



It's always best to be overly cautious about what you read into a Preseason game, but there aren't too many negatives to take away from Cleveland's 35-10 win over a (supposedly) good team like Green Bay.

The Defense looked very good... once Aaron Rodgers vacated the field. The Running Game looked plenty solid. The Offensive Line looked very effective. Yes, the Packers were missing 18 players, but the Browns were missing 15. So in a battle of backups/starters that normally are backups, Cleveland certainly appeared to be the deeper team.

Deeper than a team that went 15-1 last year. Shocking.

In all honesty, I'm not sure that's a compliment to the Browns as much as it's a damnation of Green Bay - the Packers have no run game and poor pass protection and are mediocre defensively and would likely suffer a Colts-like drop to 4 or 5 wins if Rodgers goes down. You take Rodgers off the field, the bully shrinks down to ewok-size. It's all part of the disturbing trend in the NFL where one player can make far too huge a difference in what is supposedly a "team" sport. If they continue down this dark path, the NFL will soon be no better than the diseased outhouse that is the NBA.

But I digress...

The start of the game was as enjoyable as stabbing yourself in the eye with a spade bit, what with Montario Hardesty fumbling on the first play and Aaron Rodgers abusing Joe Haden for a 20 yard TD pass. But Brandon Weeden and the offense moved the ball efficiently - with a

strong dose of Hardesty ground attack and drove to a FG.

Rodgers looked sharp again in his second drive, picking the Browns apart at will, but Sheldon Brown saved the day by stripping GB WR Randall Cobb after a reception, and that was basically it for the Packer Offense for the rest of the night.

Weeden drove the team to 2 more FG's and a TD in the 1st Half, looking sharp at times but mainly acting as a "game manager" as the team ran the ball plenty and called a lot of short pass plays. It almost appeared that Pat Shurmur was coddling his supposed gunslinger.

After a 16-7 Halftime lead, the Browns backup units continued to abuse poor GB backup QB Graham Harrell, who played almost 3 full Quarters. He finished 12 for 24 for 100 yards and 2 picks (should've been a third), one of which was returned for a TD by David Sims with 12:30 left in the 3rd to push the lead to 23-7.

Colt McCoy and Seneca Wallace both looked good again in their brief 2nd Half stints, McCoy moving the team 75 yards for a TD and Wallace driving them 64 yards for a short FG.

The Browns young, young, young Defensive players stacked up Green Bay's pathetic run all night, and pressured Harrell consistently, one of which resulted in a Safety when he intentionally grounded the ball from the End Zone as he was trashed by Auston English and mid-week pickup Ronnie Cameron.

In the end, it was a thoroughly dominating performance by the Browns that would've sent me into apoplectic shock had the game counted. And even though we remember that the win really means nothing in the grand scheme of things, it was important to see the team shore up some of the weaknesses of the prior week and to realize that perhaps this team isn't so incredibly bereft of talent as the rest of the world makes it out to be.

Stats

Time of Possession: CLE - 31:29, GB - 28:31

Total Yards: CLE - 337, GB - 228

Yards Passing: CLE - 220, GB - 159

Yards Rushing: CLE - 117, GB - 69

First Downs: CLE - 19, GB - 10

Turnovers Forced: CLE - 4, GB - 1

Sacks: CLE - 0, GB - 0

Final Score: Cleveland 35, Green Bay 10

It's not always the case, but the stats are very reflective of the game. This was a beat down.

Naturally, the most encouraging stat is the reduction of the opposition Rushing Yards from 200 down to 69. The Browns only had 117 yards rushing, which is not necessarily reflective of how effectively they ran the rock. Only allowing 228 total yards is also quite impressive.

Now if only this game counted...

Game Balls

Phil Dawson - Makes 43 yarder. Holding penalty moves it back to a 53 yard attempt instead. And you the viewer are unconcerned by that fact because he's Phil freakin' Dawson.



Defense - Yes, Aaron Rodgers may have dissected you like a frog had he remained in the game, but you can only play against whomever they field, and you dominated most of the contest.

