



Thank Tebow that's over.

The game, the season... all of it. Despite the fact that, as with most of their losses, the Browns were in it to the very end, you just never got the impression that they would/could get it done. It was a microcosm of the year - playing hard, hanging in there (especially defensively), but making too many mistakes and having too little talent to win.

It's not the worst Browns season I've seen (2000, 2004, and 2008 were worse, in my opinion), but it was depressing nonetheless. That's why it ended with a half-empty stadium and a majority of those that did attend twirling yellow washrags (bolstering my theory that Steelers fans were all high school majorettes that put on 50 pounds, moved to trailer parks, and bandwagon with winning teams to have at least one good thing in their life while waiting for the Welfare check to come so they can get that fancy new Velveeta flavor of Mad Dog).

Still, we all know this loss isn't as horrific as some would make it out to be. They played a very good team tough, a Steelers team that was fighting as hard as it could to win for Playoff positioning. They were in the game to the last snap - just thiiiiis close to pulling it out. Oh, and they knocked Rashard Mendenhall out for the year, hurting Pittstown's chances a little (but not much - I've always thought Isaac Redman was the better RB anyway).

Keep it close, play 'em tough, knock 'em around, and lose in the end, securing the #4 pick in the draft. Yeah, I was definitely rooting for the Browns to win that game (certainly when the

Ravens-Bengals game was in question), but you couldn't really ask for a better loss.

That is what we have been reduced to, kids: Pray for the Browns to not embarrass us while still losing.

Take heart, noble fans. Tomorrow is another day. And it's part of the offseason. Ahead is Free Agency, then the Draft, then Training Camp... and Hope. We're 0-0 again. Sure, some teams are still playing in some weird tournament that we haven't been invited to in a while, but who cares about that noise when we have only 4 months left to debate RG3 vs. Luck vs. Flynn vs. McCoy vs. Wallace?

Bring on the Mock Drafts.

Stats

Time of Possession: PIT - 39:11, CLE - 20:49

Total Yards: PIT - 360, CLE - 240

Yards Passing: PIT - 199, CLE - 168

Yards Rushing: PIT - 161, CLE - 72

First Downs: PIT - 22, CLE - 14

Turnovers Forced: CLE - 2, PIT - 1

Sacks: PIT - 2, CLE - 2

Final Score: 🗑️ **Garbageville 13, Cleveland 9**

These stats are indicative of a much bigger ass-whuppin' than the Browns got, and are thus a little misleading. As in most of their close losses (and even their wins), Cleveland was out-everything-ed but somehow managed to hang in there long enough to make it interesting (in a manner of speaking).

For the season, the Browns finished with the 10th ranked Defense, even though it didn't feel like it at times. Having the 5th ranked Scoring Defense and the 2nd ranked Pass Defense was especially impressive, but the whole party was kinda killed by the 30th ranked Rush Defense.

Offensively, it was like getting slapped in the head by a dead armadillo. Ranked 29th overall, they were 30th in Scoring, 24th in Passing (surprising as bad as it was), and 28th in Rushing. Much work is needed on that side of the ball.

Game Balls - Year End

Joe Thomas - With the other side of the line in constant flux, it's good that at least one of the bookends can be counted on.

D'Qwell Jackson - Overcame 2 lost seasons to end up 2nd in the NFL in tackles with 158. He's not necessarily an elite LB, but he's very solid and would be a huge loss if the Browns cannot find a way to retain him.

Jabaal Sheard - After they moved him from RDE to his more natural LDE spot, Sheard came alive. He finished with 8.5 sacks and 5 forced fumbles. Could become a monster as he matures.

Ahtyba Rubin - Another solid year in the middle of the line, 83 tackles and 5 sacks, big numbers for a DT.

Phil Dawson - Could be another adventurous year contract-wise for the annual MVP of the team.

Honorable Mention - Year End

Greg Little - Became more and more effective as the year went on, showing flashes of his playmaking ability towards the end. May not be a true #1, but would be a helluva #2.

Chris Ogbannaya - Not sure why the coaching staff decided to keep him under wraps the last several games of the year (probably because they're stupid), but always made a difference when he was in there. With Brandon Jackson back next year, it's difficult to say what role he will have on the team, but let's hope they can find a spot for him.

