



Week 14 – Cleveland at Buffalo

It was only a matter of time.

When you play not to lose, this will happen. When you play uber-conservative safe ball-control Offense to try to keep the game close and win it in the end, this is what you get.

Hey, it's not like this is a losing formula. They won with it the 2 weeks prior to this. All you need to do is keep the score nice and close and wait for their QB to get his pass deflected to a Safety or for their Kicker to doink the ball off the upright.

Piece of cake.

Of course, it's not necessarily a winning formula either. You'll lose some games that you really should've put away - the Buccaneers and (especially) the Jaguars games come easily to mind.

It's a good way to go anywhere from 5-11 to 9-7.

Sure, when the coaching staff feels like they're up against a markedly superior opponent - like, oh, let's just grab 2 names at random... the Saints or the Patriots - they'll get aggressive and pull out the stops and try things they wouldn't normally dream of. But if they're playing an equal or - god forbid - inferior team? Run run run, short controlled passes, safe Defense, punt on 4th and Inches, try and grind it out.

It's like watching snails F***.

Either I'm not getting it, or they're not. You throw the ball down the field, you try some trick plays, you use bizarre Defensive formations, you come out and stay aggressive, and you get your 2 best wins of the year... not to mention your 2 largest margins of victory.

What, you only got 3 trick plays in the book? Gotta save 'em for Pittsburgh & Baltimore at the end of the year? Can't go wastin' 'em now (or earlier in the season) against teams that maybe you can beat by 3 in the last 2 minutes if you get lucky?

HELLO! You play the game to win the game! You don't play it just to play it.

Especially now. What do you have to lose? Your job? Well, what you're doing now probably is helping that.

Brian Daboll and, guilty by association (at least), Eric Mangini have shown all the Offensive imagination of unsalted freakin' chicken broth. Opponents (and everyone watching) can see what's coming from freakin' Saturn. You know, I appreciate the idea that you're going to establish yourself as a power running team, but there will be weeks where running 9 out of 10 times just doesn't work, and you have to be able to present Plan B.

And Plan B can't be a 3 yard pass to Peyton Hillis on 3rd and 11.

Or a 4 yard slant to Brian Robiskie.

Or an end around to a guy who's never in the game unless he's gonna get the ball on an end around.

Because it looks like Defenses may have figured the pattern out, and 4 games is a long time to go without a discernible Offensive adjustment.

Believe you me... if you're watching this debacle and reaching for a puke bucket, imagine what Mike Holmgren is feeling. He knows football, especially Offense. This isn't just like you and me, armchair QB's that know something is wrong with a vague idea of what we'd do differently.

If Daboll is a 16 year old driving for the first time and he keeps ramming into trees, we'd be 13 year olds in the back seat yelling "

Stop hitting trees, dillhole!

"

We don't have quite the necessary know-how or experience to give him the exact instructions to help (and he wouldn't listen anyway cuz we're just 13 year old jackwads that don't know diddly-poo), but we sure know that plowing headlong into oaks is definitely NOT the right thing to do.

Holmgren is more like the father, growing rapidly impatient as Daboll continues to slam into bark. *"What you need to do is apply the brake - that pedal to the left of the gas - and turn the wheel in a direction away from the tree ."*

"Huh? Like this?"

"No, that's the same thing over again."

"Now?"

"Still the same."

As the father - Mike Holmgren has the power to put an end to the lesson. A couple more trees, and that might become a reality.

I'm guessing that he's getting pretty damn close to saying "
Brian, just stop the car.

Get out.

Give me your license.

*I'm driving
."*

Game Recap

Here's what you need to know: On the opening drive, the Browns ran the ball 6 straight times for 53 yards down to the Buffalo 2. They were stuffed on 2 incredibly predictable runs there, bringing up 4th and Goal from the 1.

With nothing to lose and the opportunity to establish a strong lead or - at the very worst - leave Buffalo to start at their own 1, Eric Mangini chose to take the FG and the flaccid 3-0 lead.

