



It's a sad day in this town when I have to step to the plate as the voice of reason.

It's a sad day indeed. It's like a starting pitcher being called upon to pinch run in an extra inning game. You know the guy is *probably* physically capable of actually running the bases *but it just seems weird to see him in that role*

But I'm going to state my case as to why all the hand-wringing and anger over the Browns latest nut-punching loss is misplaced. Here I go:

The Browns started the year off with a lack of talented players and now, ten games into the season and with injuries mounting, well, they have even fewer talented players.

That's it really. There's nothing else other than that. Thanks for reading and good night.

The Browns simply and inarguably need better players at every single spot on the field save maybe long snapper, place kicker, punter and tight end. They're actually either average to above average at those spots. But at every single other place on both sides of the ball they need more talent.

The main culprit in Sunday's loss to Jacksonville was the offensive offensive line. And yeah, I know I typed 'offensive' twice. Microsoft Word can eat me with their red underlined words. The right side of the Browns offensive line is the second team line and the left side was uncharacteristically porous down in Florida.

Also consider that without all-everything Josh Cribbs that the receivers are very likely the worst

set of receivers to ever suit up under one Browns roster since I've been watching football. And that includes the expansion receivers. I'd take Kevin Johnson over any one of the Browns current receivers. Shit, I might take Kevin Johnson in whatever shape he's in today over Brian Robiskie.

What it all means is the depth on this team simply isn't very deep.

You can bemoan the predictable play calling of offensive coordinator Brian Daboll all day long. But tell me what types of creative plays you'd have dialed up when Jacksonville defenders were spending more time in the Browns backfield than Peyton Hillis did. What plays would you like to see called when the Browns receivers couldn't create space with a can of Crisco and a crow bar?

No. The Browns wasted a tremendous effort from their defense Sunday not because the scheme or game plan was lacking but because the talent was lacking. This team is a couple more productive off-seasons away from being potentially special. In fact, I'll go so far as to say they're a couple key draft picks and two or three free agent signings away from being a legitimate playoff threat next season.

But they need talent everywhere. And when 'talent' like Cribbs, Eric Wright (who would be fine as a nickel back or DB depth), Billy Yates, Scott Fujita, Tony Pashos and Mike Adams is either on IR, inactive or gets hurt early in the game, well, swimming upstream gets even more difficult.

I said before in this column that there will come a day (probably next season) when there are no such things as 'hopeful losses'. It's simply not going to come this year. You can be pissed off for a few hours after the game because of the frustrating nature of the losses. That's understandable and natural. But when you wake up and look at the big picture you'll see a team severely lacking in talent that is not anyone's homecoming game any more. A team that is entertaining, physical, undermanned, playing hard on every snap, lacking any semblance of a receiving threat and that is continuing to develop an identity each week. You'll note that the team in question also seems to have found their leader and QB for the future which makes this season worth however many of losses it would have taken to find that guy.

This was a wasted season coming in. No one in their right mind picked this Browns club to win more than six games. Six wins might very well be the ultimate win total. But damn if this isn't the best wasted season I can remember because of much of what's been mentioned above. Mike Holmgren and Tom Heckert deserve huge accolades for the forward motion they helped create with their first offseason of transactions. I have no reason to believe they won't continue to move forward in the years ahead.

And when they add some talent to the roster then you're going to have plenty more good Sundays than frustrating ones.

Spoiled Rotten?

Saturday's win in Iowa City gave the Ohio State Buckeyes their sixth straight season of 10 wins or more. That's an incredible accomplishment for a Big10 team yet I watched the game against the Hawkeyes and felt no pride. Instead I felt mostly frustration and then relief as Terrelle Pryor led OSU to a come from behind 20-17 win.

You'd think as a Cleveland sports fan that 10-1 would be cause for celebration for any of the teams you follow here. But the Buckeyes, fairly or not, play under a different set of lights for me.

Instead of basking in the glow of what is potentially an 11-1 season, another win over Michigan and a potential (however unlikely) BCS bowl bid, I can't get past the opportunity lost when the Buckeyes simply didn't show up at Camp Randall Stadium a few weeks back.