Alex Mack - Not really an elite Center as some would have you believe, but he's solid, and in the end that's good enough. Can't have a Pro Bowler at every position, and the Browns have a shortage of guys that are even Good Enough.

Chris Gocong - There was a lot of teeth-gnashing when the Browns extended him midseason, but he turned up his play as the year went on and became a real playmaker at the end. If that's his ceiling, he'll need to stay there to warrant a starting position go-forward, but at the very least appears to be a solid contributor in a Linebacking rotation.

Joe Haden - I was kind of hard on this guy the 2nd half of the season, but that's only because he had set the bar for himself so high that not playing up to that was frustrating. In the end, even if he wasn't "elite" or "shutdown", he was still a solid starting Corner, and I surmise that he'll only be better if the Browns can fill the open RDE, CB, and S spots.

Shurmurs - Year End

Pat Shurmur - Can't have an award for futility without the namesake, can we? A poor year in just about every way, at least it would be hard for him to not be better next year.

Chris Tabor - How do you take the one aspect of the Browns that has been good for the last 6-7 years and make it a liability? Don't look at me. Ask the Special Teams Coach.

Tony Pashos/Artis Hicks/Oneil Cousins - If you multiply 0 x 3, the answer is still 0.

Colt McCoy - List all the important attributes that a QB must possess to be successful in the NFL. Arm strength, accuracy, height (to see over linemen), leadership, intelligence, decision-making, mobility, avoids turnovers, ability to stay healthy, ability to move in the pocket to avoid the rush, ability to come through late in games. Now tell me which of those attributes are one of McCoy's strengths. You might be able to argue that he's *pretty good* at one or two.

Peyton Hillis - The Browns brass hurt Peyton's feewings, so it's likely that he's gone. On one hand, he's a decent RB that would be serviceable for a few years in this Offense, and it sucks that his departure creates another hole. On the other, he's clearly a drama queen that has lost the confidence of many of his teammates and probably isn't worth the money or effort it would take to sign him. In the end, he's hardly irreplaceable. He'll do fine as a change-of-pace guy with some other team.

Montario Hardesty - Makes Hillis look elite by comparison. Just HIT THE HOLE, Montario. Stop dancin'. This ain't a game show.

Sheldon Brown - Got beat so often that his suckitude started rubbing off on Haden.

Jayme Mitchell - I know the Front Office had high hopes for him, but he did really nothing, then got benched for some dude I've never heard of who also did nothing, only to get back into the starting lineup thanks to injuries... where he continued to do pretty much nothing.

Mo Massaquoi - Another concussion, missed a number of games, didn't do much in the ones he played, and dropped balls when the QB's did remember he was alive. Those three 2009 2nd Round picks are probably the hugest draft debacle in Browns history, and that means they were worse than Clifford Charlton or Mike Junkin.

Owen Marecic - The blackest spot on Tom Heckert's resume to date. It's not good when you spend a 4th Round pick on a Fullback that doesn't block that well, doesn't run that well, doesn't catch that well, and doesn't really play very much.

Regarding The #4 Pick

Pretty much every Mock Draft I've seen that's been updated since the end of the season has

the Browns taking Robert Griffin III at #4 overall. Go ahead. Google it. They all like RG3 for #4.

That would make me happier than Charlie Sheen in a bathtub full of blow.

Take away the fact that we haven't had a QB with that much potential, that much talent since... Otto Graham... imagine the excitement, the attention he would add, both locally and across the nation.

But there's so much drama left to be unveiled in this matter. Owner Jim Irsay fired the Polians (GM types Bill and Chris) in Indy, which might be a sign that he plans to keep Peyton Manning and sell that 1st overall pick (something that the Polians reportedly never would have done). So Andrew Luck could be in the mix, for the right price.

Also, there's a strong feeling that, like mock draft makers, teams would assume that the Browns would snatch RG3 at 4 and would trade up with STL or MIN to ensure they get him. Thus, if you want to ensure you get the Heisman Trophy winner, you'd have to sacrifice probably your low 1st rounder and your 2nd rounder to move up to 2 and get it done.