Run Defense - Was very solid no matter who was on the field, sporting a starting front 7 of Jabaal Sheard, Billy Winn (6th Rd - Rookie), John Hughes (3rd Rd - Rookie), Emmanuel Stephens (backup), Kaluka Maiava (backup), LJ Fort (undrafted - Rookie), and James-Michael Johnson (4th Rd - Rookie). That's only one starter coming into Training Camp, basically

entirely a 2nd string unit.

Bernie Kosar - Josh Gordon drops an easy pass and an official inadvertently drops a flag. " *The y threw the flag on Gordon for dropping the ball,*
" Bernie quips snidely. Wish he could do every Browns game. Drunk, stoned, I don't care, he's just damn entertaining.

Trevin Wade - Several times, I said to myself " *Jinkies! That was a damn fine play! Who was that?* " And more often than not, it was Wade.
And some of that was against Rodgers. Looks like a real find - good size, aggressive, smooth. Naturally, the Football Gods smote him down, as he was carted off for unknown reasons.

Graham Harrell - For increasing the value of our backups. Thank you for being so bad.

Honorable Mention

Montario Hardesty - Fumble aside, hit the holes fast and always seemed to get positive yardage even if he didn't break anything.

Sheldon Brown - In how many games does Sheldon clearly outplay Haden? Not many, but he did here.

Colt McCoy & Seneca Wallace - One of these guys is gone, and I frankly don't care which one. Both are backups for a reason, but both are solid in that role. Whichever you can get more for, take it and go. Mary Kay Cabot maintains they should get a 3rd for Colt, but that's insane. You won't get more than a 5th rounder for either guy because that's what career backups go for.

Mitchell Schwartz - Much better, sir.

David Sims - Another INT, this one returned for a TD. It was a right place-right time situation where the WR fell down, but let's not take that away from him.

Hall of Shame

Joe Haden - If you're a shutdown corner, the opposing QB doesn't go after (and beat) you twice in 3 plays.



Oneil Cousins - Two penalties on the place kicking team. Is there any reason we can't cut this guy right now?

Pat Shurmur - For his foul misuse of a PRACTICE game.

Brian Sanford - Lined up offsides, a mistake that cost the team an INT return for a TD.

Josh Gordon - Yes, he finally caught a couple balls, but for the second week in a row his sloppy, lackluster route running should've resulted in a pick. That makes him a liability.

Owen Marecic - Seems immensely replaceable now that Brad Smelley is showing him up.

Josh Cooper - Blatantly dropping the only pass thrown your way is no way to sneak onto the team.

Oneil Cousins - When you're this noticeably bad, you get in the Hall twice.

Regarding the Training Wheels

Are we witnessing the birth of a run-first West Coast Offense?

It sure looked like the Browns were trying to establish themselves as a run-first type team (which I supposed makes sense since you moved up to draft a RB #3 overall). Even in the Fake Season, they seem unwilling to unchain Brandon Weeden, calling for plenty of run plays and short passes/check-downs.

But even if you somehow feel it is vital that your team gets lots of reps running the ball up the middle and throwing 3 yard passes, it still doesn't explain:

2nd Quarter, 4th and 1 at midfield. Punt. Any reason not to go for it in a PRACTICE game?

2nd Quarter, 4th and 4 at GB 34. FG. Any reason not to go for it in a PRACTICE game?

2nd Quarter, 3rd and 9 at your own 38. Run the ball (converted). Any reason not to give your QB the opportunity to throw for it in a PRACTICE game?

Which of the following need the most work/reps/practice: A) Phil Dawson, B) Reggie Hodges, C) your 3rd string RB (Jackson), or D) your rookie starting QB?

You know, I have no problem if the Browns want to handle Weeden with kid gloves when the Real Season starts. If they want to be a run-first, ball control O that just doesn't want to make mistakes while Weeden develops the way that the Steelers did with POS Rothlessburger or the Ravens did with Smokin' Joe Flacco or the Bengals did with Handy Dalton, then fine.

But this is the Preseason, and I don't see why you don't give Weeden the opportunity to experience those kind of pressure plays, not to mention giving him a chance to get more reps by extending the drive. Is Weeden's psyche so fragile that they have to coddle him along with the kind of dink-n-dunk garbage that even Colt or Seneca can run? Will he just be ruined forever if he fails to convert those situations or gets picked throwing the ball down the field?

