Hands down, this is one of the most brilliant pieces we've posted on this website. It's Part IV of Mansfield Lucas's off-season assessment of the 2007 Cleveland Browns. In it, he examines the two glaring weak spots on the team that make playoff contention unlikely: the offensive line and the quarterback situation. Hard hitting analysis here from Mansfield, and a must read for any Browns fan.

This is the last installment analyzing the nearly three off seasons of work by Phil Savage leading up to his third draft. In **Opie’s Opus One** , I gave yah a recap of the sorry state of the Browns as well as an off-season plan as free agency kicked off.
Part Two
reviewed the areas of strength and potential promise.
Part Three
recapped where I expect us to struggle.

Now I give you the pure, unadulterated reasons why (barring significant need-based investments and good luck on draft day) the Browns will again be drafting very high in 2008 and we'll be welcoming a new coach to C-Town; and perhaps even a new GM and owner if Randy's frustrations mount. The Browns are so bad at these positions that no other strengths or the rest of their mediocre-at-ceiling talent can compensate**.**

The Offensive Line

It sure 'nuff is offensive. Badda bing. Thank you ladies and gents, tip your wait staff and I'll be back every Friday for two shows. Enjoy your evening on Short Vincent …

How long, Moses Cleveland? How long will we wander, lost, aimlessly, around the Mentor Marsh mired in rudderless suck? How hard is it, really? No disrespect to Sam, I mean, he was good for Cleveland so I've heard. But I watched Marty Schottenheimer and his staff take over a

1 – 7 team midseason that couldn't walk and chew gum at the same time, insert a bunch of no-name cast offs like George Lilja on the line, and go 4 – 4 with Earnest Byner simply running hard as a 10th round pick with no experience. I watched Bill Bellichick and a young O line coach named Kirk somebody transform Zeus, Bob Dahl and Gene "I-cost-us-a-Steelers-Game" Williams into a unit that plowed the way for even Leroy Hoard to be productive. I see it all the time in the NFL. But not here, nope; not with this new incarnation of the fake Browns.

Have we EVER developed a single young O lineman here in eight, long, miserable seasons? I mean, damn, you almost have to TRY to assemble so little talent and such craptacular coaching to get so little. Larry Zierlien whose career peaked at the University of Cincinnati? The new O-Line coach is a castoff of the Texans? The Texans?

It all starts there as far as I'm concerned. Teams in the NFL routinely take no-name players and make serviceable NFL linemen out of them. Not here. Plus, our O line coaching has also failed Shaun O'Hara, Jeff Faine and Mel Fowler, three young linemen who do have the talent to have ten-year careers at various levels of success – all with other teams. We can't do what other NFL teams do because our line coaching sucks. Jeff Davidson actually had potential in his one year as O line coach that produced a thousand yard rusher, but we Peter Principled his ass out of the organization because of Moe Carthon.

Now I know that *The Thing To Do* on the talk shows and the fan forums this draft season is to clamor to draft Joe Thomas third overall and "fix" the line. Uh-huh. Draft an offensive lineman number three overall when you have Charlie Frye and DA as your quarterbacks after having suffered through four seasons of Holcomb, Garthia, Dilfer and Frye providing no consistency at what remains the most important position on the field. More on that later. But the only things stopping the Browns from developing an O Line that doesn't suck are as follows:

Invest <u>Appropriately</u> in the Draft

The Browns first round draft choices have actually been a very balanced lot of snake bitten players. The team hasn't overly invested in skilled players, or only drafted defensive players. The balance is remarkable: QB, DE, DT, RB, C, TE, WR, DE/OLB. If anything, it is more tilted, ever so slightly, to the front seven of the defense, and what football mind wouldn't argue that's one of the core foundations to win? They haven't been Matt Millen in round one as the *Draft*

Joe Thomas Mafia
would have you believe. Want to know why we don't have any developed kids? Not enough ball bearings through the funnel. Where teams are built are rounds 2 through 5 of the draft. There's too much emphasis placed on round one, and by the time you get to rounds six and seven you are dealing with seriously flawed players who almost never stick for the long haul.

