

Kibble & Bits

Written by {ga=jta1975}

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My family and I had a blast at Cleveland Browns Stadium while getting our first look at the Pat Shurmur version of the Cleveland Browns. First let me say it is a great idea for any true football junkie to bring a football enthused kid with you while attending a preseason game.

If my kid didn't harass the wife I would have never gotten to stay until the very last snap in a game where none of them knew any players after the first half of the game.

In general I think the Browns represented themselves really well in their first game but I did see a couple of things that sent up red flags. I will get into some good and bad from the game as well as preview the second game against the up and coming Detroit Lions.

What I Liked

Offense-I expected the first and second team offenses to play fairly well in the first preseason game but I didn't expect the first team to outshine the second team. I thought Seneca Wallace would do much better than Colt McCoy because of the history he has in the offense.

Colt ended up doing much better than Seneca Wallace and looked like he has been running this offense for years. The numbers Colt put up were great and he really displayed the level of accuracy that his college stats boast.

McCoy showed a high comfort level with the new system and he also began to prove he can execute this version of the WCO at a very high level. The two things that really jumped out at me was the ability of Colt to spread the ball around getting everyone involved and second thing that caught my eye was the great throw to Josh Cribbs for the TD.

The outside throw is the type of throw that Colt needed to improve on the most this off season and the placement of that ball to Cribbs was perfect. He led the WR with the perfect trajectory for the throw putting the ball where only the WR could come down with it.

If that throw represents the type of work McCoy put in over the offseason he could be in line for a breakout year.

The other thing to note was the overall execution of the offense. It wasn't until the third string was put in that there was any type of alignment or assignment issues. This is a big kudos to Pat Shurmur and his offensive staff.

Defense-Two things jumped out for me on defense. First was the ability of the DEs to create

havoc when attacking up field. Mitchell and Sheard can really get in the back field and wreak havoc when given the green light.

The other aspect of the Browns defense that showed well was the ability of the two starting defensive tackles to hold position. Taylor and Rubin started off the preseason living up to the billing when it comes to being stout. If they keep that up running inside against the Browns will be a chore. I understand they played only about 15 plays so the sample is small but keep it up guys.

What I didn't Like

Offense-The biggest disappointment from the Browns first team offense was the 5 Carry 16 yard performance of Peyton Hillis in the run game. It is early and with only 5 carries I can't be totally disgruntled but that 3.2 yards a carry is over a yard less than what we are used to from Hillis and the running game.

I am not jumping off the building just yet, I will give the right side of the line time to develop some chemistry and revisit my assessment again in a few weeks.

Defense- The Packers really exposed an early problem with the Browns run defense.

When the Packers used the 3 WR no FB and 1 TE set, their first team RB James Starks ran twice off the RT for a total of 14 yards.

With 3 WR formation the Browns were in nickel which took the Will LB out of the game and inserted a third CB in his spot. With the Will gone Fujita went from an on the line of scrimmage strong side LB to playing off the line of scrimmage where the WLB would normally be aligned. At this point the Packers ran over the RT for big chunks of yards because Jayme Mitchell got manhandled by a TE.

It was not all Mitchell's fault on those plays, Fujita got blocked well and couldn't get off of his

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block either, but you can't let a TE handle you like that as a DE. Those are the type of plays where Jackson ends of getting the tackle after scrapping playside but because nobody strung it out he engages the back after the play has already gained 5 or 6 yards. If Jackson doesn't make those plays the RB is off to the races in the secondary.

The other aspect that sent up red flags was the safety play of Mike Adams. Adams plays too small to be a big factor in the run game and gets caught watching action in the backfield too much. This gazing causes him to miss crossing WRs in the passing game and gives up big chunks of yards. I hope Usama Young is a better player but the fact that he has never been a starter and can't get on the field yet is a bit alarming.

Player/Game Notes

-Nice seeing the first team offense power the ball into the endzone on the right side. That side is a work in progress and they did a decent job.

-Joe Haden needs to relax and stay alert in man coverage. It seemed like he got caught off guard on that Jordy Nelson pass attempt because they hadn't been throwing the ball his way until that point. That should have been a long completion, he got lucky.

-It was a nice first look at the rhythm that Pat Shurmur can give to an offense with his play calling. When he gets into a groove, he can really keep a defense off balance. It was also a shot to see his creativity at the end of the game with that end around which caught every one off guard and gained a clinching first down.

-Titus Brown shows well in the 4-3 and he brings some thunder when he arrives.

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-Jordan Norwood looked like a natural on those punt returns, he looked way more comfortable than Stuckey did in the backup role last year.

-The weight gain reports on Marcus Benard are very accurate. He has more of a power lifting build this year, very squatty below the waist. If he is going to be a situational rusher he does need to lose the weight and get his quicks back.

-Sheldon Brown looked stiff, I hope it is just early in the season and not a sign of his wear and tear.

