



This was probably the greatest Browns loss I've ever seen.

Up 17-7 in the 4th Quarter, my fears were justified: For the first time ever, I had finally accepted the fate of actively rooting for my team to lose, and here they were going to screw even that up.

What was even more infuriating that the QB that was winning the Browns out of elite-QB draft position was the backup, Seneca Wallace. If Colt McCoy was going to win the team out of being able to draft Robert Griffin or Matt Barkley, that's one thing. But for a guy that has no chance of starting long-term to come in and do it for him, that's like stuffing an angry iguana down your boxers.

But a hitherto effective Wallace demonstrated why he's a career backup at the end, and the Cleveland Browns once again snatched defeat from the jaws of victory - to my delight this time.

Couple the inspired loss with Washington, Miami, and Carolina all winning, and the Browns moved up to the #5 overall spot. With Jacksonville yet to play Indy (and Indy likely scared of winning their way out of #1), that is likely to move to a #4.

How do you win by losing? Ask the Cleveland Browns.

Yes, I know that I'll get some self-righteous responses to this. But all the anger over the loss, all the "Not Again!" takes, come off as disingenuous. At this point, winning does nothing helpful and just hurts draft position. I don't buy that they can carry the wins over to next season, especially if the wins come from Seneca, whom the players and organization all know won't be the starter in 2012.

The Browns have already proven they can lose. They need to now lose enough to get the players needed to win.

I too find it difficult to swallow, but it's a truth nonetheless. Multiple times I found myself saying "Yes. I mean... boo!"

" I'm not wired to root against them, but I know that it is clearly in their best interest long-term.

Kids, we live in a world that has football teams, and those teams have to be stocked with good QB's. Who's gonna do it? You? You, Colt McCoy? I have a greater vision than you could possibly fathom. You weep for Colt, and you curse those that want losses. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know. That Browns losses, while tragic, help the team overall. And my attitude, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, helps the team overall. You don't want the truth because deep down in places you don't talk about at parties, you want them to lose, you need them to lose.

Shurmur, order the Code Red.

Stats

Time of Possession: ARI - 32:23, CLE - 31:41

Total Yards: ARI - 363, CLE - 333

Yards Passing: ARI - 289, CLE - 213

Yards Rushing: CLE - 120, ARI - 74

First Downs: ARI - 24, CLE - 16

Turnovers Forced: CLE - 1, ARI - 1

Sacks: CLE - 4, ARI - 2

Final Score: □ Sanctuary For People Too Old To Deal With Snow 20, Cleveland 17

The once Top 5 Defense of the Browns has slid down to #14, and rightfully so as they have been giving up nearly 400 yards per game since the Jacksonville game (Week 11), although I must admit that I was pleasantly surprised that Beanie Wells didn't run all over them.

And it was nice to see the return of the Sacks. Getting after the QB didn't always result in a stop, but it was better than the slow death (exemplified by the drive at the end of the 1st Half).

In the end, the Browns tailed off towards the end of the game and let a decided advantage in ToP, total yardage, and score slide away. Acquiring a 2nd legit pass rusher for the right side help to solve this issue for next year. And maybe a new Offensive Coordinator. And QB. And RT. And CB. And Safety. And...

Game Balls

Kaluka Maiava - I've liked this guy more than most, who have pish-poshed him as a total useless, but even I didn't expect him to be all over the field making plays like he was Sunday.

Chris Gocong - Clearly, the man has been inhabited by the spirit of an angry warrior, because for 2 straight weeks Mr. Gocong has played a helluva game. Perhaps extending him wasn't such a farce after all? Time will tell.

D'Qwell Jackson - Gratifying to hear Heckert say that the Browns would be "taking care of" Jackson this offseason. He's playing at a Pro Bowl level right now. In this game, between the 3 Linebackers, they accounted for 29 tackles and 2 sacks.

Jabaal Sheard - 2 more sacks, 7.5 on the season, and really saving his best football for the end of the season. High hopes for this guy, especially if they put someone equally dangerous on the other side.

Greg Little - 5 catches, 131 yards, including a 76 yard TD, and NO DROPS.

Honorable Mention

Peyton Hillis - 99 yards on 26 carries and a TD, showed that - when healthy - he can still be a functional Back. I still don't break the bank for this guy, but I'd gladly take him back if he signs a humble pie contract.

Buster Skrine - Got his first NFL pick (a nice one) and had a quality stop on punt coverage, not to mention being decent in kick returns.

Mike Adams - For playing DB for both teams.

Jordan Cameron - For showing up.

Browns Fans - Parts of that contest sounded like a home game.

