Football season is right around the corner. Finally. And we're going to be all over the Browns this season, ramping our coverage of the team up greatly over last season. In the first installment of his "Training Camp '07" series, in which he looks at the team position by position, Erik Cassano takes analyzes the Browns quarterbacks and running backs, headlined by new additions Brady Quinn and Jamal Lewis.

Time just won't stand still, will it?

It just won't give us a chance to sit back and bask in the glow of a triumphant Browns offseason.

We can't sit back and count our acquisitions like so many unhatched eggs. Joe Thomas. Brady Quinn. Eric Steinbach. Jamal Lewis.

Nope. They have to suit up and play and wreck that pristine mental picture of a fully-loaded young team ready to take the league by storm.

In less than two weeks, training camp will commence and we will be knee-deep in the muck of rebuilding once again, facing the harsh reality that the Browns are still a couple of time-warps away from being competitive with their divisional foes.

With that in mind, I begin my position-by-position training camp previews of the 2007 Cleveland Browns. Remember, hope is a good thing for Browns fans -- in moderation.

The backfield

Synopsis

Heading into 2006, this was supposed to be one of the budding strengths of the team. Charlie Frye had his first go-around as a starting NFL quarterback and graded high in toughness and leadership. The Browns' brass was so confident in Frye's ability to lead a team that GM Phil Savage didn't bother bringing in a veteran mentor in the aftermath of trading Trent Dilfer.

The running back corps was supposed to be in good hands after Reuben Droughn s
became the first 1,000-yard rusher for the Browns in two decades in 2005. Again, the backup situation was placed in the hands of youngsters Jerome Harrison and Jason Wright.

Alas, things went awry, as they often have for the Browns. Frye wasn't ready to lead a team for a whole season and looked overmatched on many occasions. Dro ughns
fought through injuries and was a shell of his '05 self. By season's end, coach Romeo
Crennel
was in full-on experimentation mode, throwing Derek Anderson against the wall to see if he would stick and starting Wright at tailback.

The situations at quarterback and running back comprised arguably the most disappointing aspect of the '06 squad. And that's saying something on a 4-12 team.

The offseason

Savage went right to work on the backfield, signing former Raven rusher Jamal Lewis as a free agent and pulling off a major draft-day trade with Dallas to draft Brady Quinn. Lewis is a short-term bandage at feature back. Quinn is a long-term plan at QB. Neither figures to pull the '07 offense onto his back and carry it.

The major players

QB Brady Quinn: A rookie who might be facing a long and difficult holdout

considering where he was drafted (22) and where most teams projected him going (between 2 and 9). He probably wouldn't have had a shot to start the Sept. 9 opener against Pittsburgh with a full helping of training camp, but if he holds out well into August, he's going to get buried in Crennel's doghouse from the get-go.

In a nutshell: Don't expect to see much out of Quinn between now and the start of November.

QB Charlie Frye: The incumbent starter who will likely hold onto his job. There are still questions about whether he can adequately lead an NFL offense, as well there should be. Too often, the game simply moved too fast for Frye last year, and he was flustered into making shoot-first-think-later mistakes.

If Frye is going to survive as a starter in this league, he has to figure out a way to adapt to the speed and ferocity of the NFL. It's miles away from the Mid-American Conference.

QB Derek Anderson: An intriguing wild card. at 6'-6" and possessing a strong throwing arm, Anderson has all the physical traits of an NFL starter, but he's been a project player since coming over from the Ravens two years ago. If Frye really struggles in the preseason, Anderson could be given a chance to win the starting job. He was spotty as a late-season injury replacement a year ago.

RB Jamal Lewis: He's approaching 30 and entering his ninth NFL season, which makes him old in running back years. If Lewis stays reasonably healthy, he'll be an upgrade over Droughns. But Lewis' punishing running style is very much like Droughns. He runs through tackles, not around them.

Lewis can still be a pretty good feature back when healthy. But don't bet the house that the Browns are going to get 16 starts out of him this year.

RB Jason Wright: He's somewhat undersized and more of a changeup back, but he still brings a
dimension
of speed and shiftiness that the Browns' backfield sorely lacks. At 5'-10" and about 215 pounds, he's not built like a tank, but he's also not a featherweight.

If Wright has to start at tailback, head for the hills. If he can come off the bench as a change of pace behind Lewis, the Browns' tailback situation might actually be halfway decent.

RB Jerome Harrison: He's small and quick. He had a dynamite preseason last year that got everyone talking. But unless the offensive line gives him room to run, he's not going to be much of a factor.

FB Lawrence Vickers: His primary competition in camp consists of J.R. Niklos and Charles Ali.
Terelle
Smith is long-gone. He's no longer playing for fullback-obsessed Maurice
Carthon
, who has been replaced at offensive coordinator by tight end-obsessed Rob
Chudzinski
. So no one outside of
Berea
really knows what purpose
Vickers
is going to serve on the '07 Browns. He'll likely be the only fullback they carry.

Up next: The offensive line