Barf.

After that - 5 fumbles, 2 lost. 3 by Hillis, 1 lost. 1 by Josh Cribbs on a super-botched end-around, but he got it back. 1 by Jake

Delhomme on a strip-sack that pretty much sealed the game.

1 INT by Delhomme - a ball that floated straight up in the air after his arm got hit on the throw - that DID seal the game.

And that was the exciting stuff.

Spew.

86 yards passing for the Browns. 192 yards rushing for the Bills. An 89 yard TD drive by the Bills. No TD's for the Browns. Vomit.

Final: Bills 13, Browns 6.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Buffalo – 36:10, Cleveland – 23:50

Total Yards: Buffalo – 323, Cleveland - 187

First Downs: Buffalo - 19, Cleveland – 9

Hurl.

Gameballs

Joe Haden – Don't throw at Joe.

Reggie Hodges - Gotta say something nice about somebody. His punting kept flipping field position.

Honorable Mention

TJ Ward – Could've made a better play defending several passes, but... well... 12 tackles. Troy Polamalu made a huge jump from Year 1 to Year 2.

We can hope, can't we?

The potential is at least there...

Chris Gocong – 10 tackles and a sack, very active game for him.

Dishonorable Mention

Peyton Hillis – Yeah, you went over 1000 yards for the season, and you got over 100 yards in this game, and, yeah, I know the coaching staff flat abuses you, but... gotta hang onto that rock, big guy.

The Front Seven – Yeah, you kept the flailing Offense in the game with some key stops. But you also got run over by the Bills, with a bunch of backups starting on OL, no less.

You were suspect.

Wall of Shame

Jake Delhomme - Wow, did that suck. I can't really blame Jake. He's not what he used to be, and I'm sure his ankle is still bothering him.

He really shouldn't be out there - it's not his fault they keep tossing him into the whirlpool.

But, if you do play, then you get judged, and Jake was just terrible in this game.

Brian Daboll - See below.

Eric Mangini - Him too.



Brian Daboll must go.

I hate to call for someone's job. We as sports fans live in this bizarre world where the games we watch are played and run by individuals that are as real to us as cartoon characters.

We can hope that they get fired because we don't know them and we never will - they might as

well be Scrappy Doo.

We don't know their personalities, what their financial status is, what their home life is like, what their problems are, what they have waiting for them after the job they love is taken away and they have to rip up their family and run off to another city as soon as possible to start the long slow climb all over again.

So, Mr. Daboll, I apologize if I come off as shallow and unsympathetic.

Unfortunately, as a fan, that's exactly what I am.

I don't tune in to watch you. I tune in to watch the Cleveland Browns, and I'd like them to be good for once. It makes tuning in a lot more fun.

And I feel that you are a roadblock to where they need to go.

Maybe Daboll will learn from this experience and be improved next time. Maybe he just lacks the requisite imagination to perform such a high-profile job in such a high-profile league.

Maybe he just needs to find an employer that stops "holding him back".

Whatever the situation, it's not gonna happen here. Daboll has to go.

Certainly it can be argued that he is strapped by a certain lack of talent. That's not debatable - Daboll doesn't have great skill position players at his disposal.

All the more reason to be much more creative - to make much more comprehensive adjustments - than what he has done.

You tailor your game plan to your talent and your opponent, not insist on doing a certain thing and keep trying to ram that peg in that hole even if it clearly might not fit (this week or this year).

You don't keep doing the same thing that isn't working over and over again. You try something else. What's the worst that can happen?

It doesn't work too?

This wouldn't be a great Offense even with Don Coryell. But you have enough parts to at least be competent. You have a solid RB, a good FB, a decent OL, a competent WR (Massaquoi), 2 very solid TE's, and a couple capable QB's. It's not the 2007 Patriots, but you shouldn't be netting 187 total yards against one of the worst D's in the NFL.