Preseason Game 2 Detroit Lions

In the Browns second game Friday against the Detroit Lions Pat Shurmur gave the indication that the starters would get to play the first half. The starters getting to play the whole first half will allow us to see a bigger sample of what the Browns will look like as well as give the first string a better gauge on where their conditioning is.

Expectations

Defense- The defense last week against the Packers was mostly nickel with the first team. The Packers used mostly 3 WR sets on offense allowing us to work on a great deal of man coverage.

The Browns really didn't use any exotic alignments or run any stunts up front in preseason week 1 so I am hoping we will get to see a few more wrinkles in week 2. It was nice to see Brian Smith come on that blitz that caused the Titus Brown TD and hopefully we will get to see the first team try and execute a few blitzes of their own.

The Lions running game brings a different style of RB in week 2. The Packers first team offense with James Starks ran twice for 14 yards and that is not good at all.

Starks is a bigger more physical RB and the Lions Javid Best is a much smaller back who presents a different problem, he is a RB who can take it to the house on any play. Best is a big play waiting to happen so the Browns run defense must be on high alert. He is also the type of RB that can wreak havoc in the passing game catching balls out of the backfield so you need to account for him at all times not just on running plays.

The other player that they always need to account for is all world WR Calvin Johnson. Johnson boast the type of size and speed that can break a game wide open so the defense will need to stay locked in.

The one matchup I think the Browns defense can take advantage of is the Lions offensive line against our defensive front. The normal starting LT Jeff Backus will more than likely not play giving the rookie Jabaal Sheard a much lower caliber of player to go up against and should give the rookie the opportunity to make some plays in the backfield.

Offense- This week the offense will have their hands full trying to stop the aggressive front 4 of Detroit. The Lions defensive front 4 are the tone setters for the entire team and play fast paced physical football.

Jim Swartz the head coach of the Lions made his mark as a defensive coach in the NFL and the Lions have put together what most people consider the deepest group of defensive lineman in the NFL.

Blocking Ndamukong Suh, Corey Williams, Cliff Avril, and Kyle Vanden Bosch will be a great test for the entire Browns offensive line and the newly formed right side for sure. The Lions play an aggressive, get up field style that can cause nightmares for QBs if the protection is top notch.

After what I consider a below average showing in the running game during week 1 of the preseason I expect the Browns to try and establish the run more so than they did against the Packers.

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Matchups and Player Notes

-Most people can pick out a few interesting matchups fairly quickly (Haden vs. Johnson, Luavao vs. Suh, Cribbs vs. Eric Wright) I have a few others I am interested in also.

-Delmas vs. McCoy Louis Delmas is one of the best young safeties in the league and plays the run and pass well. I want to see if McCoy can show the type of veteran QB play that is needed in order to freeze the safety. With the safety play of our two division leaders this is a skill that Colt will have to develop and this will be a good bench mark.

-Jackson,Taylor,Rubin vs. Sims,Raiola,Peterman In order for the Browns run defense to get better, these types of matchups that put two mauling guards with a smart, agile, veteran center will have to be won by the Browns.

Taylor and Rubin need to be physical enough that Raiola needs to help the guards and D'Qwell Jackson has got to read and react fast enough so the center can't help then peel off and still block Jackson at the MLB spot. If the Browns DTs can finally start to win these battles then Jackson will finally be able to meet plays at or behind the line of scrimmage and not 4-5 yards down field.

-Jordan Norwood unleashed. It has been said that Norwood not G. Little has been getting the reps in the slot with the first team offense this week in practice. That spot in a Pat Shurmur offense is tailor made for a small shifty WR like Norwood and not the bigger more physical Little. We should get our first real look at Norwood running the choice routes out of the slot.

-Greg Little....I do expect to see Little in the slot some, but I also expect to see him spell both Cribbs and Robiske on the outside. Little's skill set makes him the perfect candidate to play multiple WR positions effectively and expect that to continue this week.

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-Size Matters...This is one of the weeks where the Browns size at the WR position can become a really big factor. Both of the CBs the Lions start are smaller players that are very skilled but not really physical. The Browns can use their size advantage and I expect them to. Look for some trips formations with some quicker passes that force the CBs of the Lions to tackle our big WRs in space.

-Safeties and LBs...The Browns have had injuries to two starting LBs and both starting safeties this past week causing the young backups to get reps in practice. If these injured players don't participate on Friday it will be a good look at players like UDFA Rookie Brian Smith and 3rd year player Kaluka Maiava playing with the first team defense.

Depth at LB was a question mark going into training camp and we should be able to see if these guys can provide it. Safety play next to T.J. Ward is also a question mark and we may get to see some young players get a shot at running with the first team if Ward and Young don't play much on Friday.

Well, enjoy the game Browns fans and I we will talk again after the second game is in the books....Go Browns!

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