



I should have just watched the Cleveland State game Sunday afternoon.

I should have saved myself the shame, embarrassment and disgust that is Cleveland Browns football and instead watched a team committed to a purpose go on the road and beat Vanderbilt, the 7th rated team in the country.

But I didn't.

Instead I watched an overmatched coach crap himself in the late stages of a winnable game. Trailing by a point and with a 1st and goal from the St. Louis 8-yard line, Pat Shurmur choked on inexperience, lack of testosterone and stupidity and it cost his team and Browns fans what would have been another butt-ugly win.

You want the sequence?

1st down run to Chris Ogbannaya that lost a yard.

2nd down handoff to TE Alex Smith that resulted in a fumble the Browns recovered.

3rd down run to Ogbannaya that gained four yards.

4th down FG attempt that missed wide left after a botched snap.

Read it again. Not a single attempt to get the ball into the end zone. Instead Shurmur actually decided that 2nd and 9 was a perfect time to give TE Alex Smith the first carry of his NFL career. He decided that two carries (with more than 3 minutes left in the game) for Ogbannaya, who wasn't even on an NFL roster two weeks and who couldn't beat me to a hole, was the best way to go. Shurmur never even considered trying to get the ball into the end zone despite the amount of time left and despite the fact that St. Louis would have needed only a field goal to re-take the lead and win the game.

He handed the freaking ball off to a TE for God's sake! He decided not to go to Greg Little, Ben Watson or Evan Moore against a depleted and banged up Rams secondary in order to hand the football to a TE.

And then after the game was lost he had the same deer-in-the-headlights, shell-shocked look that he wears like damn socks every time you see him on camera.

That's two straight home games without a touchdown for this west coast offense genius who was gift wrapped and given his first NFL coaching job. I defended the hire back when it was announced too. I defended Mike Holmgren's selection under the auspices that Holmgren knew what he was doing, handpicked a guy that would emulate Holmgren's version of the west coast offense and that would bring an innovative approach that utilized the strengths of the personnel in place while upgrades were made through the draft.

I was wrong. I apologize to those I chastised for immediately hating the hire and who saw it for what it's turned out to be. And it's turned out to be a huge mistake.

You know who else was wrong? Mike Holmgren. He put his faith and our future into a gutless play caller who lacks the bona fides to lead anything or anyone, beyond maybe a barbershop quartet.

Our playcalling genius who's benefitted from nepotism more than a Kennedy handed the ball off to a damn TE!!!.

That may very well go down as the defining moment of the season, if not as the defining moment of Pat Shurmur's career as a head coach.

Additional Thoughts on Sunday's Abomination

- Don't blame Phil Dawson for the miss late in the game. Alex Mack's leg actually got in the way of Ryan Pontbriand's snap. Brad Maynard got the ball down but the laces were facing Dawson and his timing was shot to hell. The Browns have had kick protection problems for much of the season and Mack may have been trying to shut down the A-gap a bit too quickly. Regardless, the team shouldn't have been in that position.

- Likewise, I'm not going to come down too hard on Josh Cribbs, whose fumbled punt led to the Rams decisive points in the 4th quarter. Cribbs has fumbled twice now in 101 games and actually had the ball tucked away fairly securely. That was just a great play by the Rams special teams to dislodge the ball.

- Great route, read and throw on McCoy's long, 52-yard connection to Greg Little. Funny how much better McCoy's arm looks with some protection and an open receiver.

- O' Christmas Ale, O' Christmas Ale, your glory does redeem us. O' Christmas Ale, O' Christmas Ale, even when our teams they ream us. You're always there no matter when, even if coach hands to the tight end. O' Christmas Ale, O' Christmas Ale, you're our one, true civic pride.

- Actually, although I love Great Lakes Brewing Company's Christmas Ale, Thirsty Dog's "12 Dogs of Christmas" and Troeg's "Mad Elf" are better. There, I said it. And not just because I'm in a shitty, foul mood. They're both just better.

- Don't delude yourself, Rams fans. Your team is woeful. And just for good measure, I see almost no difference between Sam Bradford and Colt McCoy as it stands right now. Sure, Bradford is a bigger, stronger QB and has more potential. But try paying the rent with potential. In the offenses these teams use there is no difference between these eunuch QBs. And if that's the way it's going to be I'd rather have spent a mid-3rd round pick than the first pick in the draft.

- Yes, I loved the pass from McCoy to Seneca Wallace off the reverse action. Great design and call. But I swear with God as my witness, if I see another 3rd and 2 or 4th and 2 give to Owen Marecic I will hunt down Pat Shurmur and put a boot in his ass.