The Sheldons

Sheldon Brown - If you don't flat-drop that 4th Q INT, then the Browns win.

Montario Hardesty - You are just a HUGE disappointment to me.

Pat Shurmur - For not going for it on 4th and Short in the 3rd Q, and, well, for Mike Holmgren pronouncing unequivocally that you would be back next year. I wish I didn't feel you were such a waste of time.

Whoever is Playing Right DE- They always run at YOU.

Mo Mass - Ya jumped way too early on that OT pass from Seneca. It's your fault you didn't

come down with it.

Brad Maynard - You managed to punt away from Patrick Peterson all day, then inexplicably nail it right to him in OT, resulting in the 32 yard return that pretty much ended the game.

Regarding the QB Crap

Pop quiz - name me one thing that Colt McCoy does better than Seneca Wallace.

Just one.

Take your time. No hurry.

OK, now name me something that Wallace does better than McCoy. He throws a better deep ball. He runs the Offense better. There, 2 quick things.

This is in no way a support for Seneca Wallace. He's a career backup, and that's exactly where he belongs. The only point I'm trying to make is that if your starter doesn't look any better than - or isn't even as good as - your career backup, then you don't have a starter.

You have 2 backups.

It seems that even Paddy O'Shurmur has noticed. When asked if Colt would be the starter again if healthy, he responded:

"I'm going to cross that bridge when they're both healthy. Right now, until Colt's healthy, we're going to go with Seneca. If Colt is OK — when Colt is OK — we'll talk about that ."

Not a glowing endorsement.

When asked if the Browns had enough data on Colt to judge him - despite the O Line problems and dropped balls - Tom Heckert said "Yes." Both he and Mike Holmgren refused to comment on McCoy's future prospects, saying they would evaluate him in the offseason.

Not a glowing endorsement.

If you want to read between the lines, like it or not, Colt McCoy is done with the Cleveland Browns.

They won't keep him on as the backup - that's Seneca Wallace's job. They won't keep him on as the starter - that's someone else's job. They'll trade him in the offseason to some team for a 5th or 6th round pick and a throw-in player like they did with Brady Quinn, because Colt McCoy IS Brady Quinn who IS Charlie Frye who IS Kelly Holcomb who IS Tim Couch.

It's not fair, but it wasn't quite fair with those other QB's either. And fair's got nothing to do with it. Did any of those other guys go on to stellar careers elsewhere? Did anyone (outside of hopeless romantics and fanboys) really think they would?

That being said, I really hope that Colt is able to start the last 2 games. Because although Seneca looked only marginally better than McCoy, that margin might be enough for them to accidentally win a game.

And then our 2012 QB options get really messy.

Regarding Offensive Line Falsehoods

Myth - The Offensive Line is so bad on the right side that no QB could ever be successful.

Bzzzzzt! Tony Pashos certainly isn't a top RT, but some are making him out to be nothing more than a fat zombie that could easily be replaced by a rotten tree stump. Shawn Lauvao hasn't been great at RG, but he's gotten better as the season has progressed. It's completely false to intimate that Colt is getting bull-rushed every drop back, propaganda invented purely to try and support people's excuses.

As of right now, the Browns' O Line is ranked #20 in sacks (35), ahead of teams such as the Packers, Steelers, 49ers, and Broncos. They have given up 77 QB hits, roughly the same as the Falcons, Bears, Lions, and Ravens.

I'm hardly going to sit here and tell you that Pashos is good. But Colt doesn't really get pressured any more than any other QB in the league, and part of the pressure he does get is his fault. He's indecisive, he holds the ball too long, and he doesn't throw the ball deep enough to back the Safeties off the line of scrimmage.

Going to the tape from the Cardinals game, Seneca Wallace dropped back to pass 34 times. He was pressured 11 times. Of those 11 pressures, 2 resulted in sacks (including the crucial fumble), 4 resulted in completions (including the 76 yard Greg Little TD), 1 resulted in a 15 yard scramble for a 1st Down, the remaining 4 resulted in the ball being thrown away.

That means that 67% of the time Wallace dropped back, he was under no special pressure in spite of having what some claim is the "*Worst Offensive Line in the History of the World*".

And, despite assertions otherwise, every freakin' QB on every freakin' team in the freakin' league has to deal with pressure from time to time. The good QB's can help mitigate their own pressure by beating it. Bad QB's invite further pressure by not knowing how to deal with it.

