Meet the new Boss. Same as the old Boss.

Yes, I realize it's hardly fair to saddle Jimmy Haslam (and Joe Banner) with this loss. They've been in power for a week. That's not their Coach and those players were not chosen by their GM. They can hardly be held responsible for what transpired on the field.

And it was fun to see an Owner care enough to spaz out in the box like I do when I watch the games (Note to Jimmy - throw more stuff. It helps.)

But that warm fuzzy feeling that many of you apparently had after the Cincy win and the ownership change is gone, and Jimmy Haslam is suddenly no different than Randy Lerner until the results are different.

Another new regime? Hard to muster up excitement for that anymore. This is Regime #6 since 1999. I know as well as you that this Regime is not responsible for the mistakes of their predecessors, but that won't keep me from being skeptical until I have reason to be otherwise.

So until that occurs... SSDD.

I'll not bother recapping the game this week since it wasn't really interesting enough to warrant

it. Josh Gordon dropped a sure TD that may or may not have won the game. No two phases of the team can seemingly be "on" at the same time. The Walking Dead coaching staff continues to flail and the team continues to do just enough to lose each week.

On one hand, you want to see the progression of the young team, you want to see them learn how to win.

On the other, you don't want them to win enough that Haslam & Banner are fooled into keeping Shurmur & Co, and there's no reason to go blowing your draft position when there are some desperately needed Pass Rushers to be had.

Now, I can hear your argument - Jimmy's way too smart to be keeping the Shurminator. But last week - after Shurmur won his first game in the last 12 tries - suddenly every talk show was teeming with callers feeling like Paddy probably deserved one more year.

I would hope that Banner & Haslam (Banslam) are too smart for that kind of wishy-washiness. But I don't know that. I never dreamed that Mike Holmgren would've been as big a disaster as he was either. I am wary.

Right off the bat, there are 4 decisions that Banslam could make to instantly transform my caution to disdain:

1. **Not Fire Shurmur** - I have nothing against Paddy, he seems like a good guy, snappy dresser. But a high percentage of NFL games are won or lost by a play here or a decision there, and Shurmy always seems to make the wrong one. I would also argue that he is antiquated in his offensive schemes and the furthest thing from innovative that you can imagine. This could be subject to change should he roll off a 6-3 record in the last 9, but even in the win last week I felt that Pat was a weak link.

2. **Fire Shurmur and Hire Jon Gruden/Bill Cowher/Insert Has-Been** - If Cowher or Gruden had been out of football for just one or two years, then this might be different. But if you're out of it as long as these guys have been, you're obviously not overly interested in getting back in.

Not to mention that they'd probably have to do a lot of catch up on "modern" game planning. I'm not sure why it's always these 2 thrown out there - probably because they have "Cleveland connections" or some crap. Why not Mike Ditka? Joe Gibbs? Jimmy Johnson? Plenty of has-beens that they can overpay to come in and amplify the volume of this hot mess.

Just because you've heard their name before does not make them a good option.

3. **Allow Themselves Too Much Input In Personnel Decisions** - If you don't want to retain Tom Heckert, that's fine. I'm on the fence about him, so I wouldn't squawk either way. But whether you retain Heckert or hire your own guy, personnel decisions are HIS job. You hired him to do that job - trust him to do it.

4. **Draft a QB In The First Round of The Draft** - This is not to say that Brandon Weeden is The Answer. That is still up in the air. But he's shown enough to want to see more, and there's no Luck or RG3 in the 2013 Draft anyway. Geno Smith... Matt Barkley... yuck. This team has too many other pressing needs to go restarting with a marginal QB prospect just because he's 23.

This approach may seem overly pessimistic/protectionist, but fool me once, shame on you; fool me 6 times...

