



"Nothing new".

That's what my 10 year old daughter said as we watched Cedric Benson run 39-yards untouched on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 3 late in Sunday's Browns-Bengals game.

I've decided to provide my kids cigarettes and booze instead of subjecting them to more Browns and Indians abuse. I honestly think Marlboros and Wild Turkey would be better for their long-term health.

Personally, I had one overriding thought as I watched that crap-tacular: Thank you God for the wrecked knee. Seriously. I appreciate the dislocated knee cap and the inability to walk from lot to stadium. Otherwise I would have had to spend more time and more money to watch that shit and I would have potentially been compelled to throw myself in front of an RTA train on the way back to the car after confronting how stupid I am.

Benson's run referenced above basically ended the ballgame and it ended a seemingly

unending array of Cleveland penalties and Bengals rushing yards in the opener for both teams but the Browns wasted no time showing their youth and their lack of discipline. They piled up seven penalties in the first quarter alone as they fell behind 13-0 in the first half. Some of the penalties were the garden variety and some were more exotic. An example of the latter was an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the Browns bench when someone on the sideline knocked over the line judge.

Yep, the entire team and coaching staff was running around out of control early on. For the day the Browns rang up 11 penalties for 72 yards.

The biggest lack of discipline occurred late though. The Bengals offense somehow got off a play with the Browns still in their defensive huddle and backup QB Bruce Gradkowski hit rookie AJ Green who was open by 20 yards for the go ahead score. That play ruined an otherwise other-worldly day for Browns CB Joe Haden who was all over the field.

The Browns showed some resolve in coming back with 17 straight points to seemingly take control of the football game. Colt McCoy looked good for much of the day and he hit Ben Watson and Evan Moore for TDs and also threw a beautiful 50-yard ball while on a dead run to his right to Mohamed Massaquoi.

But you could see the Browns either relaxing or softening in the second half and that was culminated with the Green TD catch. The Browns ultimately gave up 139 yards on the ground and nothing is going to actually change in Berea until they get better at stopping an opponent's running game.

It's truly disappointing to start the season the way the Browns did Sunday. You knew going in the defense was a work in progress but the cavalcade of penalties is disgusting and it backed a young and inexperienced offense into a corner the entire first half.

Yes, there were signs of life and growth, but this team is nowhere near good enough to beat even bad teams without a better effort than the one they put forth Sunday.

Oh, and if anyone in the front office is reading, start scanning the waiver wire immediately for someone to replace punter Richmond McGee. He's horrific. You've had five weeks to upgrade that position and there's no way in hell there aren't better punters out there than McGee. That's a great guy to get rid of and send the message to everyone else that there is a basic, minimum amount of production required everywhere. Pat Shurmur is reportedly a 'player's coach'. But that doesn't mean there can't be repercussions for shitty play and repeated mistakes.

### Quick Thoughts on the Browns-Bengals

- I thought Colt McCoy was average Sunday. He demonstrated better arm strength than he had last year when he was coming off a shoulder injury and he made two nice throws on the TDs as well as on the ball to Massaquoi.

He also missed Moore and Josh Cribbs on fades to the end zone when he didn't get enough height or depth on the throws. The Browns had to settle for a FG after the miss to Cribbs and that changed the complexion of the game. McCoy looked oddly unsettled at crucial points in the fourth quarter and he missed an open Massaquoi on a deep ball that was there. That might be a case of having guys in his face all afternoon. Maybe.

- I wondered for most of the first half where Moore was. He wasn't on the field for much of the half and/or he wasn't targeted. The guy is a catch up nightmare and needs to be a regular part of the passing game.

- Montario Hardesty appeared to have survived his first real game action and he looked good in limited use. Hardesty will evolve as a weapon as he proves his ability to stay healthy.

- D'Qwell Jackson was all over the field. Impressive return for Jackson.

- TJ Ward best not be living on his rookie year laurels. Jermaine Gresham owned Ward in the first half Sunday at times it seemed Ward was looking more to celebrate big hits than actually cover someone.