If so, then they are in enormous trouble, cuz you can't be a Cleveland QB and not be able to take a beating, both physically and psychologically.

It wasn't even just Weeden. Why bring Thad Lewis in at the end of the game just to have him hand off and kneel? Why wouldn't you use this PRACTICE game as a chance for your young players to get every opportunity they can?

Are you hiding all your "genius" plays, holding them for the Real Season when you play teams and they say "*Holy crap! They threw a 20 yard slant! I never imagined they had that in their arsenal! We are helpless against their devious aerial onslaught!*"

I don't get you at all, Shurminator.

Regarding Whatever

***Much speculation has been made about Josh Cribbs making the team at this point, and as it appears that he's lost a step and may no longer be the best option on kick returns, Cribbs may have to actually make this squad on the merits of his receiving and kick coverage skills. Personally, I think maybe his greatest value is being the only veteran in the WR corps, and guys like Josh Gordon need leadership. Not to mention that Gordon might be playing Cribbs into the lineup.

***One thing that isn't too alarming yet but certainly would be in the Real Season is the lack of sacks. 1 last week, none this week. That can be a bit misleading since the Browns certainly had plenty of pressure on at least Harrell - especially up the middle - but I think it's also fair to say it underlines the lack of a consistent secondary pass rush threat after Sheard. That may be order #1 in the 2013 draft.

***Where is the righteous outrage for less-effective Adonis Thomas getting tons of playing time at the expense of Chris Ogbannaya? Doesn't the Kult of Kolt have room for a secondary cause?

***Imagine the beating Shurmur would get if he had been the one that threw the challenge flag on a turnover and thus received the 15 yard penalty as Mike McCarthy did.

***One play that Weeden has clearly mastered is the throw-away. If he feels trouble, he knows where the sideline is. It's a sign that if the pocket disintegrates, you should not count on Weeds to be a playmaker. It's also a sign of maturity and good decision making.

***Did you see how ridiculously good Andrew Luck looked in his debut? As much as I support Weeds, I would literally cut off a finger if the Browns could have Luck instead. It'd be worth it to have a 10-12 year run from a Peyton Manning/Tom Brady type talent. I'd even let him pick the finger. I can certainly think of one finger I'd be using a lot less if he were on the team.

***At this point, it appears that all 11 members of Cleveland's 2012 draft will make the active roster, with 5 or 6 starting and 10 getting major playing time (Ryan Miller excepted). Generally, that's not a good thing, but if they all continue to look as good as they looked against the Pack, then that has to be considered an insane draft class.



***Weeden got speared on one pass in the 2nd Quarter, and afterwards looked visibly affected by it. But he got up and stayed in the game, although he did nothing but hand off for the next several plays. Later, he revealed that he had the wind knocked out of him on that play.

Now, I don't know if you've ever had the wind knocked out of you, but I have, and for him to stay in the game and remain functional while he got past it does speak well for his ability to take a lickin' and keep on tickin'.

***Woo, Nelly, are them Rams bad.

***Love them Tim Misny commercials, especially [this one](#) . If they ever do a live action version of *Megamind*, I know who Hollywood should call.

Next Up

Philadelphia Eagles (Fake 1-0).

Usually the 3rd Fake Season game is the one where the starters get the most reps, but since the Browns and Eagles lock... feathers... again in Week 1, just 2 measly weeks later, they'll likely go into a shell of formulaic boredom.

Fine, I know it's coming, it makes some sense (although I think you can keep it vanilla and still stretch the field some). But if you're going to run the ball up the middle every play, then you need to go all out to dominate and punish them up front. Make 'em wary of you. That way, this game will at least have a little meaning.

And as Shurmur will probably feel he should keep his "secret" weapon Weeden under wraps as well, our Rookie starting QB will likely get far fewer reps than he should. We'll probably see a boatload of Colt & Seneca as Heckert continues on his quest to unload one of the two.

So the winner and the score of this game is completely irrelevant.

Eagles 17.8, Browns 13 3/4.