Then there's the theory that Holmgren wouldn't want RG3 anyway, so the Browns would go a non-QB direction like Matt Kalil (T - USC), Morris Claiborne (CB - LSU), or Justin Blackmon (WR - OK State). Or some other direction that we haven't conceived yet since the draft is still about 4 months down the road and there will be a million stock moves up and down by that time. Just remember the road that Daquan Bowers took last year - he was considered a potential #1 overall pick during Bowl season. He was drafted mid 2nd Round.

I will make a strong effort not to marry myself to one guy - a "We have to get so-and-so or I will stab myself in the head with a fork" situation. Any guy we get would be a huge help to the Browns. I'm watching Blackmon in the Stanford v Oklahoma State game right now, and Day-um!

If I had my preference though...

Regarding Seneca's Quest To Start

Apparently Seneca Wallace has thrown his hat in the ring to get a shot at starting next year. Well, verbally at least. He didn't really do it with his play.

He told [the PD](#) :

"All I want is a legit opportunity. That's all you can ask for at the end of the day... I feel like I deserve a shot... Do I feel like things always are fair? No. And that's just the way it is. . . . It was Pat [Shurmur's] decision to give Colt an opportunity, and that's what it was ."

Does Seneca deserve a chance to start? I guess that depends on the circumstance. If the Browns haul in Matt Flynn in Free Agency or draft Andrew Luck or RG3, then, no, there is no reason that he should be in the starting mix. He should be the backup, which is what he is in this league.

But if the Browns draft a late round QB or don't address the position at all, then, yeah, he should certainly be in the mix.

Seneca's got a strong arm and good mobility (both better than Colt), but he's got backup quality accuracy and decision making (same as Colt). It seems he makes bold statements and is a more accepted team leader, but then says things like what he told [92.3 The Fan](#) when asked if he helped mentor McCoy:

"Not much. Not much. That was Jake [Delhomme's] deal. He did a lot of some stuff with him last year. But that's not my thing. It's just one thing I don't do. I came in with the mind-set I wanted to

compete, whatever case that was ."

So you're basically admitting that you put your personal agenda ahead of the team. I mean, even if most guys secretly believe the same, they at least have the couth to keep it to themselves. Honesty is not always the best policy.

But if we're talking about Colt McCoy, Seneca Wallace, and Thaddeus Lewis or a late round pick... then Seneca should get every chance to get that start. I've seen nothing out of Colt McCoy that tells me that he deserves to be gifted the starting job again.

Regarding Matt Flynn



480 yards. 6 TD's. It would probably take Colteca McWallace 4 or 5 games to get that.

That's what Matt Flynn got against Detroit's 1st string Playoff-bound Defense on Sunday.

Is it a Kelly Holcomb-esque mirage? Is it the dawn of a backup come into his own, a la Aaron Rodgers himself?

I DVR'd that game with the specific reason of watching Flynn to see if there was anything there, and there obviously is. He doesn't look that tall out there, but he's the same size as Rodgers or RG3. His arm strength is median, but he did throw some nice deep balls regardless. He's not overly mobile, but nor is he a statue.

I have mixed feelings about him. I just think his ceiling is not overly high, that he's more of a placeholder QB, that he might be a dud without being surrounded by Green Bay-ish receiving talent.

But I don't know why it's fair to damn the guy for performing every time he gets a chance (this game, last year vs. the Pats), and he's had 4 years learning a West Coast Offense. Most of all, if you acquire a Matt Flynn, it costs you 0 draft picks. Assuming that you'll need to move up to 2 to get RG3, you could have:

Matt Flynn, Justin Blackmon, #23 pick in the 1st Round, #37 pick in the 2nd Round

OR

Robert Griffin III

Now, if RG3 falls to 4, then I think that's a no-brainer. But if you feel you have to move up to get him, thus sacrificing 2 high picks/2 likely starters... less attractive. You could roll the dice and hope that RG3 falls, but Free Agency is before the draft, so Flynn would be gone, and if someone does leapfrog you to grab RG3, then you're sitting there with your very limp member in your hand because you just got stuck with Colteca McWallace again.

I'm glad it's not my decision. It's easier to be the crucifier than the cruciffee.

Regarding The Playoffs

Before the season, I predicted we'd have Pats, Steelers, Texans, and Chargers as AFC Division Champs with Ravens and Jets as Wildcards, then Packers, Saints, Cowboys, and Rams as NFC Division Champs with Falcons and Giants as Wildcards. I chose 8 of 12 playoff teams correctly, 5 in the right spot, so not a bad year prediction-wise.