Here's what fan ignorin', KFC eatin' in his town car Dwight Clark did:

1999
2 2 1 32 Kevin Johnson WR Syracuse
3 2 14 45 Rahim Abdullah LB Clemson
4 3 1 62 Daylon McCutcheon DB USC
5 3 15 76 Marquis Smith DB California
6 4 29 124 Wali Rainer LB Virginia
7 5 15 148 Darrin Chiaverini WR Colorado

2000
2 2 1 32 Dennis Northcutt WR Arizona
3 3 1 63 Travis Prentice RB Miami (OH)
4 3 17 79 JaJuan Dawson WR Tulane
5 4 1 95 Lewis Sanders DB Maryland
6 4 16 110 Aaron Shea RB Michigan
7 5 1 130 Anthony Malbrough DB Texas Tech
8 5 17 146 Lamar Chapman DB Kansas State

Here's what Pete Garcia and Butch Davis did while they were giving us that huge advantage from having scouted these guys in high school:

2001
2 2 2 33 Quincy Morgan WR Kansas State
3 3 3 65 James Jackson RB Miami (FL)
4 4 2 97 Anthony Henry DB South Florida
5 5 3 134 Jeremiah Pharms LB Washington

2002
2 2 15 47 Andre Davis WR Virginia Tech
3 3 11 76 Melvin Fowler C Maryland
4 4 3 101 Kevin Bentley LB Northwestern
5 4 13 111 Ben Taylor LB Virginia Tech

2003
2 2 20 52 Chaun Thompson LB West Texas A&M
3 3 20 84 Chris Crocker DB Marshall
4 4 18 115 Lee Suggs RB Virginia Tech
5 5 7 142 Ryan Pontbriand C Rice

2004
2 2 27 59 Sean Jones DB Georgia
3 4 10 106 Luke McCown QB Louisiana Tech
4 5 29 161 Amon Gordon DE Stanford

And now, here's what Phil has generated from his sooper-dooper scouting system:

2005
2 2 2 34 Brodney Pool DB Oklahoma
3 3 3 67 Charlie Frye QB Akron
4 4 2 103 Antonio Perkins DB Oklahoma
5 5 3 139 David McMillan DE Kansas

2006
2 2 2 34 D'Qwell Jackson LB Maryland
3 3 14 78 Travis Wilson WR Oklahoma
4 4 13 110 Leon Williams LB Miami (FL)
5 4 15 112 **Isaac Sowells G Indiana**
6 5 12 145 Jerome Harrison RB Washington State
7 5 20 152 DeMario Minter DB Georgia

Source: NFLDraft History.com

For those of you scoring at home, that's 7 wide receivers, 11 defensive backs, 9 linebackers, 4 running backs, 2 quarterbacks and TWO offensive linemen to fill 5 positions. That's two out of 38 draft picks. That's what has to change, not over investment in round one where you need to land your game changing difference-makers; guys who score touchdowns and guys who stop touchdown *s.*

Get a decent O Line Coach

That sad drafting history noted, the Browns have invested heavy coin in the O Line in free agency, and in return have had some of the worst imaginable luck, making their investments worthless or insufficient. The few young players who have been groomed have all failed here. When the veteran lines were combined, none of them seemed to be organized, coherent, and shown an ability to play together except for a few games in 2002. Ever ask yourself why?

Look at out O line coaches and their NFL experience and pedigree.

Now I just don't know if Howard Mudd, Joe Bugel or Alex Gibbs combined could have made Scott Rehberg, Steve Zahursky, Brad Beddell, Roger Chenoine, Paul Zukakis, Qasim Mitchell, Chris Chambers, and Nat Dorsey not suck. I am guessing they could have worked enough with Shaun O'Hara, Mel Fowler and Jeff Faine to make them good enough to stay and be productive here, though. They could have also probably cobbled together effective O lines from the various and sundry free agents that came through town, ***because on paper, the Browns O line should have rarely been as bad as they have been.***

Now here's Phil and Romeo's solution to the problem**:**

Steve Marshall

Offensive Line Coach

Year with Browns: 1st
Year in NFL: 5th

Steve Marshall was named the Cleveland Browns offensive line coach on Jan. 29, 2007. Marshall brings an impressive depth of coaching experience to the Browns having served successful stints at several colleges and in the NFL.

Marshall comes to Cleveland from the University of Alabama where he recently joined Nick Saban's staff. Marshall spent the 2006 season out of coaching after serving four seasons with the Houston Texans (2002-05). Marshall joined the Texans as an assistant offensive line coach for two years (2002-03) before being named offensive line coach by the Texans (2004-05).

