

## Cleveland QB Controversy? Yes, Please.

Written by {ga=richardhanes}

Tuesday, December 13 2011 6:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, December 13 2011 9:59 AM

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Its mid-December, snow is starting to fall, Christmas shopping is in full swing, and Browns fans are looking forward to the next NFL Draft. Talking draft in December is simply a part of the holiday season for Cleveland sports fans. The Browns are usually far from contention and although we cannot unwrap our shiny new draft picks until April, we start making our wish list in time for Santa to make his rounds just in case.

This year Browns fans are wishing for more “talent” and “options” at the skill positions on offense. This chatter seemingly dominates twitter and sports talk radio 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

“The Browns need better wide receivers!”

“Greg Little is a #2 at best and everyone else is a bum!”

“We need another RB! We can’t count on Hillis and we can’t go into next year counting on practice squad players!”

All of these comments are valid. We do need help at these positions, but there is another position that I now feel is needed more than any other. That position is of course the most important on the football field, the quarterback. Since the third week of the season Browns fans have debated if Colt McCoy could be “The Guy.” The Guy that could lead this team to winning seasons. The guy that hopefully leads the Brown to the playoffs. Twitter and Radio personalities have supported Colt. Other Twitter and Radio personalities have bashed Colt. It

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is an unending cycle. As the losses pile up and the play on the field stays status quo it's like Groundhog Day... or week rather starts the minute the Browns stop playing. Colt, Colt, Colt, Colt.....

"We need RG3!"

"We need Matt Barkley!"

"We might take Ryan Tannehill with our second 1<sup>st</sup> Rd Pick!"

We send out these tweets like pleas to Santa in hopes h will hear us and send us a Quarterback that not only has the intangibles that you need to lead a team, but one that ALSO has the talent to take this team back to national prominence.

Out of all of the skill positions that need improvement on the Browns the Quarterback is the MOST important. It might not be the least talented position group currently, but it needs to be the #1 priority this offseason. Colt has shown that he is one tough kid. He has taken some nasty shots this year and keeps getting up and trying to make plays. That statement however contains a large problem. "Trying" to make plays isn't good enough. You can have all the Heart in the world, but unless your name is Tim Tebow, you need elite Quarterback skillas well to stop "Trying" to make plays and actually make plays to win games.

Until this week I have defending Colt to the point that I thought we needed to give him more time. We needed to watch a larger body of work before we as fans and media made snap decisions and wrote him off as being "The Guy." Colt has now appeared in 21 games. He has attempted 685 passes. While some of you may not think that is enough time and others will point to his supporting cast, I have reached the point where I am ready to say that I do not think Colt has the god given ability to become a top 10-12 passer in the NFL. Regardless of the talent around him, he has had opportunities to show that he can make good solid NFL passes. That he can step up in the pocket, shake off the poor pass protection on the previous play, and zip a pass into a spot that he needs to hit. Too many times I have watched Colt leave plays on the field. He has missed open receivers (yes that does happen on occasion), he has underthrown receivers downfield, he has not anticipated well enough, and most importantly he hasn't progressed. I don't expect him to look like an All-Pro with the current talent around him, but I did expect him to progress this year. Simply put I don't think he has done that nearly enough. I want Colt to succeed, but in today's NFL you need an elite signal caller and in this

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blogger's opinion the chances Colt transforms into one are not high enough for me.

The Cleveland Browns need to win games. Not in five years. Not in three years. Next year. They need to show this city and the fan base that they are on the right track. In order to do this they need to find the face of their franchise. They need to find their Aaron Rodgers. Their Drew Brees. Their Cam Newton. The Browns must use a "high" draft choice in the 2012 NFL Draft on one of the many potentially good Quarterbacks that should be available. They need to create competition at the Quarterback position and manage that properly. Having Colt McCoy on their roster with any of the 2012 Draft possibilities doesn't have to be a bad thing. If Colt does "find" it in the offseason, and I am wrong, then the Browns have depth at the most important position on a football team. The ability to swing future deals, options. If Colt does not, then the Browns have a young quarterback in their 2012 Draft pick with a higher skill set that they can turn to.

You may be wondering why I haven't said anything about the potential options the Browns could turn to in the 2012 NFL Draft. That's the question everyone seems to want answered right now. Who is the best option? Should the Browns trade up for Andrew Luck out of Stanford? Should they hope Matt Barkley from USC is available with their first 1<sup>st</sup> Round pick? Should they turn to the Heisman Trophy winner, Robert Griffin III? Should they take another skill position player initially and then swoop in and take the raw Ryan Tannehill towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>

or early 2<sup>nd</sup>

Round? Should they consider Laundry Jones, whose stock has fallen, but has ability?

In all honesty I think drafting any of those players would help. Ideally we finish in the Top 5 of the NFL Draft and have a chance at either Matt Barkley (once he officially commits) or Robert Griffin III. I think both of those players could significantly upgrade the Quarterback position group on the Cleveland Browns.

Barkley brings more of the traditional pocket passer that many seem to covet. His size is ok at 6'2", 220. He also has had to lead USC teams that have not been their usual traditional talent power houses. I think this is to his advantage. He is going to be drafted by a team that most likely will be at a talent disadvantage on most Sundays. This should be less of a shock to him than some past USC quarterbacks. The exceptional poise he possesses will be a key attribute for him as he looks to make plays under pressure in the NFL and win the respect of his football team.

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RG3 brings superior athleticism combined with a strong arm and the ability to improvise. His size at 6'1", 218 is not ideal; however I think he makes up for that with his athletic ability. RG3 is a pass first quarterback that runs when the play asks him to or when he must. Those that have not watched him may think he is like Michael Vick, who felt much more comfortable relying on his legs early in his career. He is not. He is a much better passer at this stage in his career than Vick was out of college. He does not quite have Vick's athletic ability, but is more than athletic enough to be dangerous at the next level. The only knock I see after reviewing tape is that his footwork seems a bit awkward to me. Almost like a boxer shuffling in the ring. This is nothing that cannot be coached though.

Some of you may want us to take Justin Blackmon WR Oklahoma State if given the opportunity. While Blackmon is fine wide receiver, he is not Calvin Johnson. He is 6'1". He is not 6'5" like the one that is called Megatron. Some of you may argue to take Trent Richardson RB Alabama to help bolster a running back position group that will be very thin if Peyton Hillis leaves in the offseason. I will argue that I trust Heckert to find help at wide receiver with one of our other top 2012 NFL Draft picks or through Free Agency. I will also argue that with a good offensive line and good quarterback play you do not need to spend Top 10 Draft choices on running backs. See Demarco Murray, LeSean McCoy, Michael Bush, Arian Foster, Ben Tate, Michael Turner, Peyton Hillis, and Ahmad Bradshaw, just to name a few that are active.

The bottom line is that the Browns must add talent to the most important position group in the NFL, the quarterback. Until the Browns have a signal caller that can be and will be a top 10-12 passer we will continue to be futile in the AFC North. As fans we should not be as concerned with who the Browns will take, but if they will take one at all. We need a highly rated, highly coveted quarterback. One with elite potential and skills that make opposing defenses game plan. We should not fear competition at the quarterback position. The time is now. That is the message we should be sending to Santa this holiday season. Come April when we can finally unwrap our holiday draft wishes one must be the next face of this franchise.

-Rich Hanes is the host of "Fantasy Focus, This City, and Fast Break" on CSFRadio.com

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