I also can't get past the fact that the freshman growing pains and sophomore development of Pryor seems to have stretched to a junior year of missed opportunities and something just lacking in his game that prevents me from standing up and jumping on his bandwagon like I did with Troy Smith a few years back.

Maybe it's Pryor's supporting cast that underwhelms me. There were more balls hitting the ground in Iowa City than in the red light district in Bangkok on Saturday. Maybe it's Pryor himself who seems to me to be following in the public relations footsteps of The Whore of Akron, LeBron James. Pryor, instead of enjoying the win over the 20th ranked Hawkeyes and looking forward to the Michigan game, apparently felt the need to defend himself from fans and critics when he tweeted (since removed from his Twitter account) that Kirk Herbstreit was a 'fake' Buckeye and that the haters couldn't fill his shoes with ten pair of socks on their feet.

That kind of crap just doesn't seem to me to be the hopeful sign of maturity that we need to see from Pryor. That's arrogant and unnecessary. And while Pryor has it all over a guy like Herbstreit athletically, in terms of signature wins and magic moments the gap isn't very wide between the two OSU QBs.

Make plays man. The 4th and 10 run with the game on the line s how you answer critics and build a legacy. Signature wins and beating scum this weekend are how you build a legacy. Winning a national championship is how you build a legacy. Being a spiteful little girl and whining about 'haters' is how you build animosity.

Play football and continue to elevate your game when you need to and everything will work out just fine. Cry about a commentator and stumble in Camp Randall and you're not worth mentioning in the same breath as Craig Krenzel.

You Were Expecting?

I'm hearing some grumblings about the Tribe's lack of involvement in the free agent sweepstakes that are going in Major League Baseball.

Yes, I'm hoping the Indians will throw their hat in the ring really soon for Cliff Lee and Carl Crawford too.

What are people looking for exactly? Do you realistically think the Indians, as currently built, are ready to throw themselves into the deep end of the pool and make a huge free agent splash? Did you not watch what I watched last season? Namely guys like Luis Valbuena, Andy Marte, Jayson Nix, Jason Donald, Lou Marson and the entire cast of characters butcher their way through a season of nearly 100 losses?

Would you prefer the Tribe go grab a crappy journeyman catcher like John Buck for three years and \$18million?

Come on.

The Indians spent nearly \$10million dollars a few months back to sign their June draft picks. That's as much or more than anyone else spent in the draft and the Tribe actually went over slot to sign a number of their selections.

That's where they need to spend their money and that's where they need to be right more often than they're wrong. If the Indians are going to return to form and be a contender in this financial environment they'll have to do it through the drafting and development of their own players.

Applaud them for their actions in getting these kids in the fold. Criticize the fact it took them way too long to take that course of action. Then close the paper and let this free agent year slide by. Because there's nothing good that will come of it for an Indian fan.

Once Upon a Time...

There was a guy drafted by the Cavaliers who was about 6'9" tall and freakishly athletic. He showed some promise as a young player after being drafted by the Cavaliers at about the 20th spot in the NBA draft.

He went from averaging just a handful of points in his first season to being a guy who scored 14 or 15 points per game a couple years down the road.

JJ Hickson?

Nope.

How about Roy Hinson. And the very best thing about Roy Hinson is that he was sent to Philadelphia with a couple other odd pieces and parts for the very first pick in the NBA draft that made Brad Daugherty a Cleveland Cavalier.

Daugherty was a mainstay in the middle for a decade in Cleveland until his back failed him and he was the center for a very talented Cavalier team that could never quite get past the Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls in the Eastern Conference.

Hinson went on to have a serviceable NBA career for Cleveland, Philadelphia and New Jersey but he was never an NBA star.

And right now, after watching JJ Hickson struggle for the last few weeks, I can't help but wonder if I'm watching Roy Hinson all over again. Hickson is freakishly athletic and tantalizingly effective on some nights. But I can't help but think he's ultimately just a tease.

And I also can't help but hope there's a Philadelphia-like deal out there for him at some point.

The 'Wrap' is on vacation next week when I travel down to southern Ohio to sit in the cold, wet Belmont County Woods. In true Browns fan fashion I will shoot only to wound any unsuspecting deer that happen upon me, scare them terribly and allow them to ultimately escape the woods

with their lives.

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