- Not much production in the passing game from Greg Little, Brian Robiskie and Cribbs.
- Hopefully Indianapolis is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome next week after getting waffle-stomped in Texas Sunday.

### **Almost as Bad**

Halfway through Saturday's Ohio State's 'win' over Toledo I was ready to turn off the television and go watch leaves fall off trees. That was a brutal and baffling effort from the Buckeyes, and while OSU honks will tell you, 'A win is a win' (all the while belittling Michigan's ridiculous win over Notre Dame in one of the best worst games I've ever seen) that game against Toledo did nothing but hurt the Buckeyes. It will likely set them back in the polls as they head to South Beach next weekend and it fully exposed Joe Bauserman as the limited quarterback many of us thought him to be.

My issue with Bauserman is he's not gifted in any area. The only 'advantage' he's got on Braxton Miller is about 8 years on earth. Bauserman's age, however, isn't any advantage on the field. He's not any more experienced or poised than Miller, he's far less athletic, he doesn't throw the football any better and his 'leadership skills' are negligible.

Time after time Saturday, Bauserman either missed wide open Buckeye receivers or simply didn't see them. And when he gets pressure, either in down and distance situations or from a defense itself, he's more inaccurate than usual and incapable of making a play with his legs to bail out his offense.

In short, he's not good. At some point this season the Buckeyes are going to need someone to make a play from the quarterback position and Bauserman hasn't given us any reason to believe he's capable of getting that done. Buckeye head coach Luke Fickell panicked yesterday as well. By not going to Miller he showed his hand. Fickell is clearly aware he's coaching this season for his job at Ohio State and he's put development and the future aside for a nominally better chance to win today (if it actually is a better chance).

That 'effort' against a game Toledo team was embarrassing. Bauserman's effort was embarrassing. Fickell's lack of imagination and courage was embarrassing.

Cling to that 'A win is a win' thing from Saturday. It's truly all Buckeye fans have got. And barely so at that.

### **Another Buckeye Thought**

Prior to the abomination against Toledo yesterday I was amused by Buckeye fans defending the three Buckeyes who were suspended again for yesterday's game for accepting gifts at a charity event. Jordan Hall, Travis Howard and Corey Brown were unavailable for the game against Toledo and might be sitting even longer given that they apparently took cash money from charity event organizers and they apparently can't get their stories straight as to who gave them the cash and why.

I contest these three are stone-cold stupid for doing what they did. The Buckeye faithful tell me these are good kids who didn't know what they were doing was wrong.

Bull shit. Those three idiots just got done watching the NCAA and the media crucify their program for 6 months over goddamn tattoos. They just got done watching their ex-coach be publicly and deeply humiliated and yet they failed to ask permission to attend this event and they failed to advise they received compensation for being there.

That's selfish and ignorant. And stupid.

Don't tell me about what solid kids and teammates those guys are. Good teammates are actually on the field next to you when you line up to knock heads. If they aren't then they're hurt. Good teammates aren't sitting out multiple games because they're ignorant and selfish. That's the antithesis of a good teammate.

What's even more disgusting to me is the continued embarrassment that the Columbus media continues to suffer. Whether it's all the fan bois publications and insider sites or whether it's actually the mainstream Columbus media, they're taking incompetence and lack of objectivity to a higher level.

I heard for weeks how the Buckeye players were suspended for simply attending a breast cancer fund raiser and taking a gift bag filled with trinkets and small items.

They took cash money. The breast cancer gift bag bullshit was either horrific investigative reporting or it was an immediate or vile attempt to minimize what those kids had done and paint it in the most sympathetic light. There's no more heartbreaking or emotional issue than breast cancer for many people, especially in areas of Columbus where the memory of Stephanie Spielman's losing battle with the disease is still fresh in the minds of Buckeye fans.

I'd hate to think that those who write about Buckeye football would stoop to use the disease and the charity event as a way to curry some sympathy for the suspended kids. But it wouldn't shock me anymore. Not when you see just how far people are willing to go to compromise their integrity and values in order to ensure their football program is healthy and seen in a positive light.