Not to mention Josh Cribbs and Seneca Wallace (since they won't play him at QB) and their playmaking abilities. The utter REFUSAL to use these guys to shake things up is BAFFLING. Cribbs is a little banged up, so you use Wallace in the Wildcat twice... and you have him hand off both times.

You gotta be joking.

Maybe - MAYBE - Daboll would be fine with an Offense just rife with Pro Bowl players, one where it didn't really matter what he called, it would probably work, and even if it didn't, his playmakers would ignore his commands and just make plays.

That's the most I can agree to in an argument with a Pro-Daboll-ite. And even then, I wonder: Why would we want to keep a guy that needs the situation to be perfect in order to succeed?

Why would we feel the need to hang onto the Trent Dilfer of Offensive Coordinators?

I'm not overly worried about it. I would put good money on Daboll's sacrifice being demanded once the season is over - provided that Mangini isn't given his walking papers too.

Which is a distinct possibility.

I think Holmgren likes Mangini, and I agree. Mangini has a lot of qualities that good coaches have - he's far from a disaster. His team almost always plays hard, and they prepare - as a coaching staff and a team - as well as anyone in the league.

But his conservatism and, more than anything, his decision making... those make it so hard for me to embrace him.



Jake Delhomme is a perfect example. Why is Jake Delhomme starting? We've seen Delhomme start and we've seen Seneca Wallace start, and it's clear - CLEAR - that the Offense runs better under Wallace.

The arm strength and the ability to get the ball down the field is one thing, but the main quality that makes both Wallace and McCoy superior QB's in this Offense is mobility.

You see, the Offensive playcalling sucks (did I mention that yet?). And the WR's aren't very fast and don't get very good separation.

So, sometimes - lots of times - the QB has to hold the ball longer than is healthy.

He needs to be able to move around and buy some time so that something that likely wasn't scripted can come open.

And sometimes - lots of times - he might need to just take off with the ball and get the yards himself.

Delhomme CAN'T do that at this stage of his career. So you limit what you can do Offensively by simply having him in there. And this O don't need no mo' limitations.

Why is this happening? If your QB can't physically get it done, or you don't trust him to run the plays, why is he in there? Loyalty? Misguided perception? Wallace piss you off?

Flying the bird at The Man?

And even if you insist on starting Jake for... whatever reason... then why would you stick with him when it was absurdly obvious that he wasn't getting it done? Do you want to lose?

Someone argued to me that Mangini sticks with Delhomme because he "won" his last two games. No, he freakin' didn't. He was part of a team that won the last two games. Neither of

those wins was helped significantly by his presence.

Brady Quinn "beat" the Steelers last year in a game where he passed for 90 yards and could've been replaced by a duck.

Quinn didn't "win" that game.

Derek Anderson didn't "beat" Buffalo last year.

Trent Dilfer didn't "lead" the Ravens to the 2000 Super Bowl.

There are many games where the winning QB has a lot to do with the win. Jake's 2 "wins" don't qualify. All he did was not lose them.

Probably 50 QB's in the NFL could've done that - or better.

Someone also argued to me that Mangini is forced to play Delhomme because Holmgren/Heckert picked him up, but that case is horseshit as well. Heckgren picked up Wallace too. And McCoy.

I'd bet a kidney that there's no directive coming from on high to play Jake freakin' Delhomme.

No, this is Mangini's doing, just like last year when he REFUSED to play Jerome Harrison more despite the fact that it was clear - CLEAR - that Jamal Lewis was done. I don't know why Mangini kept doing that either, but he did.

It took a freakin' injury to get Lewis out of the mix, and - viola! - they suddenly had an effective running game and won a couple games.

When Mangini claims that he "*plays the players that give the team the best chance to win*", I scoff, because either he's lying or he's blind.

Once again, I'm not calling for Mangini's job. I don't know how much of the Offensive disaster is his fault, and I think he can - when surrounded by better-than-average Coordinators - be a winning Head Coach. I'm not sure he's good enough to win the big one, but I don't know that he's not, and if Holmgren feels he's good enough to return for 2011, then fine.