- Incidentally, Marecic should thank Tom Heckert every damn pay day for Heckert wasting a 4th round pick on him. Not only was Lawrence Vickers a better player at a reasonable price, but so too was Tyler Clutts who's now doing everything we'd hoped Marecic would do plus more with the Chicago Bears. Clutts outplayed Marecic during the preseason and didn't get the roster spot because Heckert had to justify his draft slot.

- And you know what, while we're at it, I'm starting to think the exalted status we've laid on Heckert by virtue of his first couple drafts may be too much. We talk about all the starters he's drafted but come on, he inherited a roster and team where it wasn't hard to find a spot that couldn't be upgraded. It's all relative and while I love Joe Haden, Phil Taylor and Greg Little, what Heckert pick, other than Haden, is elite or has the chance to be?

Mea Culpa

While I'm in an apologetic mood, Saturday was my fault Buckeye fans. Saturday, 20 minutes before Ohio State and Purdue kicked off, I was stupid enough to ask Twitter followers and Buckeye fans whether a potential six game, season-ending win streak, with a bowl bid, would entitle Luke Fickell to another year on the sidelines as Buckeyes Head Coach.

Clearly I forgot how painful it was to watch this team play and clearly I got caught smelling the deodorizing scent of a few wins that covered up the underlying stench of the offense and offensive play calling.

But heading into that game I thought it was a distinct possibility that the Buckeyes would beat Purdue, an emotionally shot and fractured Penn State team as well as a Michigan team that Ohio State has either owned or had on long term lease for years. That would have been an impressive feat considering the situation Fickell inherited and the fact that he's facing it with a true freshman QB in Braxton Miller.

Of course, now I just feel stupid for even considering it.

Anyway, it was nice to be able to prepare for the Browns game Sunday by watching the Buckeyes offense Saturday. Blind dates are less awkward than the play calling employed by Jim Bollman. I suppose I could Google Bollman and see what he looks like and review his resume, but I just don't feel like wasting the time on a guy who's as finished as any remaining Penn State coach.

I understand the damn 'Dave' play is OSU's bread and butter and that they've been running it and with it since Christ was a corporal. My issue is with how they've used Miller. It's simply unacceptable that he's not been utilized more on bootlegs and half rolls that reduce the number of things he needs to consider. Shrink the field to one side and give the kid a short and a deep read and if neither is there then he tucks and runs.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE SAID THIS!?!?!?

Instead Miller looks lost and overwhelmed and, often times, paralyzed when he drops to pass. He's holding the ball way too long.

Stop me if this sounds familiar: he's a QB without much experience behind a mediocre offensive line and without much talent at the wide receiver position. See why Saturdays prepare me so well for Sundays?

Meh... all is well with a win in two weeks. Stomping on Penn State's broken heart this coming

Saturday in Columbus would be great too, but save the season in two weeks with a win in Ann Arbor.

By the Way

The Weekend Wrap is Penn State scandal-free since 11/6/2011. I got out in front of the explosion of allegations last Sunday and what I said stands this week as well. If you haven't read the four columns on the front page from multiple TCF writers then you owe it to yourself to do so.

I do have a question I'd love to hear back on via twitter or email or STO's facebook page: Is the Penn State situation **terminally** toxic? What I mean by that is with all that's gone on, and is going to go on there for the next couple years, does a big time coach stay away from that job as though it was Chernobyl? I'm just wondering if Urban Meyer wants anything to do with either Big10 school that's got big problems right now.

By the Way II

No end in sight to the NBA lockout. At the risk of alienating the two people that give a shit, it's high comedy to follow this 'negotiation' in the media and via social media sites. I can't help it. The optimal situation for me as a Cavs fan is for the season to be saved at the last second so that some minimum number of games could be played that wouldn't be a farce in terms of establishing playoff teams. Why? Because the Cavs will blow, miss the playoffs and probably be near the very bottom in terms of overall standings. That means better draft position.

If the NBA completely wipes out the season then they might consider establishing draft order like the NHL did a few years back when they lost an entire season to labor strife. The NHL used the previous *three* seasons as the basis for that next NHL draft after their strike.

See the big problem with that Cavs fans? It means LeBron would screw you again because the Cavs have blown only for a year. They had the best regular season record in the NBA the two seasons before last.

The Cavs are better off playing this season in terms of the long term health of the franchise. But I'm having so much fun watching no one play and listening to the laughable rhetoric from both sides that I'd like to have my cake and eat it too. For just a little while longer and to see what happens when a couple more checks don't come to some guys who probably need them.

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