



Random musings guaranteed to make you spit up blood even though you haven't taken a direct hit to the chest...

QUICK TURNAROUND: With their win to complete the sweep over the Angels on Wednesday, the Indians surpassed their victory total from 2012.

It took them only 127 games to do it - the earliest in the season the Tribe has improved upon the previous year's record since 1992. That year the Indians hit 58 wins in their 123rd game, topping 1991's pathetic total of 57.

They'd improved their record in six seasons since then (excluding the shortened 1994 season from comparisons), but in each of those seasons, the passing point didn't come until September.

The biggest one-year improvement in Tribe history was 24 games in 1986 (from 60-102 to 84-78). This year's team would need to win 92 games to match that turnaround.

REAL FANTASY FOOTBALL: Since it's that time of year when pompous assholes wearing oversized Randy Moss jerseys justify their existence by gathering together at BW-3s across the nation to put together their fantasy football teams, it seems only right that we examine what little impact the Browns have on this multi-billion dollar industry.

Among the many fantasy football porn magazines that choke newsstands and website-exclusive materials that promise to turn your fantasy team into the type of juggernaut that will justify your acting like a pompous asshole at BW-3, **Trent Richardson** is the only Browns player even remotely regarded as a must-have.

ESPN's fantasy cheat sheet has Richardson ranked No. 8 overall on its power rankings. The next Brown is **Josh Gordon** at No. 107, then **Greg Little** at No. 163 - right around the point your draft probably ends. In other words, Richardson may be the only Cleveland player in your entire fucking league. (And knowing what we know from his brief track record, anybody who picks him in the first round is just asking for him to ding his knee in Week Two.)

CBS Sports is very similar. They've got three separate "expert" rankings putting Richardson anywhere from No. 3 (oh Christ) to No. 6, and all three also give Gordon a little more love, putting him between No. 75 and No. 86. **Jordan Cameron**'s strong preseason has resulted in his star rising (between No. 114 and No. 117), followed by Little somewhere in the "oh-shit-it's-11:30-Sunday-morning-and-I-need-to-fill-a-spot-on-my-roster" territory.

FOX puts Richardson at No. 13, Gordon at No. 111, and, incredibly, **Davone Bess** and **David Nelson** both ahead of Little at 151 and 169, respectively. While none of this is flattering, that's a proverbial kick to the nuts.

As for that aging wizard **Brandon Weeden**, his strong showing in the preseason thus far has made less of an impact. ESPN ranks him 27th among quarterbacks and a dazzling 249 overall, which surprises literally no one, and while FOX and CBS are both a bit more sympathetic (between 173 and 194), he still is less likely to positively impact your team than **Phil Dawson**.

Don't mistake this for one of those "expert columns" you'll stumble across more frequently than a back-to-school sale this time of year. (BTW, should I ever express a desire to become that guy, I request the bullet be placed in that soft part just beneath the base of my ear.)

Rather, take this as the opposite of what those rankings and mock drafts are intended for: a method of measuring where an actual NFL team is. I certainly don't disagree with where any of those Browns players are placed in any of these rankings, and because of that, I think it's fair to say that any team that enters a season with a grand total of one player in anybody's top 100 list still has a long way to go before being considered a playoff contender. Or even toward becoming a .500 team.

This insight is delivered not to depress, but rather to temper expectations, which I fear have gotten a bit overinflated in the past two weeks (though did taper off considerably following the lackluster performance in Indianapolis).

SPIRIT OF '97: Since you're no doubt wondering, this year's Indians still hold a better record than the 1997 pennant-winning team did at this point in the season.

SATURDAY-NIGHT FEVER: Amazingly, the Browns-Colts game snapped a string of nine straight Browns' preseason games *not* played on a Saturday night. The last was the exhibition opener in 2011 against the Packers.

Remember when nearly every Browns' preseason game was played on a Saturday night? Consider the evolution: in 1987, all four of the Browns' preseason games were on Saturdays. In 1999, it was three, and last year, none.

Does it change the feeling of the experience for anyone else? Putting it on Thursday and Friday nights seems to make them even more meaningless than they already are.

Maybe it's more of a throwback thing. The Browns avoided Saturday for the first seven preseason games they ever played from 1946 to 1949.

POWER NEEDED: It's been three years since the Indians had a .300 hitter. Five years since an Indian hit 30 homers in a season. Six years since an Indian drove in 100 runs in a season. And seven years since a player hit both 30 homers and drove in 100 runs in the same season.

And, incredibly, all four of those distinctions were accomplished by four different players.

Point being, to take the next step - whether this year or in the future - the Indians desperately need a dependable slugger that genuinely strikes fear in opposing pitchers. Someone who can fall into at least one of those four categories.

To be fair, the Tribe has improved offensively this season (currently 8th in the AL in batting average and 4th in runs scored), and **Jason Kipnis** is flirting with a run at .300. But no one will come close to 30 homers or 100 RBI. (Unless Mark Reynolds gets really hot with the Yankees - and I think to count that would be counterproductive.)

DRESS REHEARSAL DRAMA: For as much hand-wringing as there is about the "dress-rehearsal" preseason game, it's done little to forecast what the Browns have in store for the upcoming season.

True enough, going into Saturday, they'd lost their last three dress rehearsals and four of their last five - which would reflect 4-12, 5-11 hokey-pokey the Browns have put us through in recent years. And since 1999, the Browns were 5-9 in their second-to-last preseason game.

But only once since their return have the Browns won the dress-rehearsal game and then posted a winning record in the regular season. Conversely, in eight of the nine seasons in which they lost the dress rehearsal, they posted losing records.

SWEET FIFTEEN: Going into the Minnesota series, the Indians had five players with exactly 15 home runs.

RARE INDY INSTANCE: Amazingly, despite their close geographic proximity, the Browns and Colts hadn't played in the preseason since 1994.

PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE: A year ago at this time, the Indians were in the midst of a stretch of losing 15 times in 16 games.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH: The Browns also started 2-0 in the preseason in 2005 (then went 6-10 in the regular season), 2002 (9-7), and 2001 (7-9). The last time they won their first three preseason contests was 1994, when they went on to an 11-5 record.

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