Believe it or not, the NFL Draft is just 12 days away. And word is, Phil Savage is in "can we watch a romantic comedy while I rub your feet and you blabber on and on about your day and people I don't know" love with JaMarcus Russell. This scares the living crap out of the Hornless Rhino, who believes selecting the monstrous quarterback from LSU would be the worst mistake the Browns could possibly make.

I've been advocating that the Browns trade down and/or use at least two first day picks on offensive linemen. I'm on record as saying that Quinn's just not all that (and likely never will be wearing a Browns uniform) and that Peterson is too injury prone to bet the farm on. I haven't dissed JaMarcus Russell yet, but with the draft only a couple of weeks away and one recent mock draft showing that he might end up here, I guess there's no time like the present.

Russell has all the physical tools that you could ever ask for, but he's an inconsistent player who could definitely use another year of seasoning. His upside is big, but so is his risk. He might be the next Daunte Culpepper, but he could just as easily be the next Kyle Boller. His current ascendancy is based largely on a terrific performance in the Sugar Bowl against a Notre Dame secondary that could charitably be characterized as "dreadful," and people forget just how bad he looked at times last season.

Russell threw three interceptions against Florida in LSU's 23-10 loss to the Gators, and the LSU offense that he led managed only three points in a 7-3 defeat at the hands of Auburn. Russell's advocates will point to his performance against Tennessee, where he led the Tigers to a 28-24 comeback victory, but they'll neglect to point out that he threw three picks in that game, one of which was returned for a touchdown. In fact, you know who JaMarcus Russell reminds me of when it comes to big games? Yup, Brady Quinn. If you want to see how similar the two players'

numbers are, check out
this analysis
--it's an eye opener.

So you can talk all you want about the physical tools (remember Kyle Boller's 60 yard throws from his knees
during his pro day workouts?), the bottom line is that if the differentiating point for you between Russell and Quinn is that Sugar Bowl, then you're taking a pretty big leap of faith. You may be comfortable with that, but I'm not. I remember how Akili Smith parlayed a stellar senior year into being the #3 overall pick in the draft, even though he had only 11 starts to his credit in his entire college career.

Now, I'm not saying that Russell is Smith, but what I am saying is that there's reason to worry about guys who come out from nowhere to rise to the top of the draft board. Russell's not as inexperienced as Smith was, but compared to picks who've been successful, he is pretty inexperienced. This week's ESPN Magazine quotes Footballoutsiders.com as saying that "the leading indicator of NFL success" for QBs taken in the first two rounds is college starts. Philip Rivers started 51 games, Donovan McNabb started 49, and Carson Palmer started 45. In contrast, Russell has started only 29 games, putting him in the same category as guys like Rex Grossman, Joey Harrington and Akili Smith. (Bradycakes lovers take heart--your guy has 46 starts.)

Concerns about his experience alone might be enough for me to think twice about drafting JaMarcus Russell, but what seals the deal for me is the increasing desperation of the Cleveland Browns. Romeo Crennel, and maybe even Phil Savage, need this team to show improvement fast in order to survive. When you couple the pressure they're operating under with the nightmarish first part of the Browns schedule, the temptation to throw a rookie QB to the lions before he's ready could be irresistible. In short, I think that if Cleveland is a bad place for Brady Quinn to develop into a solid pro, it's likely to be an even worse place for JaMarcus Russell.