

## Telling Texts...Browns Edition

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

Friday, October 21 2011 1:58 PM - Last Updated Friday, October 21 2011 4:08 PM

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My cousin Jeff is as big a hardcore Cleveland sports fan as I am, and we frequently text back and forth to discuss what's going on with the Browns, Indians or Cavs. During a Browns game my BlackBerry blows up early, and the texts keep coming hot and heavy until we: a) both get so disgusted by what we are seeing that we don't want to talk about it anymore or b) the game is all but over and we have to go hang out with our wives.

Jeff is an interesting guy. When I first met him he was living in North Carolina with his family, but they soon moved to Brecksville where our families could get together more often. He was a Washington Redskins fan when he was younger, but when he moved to the Cleveland area he started to follow the Browns. Jeff is a couple of years older than me and introduced me to quite a few things...baseball cards, Pete Franklin's Sportsline, the Cleveland Cavaliers and Strat-o-Matic sports games.

Jeff knows his sports, but occasionally falls off the sanity train and it is up to me to drag him back onto it, usually kicking and screaming.

Yesterday, after Mike Holmgren's press conference, Jeff sent me a text to explain his thoughts. This set off yet another of our epic back-and-forth arguments about the state of the Browns. Here, with only the expletives deleted, is this exchange in its entirety:

**Jeff:** Listening to Holmgren talk always makes me feel better about the direction the Browns are heading in.

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**Me:** He is quite a salesman.

**Jeff:** But he makes a ton of sense, too.

**Jeff:** I guess I don't understand why the town is freaking out. They are 2-3. Did we really expect them to be 5-0 this year based on the roster and that they told us they were building through the draft? The drafts look good.

**Me:** Who wants to wait 10 years for them to build through the draft?

**Jeff:** Won't take 10 years, but I believe at the beginning of the season you were on board with the draft plan. Now you aren't?

**Me:** Not if they are going to mail it in for a few years during the process.

**Jeff:** Relax, the defense is playing well. They need to find a QB.

**Me:** The defense is not playing well. Last two games it has been horrible. Can't get off the field on third down, can't stop Kyle (expletive) Boller, no pass rush in the second half, etc.

**Jeff:** Defense gave up 10 points last week.

**Me:** You overrate the defense.

**Jeff:** My point is that they are 2-3 five games in, with two number one picks next year. Everybody needs to back away from the cliff.

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**Me:** What will next year's excuse be?

Jeff: I am stunned at how quick you have turned on Heckert. The season is only five games in for christsakes.

Me: The last two games were inexcusable.

Jeff: It's two (expletive) games! So blame Colt and Shurmur, not Heckert.

Me: I do blame Shurmur. He did not have the team ready to play coming off a bye week! A (expletive) bye week! That is pathetic!

**Jeff:** FACT...teams coming off a bye week last week were 1-5...look it up.

**Me:** FACT...I do not give a (expletive) about other teams. The Browns were not prepared. That is mystifying to me.

**Jeff:** You threw that bye week BS out there like it's a freakin crime to lose after a bye...just wanted to let you know that five of the six teams that had byes also must have been unprepared, too.

**Me:** Not a crime to lose. A crime not to be ready to compete.

**Jeff:** That "not competing" crap is a bunch of garbage, too...if McCoy could have completed a forward pass and was able to read a defense I bet the Browns would have "competed" in your words. Coach can have them ready to play but if your quarterback blows it doesn't matter.

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**Me:** You are viewing the world through your Brownies glasses. They weren't interested in winning Sunday. It was pathetic to watch.

**Jeff:** You are right. Colt played like a stud whose team still had a chance to pull the game out in the fourth quarter. But he couldn't complete a pass for three yards with three chances.

**Jeff:** We should fire Shurmur after five games and let's get rid of Heckert while we're at it. Start over again. I mean, you can tell a lot about a coach after five games with no off-season programs.

**Me:** Here come the straw men. If you are satisfied with the level of effort they showed Sunday, fine. I'm not.

**Jeff:** Let's just fire and cut everyone. It's clearly not working after five games of a new regime. Oh yeah, we both had them going 11-5 and contending for the Super Bowl this year. I forgot. You should write a column about how they should fire Shurmur NOW.

**Me:** Again with the straw men. You remind me of Obama with your argument style. That is not a compliment. How about a column about how my cousin is a total drama queen when it comes to the Browns?

**Jeff:** Either column would cost you your press credential because it would be so moronic.

**Me:** And if I endorsed either position I would deserve to get it revoked.

What is the point of all this? Well, other than to show how my cousin likes to jump around in his arguments and argue against points that were not made (where did he come up with my being upset with Heckert? I have no idea how that came about), the fact is that after the whole Brady

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Quinn/Derek Anderson debacle, after two years of horrible quarterback play from DA, Brady and Jake Delhomme, we thought our QB problems were solved. They obviously aren't, which is the point Jeff was trying to make.

And I agree with him to an extent. Colt McCoy was miserable against the Raiders. He did not look like a legitimate NFL quarterback. That is a problem.

What will the Browns end up doing with the QB position? Do you try to package your two first-rounders in the 2012 Draft to move up to get Andrew Luck? Do you look to sign a young quarterback who has worlds of potential, but is in a logjam? Do you stand pat with McCoy and hope he develops?

Heading into the 2011 season the quarterback position was not seen as the Cleveland Browns' glaring weakness. However, five games into the season it's obvious McCoy is not getting any better than he was last season.

This year was supposed to be the year we saw actual progress. This was the season the plan was supposed to start to come together. We still don't have a quarterback. We still have the worst wide receiving corps in the NFL. We have our stud running back from last year, a HUGE fan favorite, disgruntled and being ignored and, finally, we have another fan favorite from a local college upset because he is not being used correctly.

Touching on that last point. Joshua Cribbs is the most dangerous return man in football. The NFL negated him as a weapon with its stupid kickoff rule that has teams kicking off from the 35 instead of the 30. Touchbacks are the rule, and returns are virtually not part of the kickoff game anymore. Meanwhile, Cribbs has not had many passes thrown his way (he has 14 receptions) and has been handed the ball a grand total of once.

Cribbs has 10 kickoff returns (just two a game) and 12 punt returns. The Browns gave him a nice contract extension recently...and are not getting much of a return on it. Yes, the NFL kickoff rule took Cribbs out of the game in that sense, but the team has yet to find creative ways to get the ball in his hands in the open field. That is up to Shurmur.

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I still have faith in Mike Holmgren and Tom Heckert. Pat Shurur deserves the benefit of the doubt, having taken over the team in the off-season and not having OTAs or a full training camp to get his feet wet. However, he does not seem like much of a motivator and he will find out that one thing Cleveland will not stand for is uninspired football.

Let's hope it doesn't come to that.