Phil Savage wasn't planning on this. Picking this high again that is. By the 2007 draft, Savage was probably hoping to have the Browns good enough to at least draft in the middle of the pack, where he excelled at ferreting out diamonds in the rough in Baltimore. Instead, Savage is once again tied to a top pick, charged with finding a franchise-caliber player And he can't afford to be wrong.

The NFL Draft is like buying a car, except it's worse.

You waffle and pace, hem and haw, make your decision, retract your decision, lose some sleep and ultimately, on the day you absolutely, positively have to make up your mind, you close your eyes, put your finger down on a premade Russian Roulette list of payment death, and purchase the car on which your digit lands.

Sure, alpha draftnik Mel Kiper Jr. makes the draft seem a lot more complicated than that, but it really isn't. The members of a team's think tank identifies their needs, finds players that match those needs, then spends four months sweating under their collars, weighing pros and cons, college resumes, combine reports, signability and a host of other factors. So many variables are tossed around in NFL war rooms that if the common layperson were to pore over them, their brain would immediately be reduced to the size and color of a raisin, and they would cease to watch football for the rest of their life.

But in the end, it comes down to a decision. And the higher a team picks, the more weight is on that decision.

Right now, as a Browns fan, you have something in common with GM Phil Savage. Football isn't fun for either of you. For Savage, it's because he is the one who has to phone in the picks Saturday afternoon. For you, it's simply because you've been forced to watch the product his front office has put on the field the past two years.

Savage wasn't planning on this, hopping from the third pick to the 11th pick and back to the third pick in two years' time. By the 2007 draft, Savage was probably hoping to have the Browns good enough to at least draft in the middle of the pack, where he excelled at ferreting

out diamonds in the rough in Baltimore.

Instead, Savage is once again tied to a top pick, charged with finding a franchise-caliber player, treading the same territory where Dwight Clark and Butch Davis picked Tim Couch, Courtney Brown and Gerard Warren, none of whom blossomed into a franchise cornerstone. Treading the same territory he himself walked two years ago, where he picked Braylon Edwards, a spectacular athlete who is becoming known more for flapping his gums than catching passes.

If you believe in the saying attributed to Albert Einstein about the definition of insanity, there is no reason to believe this year's draft is going to be any better to the Browns.

Of course, there is no reason to believe it won't be better, but when is the last time the fortunes of a Cleveland sports franchise turned on a dime with one draft pick? The last time that didn't involve ping-pong balls, I mean.

You, me, Savage, we're all setting ourselves up for disappointment if we are eyeing one guy with that third pick who is going to make the clouds suddenly part.

JaMarcus Russell has all the tools for stardom, but he is still raw. Raw is not what we want in Cleveland, where we've been waiting far too long for a winner. Brady Quinn is more polished, but has a nasty habit of getting flustered under pressure. Try not to imagine him playing behind the Browns' offensive line as it currently stands.

Joe Thomas is the best offensive lineman in the draft, but this isn't the strongest class of linemen, and Savage is probably set on drafting a guard before he thinks about a tackle like Thomas.

Adrian Peterson: Fragile, fragile, fragile. He'll be a franchise-type runner ... for the four games he's on the field each year.

In many ways, Calvin Johnson might be Savage's best ticket. The Browns have no business drafting the Georgia Tech wideout, but his athleticism is making other teams drool, as athleticism often does. If Johnson is left to the Browns at three, they can start fielding offers to trade down, which would allow them to amass draft picks this year and next.

The trouble is, trading up is incredibly risky, which is why a lot of teams won't do it unless they get desperate.

So Savage is likely left to pick third for a team that needs a pair of mid-to-late first-rounders and an extra second-rounder more than it needs the inflated hope and hype that surrounds the top of the draft.

For the Browns, the Lions, the Cardinals, all the teams that annually fill the prime spots in the draft order, it is no consolation prize for last year's pathetic record. This is another opportunity to make the fans call for your head when this year's franchise savior turns out to be anything

but messianic.

For the Lions' Matt Millen, who was recently awarded a contract extension despite six years of ineptitude, maybe it's not such a big deal. For Savage, an intensely competitive executive who worked almost exclusively for winning teams prior to his current job, it probably gets under his skin a bit more.

For the fans, having the third pick means a smorgasbord of the best college players laid out in front of your team. But for Savage, the goal is far more drab: Draft well enough so that a year from now, you aren't forced to make these kinds of decisions again.