However, I have a feeling that if Holmgren/Heckert demands Daboll's job, Mangini will choose to sink with Brian rather than have someone dictate "his decisions" to him.

Just like with Jake Delhomme and Jamal Lewis.

There's a possibility that Colt McCoy will be back this week, and many feel that his presence is all that's required to get the Offense back on track.



Unfortunately, I'm not one of those.

Colt was the QB in the Jacksonville game, and that was the contest where the Defenses figured out the prescription for stopping the Browns "attack". Even if he returns, I think Cleveland will be hard pressed to manufacture points.

It's not likely that the playcalling is going to get vastly better anytime soon, and it's even further unlikely that the Wide Receivers will suddenly become great playmakers. Even with Colt's superior mobility and accuracy (as far as compared to Delhomme), it will be difficult.

The problems that have been unearthed run much deeper than a QB change.

The importance of Colt's return lies more in the further evaluation of his skill set and his potential to be a Franchise QB. It's likely that he'll get a full season to prove himself, but this high-ankle injury that he sustained reminds me uncomfortably of 2008.

You remember, Brady Quinn FINALLY got in and looked pretty good against Denver, then pulled out a win against Buffalo.

He didn't look so good in his brief time against Houston, and then he got hurt.

So we had very little data, but enough "potential" that Cleveland skipped on taking a QB high in that 2009 draft. And they kinda had to - they really needed to see what they had.

This injury to Colt - especially right after his worst game - leaves me feeling cold, wondering if we've seen enough to "know".

We think we "know", but we don't. Take 2007. If Derek Anderson had gotten hurt after his first 5 games, we'd probably have "known" he was The Answer.

Instead, he played out the season and revealed his fundamental flaws that everyone but a delusional Phil Savage saw.

If Phil had learned the lessons that DA's prolonged exposure gave us, the Browns would've traded that stiff.

What if Colt's injury after 4 impressive outings and a questionable last one is preventing us from seeing the fundamental flaws that will doom him to mediocrity (I won't throw him in with DA/BQ because I don't think he'll ever be that bad)? Yeah, it might be slightly paranoid, but haven't we been burned enough times to acknowledge that it's a possibility?

And, as a Browns fan, how can I be anything
but
paranoid?

I assume we'll see Colt a couple more times this year, and that will likely help reinforce the concept of his value one way or the other. But if the season ended today, and we were looking at the draft, what would we do?

As of today, the Browns would get the 13th pick in the draft. They have the toughest schedule of all the 5-8 teams, and their reward is to get thrown to the back of the pack.

It's like tacking on higher interest rates for people who already can't pay their credit cards.

What QB's would be available at 13?

[Andrew Luck](#) - Everyone knows that Andrew Luck - should he come out - is going #1. You 'd have to be crazy not to pick him.

If the Browns had a shot at getting him, I'd say "screw Colt McCoy" and take Luck in nanosecond.

But they don't.

They won't.

Don't even bother me with your trade-up scenarios.



[Cam Newton](#) - Could Cam Newton drop to 13? Maybe. Lots of combines and stock-changes between now and the draft. Doubtful, though.

There are enough QB-needy teams ahead of Cleveland, and Newton is very enticing.

I'd be surprised if he wasn't gone in the Top 10.

Still, it's conceivable he could drop, and I'd have to think long and hard about taking him. Newton could be special.

He could also go bust-o.

Some compare him to JaMarcus Russell, which I think is unfair, since Russell's intangibles and laziness are what doomed him, and Newton is unlikely to fall prey to any of that.

His only issues in my mind are the questions about his passing ability/accuracy and his ability to adapt to an NFL Offense.

I'll just say that it would be incredibly hard for me to pass on him, not that it might not be the right thing to do considering the Browns numerous other needs.

[Jake Locker](#) - Next on the draftee depth chart is Jake Locker, and he should be there at 13. And if the Browns take him, I'll freak the hell out.

