With the Browns draft position now set, let the real analysis begin. And Gary Benz wasted no time writing his first column on the matter. The Browns have had the third pick two other times recently, selecting Gerard Warren (2001) and Braylon Edwards (2005) in the three hole since the turn of the century. In his latest, Gary takes a detailed look at the history of the third pick of the draft ... making some interesting findings in the process.

It was nice to see at least a little something go right for the Cleveland Browns. At the Scouting Combine in Indianapolis on Friday morning, Cleveland won the coin flip over Tampa Bay that assured them the third pick in this year's college draft. Of course, they should have had the third pick without the coin flip since Cleveland had lost to Tampa Bay during the regular season, but nothing's ever as it seems in the NFL. Hence the coin flip.

But whether Cleveland actually won anything in that coin flip remains to be seen once draft day comes and goes. It may be, for example, that with differing needs Cleveland and Tampa Bay weren't going after the same players anyway, at least in the first round. But more importantly, it will come down, as it always does, to how good Cleveland's scouting really is. That's the scary part.

But the truth is having the third or fourth selection hasn't seemed to make much of a difference, except in the amount of guaranteed money the "winning" team will have to pay to sign the player. Looking at salary and bonus figures of the third and fourth round draft picks over the last several years, the third pick can expect a minimum of $1 million more in guaranteed money, even if the overall salaries are similar. Remember, in the NFL contracts are rarely if ever guaranteed. Thus, ignore the reported value of the contract and focus instead on the contract's length and the amount of guaranteed money as the length determines over how many years the bonus will hit the salary cap. Because most first round

contracts run five or six years, even a $1.5 million dollar difference in guaranteed money, prorated over those five or six years, is relatively meaningless from a cap standpoint.

But because a team has either the third or fourth pick, it is absolutely critical that it not make a mistake. Reviewing all third and fourth round draft picks since 1990, there have been many great players selected. There also been some noteworthy busts. Here is the breakdown since 1990:

Year	Third Pick	Fourth Pick
2006	Vince Young	D'Brickashaw Ferguson
2005	Braylon Edward	Cedric Benson
2004	Larry Fitzgerald	Phillip Rivers
2003	Andre Johnson	DeWayne Robertson
2002	Joey Harrington	Mike Williams
2001	Gerard Warren	Justin Smith
2000	Chris Samuels	Peter Warrick
1999	Akili Smith	Edgerrin James
1998	Andre Wadsworth	Charles Woodson
1997	Shawn Springs	Peter Boulware
1996	Simeon Rice	Jonathan Ogden
1995	Steve McNair	Michael Westbrook
1994	Heath Schuler	Willie McGinest
1993	Garrison Hearst	Marvin Jones
1992	Sean Gilbert	Desmond Howard
1991	Bruce Pickens	Mike Croel
1990	Cortez Kennedy	Keith McCants

Perusing the list, a number of things stand out. Last years picks, Vince Young and D'Brickashaw Ferguson, were both great picks that should serve their teams well for several years. Although it's too soon to judge, neither looks like a bust. Barring injuries, right now both appear to be worthy of their draft status. In 2005, Cleveland selected Braylon Edwards third and the Bears took Cedric Benson fourth. Edwards is an immature malcontent whose production, while solid, doesn't approach his outsized ego. But in fairness to Edwards, he missed a decent chunk of his first season with injury and thus it is somewhat unfair at this point to judge whether he'll live up to his draft status. The same goes for Benson. He's been solid, similar to Edwards, but isn't the Bears' featured running back yet. Whether he will be able to unseat Thomas Jones is unknown, of course, but right now he's proven to be a fairly integral part of the Bears offense. Still, the later rounds are full of running backs that could likely perform similarly and thus whether he'll justify such a high pick is, at best, uncertain.

In 2004, Arizona took Larry Fitzgerald and the Giants took then traded, Phillip Rivers. In both cases, there is little question that the two look to live up to their status. But 2002 is a much different story. Both Detroit, with Joey Harrington, and Buffalo, with tackle Mike Williams, whiffed badly. Williams is out of the league and Harrington is a back-up in Miami, although he played well in spots this last season. Still, it is hardly an accident that Detroit and Buffalo still are struggling. When you miss big, it comes back to haunt you. That's certainly the case with Cleveland and Gerard Warren, whom the Browns selected third in 2001. On the other hand, Cincinnati selected Justin Smith with the fourth pick that year and he remains an important part of that team and one of the few Bengals that hasn't been arrested. In fact, the Bengals just designated Smith as their franchise player.

Although there are a number of third and fourth pick busts, perhaps none is bigger than Akili Smith with the Bengals in 2003. But in the end it turned out fine for the Bengals as they ultimately ended up with Carson Palmer, a superstar quarterback. The Browns had no such luck, unfortunately. That year they took Tim Couch number one that year and while he flamed out like Smith, the Browns haven't found their Carson Palmer, not even close. Among the other notable busts with the third pick have been Andre Wadsworth, a defensive end selected third by Arizona in 1998 and Heath Schuler, a quarterback selected by Washington in 1994.

Perhaps most interestingly, there actually have been a few less draft busts with the fourth pick than the third and, conversely, there have been a few more great players drafted fourth than third since 1990. Among the more notable fourth round picks have been Ferguson (2006); Rivers (2004); Edgerrin James (1999); Charles Woodson (1998); Peter Boulware (1997); Jonathan Ogden (1996) and Willie McGinest (1994). The most notable of the third round picks are Young, Fitzgerald and Steve McNair, although there are several other decent third round picks as well.

The mock drafts conducted thus far have the Browns selecting anyone from JaMarcus Russell to Joe Thomas to Brady Quinn to Calvin Johnson to Adrian Peterson, any of which would be decent choices for different reasons. But the reality is that until the Browns and the other teams sign a few free agents starting next week, it will be hard to peg their draft plans.

But whatever those plans, at this point, the 2007 draft class looks to be strong enough to better the chances that the Browns won't make a colossal mistake.