to have you in there as a Starter.

Colt McCoy – If that's his "Rookie" game, then it wasn't so bad. Drove down for a 4th Quarter lead, and had chances for a miracle at the end.

Marcus Benard – 10 sacks in 14 games. That's a career for Courtney Brown.

Wall of Shame

Brian Robiskie - Drop an important pass at home like you did that 3rd Down attempt with about 10 minutes left in the 4th, and the crowd will prove to Braylon that they can boo a Buckeye just as loudly as a Wolverine. You, sir, are just a bust of epic proportions. Enjoy Arena Football.

Brian Daboll - I'm reserving a whole section below for you.

Offensive Line - The moment I saw that John St. Clair was starting, I did not feel good about the future of the running game.

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Defensive Line - It was so pleasant to see this whole unit blown off the ball play after play by the juggernaut Jaguars O Line.

Run Defense - There is only one place to tackle Maurice Jones-Drew, and that is low. That message somehow was not delivered.

Phil Dawson - Yeah, I know those weren't easy kicks that you missed (51 x 2). But if you'd made them, the Browns win.
