

In his regular Monday "Morning After" feature, Papa Cass piles on the the Browns disgusting performance in his review of this weekends game. Cassano unloads on the Browns organization from top to bottom, and like most of us ... cannot believe how unprepared the Browns looked. In a game they had nine days to prepare for. "Bartender! I'll take another!"



Visit the Papa Cass weblog at <http://papacass.blogspot.com/>

Saints 19, Browns 14
Record: 0-1

OK, deep breath.

The Browns just had a bad day. We all have bad days, right?

The Saints just happened to catch the Browns napping on a lazy late-summer Sunday. The Browns laid their egg, got the brain fart out of their systems, and can move on to the methodical improvements they were supposed to make this season. It won't happen again. Right?

Right?

Right. So long as they do pretty much everything differently for the rest of the season.

When the New Orleans Saints come in to your house, they don't beat you. You beat you. And, boy, did the Browns ever beat themselves.

It started with the usual suspects that have plagued this team since re-entering the league: penalties and mistakes.

The first play from scrimmage was a microcosm of everything Browns. A beautiful 70-yard touchdown strike from Charlie Frye to Braylon Edwards nixed by a holding penalty.

The en vogue penalty of the day was holding. It damaged several Browns drives in the first

half and ultimately ensured that the offense started out in the same funk that has afflicted it since the exhibition game in Buffalo.

The initial scoring drive of the Buffalo game is the last time the Browns' first-team offense has looked average, let alone good. That was three weeks ago.

All in all, the Browns looked utterly unprepared for Sunday's game, which is mind-boggling, considering the coaching staff and players had nine days to formulate a game plan.

The offense didn't even look like it had a game plan. It looked like head coach Romeo Crennel and offensive coordinator Maurice Carthon were flying by the seats of their pants, tossing ideas against the wall to see what stuck. Little did.

The feature back and power rusher, Reuben Droughns, was eschewed on third down twice in favor of sweeps by slow-footed fullback Lawrence Vickers. Neither worked.

Maybe Crennel and Carthon didn't have a lot of confidence in the offensive line. Can you blame them?

A great point was brought up by radio color commentator Doug Dieken after the game. The Saints run fast on defense. They move well laterally, and the Browns simply don't have the blocking personnel to match it.

The injury to LeCharles Bentley and arrival of Hank Fraley gives the Browns a mature offensive line, to be euphemistic. That could be a problem as the season wears on, even if they all manage to stay relatively healthy.

Fraley, Joe Andruzzi, Cosey Coleman and Ryan Tucker are all on the downhill sides of their careers. They have bodies that have been ravaged by years of earning a living in the NFL trenches. They aren't as quick as they used to be, and probably can't hold blocks as long as they once did. That was evident Sunday, when the only time Frye seemed to be able to make something happen was when he was running for his life.

But cohesion is more than half the battle with an offensive line, so we can only hope that their performance improves as the season goes on. That is, if the line manages to stay mostly healthy, which has seldom happened.

In speaking of injuries, another member of the highly-touted free agent class of 2006 was lost Sunday. Joe Jurevicius could be lost until November with cracked ribs.

That in of itself wasn't that surprising. What was surprising was the way historically-underachieving center Jeff Faine played Ted Washington to a draw. Washington, brought in to stifle the other team's running game at the line of scrimmage, was virtually neutralized all afternoon by the plucky play of Faine, who was cast aside by the Browns this spring. The result was something just short of a romp in the grass for Saints running backs Deuce McAllister and Reggie Bush.

I might add that Washington will face far better centers than Faine for most of the season.

With the New Orleans running game effective, it allowed quarterback Drew Brees to gain control of the game. Only one of five New Orleans scoring drives found the end zone, but the point is Brees repeatedly led his team to the scoreboard, and that's how games are won.

The Browns stumbled over themselves all afternoon, but still had a chance to pull the game out late in the fourth quarter. But the game ended the way it began: with a flub involving a pass to Edwards (who, for those with short memories, was known for having the dropsies at Michigan.)

This time Frye and Edwards timeshare the blame, as an off-center Frye pass clanged off the hard hands of Edwards and into the waiting arms of a Saints defender with less than two minutes left. Game over.

It's amazing how the optimism of a fresh start can be squashed flat in the span of three hours. But maybe it's not so amazing.

The Browns, until they prove otherwise, are a team deserving of nothing more than relentless skepticism. Just about nothing has gone right for this team since it returned.

I'm not convinced that Romeo Crennel is much more than glorified coordinator who can't handle the heat of being an NFL head coach. I'm not convinced Maurice Carthon is even an adequate offensive coordinator. I'm not convinced Braylon Edwards is going to be a star. I'm not convinced Kellen Winslow Jr. (who scored his first NFL touchdown Sunday) is going to stay healthy. I'm not convinced Ted Washington isn't going to age into a has-been right before our very eyes.

I'm not convinced that any single player on this roster is capable of staying healthy for 16 games. I'm not convinced that dumb penalties won't continue to short-circuit drives.

I'm not convinced that Reuben Droughns isn't going to be exposed as a one-dimension snow plow of a running back who will suddenly be stuffed at the line of scrimmage on a regular basis this year.

And I am not convinced that Charlie Frye is talented enough to be an NFL starting quarterback. Blasphemy? Only if you place Bernie Kosar on a station of the cross.

I am not convinced the Browns are doing anything right. Why? They haven't given me a reason to believe they are. When they stop beating themselves with dumb play, bad coaching and figure out a way to defeat the injury bug, maybe we'll talk. Until then, the Browns are, at their heart, a bad football organization.

No matter how much it wounds your pride, fellow Clevelanders, your beloved Brownies have turned into the Detroit Lions.

They have been losing for quite some time, and it appears they will continue to lose into the

foreseeable future.

Up next: at Cincinnati, Sunday, 1 p.m.