College football has cancer. That's the conclusion I've reached.

Spare me the stories and the horseshit about a corrupt system gobbling up underprivileged athletes and reaping a financial windfall on the backs of those kids.

It's all true.

But those kids that were suspended for taking money made a stupid decision. The two positions aren't mutually exclusive. Those guys didn't 'volunteer' for shit. They were paid. They took the money. They took it before their former coach's body was cold and before the NCAA even ruled

on the school's previous transgressions.

That's the embodiment of stupidity.

You just can't say it to the defenders of the program. Because that's when they break out the shit about how these are just kids and how it must be nice to have never made a mistake yourself. Too late. I have been stupid before. I probably will do something stupid again. Maybe as soon as today. But with the Buckeye fans you can't say anything. Unless you call out the kids who go to an SEC school. Then you can say what you want given the SEC recruits morally bankrupt criminals while Ohio State kids are pure as the driven snow. They're just persecuted by NCAA and subjects of a media-driven witch hunt.

Those folks inside the beltway need to shake themselves once again. No one's picking on you or the kids in the program. It's just your time under the microscope.

Own it. They were stupid. I was stupid as a kid on occasion too. Difference being there were plenty of people willing to tell me that instead of cushioning me from it or denying it.

### **Case in Point**

The last three weeks of the Indians season will be familiar to anyone who's watched the 'Resident Evil' chain of movies. The Tribe is un-dead. They are no longer alive but they can't be buried or rest for another few weeks.

Last week the Tigers unleashed the T-Virus on the Indians and now the Zombie Tribe walks the schedule and plays out the string.

A month or two back in this column it was stressed what an uphill battle the Indians faced. Fans were calling for Cord Phelps, Lonnie Chisenhall and eventually Jason Kipnis to pump some life into the Tribe due to the myriad of injuries the team had sustained and the lack of production the

Indians were getting from some vets who were healthy enough to play. The play of those three kids is exactly the reason it was put forth that contending and developing the next generation in mass is so difficult.

You can basically summarize that point by characterizing and generalizing the performance of those young players:

Phelps was simply overwhelmed by his major league experience. He was overmatched at the plate and he carried that into the infield where at times he looked unprepared and incapable there.

Chisenhall was lost. His experience was symbolic of what a lot of successful major leaguers initially go through when they are first called up. He never looked as shaky or as overwhelmed as Phelps but he struggled at the dish against major league breaking pitches. He showed power and promise and the ability to turn around any major league fastball. But for the most part he contributed negligibly while the Indians were in the race and that's because there's enough pressure in just trying to figure out the game at this speed. That pressure is amplified when games and division leads are on the line.

Jason Kipnis looked like he belonged on a major league field and in a major league lineup from the time he arrived in Cleveland. He played a decent second base and he jump started an offense that was in dire need of jumpstarting until he suffered an oblique injury. If you look at the Indians and their status in the AL Central you can make a strong argument that the Kipnis injury and absence from the lineup was the beginning of the actual end of contention. Kipnis, despite his youth and inexperience, drove the Indians with his play and with his passion for the game. His excitement and energy was contagious whether it came via a big hit, a big play or his aggression on the base paths.

In a nutshell, you got what you can likely expect when you call up and insert inexperienced into the lineup. The majority of time those kids are going to face challenges and difficulties that are not conducive to contending while the players adapt to life in the big leagues. Occasionally, as in the Kipnis case, you catch lightning in a bottle and may well witness the birth of a career that shows a great deal of promise.

The remainder of the year is important to the Indians. Not so much in terms of wins and losses, but the Indians now have the opportunity to get guys like Kipnis, Phelps, Chisenhall, Jason Donald, Zeke Carrera and others at bats and playing time that could pay big dividends in terms of the 2012 season. And those young players can relax without the specter of every game being critical in terms of the standings. The remaining 60-75 at bats are a time for them to work on their game and establish a foundation for next year that will benefit them and the club going forward.

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