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Stats

Time of Possession: IND - 35:21, CLE - 24:39

Total Yards: IND - 321, CLE - 319

Net Yards Passing: CLE - 264, IND - 173

Net Yards Rushing: IND - 148, CLE - 55

First Downs: IND - 21, CLE - 19

Turnovers Forced: CLE – 1, IND - 0

Sacks: CLE - 2, IND - 2

Final Score: Indianapolis 17, Cleveland 13

One stat jumps out at you like a diseased cheetah.

Can you guess what it is?

55 yards rushing. Against one of the worst Run Defenses in the league. Who gave up 252 yard rushing to the Jets, 161 to previously useless Shonn Greene. 55 yards. Fifty-freakin'-five. Cincuenta y cinco.

The humanity.

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Game Balls

Brandon Weeden – What would the stats have been had Josh Gordon caught that ball? Let's even go so far as to say that he doesn't throw another pass after that (which is unlikely): 23 of 35, 271 yards, 3 TD's. That's a 66% completion percentage and a 117.68 QB rating.

Greg Little – 6 catches, 52 yards, a TD, and NO DROPS. Not really "Game Ball" worthy, but we want to encourage our wayward children.

Pass Protection – No sacks again.

Honorable Mention

Bruce Arians – Aggressive play calling, the way you should if you have nothing to lose (and his team is 2-3 and he's only interim).

Josh Gordon – 4 (should've been 5) TD's in 3 weeks ain't too shabby.

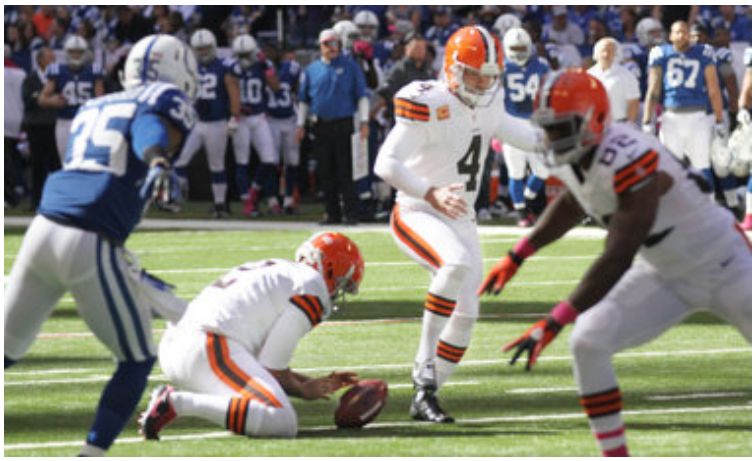
Sheldon Brown – That sack/forced fumble really kept the team in the game.

Hall of Shame

Sheldon Brown – Can't whiff on that tackle.

Josh Gordon – Can't drop that pass.

Billy Winn – Dude. You CANNOT jump offsides on 4th Down when the opponent has quite obviously NO intention of going for it. Fail.



Kick Return Unit – Too many penalties.

Ray Ventrone – A couple on you.

Reggie Hodges –Flubbed the hold on an extra point, but then made up for it by punting like shit.

Trent Richardson – It's hardly fair to give this to a guy who's injured, but if your injury is so limiting that THAT is the performance you give, you need to take yourself out of the game. Don't be a hero.

Run Defense – C'mon, people. You almost gave up a bill to Vick freakin' Ballard.

Pass Rush – This is where their Top 10 pick needs to spent.

Pass Interference Call on Cribbs – Terrible. Could've cost them a TD.

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Just Shoot Yourself

Owned Marecic – It just feels right.

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Regarding The Shurminator

Today, everyone's favorite anti-Shurmur bitch is his belated decision not to go for it on 4th and 1 on the Indy 41 with 6:30 left and down 4.

I have to agree that I was not thrilled by that call. You don't hurl one deep on 3rd and 1 (a rare GOOD call by Paddy) just to punt on 4th Down, especially when you had every intention of going for it before the clock forced a Time Out.

But I don't think it was completely moronic. There was a lot of time left, and the theory is to pin the Colts against the Goal Line. Just because Hodges was incapable of doing that doesn't mean that the theory made no sense. I'm sure there are a lot of (albeit conservative) coaches that would've done the same thing.