Prior to joining the Texans, Marshall spent the 2000-01 seasons as offensive line coach at the University of Colorado under head coach Gary Barnett. During that period, the Buffaloes won one Big 12 Conference championship and two Big 12 Conference North Division titles. Prior to his stint with the Buffaloes, Marshall spent two seasons (1998-99) at the University of North Carolina as offensive coordinator and offensive line coach.

Marshall joined the Tar Heels after he coordinated the Texas A&M offense in 1997. The Aggies were 9-4 with a No. 20 final national ranking in the Associated Press poll, made a Big 12 championship game appearance and earned a berth in the Cotton Bowl.

A native of Vernon, Conn., Marshall played offensive guard and tight end at Louisville in 1976-78. He coached the offensive line and kicking game at Marshall in 1982-83, offensive line and tight ends at Louisville in 1984, and coordinated the offense and coached the line at Murray State in 1985-86.

He coached the offensive line at Virginia Tech in 1987 and a year later was promoted to offensive coordinator, a position he held for the next five seasons (through the 1992 season). While at Tech, Marshall coached standouts including running back Vaughn Hebron, quarterback Will Furrer, and wide receiver Antonio Freeman.

In 1993, Marshall moved to the University of Tennessee to coach the offensive line. After two years he was given the added responsibility of running game coordinator. The Volunteers led the Southeastern Conference in rushing in each of those three seasons. In 1995, Tennessee beat Ohio State in the Citrus Bowl and finished No. 2 in the final coach's poll. In 1996, Marshall coached the offensive line at UCLA before moving on to Texas A&M.

Marshall earned his bachelor's degree in physical education from Louisville. Marshall is married to his wife, Karin.

Coaching Background:

1979 Plymouth State, offensive line coach
1980-81 University of Tennessee, assistant offensive line
1982-83 Marshall, offensive line and kicking game coach
1984 University of Louisville, offensive line coach and tight ends coach
1985-86 Murray State, offensive coordinator and offensive line coach
1987 Virginia Tech, offensive line coach
1988-92 Virginia Tech, offensive coordinator and offensive line coach
1993 University of Tennessee, offensive line coach
1994-95 University of Tennessee, offensive line coach and running game coordinator
1996 UCLA, offensive line coach
1997 Texas A&M, offensive coordinator/offensive line coach
1998-99 University of North Carolina, offensive coordinator/offensive line coach
2000-01 University of Colorado, offensive line coach
2002-03 Houston Texans, assistant offensive line coach
2004-05 Houston Texans, offensive line coach
2007 Cleveland Browns, offensive line coach

Source: Clevelandbrowns.com

You know, the Official $ite.

"Marshall coached standouts including running back Vaughn Hebron, quarterback Will Furrer…"

You mean **THE** Vaughn Hebron and Will Furrer? I could be wrong in being pessimistic here.

Get Rid of the Maloika

(In Jesse Jackson voice…) **It is an outright lie** that the Browns haven't invested in the offensive line, and that this can only be rectified via drafting Joe Thomas. In year one we should have had a decent line. This is where Clark invested on offense. He plucked Dave Wohlabaugh from Parcells for starters, a solid if not physically dominant center who started for nearly a decade on Sunday, much like Hank Fraley. Next was Lomas Brown, a former top ten draft choice who is one of the very best left tackles not names Pace, Boselli or Ogden over the past 20 years. Brown had enough mileage in his tank to start for a Super Bowl team after leaving the Browns as a player disgruntled by an incompetent coach and staff. Orlando Brown was a good run blocker/below average pass blocker whose career ended in a manner freakish even for the bad news Browns. You combine that group with Jim Pyne and any warm body and there is no way they should have been that bad.

Butch invested heavily with Ross Verba and Tre Johnson, and had Wohlabaugh and Roman Oben as holdovers. If healthy and focused that is 80% of a good offensive line. Think about it: that's three players good enough to start on super bowl teams. Verba was a former number one draft pick out of Iowa, good enough to start as a raw rookie at left tackle protecting Brett Favre's blind side. He comes to Cleveland, gets divorced, and thinks he's Hell Angel Sonny Barger and white thugs himself out of the NFL. Only in Cleveland. Roman Oben was a productive player for the Jets, dinged his knee and under-performed in Cleveland despite trying to tough it out. Butch gets impatient, fans call him soft, and the next year we see Roman starting on the Tampa Bay Super Bowl champions. Tre couldn't get past chronic knee problems and a young guard / center named Shaun O'Hara is ignored and released. The very next year a young tackle is signed from the Rams named Ryan Tucker, who for the next several years is the best fake Browns lineman we've seen. Imagine an OL of Oben, Verba, Wollabaugh, O'Hara, and Tucker in front of a sane William Green and healthy, developed Couch. Again, on paper, this is hardly what we got.