Locker has potential. He's big, he's strong, he's fast. He's also been a career 53% passer, which means he's not very accurate. He doesn't show up for big games.

He leads a losing program.

He's all potential - but his potential to be a bust is just as good as it is for him to be good.

Plus, he's gotta be dumb. He would've been possibly the #1 overall pick if he'd come out last year (which was also the last year of the Rookie Cash Grab), but yet he chose to stay.

It's not like he was going to improve his draft status.

All he could do was damage it and lose millions, which he did.

I don't even take this guy in the 1st Round at all. Honestly.

[Ryan Mallett](#) - Well, he's certainly got the measurables to be a good NFL QB. Big, good arm, fairly accurate, mobile enough.

I watch the guy, though, and there's something that seems to be missing for me.

It's hard to put my finger on, but when I think about taking him at #13 as opposed to all the other great players that could be had there... I don't like it.

I guess I don't think his ceiling is as high as it should be for a guy picked in the Top 15.

And so there you have it, Colt: If I were Tom Heckert, you could probably feel fairly comfortable going into the draft. I'd take Luck, but he won't be there. I *might* take Newton, but he *probably* won't be there.

And I'll pass on Locker & Mallett, thanks... at least in the 1st Round.

So make sure your Sophomore Season of Starting is better than Brady Quinn's/Derek Anderson's/Charlie Frye's/etc.

Congratulation to the Akron Zips for winning the NCAA Men's Soccer National Championship.

A lot of people blow it off because "it's just soccer", but not me. First, I like soccer. Anyone that thinks it's a pansy game has obviously never played.

You get more contact in 10 minutes of that than you would in a season of, say, baseball.

And, if you were rooting for the Zips, I defy you to tell me that you watched the end of that game and weren't totally into it.

Now, football and basketball rule college athletics, but soccer is on that next echelon down with sports like baseball and tennis - major sports nationally and worldwide that don't get a ton of exposure at the college level, but to pull out a National Championship is still damn impressive. It's not like they just won the National Badminton Championship or the National Chess Championship.

So congrats again Zips. Now fix that damn football team.

Next Up

Cincinnati Bengals (2-11).

The Bengals are once again a disaster, once again one of the biggest jokes in the NFL. In the Preseason, I proclaimed them (along with the Jets) one of the most overrated teams in the league.

I may not have nailed the Jets pick (although I'm not as far off as their record indicates), but I got Cincy.

It was an easy call. Aging and deteriorating prima donna WR's catching passes from an aging and deteriorating QB, a vastly overrated Running Game and a paper tiger Defense... it was all smoke-and mirrors for the Bengals last year, and they proved it in the Playoffs.

But I think they want to win one more before they send Marvin Lewis off into the sunset, and they won't be scared by Cleveland in the least now that they have nothing to lose. Sadly, I also think Cleveland *will be* scared (scared to lose, scared of the opponent, scared of the economy, I don't know).

The Browns will remain mired in their Offensive funk, and the Bungals will open up a can of whoop-ass that will be the last happy moment for their team before it gets blown up.

And suddenly registering back-to-back 5 win seasons will look entirely possible for Eric Mangini.

Bengals 24, Browns 9.

Thing I Like Aaron Goldhammer More Than

Home Alone

I know, I know, "*How can you hate Home Alone? It's so cute!*"

Easy.

The idea is so dumb that it's hard to suspend your disbelief, but let's just say for a moment that I do. Fine, they ran off and forgot their kid and no one noticed. Sure, why not. Happens all the time, I'm certain.

Then we've got all those retarded Tom-and-Jerry burglar traps which must have been oh-so-funny to all the 6 year olds in the audience, but even that wasn't why I HATE this movie.

No, it's the permanently burned stupid image of stupid little Macauley Culkin slapping that stupid aftershave on his stupid face and then the stupid yelling. Tee hee! How cute!

Cute, my ass. Joe Pesci will be rolling over in his grave one day about this one.

