



Saturday night was a much needed shot in the arm for the city of Cleveland. I don't have to remind anyone of the body blows the town has taken since baseball season began and basketball season ended. But for one night in Green Bay, WI the Browns, always the favorite son of Cleveland sports fans, restored some pride and offered some hope that at least one organization in Cleveland was headed in the right direction.

Waitin' on a Sunny Day

Without you I'm workin' with the rain fallin' down
Half a party in a one dog town
I need you to chase the blues away
Without you I'm a drummer girl that can't keep a beat
An ice cream truck on a deserted street
I hope that you're coming to stay

I'm waitin', waitin' on a sunny day
Gonna chase the clouds away
Waitin' on a sunny day

-Bruce Springsteen

Admit it Browns fans: you were pleasantly surprised and more than a little bit gratified by what you saw Saturday night from the Brown & White.

When the Browns took the opening kickoff and moved efficiently and effectively down the field for a touchdown on their opening drive you turned to whoever you were watching with and, wide-eyed and a bit stunned, said, "Wow".

I watched the game on DVR Sunday morning and am still a bit taken aback with what I saw.

Even with the necessary disclaimer that this was the first of four meaningless preseason games it was an impressive beginning for the Browns. And, truth be told, the way Jake Delhomme and his teammates came out and operated the offense, it may be far less meaningless than most preseason games we've watched.

Some thoughts as I watched the Browns get out a 14-0 lead after 10 minutes of play and eventually come back to win 27-24 on a Phil Dawson field goal as the clock ran out:

Offensively Speaking

The short passing game is clearly critical to the Browns success in 2010. If Jake Delhomme is given the time he had Saturday night and his weapons stay healthy this is going to be an offense that consistently puts up some points.

Delhomme is as comfortable as an old pair of jeans when making short throws and mixing in some runs to keep a defense honest. He makes his reads quickly and he can throw the football accurately in the short passing game.

He has a number of weapons at his disposal in that possession passing game too. Evan Moore, Brian Robiskie, Mo Massaquoi, Peyton Hillis, Jerome Harrison, Josh Cribbs, Ben Watson, etc., et al., are all proficient in finding space and making things happen with short throws. If Montario Hardesty is able to get healthy and get back on the field Delhomme adds another viable weapon who can run hard and fast and is also an able receiver out of the backfield.

The key is to avoid penalties and mistakes that result in Delhomme being put in 2nd and 12 or 3^r
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and 10 situations where the field shrinks, pressure is intensified and Delhomme is forced to make longer throws to the middle of the field. That's not to say the Browns won't take some shots down the field or in the center of the football field. They will. But the Browns will need to do so based on the element of surprise and when they get favorable matchups, not when they are forced to throw the football.

I mentioned in a previous 'Wrap' that I believe each and every position group on the football team has been improved heading in 2010. While we'll get to the defense in just a minute, there's nothing I saw offensively Saturday night that makes me think that initial though was incorrect.

Delhomme and Seneca Wallace are an improvement over Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn not only in experience but in awareness and command (and because they are simply not Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn). This stable of running backs isn't relying on an untested rookie like James Davis as the Browns were after one preseason game last season. Jerome Harrison showed his ability in the last five games of 2009, Lawrence Vickers continues to blow people up and gravitate toward the upper echelon of NFL fullbacks and Hillis is a multi-dimensional threat who can punish people at the line of scrimmage, hit a hole hard and quick or get himself into the second level of defenders in the passing game.

The offensive line is a year older and year more stable. Alex Mack is not walking into this season with his head spinning at center and Joe Thomas is simply amongst the top three left tackles in football. If the Browns can stop with the revolving door on the right side and Thomas and Eric Steinbach continue to anchor the left side this is a functional, effective unit. They'll be even better given Delhomme's command of the offense and his ability to make quick reads and decisions with the football that don't have the linemen trying to sustain blocks for longer than they can be expected to do so.

The receivers and tight ends are also better. For some like Robiskie and Massaquoi they, like Mack, are a year older and a year more comfortable with what's expected of them. Robiskie was targeted often Saturday night and he looks improved over the kid who was lost and relegated to the inactive list for most of last season. His TD reception on a great roll and throw from Wallace showed his instincts and his ability to separate and secure the football. Ben Watson is a guy I was thrilled to see wind up in a Browns uniform because of his physical gifts and his receiving ability from the tight end position. He can stretch and open the middle of the field. With Watson, Moore and Robert Royal the Browns have a three-headed TE monster that can be useful to a veteran QB, the passing game and, in the case of Royal, the running game.

The running backs are also a well-rounded group that blend some speed and elusiveness (Harrison) with size, strength and pass catching ability (Hardesty, Hillis, Vickers) to provide a group that can beat you down the field or at the line of scrimmage.

And that doesn't take into account the unique ways the team can utilize All-Everything Josh Cribbs.

I'm looking forward to watching the offense. They'll stumble and fall against certain teams and certain schemes but they are simply a better unit than they were a year ago and you saw the beginnings of that Saturday night.

Defensively Speaking

Meh.

I liked a lot of what I saw from TJ Ward and that includes the play he got beat on for a TD. Way too tough for a physical safety to be expected to man-up on a receiver and stay much closer than Ward did. I enjoyed watching a guy like Ward whose instincts are 'seek and destroy' as opposed to a guy who lays back and lets a play develop in front of him before making a tackle. There's a lot to like about Ward but the defense in general is a work in progress.

I still believe the DBs are better than last season with Joe Haden, Ward and Sheldon Brown. I

think the LBs are better with Scott Fujita and a full season of Matt Roth. The line will be better with Ahtyba Rubin playing a larger role and, let's not forget, Shaun Rogers and Eric Wright sat out the game and are key contributors.