Even in the Savage Era, how do you even begin to explain LeCharles Bentley? Joe Andruzzi's back rendering him the very worst fake Browns lineman, worse than Scott Rehberg? Pray for Eric Steinbach.

So why go through this painful and pedantic litany? Simple: the solution to the OL isn't the quick fix. It isn't the long bomb, one-guy-cures-all approach. This team needs patience to not again blow up prematurely what is positive, investment to get some talented guys we can develop, and good coaching to get the vets on the same page and FINALLY develop some draft choices.

The Two Deep

Tackles:

Kevin Shaffer
Ryan Tucker
Ike Sowells
Kelly Butler
Nat Dorsey

Guards:

Eric Steinbach
Seth McKinney
Lenny Friedman
Rob Smith
Fred Matua

As of now, Joe Andruzzi and Cosey Coleman remain on the roster.

Center:

Hank Fraley
PUP: LeCharles Bentley

This is the most motley crue since Vince and Tommy met. Good Gawd, we're talkin' old school Chicken McNuggetts ™ here. This is your typical collection of has-beens, never-will-be's, and

young players who probably develop with other teams punctuated by not enough guys who can actually play. A stellar O Line coach could probably assemble a passable group given the right scheme from this bunch. Odds are better that it is too thin depth-wise, too green some places, too old and brittle in others, and flat out lacking in enough talent. The operative word, as usual for the Browns O Line, is “IF”.

IF Seth McKinney’s neck is healthy…

IF Ryan Tucker’s “mystery illness” gets better and his knee has anything left…

IF we can get one guy to develop out of Smith, Matua, and Sowells…

IF Coleman stays and gets in better shape and his knee has anything left…

IF Andruzzi goes to Lourdes and his back is fixed…

IF there’s not the usual rash of injuries…

I’m not likin’ it. Same stuff, different day. I’ve seen this movie before and it never ends well.

I’m guessing come opening Sunday, for at least a couple weeks before player start to physically break down, we’re talking something like this, left to right: Shaffer, Steinbach, Frahley, McKinney, Tucker. If Romeo gets a clue and understands the season’s schedule opens in a brutal fashion and he could be fired after the first 6 games, and he changes his Club Med training camp philosophy to actually prepare for a season, then you could see as many as three of those guys fall by the way-side.

Despite the wise move overpaying to sign Steinbach, not nearly enough has been done to address this abomination. McKinney is an injured player cast off from a poor O line group in Miami who is still young with some potential, but he is a bonus if he plays and plays well. ***No tackles were signed in free agency***
. How does that happen after watching Fat Dorsey and Kelly Butler suck ass? Barring the equivalent of the Browns' offensive line benefiting from a draft in a couple weeks similar to the 49ers defensive backs in 1981, this unit is going to kill us and implode the season. Again. I can't wait for the JaLew, Souljah, Braylan media circus this fall.

But we have a strong quarterback leading us through it to keep the team together, so at least we have that going for us, which is nice.

What's that?

Never mind.

The Quarterbacks: ***Phil, Are You Freaking Kidding Me?***

"I stepped upon the platform, the man gave me the news. He said, " you must be joking son, where did you get those shoes?"

- Donald Fagan

An obscure non-sequitor lyric referencing facing your impending execution with a complete sense of incredulity thrown in. Yep, that about sums up my feeling as a fan at heading into *another*
season with Charlie Frye, Derek Anderson, and Ken Dorsey as the three deep.

Beam me up, Scottie. There's no intelligent signs of life in Berea. Repeat slowly after me: *in the NFL, the quarterback remains the single most important player on the field*
.

Those of you Frye apologists who want to blame it all on the offensive line, save it. I am John McEnroe, and you're the ref with bad eyesight.

