

Despite another unthinkable choke job on Thursday night at home against the Broncos, it actually turned out to be a pretty good week for the Cleveland sports scene. Brady was indoctrinated, Romeo's fate was likely sealed, the Cavs rattled off four straight, and Terrelle Pryor and the Buckeyes got things back on track with a 45-10 slaughter of Northwestern up in Evanston. Peeks gets us all caught up in The Weekend Wrap.



## **It Has Officially Hit the Fan**

This was my favorite NFL weekend since the Browns bye week. That's solely because the Browns wet the bed on Thursday night instead of on Sunday.

The last time we talked was a week ago, hours or so after Derek Anderson had greased the skids of an ugly loss to the Ravens by throwing a screen pass directly to Terrell Suggs of the Ravens that ended any hopes of a win over a hated foe when Suggs returned it for a touchdown.

The Browns acted quickly, if not unanimously, and named Brady Quinn the starting QB for this past Thursday's game against the Broncos at

CBS.

Quinn played well. He put up 27 points and did not turn the ball over. He took all the underneath stuff the Broncos allowed and he managed the game like an intelligent veteran. Unfortunately, Kellen Winslow Jr. did turn the ball over on a costly fumble and was unable to make a 4<sup>th</sup> down catch at midfield with a minute left in the ballgame. No fairy-tale finish for Quinn and the Browns.

Winslow coming up small was only a part of the problem. The bigger problem was the Browns were facing an NFL offense that actually looks to score as opposed to playing grind-it-out teams like Jacksonville, Washington or the Ryan Fitzpatrick-led Bengals. To say the defense didn't hold up their end of the bargain would be kind. To say the defense sucked profusely would still be kind, but also accurate.

The Browns gave up 564 yards to the Broncos, 447 of those yards through the air. That's alarming in itself. But when you consider that Denver started a RB whose career consisted of three carries coming into Thursday night and lost him in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, only to see his replacement, Selvin Young, leave moments later after just two carries (in the same week the Broncos placed RB Michael Pittman on IR for the season), well, there were more than a few of us watching the game who figured the writing was on the wall and that Jay Cutler would be putting many a football in the air.

He did exactly that and still the Browns couldn't find an answer.

The loss dropped the Browns to 3-6 on the season and now things are truly spiraling out of control. Jamal Lewis made a nebulous reference to players quitting on the field and not finishing runs, routes, blocks, tackles, etc. Head coach Romeo Crennel has officially lost control.

But there's plenty of blame to go around starting at the top of the organizational food chain. Owner Randy Lerner hasn't made his thoughts and feelings about the situation known, much less taken a firm stand on the goings-on. GM Phil Savage is living on his reputation as a talent scout when a look at the roster belies any faith fans should have in that tag.

This is an organization that continues to buy overpriced groceries they should be growing at home and then reaches into empty pockets when the need arises for other items.

Here's hoping for a 4-12 record and the accompanying high draft pick. Here's hoping Phil will use that pick on a football player as opposed to drafting a project because Phil believes he is so much smarter than everyone else and can make him a monster. And here's hoping it soon becomes someone else's job to coach those actual players. The problem I see with 4-12 is I'm not quite sure where win number 4 might come from.

## **Finding a Groove**

Nice week for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The Cavs smoked Dallas last Monday night in Dallas then took care of business against Chicago and Indiana at home. They met Chicago again in the United Center on Saturday and took down their 4<sup>th</sup> victory in a row heading into this Tuesday's game against Milwaukee.

One thing that's readily apparent is this Cavaliers team enjoys playing together. There's chemistry with this team that hasn't been seen here since the late 1980's. And honestly, this team is more boisterous and outgoing in how they pull for each other than the more business-like teams featuring Mark Price, Brad Daugherty, Larry Nance, et al.

Even though it's early in the year this squad has accepted and settled into some clearly defined roles as they've run their record to 5-2 on the year. As always, it starts with LeBron James and trickles down to the rest of the roster. And whether it's maturity or chemistry or anything else, it seems like a light has clicked for this team in that they appear to understand the importance of regular season games and aren't willing to concede games that last season they would have lost.

One of the poster children for this new attitude is shooting guard Delonte West. West ran the point for the Cavs after coming in the February deadline deal that reshaped the roster. This season, with Mo Williams having been brought in to play PG, West has seamlessly transitioned to the two-guard spot and has been electrifying on both ends of the court whenever he's been on it.

West is averaging better than 10 points per game on limited touches. He's shooting 50% from behind the arc and 53% overall while averaging nearly 4 rebounds per game to go with his 1 steal per game.

West can be backed down on the defensive end by bigger off guards. But his hands are so quick and he's determined enough that his

being relatively undersized has not been a big issue thus far in the season.

Hope for health Cavs fans. If the Cavs have that they look to be putting together a season and a team that might make forgetting the Browns a lot easier.

## **Learning Curve**

Not a bad response from Terrelle Pryor following his costly fumble and interception two weeks ago against Penn State.

Pryor threw for 200 yards and 3 TDs (two to

Brian Robiskie) and used his legs to pick up 33 more yards in the Buckeyes 45-10 blowout win over Northwestern in Evanston on Saturday. Pryor cited being more comfortable under center and it was apparent against the Wildcats.

Pryor's game was tonic for OSU fans who wanted to see some development from the freshman QB who's been handed the reins to the OSU offense for the foreseeable future. He moved well, he looked down the field and he made throws. His physical gifts are immense and are on display whenever he tucks the ball and runs but he has to be able to throw it in order for OSU to be lethal.

On Saturday he did just that and kept the OSU Big10 title hopes alive. Class resumes next in Champaign, IL against the Illini.

## **You Know You Want It**

And if you don't, well, stop reading now and/or get your own column.

But I've got a couple guys who deserve consideration for filling the soon-to-be vacant head coaching position with the Browns.

Those loveable, almost 8-year-old Madison Mystics wrapped up the outdoor portion of their 2008 season with the Madison Invitational Tournament this past weekend. As you may remember, the Mystics formed and began league play just this past September. And 7-year-olds playing against 8 and 9-year-olds was initially not pretty. But the kids were patiently coached and taught by Bill Weaver and Jason Askew and they responded beautifully. Winning their last two games in the league season was their reward.

But it wasn't enough.

The Mystics went 3-0-1 this weekend in a 150 team tournament featuring travel teams from multiple states, again playing teams that were bigger, older and more experienced than they were. They outscored those teams 25-7. They beat them on offense, beat them on defense, rotated to help each other and pushed and shoved when they were pushed and shoved.

You talk about building teams and watching them grow? This level is where it starts. In just 8 weeks Weaver and Askew led a group of girls more excited about practicing under lights and having two sets of uniforms than they were about winning and losing and built them

into a soccer team that performs and cares about each other.

Congrats ladies. Emma, Jordan, Mykala, Sydnie, Alyssa, Kacie (Happy Birthday today), Kaitlyn, Adrianna and Madison, all of you, well done. You guys have converted me from a guy who wouldn't watch a soccer game if it was a World Cup match being played in my front yard to someone who can't wait for your next match.