Bottom line is the offense will need to score and hopefully the defense will get to the point where they can blitz for effect as opposed to out of necessity.

Still, put it all together and you have to be happy with the way the night in Green Bay went down.

Your Cleveland Cavaliers

Poor Byron Scott.

When he took the Cavaliers coaching job it was a promising opportunity to elevate a team on the cusp of a championship into a title winner.

A month or so later and Scott is knee deep in the muck and ashes of an implosion of epic proportions.

Scott is a guy who likes to play an up-tempo style of basketball, running whenever the opportunity presents itself and pushing the action. That was fine when you had one of the game's best closers who was supposed to be on the finishing end of all those run outs.

But when you look at the current Cavaliers roster you have to wonder who's going to be doing the pushing and who's going to be doing the finishing. The addition of Ramon Sessions muddies the water a bit. Is it Sessions who will be running the offense while Mo Williams settles on the perimeter and occasionally drives the lane? Or does Scott give Sessions the back-up PG minutes while Mo continues to be the floor general?

And how does an aging star like Antawn Jamison fit into an up-tempo style? He has a few miles on the tires and is likely more comfortable on the wing and occasionally offering one of his twisting scoop shots near the rim.

JJ Hickson may be a finisher but that designation is all relative with James taking his talents to South Beach. Hickson is athletic and has upside but he has nowhere near the repertoire James had near the rim and he doesn't (right now anyway) have even a respectable 15-foot game that causes anyone to worry about him outside of the lane. Let's also not forget to mention he's given no indication he'll effectively find teammates cutting to the rim when he's double-teamed. He's simply never had to be concerned with that part of the game up to now.

And JJ is surely going to find the road a lot more difficult given there's no inside presence to draw defenders and allow him easy runs at the rim. He's basically it down low from what you can see.

The longer you look at the Cavaliers the more warts you find. You can't help but shake your head when you look at the roster today compared to six weeks ago. I've mentioned in this space before that it's quite possible some guys will blossom and flourish outside of the wide shadow that James previously cast on the floor and in the organization. But damn, it's going to take a lot of blossoming and flourishing from a lot of guys to be respectable and push for a spot in the playoffs. And is 'a spot in the playoffs' what you really want to see given it can be a death knell to actually improving and picking up top shelf talent in the draft?

I don't know what kind of coach Scott will turn out to be. I do know that it's going to be awfully difficult to measure him as a head coach given what clubs he still has left in the bag. It's really hard to play a hole with no driver and no putter.

And about the only people I feel sorrier for than Scott are the fans who purchased season tickets to watch what's about to go down at The Q this season.

That Makes More Sense

I have to admit I was a bit puzzled when the Tribe took on the AL's best after the All Star break and basically held their own. But after watching the Indians struggle against Baltimore and Seattle, two of the game's worst two teams, it became clearer.

The Yankees, Rays, Red Sox and Tigers all pretty much played down to the Indians level after the break.

It wasn't the young Indians getting better so much as it was similar to 2007 and before when the Indians, as good as they were, would inexplicably leave Kansas City or Oakland, inferior teams to the Indians at the time, with a series loss.

Teams simply look past this version of the Tribe and that can get you beat. But when teams like the Orioles and Mariners, both playing for new managers, come in and jobs and pride are on the line, well, you get a couple bad teams playing hard against each other and talent typically wins out.

You could argue the Indians go into every series with a one or two man rotation and without a major league third baseman, second baseman, center fielder, catcher and left fielder.

It's really hard to win against anyone at the major league level with minor league players unless the opponent is looking past you and into the future.

My advice to you is to ignore the wins and losses and see who develops. See who takes the gift of playing time and actually makes something out of it. This is a key stretch for guys like Michael Brantley, Jason Donald, Lou Marson and others. Major league at bats and innings are a precious and invaluable commodity. The year is wasted in terms of competing but that doesn't mean it's not critical for competitive purposes in years to come.

You can learn a lot about a player when all there is to play for is pride and improvement.

Who'da Thunk It?

Cleveland fans love to hate Charles Barkley. He's never been overly kind in terms of his opinions on the Cavaliers or the city itself.

But how about this? (And thanks to the [Huffington Post](#) for the quote itself)

Charles Barkley has once again voiced his displeasure with LeBron James -- and this time the Hall of Famer is using even harsher language than before.

In July, Barkley said he was "[disturbed](#)" by LeBron's actions.

Yesterday, Barkley upped the ante while reacting to James's recent tweet, in which he claims to be keeping track of "[everyone taking shots at me this summer](#) ." While being interviewed on [E SPN Radio 103.3 FM in Dallas/Fort Worth](#) on Wednesday night, Barkley snapped.

"I want him to make sure that he puts my name on that (list)," Barkley said, in reference to James' tweet. "I thought that his little one-hour special was a punk move," the analyst added, [according to FanHouse](#)

Barkley continued, ranting about James's superstar teammates, Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh. Barkley discussed the trio's welcome ceremony in the Miami, calling their dancing during the reception "a punk move," too.

Barkley is not backing down.

"He knows where I'll be," Barkley said, seeming to be referencing to LeBron James. "I don't run. I'm on TV every week, I'm easy to find."

I've always been a fan of Sir Charles. Yes, he can be a cartoon character at times. But when it follows my line of thinking and it represents how I feel, well, I'm okay with it. Wink wink.

No word on whether James's new spiritual advisor, Rabbi Yishayahu Yosef Pinto, had counseled James on turning the other cheek or pursuing an 'eye for an eye' type of vengeance. Yeah, he [hired a spiritual advisor](#) .

Talk about cartoon characters. James has gone from global icon to global butt of jokes in less time than it took for Tiger Woods to arrange a threesome or four.

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