Yes, Joe Andruzzi and Kelly Butler and Fat Dorsey were guilty of some jailbreaks that not even Bobby Douglass and Mike Vick could have escaped. But mostly, Charlie is the Browns' Casey Blake and he is to drives what Casey is to rallies. How many fumbles, slow reads, floaters, and noodle armed inaccurate tosses can you folks stand before the coffee is smelled and disturbs your slumber? On most pass plays, the kid had more than enough time, and often he had a very serviceable running game. Sure, Charlie was thrown in unprepared by a foolish Crennel who chose sides with Moe in his feud with Dilfer (see also, Palmer and Lomas Brown).

Sure, Charlie never learned how to run an offense at a losing program like Akron, where he lost far more games than he won as starter. His idea of playing the quarterback position was to run around like a madman until something broke down, throw it up for grabs, and hope something good happened. That's how he helped Akron beat Marshall; it was playground football. That's how he was Senior Bowl MVP. There's no structure to that sandlot game. He did this routine in a couple games his rookie season for the optimistic among us fans to buy into the whole *Kid From Willard, Bernie Kosar on his wall* propaganda. Quotes of "the kid just has "it" kept springing up. Ugh. We see what we want to see when we are desperate.

Charlie Frye is the NFL equivalent of 2AM beer goggles on a lonely Saturday night out. When you're blowing better than a .15 and that creature who could pass for a Chris Farley Gap Girl all of a sudden looks like a viable option. Cinching your replica number nine jersey with a belt ain't the answer, my peeps. Order another Jaeger bomb and get out the Brooke Burke *Maxim* issue when you get home instead.

Charlie Frye is a disaster as a starter. In four or five years, if he sits and watches and works very hard, perhaps he can play a little. But now? Watch him. His throws are later than Stockard Channing in *Grease* (that's for you Brucie baby, from a former "buster" caller on WBBG in the day. Welcome back home! We luuuuuuuv yah Drennan!). He has a below average arm. He's not as elusive as he thinks he is. What he is, is a third round long shot from a small football school who was rushed into service by a perfectly rotten organization who failed him. He's the second coming of Stoney Case. He's had what, 19 starts as an NFL quarterback, and he shows absolutely no improvement or hint of success actually playing the position of NFL quarterback.

He does something when he runs around, but it's not playing NFL quarterback. Put him out of our misery as a starter. Since he's a homeboy fan, let him stay as a back up. He's better than Dorsey.

Derek Anderson is more intriguing. You know Frye is bad when this kid steps in after never having started and instantly looks much better. DA has an upper 10% arm, good size, and shows the main thing Charlie lacks – anticipation and read understanding. His Achilles' heel is his turnovers, and this is a tough one to evaluate right now. Bernie Kosar once said of playing the quarterback position, "It's my job to get the ball to a spot on the field, and it is the receiver's job to get to that spot and fight for the ball". If this is the case, is it any wonder that the consummate vet, Joe Jurevicius, saw his best games with DA? Joe caught more balls when DA played in December than in all of the rest of the season. How many of those picks were the result of the attitudinal child, Braylan Edwards, running amok and not executing a route to save his life as opposed to DA being too aggressive, almost Holcomb-like in his stubbornness to make the play on every play? DA also had a ton of picks in college, and this is one area quarterbacks rarely change from college to the pros. This makes him a long shot.

But unlike Frye, DA got better, and he's shown improvement in his time with the organization. There is a modicum of hope there. If the Browns go into this season with any combination of the current quarterbacks, or a rookie chosen in the draft and Frye and DA, and they don't have DA as the guy getting the starter's reps, then there is no excuse for the front office and the coaching staff of this team and they all deserve to be fired. Ray Charles can see that while DA has some issues and is raw, he probably has about a 20% chance of being a starting QB on Sunday. Frye has less than a 5% chance.

Neither is the probable solution.

Ken Dorsey is probably a nice guy who should be off to a career as a coach by now. As a player, he's garbage. There is no point.

Between the offensive line and the quarterback positions, the Browns will hemorrhage losses

again this fall, and every subsequent fall, until radical change occurs. Unfortunately, these are the two hardest areas to make changes overnight, and it will take a while. After eight long seasons of rudderless suck, more patience will be asked for and required for enough talent to be obtained and developed.

But it cannot be developed until it actually arrives.

Last installment in the coming weeks? Opie: here's what you need to do on April 28th… and throughout the summer.