Regarding Putting The Concussion Thing To Bed

Mike Holmgren had a presser this week to explain the whole Colt-Concussion thing, and his explanation went something like this:



Trainers working on people didn't see play. Got called onto field. Got to Colt, he complains about his hand. Take him to sideline and examine hand. Ask him 6 key questions to measure concussions, he passes. Not demonstrating concussion symptoms. No one tells them to test for concussion. Hand OK to go back in. Colt goes back in. Doesn't demonstrate concussion symptoms until after game. Tested after game and does indeed have concussion.

To many, this explanation is weak. I find it weak myself. But then I ask myself: If this story is a lie or a cover-up, what really happened and what are they trying to cover up?

From forcing a concussed player back onto the field despite the Trainers to purposely trying to get Colt killed, no other alternative scenarios make any sense.

So, if there is no other explanation that makes sense, then I guess I'm forced to buy their story, no matter how weak it sounds.

I mean, yes, it is entirely plausible that the Trainers were working on guys on the bench, making them 1. busy and 2. separated from the field by a wall of humanity. There are replays and hits and announcements and crowd reactions every damn play - it is easy to believe that the Trainers tune this out when they're working.

It's also plausible that no one went over to the Trainers and told them to examine Colt's head more thoroughly for a concussion because they - the players, the coaches, the guys in the booth - believed that's what the Trainers already were doing. I'm pretty sure that people don't just walk up to the medical staff after every single injury and tell them "*Hey, make sure you look at their knee.*"

So, yeah, I guess I can buy that Colt went back into the game because of a total lack of communication that probably has happened before and will happen again unless the NFL itself institutes a regulatory change.

Conspiracy theories are fun and all, but that doesn't change the fact that 9 times out of 10 they're more make-believe than the Tooth Fairy.

Regarding Greg Little

All season some have bemoaned the lack of playmakers on the Offensive side of the ball, and while it is hard to argue that the Browns aren't talent-deficient in that area, I would argue that they are not talent-free.

Sometimes a playmaker can't be a playmaker if the QB can't get him the ball.

Greg Little has more than his fair share of drops this season, so some of his troubles have been of his own volition. But his 76 yard TD catch and run against Arizona showed that he does have big play potential if given the ball in space.

There's no way I'm going to pronounce him a #1 WR at this point, but I think he's plenty talented enough to be a solid #2 on a good WR corps (not just ours). He's less celebrated than several of his fellow rookie WR's, but his numbers (in a terrible Offense, no less) are very comparable to everyone but Green (who is clearly an elite talent):

AJ Green - 61 receptions, 1006 yards, 7 TD.

Torrey Smith - 43 receptions, 770 yards, 7 TD.

Julio Jones - 42 receptions, 755 yards, 5 TD.

Doug Baldwin - 46 receptions, 731 yards, 3 TD.

Greg Little - 57 receptions, 669 yards, 2 TD.

In many ways, Little reminds me of Princess Douchebag (otherwise known as Braylon Edwards). But the Princess was the last WR in Cleveland with big play ability, and that's something that the Browns will need if they're ever to come up for air.

Regarding Whatever

***Mike Holmgren, do you know how foolish you sound when you chide the press for proclaiming "Same Old Browns", especially when even you must admit there's no evidence to the contrary. And "*You're either with us you're against us*"? Come on, this ain't your first rodeo. In what universe does that fly?

And what do you care what the press thinks anyway? No matter where you go, no matter what you do, there's always gonna be someone that hates everything you do. Do your job and the rest will take care of itself.

***It really appears that Jordan Norwood is the de facto 2nd WR at this point. Mo Massaquoi, like his 2009 2nd round brethren before him, is drifting towards oblivion.

***If Colt McCoy didn't play for a big-name big-exposure school like Texas, where does he get drafted? Does he get drafted at all?

***The Cardinals have themselves a bit of situation, because John Skelton looks every bit as good as Kevin Kolb, maybe better. But that still doesn't mean they have a legit starter.

***That opening drive for the Browns was easily the most efficient their Offense has looked all season.

***How bad do you need to be to get the #1 overall pick these days? The Colts win their first game of the year to go to 1-13, and suddenly they're in danger of dropping all the way to 3 if they win another game.

I know that we in Cleveland think we have a monopoly on misery, but there are a slew of terrible teams in the NFL these days.

Next Up

Baltimore Ravens (10-4).

The Ravens have had some BAD losses on the road this year, but at home they're nigh untouchable. Especially against a team whom they had one of their few convincing road wins just a few weeks ago.

This game is essential to the Ravens, and they'll be in a sour mood after getting a colonoscopy in San Diego on Sunday. Colt McCoy... Seneca Wallace... it don't matter who starts as long as Ray Rice is runnin' and the Ravens D is rushin'.

Only one more loss after that to seal the deal.

Ravens 30, Browns 13.