3 of the 4 teams I missed - Dallas, San Diego, and the Jets - were barely misses. Only on St. Louis did I miss by a mile, and I'm sure I'm not the only one that whiffed on that enigma that is the NFC West.

Wildcard Weekend Predictions:

Cincy at Houston - The poor Texans would be a strong contender for the Super Bowl if not for being reduced to their lowly-drafted rookie 3rd string QB. And if he fails... Jake Delhomme. Too much to overcome, the Bengals D doesn't allow TJ Yates that late drive this time, and Cincy wins its first playoff game since the invention of the printing press. *Cincy 23, Houston 17.*

Pittstown at Denver - Throughout Tebowmania, I maintained that the Broncos O-style was going to fail once they started playing good teams and/or teams figured out how to beat the triple-option (which it really shouldn't have even taken that long to beat). Unfortunately for Denver, that came right in time for the Playoffs. As much as I'd love for Tebow to beat the Inbred, there is less than zero chance that will happen. I'd almost put money on a shutout loss at home for the Donks. *Pittstown 27, Denver 0.*

Detroit at New Orleans - The Lions are a feel-good story, and they have enough Offensive firepower to make this interesting. But they simply aren't going into the Superdome and beating

the Saints, the only team I think has a legit shot of taking the Packers down.
New Orleans 45, Detroit 34.

Atlanta at New York - The Falcons look awesome against, well, Tampa, but never seem to get it done against good teams. Plus, playing outdoors in New Jersey weather... hard to like them. The Giants are a sleeper team right now - inconsistent, but good enough if they get hot to run the table. They remind me of their 2007 team. *New York - 31, Atlanta 27.*

That lines up New York at Green Bay, New Orleans at San Fran, Cincy at New England, and, disgustingly, Pittstown at Baltimore. At least we'll get rid of one of them before the AFC Championship Game.

Regarding A Dream

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

A general buzz fills the room as multiple reporters await the arrival of Tom Heckert and Mike Holmgren following an impromptu conference scheduling. There is the sense that something big is in the offing - there is a tension in the air.

Finally, Holmgren and Heckert enter the room from a side door, walking to the table to be seated. Holmgren waves genially to the reporters as he makes his way to his chair, his demeanor regal. After both men are seated, Holmgren clears his throat and leans towards the microphone in front of him on the table.

Holmgren: *I know that there's been a lot of speculation about why we called this press conference so urgently, so I won't keep you in suspense. At the end of 2009, I took a job from Mr. Lerner, God bless his heart, and my full intention was to see the task he set me through to*

fruition. And I feel that from where we were at that time, we have made incredible progress towards building a lasting, tangible organization. But over the last several months, I have been doing a lot of soul searching, a lot of praying, a lot of talking with my family, with my doctors, and I am disappointed to report that it is in my and the organization's best interest to step down as President of the Cleveland Browns.

He waits for a dramatic reaction, but there's just silence.

Holmgren: Now, now, I know that when I took this job, I promised to see it through to the end. Even a few months ago, I promised to see it through to the end. But medical reasons of a personal nature have entered into the equation and have changed the situation, so that now I must regretfully retire.

Waits again. Everyone just stares at him.



Holmgren: So... I'm leaving. Just want to make sure everyone's clear on that.

More silence.

Holmgren: So now you really won't be getting your playoff tickets from me.

He chuckles at his own joke. No one else does.

Holmgren: *I realize that you are all shocked, but I want to assure you that you'll remain in good hands. I've talked to Randy, and Tom Heckert will be taking over the President role in addition to GM duties. Tom's been ready for this move for years. He already essentially runs the show. He makes my life so easy that it almost feels like I'm just "cashing in".*

He chuckles at his own joke. No one else does.

Holmgren: *So, the new President of the Cleveland Browns, Tom Heckert.*

The reporters all turn and stare at him now.

Heckert: *First, I'd like to thank Mike for this opportunity. This is something I've been waiting for my whole life. The Cleveland Browns and all their fans will sorely miss a legend like Mike Holmgren.*

He claps, then looks to the reporters to join in. A couple clap two or three times.

