

There's all kinds of blame to pass around for today's loss to the Saints in the opener. The woeful performance from the offensive line. The playcalling from the embattled Maurice Carthon. Charlie Frye holding on to the ball too long. The Hornless Rhino was at the game, and provides us his thoughts on which of the aforementioned culprits contributed most to today's loss.



Yup, I was there, and man, it was awful. The Browns sucked harder than Monica Lewinsky on roofies. A game that they should have and could have won ended up being the latest addition to the long list of feeble opening day home performances by the Cleveland Browns.

The downhill slide started even before the opening kickoff. During the pre-game ceremonies, the Browns paid a tribute to the American military, which is a fine and appropriate thing to do. Unfortunately, although probably inevitably, they chose the awful country singer Lee Greenwood to headline the tribute.

The untalented Greenwood proceeded to shamelessly wrap himself in the flag (he had a stars and stripes jacket on) and serenade us with his trademark hymn, "God Bless the USA." Sorry if you like the tune, but to be honest with you, I think it's practically an English-language version of the [Horst Wessel Song](#). The only good news was that since he sang it before the game, we didn't have to listen to it at the end of the first quarter for a change.

Then came the Marine Corps flyover, but for the first time I can ever remember, the planes were late, arriving just as the massive American flag that had been rolled out for the festivities was being rolled back up. The Marines' tardiness turned out to be sort of an omen for the day, because as we all saw, the Browns offense arrived late as well--about 30 minutes late.

The list of villains for today's performance is lengthy. Charlie Frye held the ball way too long on several occasions, and he was absolutely terrible at key points during the game, most notably during the Browns' last possession. The offensive line was completely out-of-sync (not all that surprising), and the defense still can't stop the run despite the addition of millions of dollars to the payroll and hundreds of tons to the NT position. Still, if I had to choose one guy to blame for today's fiasco, I'd point the finger at Maurice Carthon.

Play calling may be overrated, but it's hard to overrate how inept Carthon's performance was today. Why do you run a slow moving sweep out of the elephant package on third and one? Why do you do it twice? Why do you run any play on third and one that starts 7 yards deep in the backfield? The New Orleans Saints have two decent defensive players. They both happen to be defensive ends. Why do you base most of your rushing attack on zone stretch plays apparently designed to run at them?

During the Browns touchdown drive, the team came out in a twins right, split left formation. Winslow and Edwards were the twins, and Northcutt was the wideout on the opposite side. To his credit, Carthon made a nice call, and had Frye throw a slant pattern to Northcutt. The play picked up a key first down, but I think that was the only time that we saw that particular alignment. Why? I think it would've given the Saints fits all afternoon.

Oh, yeah, I almost forgot about the shotgun draw that killed the only drive of the first half. That was beautiful.

Unfortunately, based on this game, Maurice Carthon's second season as impresario of the Browns' offensive game plan doesn't seem to promise much beyond what we saw during his first. That doesn't bode well for the remainder of the 2006 campaign.