Same with not going for 2 to tie after the 2nd TD. At that point, there was 12 minutes left in the 3rd Quarter. Lots of Coaches would've gone for it, but lots wouldn't. The only reason that Shurmur is getting crucified for it is... well... he lost, he's Shurmur and people want an excuse to crucify him, and it was a cowardly/conservative decision.

To me, the more egregious errors were the play calling/clock management during the drive at the end of the 1st Half and the abortion of the Run Game.

Play calls with 1:42 left in the 2nd Q starting on their own 11: Run Hardesty for 7 yards. Ah, trying to run the clock out. 1:14 left, 1st down pass to Jordan Cameron, 4 yards. Then a 9 yard pass to Ben Watson. 2nd and 1 on their 31 with 1 minute left. Incompletion, then run for 4 yards by Chris Ogbannaya, 1st Down on their 35 with 40 seconds left.

You've blown over a minute going 24 yards, running the ball twice in the process. You're obviously trying to run out the clock. So NOW you decide to start chucking it around?

Apparently so. Throw (incomplete). Throw (incomplete). OK, I guess we're back to running out the clock. Run for 6 yards, kneel down on 4th and 4 instead of trying a 59 yard Hail Mary.

Oh wait, penalty on Indy. Now we're only 55 yards away. That changes EVERYTHING. NOW we try the Hail Mary (which doesn't work).

My problem with this drive is that it is obvious that Shurmur has no idea what he wants to do. Does he want to kill the clock and go into Halftime? Or does he want to be aggressive?

Or does he have no clue and bets like a guy with pocket 5's. I call. No wait, I fold. Oh, it's not my turn? OK, then I raise. OK, now I fold. Whoa, bet out of turn again, my bad. In that case, I'm all in. No wait, I call. Fold.

But that's standard Shurmur indecision. Abnormal Shurmur indecision would be the handling of the RB's.

It took all of one play for me to realize that Richardson should not be playing. On the Browns' first play from scrimmage, Weeden tossed a screen to Trent that went for 9 yards and resulted in a Colts defender nailing him from behind. He got up almost like he was in shock, like he had spasms in his lower back and was trying to move deliberately so as not to set them off.

After that, he was fairly useless. Indecisive, hesitant, slow... a shell of the RB we saw earlier in the season. By his third carry, I was telling the TV screen "*Get him outta there*."

"*Shut him down. Don't put him back on the field until he's 100%. There's nothing to play for this season. Don't F up our #3 overall pick for some garbage wins* ."

Anyway, after Trent rushed for 8 yards in 8 carries, Shurmur seemed to give up on the run. He finally got Montario Hardesty into the game on the aforementioned end-of-Half 2 minute drill, but only ran him 7 times (even though it was 4 yards per carry). They rushed the ball only 17 times all game - half of which were by an injured RB in the 1st Quarter, and only 6 times in the entire 2nd Half - compared to 41 throws.

When you're a year and a half in as Head Coach, you can't be making these mistakes any longer. If the team were uber-talented, then maybe you could overcome your piss-poor decisions, but as it is you're getting out-coached by interim guys with less talented rosters.

Regarding Reggie the Hodges

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Hodges was again poor. But you have to like the solid logic he employed to explain his punt on the infamous 4th and 1, as told to Tony Grossi of ESPN Cleveland :

“They wanted the ball kicked out of bounds,” said Hodges.

Understood, but didn’t they want it deeper?

“The call was to get it out of bounds,” Hodges repeated.

This was probably some kind of petulant response to Paddy's post game statement:

"*We needed to get a better punt there. I think we punted the ball out of bounds at the 20*."

Oooooo, Death Match Berea: Zombie Coach versus Zombie Punter.

Regarding Coaching Vacancies

I've pretty much assumed that the Browns would be looking for a new Head Coach during the offseason, and I'm sure we'll have plenty of time to get into whom they might tap to fill that role. Today, let's look at other teams that potentially will be looking for new management - and what kind of competition they present for hot suitors.

