Josh Cribbs is one of those athletes that it's both easy to like and dislike at exactly the same moment. The liking part stems from the passion and work ethic he's brought to a Cleveland Browns franchise that lacked both, from the management ranks on down. The disliking part comes from the near constant disingenuous way he goes about making sure everyone knows how much passion and worth ethic he's brought to a Cleveland Browns franchise that lacked both.

Cribbs has always been viewed as a local kid though he didn't grow up in Cleveland. He played quarterback at Kent State when they sucked (which until last season was always) and while his pure athleticism revealed him to be a unique player, he carried himself away from the field as a highly entitled big fish in a small pond and had got himself involved in some off field issues (marijuana) that caused many to question his character.

To his credit, Cribbs turned it around. He made it to the NFL through the back door as one of the many undrafted free agents that teams sign in order to meet their salary cap obligations. That he was signed by the Browns was a reflection of the simple fact that a quarterback at Kent State is never going to be on any team's radar except the local one.

Cribbs has been as good of an addition to the Browns, in terms of overall contributions, as nearly any one whom the various iterations of the front office have brought in, via the draft or otherwise. The list is incredibly short as to the number of Browns who have added more value for as long a period of time as Cribbs in the last 10 years. Once you get past Joe Thomas and Phil Dawson, it's pretty tough to figure out who slips in ahead of Cribbs.

That's the good Cribbs.

The bad Cribbs is the one who lacks self awareness, the one who bitches and moans constantly, the Cribbs who was on display this week caught, apparently, lying to the public about the state of negotiations now that he's a free agent.

Cribbs has been taking his act to the local media to try and drum up grassroots support for re-signing with the team that's likely to value him the most. Nothing wrong with that. But where it gets sticky is when he said that his agents are in talks with several other teams and numbers have been exchanged. It simply wasn't true.

In an incredibly rare rebuke, Cribbs' agents took to the media immediately to deny the claims their principal made, namely that they are talking with other teams. If they were they'd be in violation of the NFL's collective bargaining agreement, a breach that would place Cribbs, the agents, and those unnamed teams in various levels of hot water.

For example, Cribbs could be prevented from signing with a team that negotiated with him before the league's March 12 signing date. His agents could be decertified by the union and thus lose, basically, their business. The teams involved most assuredly would be severely fined and perhaps lose draft picks. In short, the penalties for engaging in early discussions with free agents are so severe that there's no question who's telling the truth here and who is not.

That's the problem with Cribbs. He can't stand the truth. I suspect he'll garner moderate interest on the free agent market but there isn't any team that's going to step up and overpay for his limited services. And let's be clear about that. The type of service he can provide is limited, even if he doesn't think he is.

Probably no other player in the league saw his value decrease as much as Cribbs' when the NFL moved the line of scrimmage for kick offs forward, resulting in fewer return possibilities. Cribbs noticed and bitched about it. He also did more than that. With free agency pending, Cribbs took it on himself to repeatedly field balls deep in the end zone only to find himself repeatedly getting tackled at the 15 yard line. There were times, certainly, when he sparked the team with a good return, but mostly he struggled just to get to the 20 yard line because he was ceding 7 or 8 yards from the outset by fielding the ball so deep and then attempting to run it out.

It was selfish.

Cribbs is still very serviceable on the defensive side of a kick return unit but so are plenty of other younger, cheaper players. His value as a pure punt returner isn't especially high, either. On offense, he brings very little to the table. He's at best a 3rd or 4th receiver, lacking both the blazing speed and the route running ability that a truly professional receiver has. He's nice to have around when you want to throw a gimmick at the defense but no offense can survive on that kind of diet. That's just the reality of the situation.

It's a net positive to the Browns if they re-sign him, but that's mostly for visibility and continuity. They shouldn't break the bank for him. Indeed, they shouldn't even make a dent. Cribbs is on the back end of a very decent NFL career and no matter how ham-handedly he tries to manipulate the facts and the media, the Browns still represent the best opportunity for Cribbs.

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In a related story there was a brief item in one of the local papers that this new Browns regime is embracing a deeper level of analytics. That's nice. It only puts them about 10 years behind the New England Patriots.

Advanced analytics aren't quite the thing they are in baseball or even basketball but there's no question most NFL teams, the good ones anyway, are already on it. That's where it becomes difficult for a free agent like Cribbs. It's those analytics that reveal his shortcomings as a receiver and his selfishness as a returner. It's not that Cribbs doesn't have value. He does. But the algorithm that takes into account his performance will do likewise for the similarly situated and assign him a value. If/when Cribbs salary demands exceed the value assigned he'll find it difficult to find the appropriate match.

But none of this is a surprise to Cribbs or his agents. That's why when Cribbs was lying embellishing to the local media about negotiations with other teams he also slipped in the statement that he'd be willing to take a little pay cut to stay in Cleveland. The absolute truth is that Cribbs is in line for a pay cut irrespective of where he signs. Balancing the salary cap is among the most important activities a team's front office undertakes. If you want to understand why the Patriots have remained successful for so long despite a revolving cast look no further than the cold-blooded way they administer their salary cap. When a player's cost starts to exceed his value, he's gone.

When it comes to the Browns and Cribbs that's the calculus, or at least it should be. If Cribbs ends up re-signing it will be because he and his agents landed on a number that is consistent with how the team perceives his value. If he doesn't he'll be gone, looking for another team that he hopes values his services more highly. Good luck.

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There was an item the other day suggesting that the Oakland Raiders are looking to talk to Mike Holmgren about a front office position. I wonder what aspects of his performance in a similar role intrigues them most. Was it his indifferent approach? Was it the surly disposition? How about the overarching bad attitude? Maybe it was all the stellar personnel decisions he made.

I can't imagine the Raiders making a worse decision than hiring Holmgren except they are the same team that basically gave the Bengals a first rounder for Carson Palmer so anything's possible. I just wish it was the Baltimore Ravens or Pittsburgh Steelers and not the Raiders who were thinking of hiring Holmgren. That would be far more impactful for the Browns than almost any other decision they could make in the offseason.

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With the Browns front office now embracing a deeper level of analytics, this week's question to ponder: If this regime had been in charge of last year's draft, would Brandon Weeden's age

have eliminated him from being a first round pick?