For once, the Browns did what they were supposed to do. With the season lost, the Browns could easily have finished with two bunny-shot wins over Tampa Bay and Houston, pumping their record to 6-10 and dropping their draft position as low as ninth. But they did the right thing, dropping the last two and lining themselves up to draft as high as third. Papa Cass checks in with his final "Morning After" of this Browns season, taking a look ahead to the 2007 NFL Draft in the process.

Texans 14, Browns 6
Final record: 4-12

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Now, the real test begins: Can the Browns do the right thing, resist the impulse to make a sexy selection with that high pick, and go after offensive linemen high in the draft? Finally?

Adrian Peterson, Ted Ginn and Troy Smith are fine talents. Smith might be the answer the Browns have been looking for at quarterback. All would look good in Browns uniforms. But, for the forty thousandth time since this franchise resumed operation eight years ago, what in the name of Mike Trivisonno smoking Cubans with Carmen Policy in vineyard humidor is going to change if the Browns don't draft linemen to protect them and open holes?

Nothing. Nada. Not one thing. Are you listening, Phil Savage? Assuming you're still in control of the roster when April rolls around.

The thing is, I'm not so worried that Savage is going to be swayed by Ginn, Peterson or Smith. I'm worried that he'll fall in love with some defensive stud he finds. Granted, the Browns can always use shoring up on the defensive line and in the cornerback corps. But the fortunes of this franchise will simply not change until they draft offensive linemen, early and often.

This is the bullet the Browns must bite. No stud pass rushers this year. No quarterbacks, no wide receivers, no running backs, nothing of the sort on the first day. Unless an impasse is reached in the conference room during postseason meetings, Savage will probably get one more draft, as will Crennel, and they must cash in.

The bar has been set at 6-10, the Browns' record a year ago. They have fallen short of that with a four-win debacle of a season this year. For Savage and Crennel to last past 2007, they must get this team to .500 next year.

That's progress. It's still possible, but it seems much farther away after what transpired this season. But it will require a lot of growth and compromise on the part of Savage and Crennel.

They must develop an outlook rooted in pragmatism more than an ideal picture of the dominant defense both want to craft. You still need to move the ball on offense. And to do that, you need a young, deep, talented offensive line.

If Savage learns that lesson between now and the draft, and can stick to his guns on draft day, this organization will be much better off in the coming years. If not, it's going to be more of the same shtick, and the Browns will once again be holding open casting calls for a GM and coach a year from now.

Up next: We'll see