Certains: Kansas City, and... uh... that's it.

Maybes: San Diego (Norv's time may finally be up), Carolina (disasterous season so far), Philly (unless they turn it around in a hurry), and Dallas (JJ isn't a patient man).

Unlikely But You Never Know: Cincy (Mike Brown hates to fire Coaches with contract years left), Jets (if they completely bomb), and Buffalo (same).

Sticking with the Certains and Maybes, that's 5 teams. Philly and Dallas are sure to be more attractive, although the Cowboys won't go after any hot candidates since Jerry won't hire a guy he can't control. Carolina too, since Cam Newton is sure to be enticing to many of the prospective hires. Possibly the Chargers as well, although Rivers is on the downside of his career at this point.

Which means out of 6 possible job openings, the Browns job would likely be the 5th choice, even with some decent young talent and what looks like a competent QB.

Good thing Jimmy's a billionaire.

Regarding Whatever

***Jimmy Haslam, might I suggest you put up a curtain or a tall cardboard partition in the corner of your suite, so when you feel the need to flail your arms or kick a chair or dog-cuss a waiter, you step behind your blind so the cameras can't catch you.

***Per Shurmur after the game: "*I told the players what's most important is we get back on the stick* ."

Back? They've BEEN on the stick. Hell, we've ALL been on the stick since 1999. Hot damn, we'd love to remove that thing.

***Frostee Rucker after the game regarding the Colts running the ball so much: "They kept us off-balance. They caught us off-guard."

They RAN THE BALL. It's not like they ran double-reverses or Statue of Liberty plays or the Inverse Wildcat. They handed the ball to a RB and he ran it. How is it that you didn't see that coming?

And how is it that it took you an entire Half to adjust to that? I was begging you to start blitzing by the third play of their second drive.

***Here's a nice feel-good piece about Joe Banner and how much he likes kids.

I don't want to seem like an ass here (on the other hand, I probably do), but I don't give a good goddam if he's a secret sweetheart or not. I don't work with him. I don't socialize with him. Our kids don't go to school together. We don't share a dentist. I don't want/need to know these people as people. Win and we'll think you're swell. Don't, and even Mother Theresa gets the Bronx Cheer. That's what happens when you have the job that you have and get paid the money that you get paid.

***With Weeden's 13 yard scramble for a 1st Down on 3rd and long - running past 2 defenders easily - I think we can put to bed the notion that he is so immobile that his feet might as well be made of ununoctium (the heaviest element, in case you were wondering). Dude ran a 4.89 forty, which is hardly blistering, but hardly blundering.

He's no less immobile than several of the best QB's in the league, who, coincidentally, are also several years older.

***Speaking of Weeden, my fantasy team is 5-2 and in first place in a 12 team league. My starting QB? Brandon Weeden.

Stafford is on my bench.

***The TD pass to Gordon may have been the sweetest throw I've seen a Cleveland QB make since honeys were wearin' Sassoons (credits to Tupac).

***Weeden still looks awkward when throwing outs to the right sideline.

***Tony Rizzo seems like a good guy and I like his energy, but, man... all too often I'm not sure he knows what he's talking about.

***The commercials for *Assassin's Creed 3* - apparently featuring a Native American fighting for the revolutionaries against the British - cracks me up.

Because Native Americans clearly were incredibly eager to help out the European Americans that were snatching up their land. But I'm sure there's some super-plausible reason for it.

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Next Up

San Diego Chargers (3-3).

The Chargers are nothing special. Norv Turner is meh. Phillip Rivers is getting there.

They're middle of the pack on Defense, bottom third on Offense.

But still ahead of the Browns in both categories.

San Diego is not a formidable opponent by any stretch, and it doesn't take a warped imagination to envision Cleveland winning. But it's always safe to bet the L on our poor team, and that's what I'll do.

Chargers 27, Browns 20.