Heckert: *I'm sure you all have a million questions for me...*

Reporter: (interrupting) *Are you retaining Shurmur?*

Finally, there is life in the reporters as they all chime in the same question. Heckert opens his mouth to answer.

Holmgren: (interrupting Heckert) *I'll field this one. (stares out at the reporters angrily) Pat Shurmur is a fine young football coach, as well as a fine fine man. He's tall, he's got good blood pressure, he...*
(glances at Heckert)

Heckert: *...he's got good teeth...*

Holmgren: *...he's got good teeth... this is a good good man, and a lot of the things that happened to him this season were out of his control. So there's that. And when I say this, I want to be clear about what I'm saying...*

Heckert: (interrupting) *We're letting him go.*

Now there is a burst of excited muttering. Holmgren gives Heckert an annoyed glance.

Holmgren: *Tom is letting him go. This is Tom's team now, and even though he thinks as highly of Pat as I do...*

Heckert: (leaning to the mic) *I really do.*

Holmgren: *...with Tom taking over the team, he wants to hire his own guy, put his stamp on the team, and he has every right to do that. I think it's a huge mistake and Pat will probably go on to win Super Bowls elsewhere, probably next year, but that's Tom's call now.*

Reporter: *Tom, what prompted the removal of Coach Shurmur?*

Heckert: *Well, as Mike alluded to, since I'm taking over there will be a shift - not a huge shift, but a shift - in direction and how we go about doing things, so we thought it was best to start*

fresh and not try to pound a square peg through a round hole. That, and Pat was way more incompetent than anyone thought he would be.

Holmgren turns and glares at Heckert, aghast, but Heckert plows on.

Heckert: *I mean, between you and me, after the job interviews, I didn't have high hopes for the guy, but he has been coaching a while and has been around the game his whole life, you'd at least think he'd know when to call a time out and how many people should be on the field and that on 4th and 5 you need to call a play designed to get more than 2 yards.*

Holmgren: *Tom, I thought we agreed to ix-nay the owing-thray under... us-bay... thing.*

Heckert: *Sorry. That sorta slipped out. (to the reporters) He's a good man.*

Holmgren: *(glowering at Heckert) Yes, he is. Now, if you don't mind, I'll continue MY press conference.*

Heckert: *(quietly, almost to himself) It's really OUR press conference...*

Holmgren: *Are you talking back to me? Mine. I wouldn't even have invited you if I knew you were going to be so ungrateful.*

Heckert: *(surprised) I'm not being ungrateful...*

Holmgren: *You didn't even thank me.*

Heckert: *I did. I thanked you several times.*

Holmgren: (motioning to the reporters) *Not in front of these people.*

Heckert: *I did. That was like the first thing I said.*

Holmgren: *I don't remember it.*

Heckert: *I know I did. I even put it at the top of my list of things to say. (showing Holmgren his sheet of paper) See? I even put a check mark next to it showing I did it.*

Holmgren: (to Tony Grossi) *Tony, did he thank me?*

Tony: *I... I'm pretty sure he did.*

He looks around at his fellow reporters, and there are nods and general agreement.

Holmgren: *Well, I don't remember it.*

Long pause. He sits back, sulking, arms folded angrily.

Reporter: (coughing) *Anyway... Tom, can you tell us who you've got targeted for your coaching search?*

Heckert: *We're going to cast a wide net this time, but what we're looking for most of all...*

Holmgren: (yelling) *Nobody thanks me! You people are lucky I even came here!*

Silence as everyone stares at Holmgren, that at each other in confusion.

Heckert: (continuing, wary of Holmgren) *...uh... like I said... what we're looking for most of all in a Head Coaching candidate...*

Holmgren: (interrupting again) *You wouldn't be here if it wasn't for me! None of you!*

The reporters stare again.

Reporter: *Do you mean this room...?*

Holmgren: (ignoring) *I didn't have to take this job, you know! Dying town, shitty weather, an owner that didn't know his ass from his hand, and then I came in and changed it all! You thought you knew what you know, but it wasn't that at all! Not after I told you about it! But do I get a thank you? Do I get a statue? A poem? Not that I see sitting here at this table near this room! I get wagging heads and drooping... eyebrows.*

Heckert has now scooted a few feet away from Holmgren and the reporters stare at him in shock, some of their mouths actually hanging open.

Holmgren: *East side, West side, no side! Offsides! How can you not understand that? It's not like carving a lightbulb! You write that stuff that says what you want to say, but you didn't write it, not before I told it to you! My grandkids have beards now! But you say same day, different day! It's not the same day! It's not!*

Holmgren is so angry and red that he's almost out of breath, puffing into the mic, spittle on his cheek. With great effort, he composes himself.

Holmgren: *You're either with me or you're against me.* Good day.

He stands up and leaves the room with as much dignity as he can muster.

The reporters wait a few seconds, then turn their heads back to Heckert and resume the questions.

FADE OUT.

Regarding The JC Penney Tampax Gator Bowl Presented By Pepcid AC

I didn't even watch the Florida-Ohio State Bowl Game this year. It just wasn't interesting enough to me to bother.

First, it's a Bowl Game, so it means nothing. The only reason to watch those is to scout draft eligible players, or maybe if your team is playing for the Mythical National Championship. Or nothing else is on and you're not in the mood to read a book.

Second, it's two 6-6 teams. Who cares if you beat an SEC team if it's a 6-6 SEC team? Who cares if you lose because you're a 6-6 team that will have a new Coach and new offensive system and a whole new class of recruits? A win means nothing except some warm fuzzies. A

loss means even less.

And it's not like Luke Fickell has been around long enough or been successful enough that the game is "*Win One For The Ficker!*"

The only Bowl Games I give even half a damn about are the ones involving Top 10 draft picks or draft eligible QB's. Normally, I'd never watch Baylor v Washington (what a horrible football game, unless you're just really hoping that major college football becomes the Arena League), but I did just to see RG3.

I actually had to force myself to sit through Oklahoma v Iowa (like watching rocks erode) just to see Landry Jones (meh). Couldn't even stomach Texas A&M (Ryan Tannehill) v Northwestern; I DVR'd it to watch on some football-desperate night.

Other than personal scouting efforts, the only reason I can think to even pay a smidge of attention to these Bowls is to check on my score in the Bowl Pools. There's a pretty simple trick I use every year that keeps me in the hunt for a payout: Always bet against the Big 10.

Regarding Whatever

***At the end of last year, the tandem of Colt McCoy and Peyton Hillis seemed destined to headline the Cleveland Offense for seasons to come.

Now, a year later, it's quite likely they've already taken their last snaps as a Brown.

Not For Long.

***The Browns forced 2 fumbles late in the game, and followed each up by doing absolutely nothing. Awesome.

***About 10 minutes left, ball at the PIT 34, 4th and 12, and Shurmur decides to punt. Yes, I know that converting a 12 yard 4th Down was unlikely. Yes, I know that the D had been doing a good job on the Steelers all day, but not a good enough job to keep them from running a whole bunch o' clock. But that was the perfect time and spot to try for a conversion.

However, Shurmy is Conservative By Nature (a much less interesting version of pop group *Nughty By Nature*), so we got ourselves a stupendous 19 yard punt. Love it.

***POS was whinin' [after the game](#) :

Ben Roethlisberger was disappointed to hear Browns fans cheering when running back Rashard Mendenhall went down with a right knee injury at the end of the first quarter.

"It's never good to see a guy go down," said Roethlisberger. "I know these Browns fans are passionate about their Browns, but when you hear fans cheer when a guy goes down, that's really disappointing. I don't care who it is or if you really hate that team. To be a fan of the sport, you never like to see that. So that was disappointing to hear that."

That's nothing, POS. If you would've gone down in a season-ending heap, they'd have set off fireworks. There would've been a damn parade.

***Man, I hope Jon Gruden takes that rumored job in St. Louis, because I am damn sick of hearing him genuflect endlessly on game telecasts. He makes Ron Jaworski seem good, and that's not easy. Shaddup, Chuckie.

***Deshaun Jackson, Santonio Holmes... lordy, those WR's are a bunch of little bitches.

***Speaking of Holmes, nothing brought me more enjoyment on Sunday than watching the Loud Blob and his Team of Jerkoffs lose in Miami, starting a very uncomfortable offseason for the J-E-T-S Jest Jest Jest.

Next Up

The Offseason

The longest and (sadly) most exciting game of the season for the fans of the Cleveland Browns.

