In his latest piece for us, Gary Benz takes some time to scoff at the mainstream local media for their overblown coverage of the Leigh Bodden arrest in the "Circle Of Hell" at Hopkins Airport. Channel 5 doing live remotes. The Plain Dealer making it a front page story three days in a row. Gary says that what our local media never seems to get is that by playing up a story like Bodden's, they unwittingly make it even more difficult for the rest of us to discern a real news story when one does come along.

Maybe it's just a cornerback thing.

The news that Browns cornerback Leigh Bodden was arrested Wednesday night for aggravated disorderly conduct conjured up the memory of former Browns cornerback Corey Fuller who was arrested a few years ago under somewhat similar circumstances.

In both cases, the trouble began because our cornerbacks couldn't drive in the right direction. In Bodden's case, it was at the Cleveland airport. In Fuller's case, it was on his way to the Flats following a pre-season game against Green Bay. For Bodden's sake let's hope he doesn't further follow in Fuller's steps, however. As it turned out, driving the wrong way ended up being the least of Fuller's legal problems, but I digress.

The arrest of Bodden raises the important angle that our mainstream media pack seems to have missed in its otherwise overblown coverage: why can't Cleveland cornerbacks drive in the right direction? And if our cornerbacks can't point a car in the right direction how can we ever expect them to run in the right direction when covering a receiver? If you're looking for bad omens, this could be one of them. Take the Steelers and give the points.

Seriously, though, it's hard to get too excited over the Bodden arrest. This is one case where head coach Romeo Crennel is absolutely right; it's a minor traffic

matter. Yet because many in the local media suffer from massive inferiority complexes, the story has taken on an odd sort of life of its own. So desperate are they to have their own important story of an athlete in trouble happen right here in Cleveland that they're willing to manufacture one if necessary.

But whatever one wants to make about the Bodden arrest, this much is true—it's no big deal. Or is it? Cue the dramatic music. Ponder the implications. Speak in hushed tones: Will this arrest be a distraction? How will it affect the team's preparation for the big game against the Steelers? Will the rest of the defense be able to focus on Ben Rothlisberger knowing that one of their comrades has a misdemeanor charge hanging over his head? Can Romeo rally the team under such trying circumstances? Who knows, but let's keep asking the questions until they actually do become a distraction.

This is not to excuse whatever it is that Bodden actually did, but people how about a little perspective here? Hasn't anyone in the media actually been to Hopkins airport to pick someone up? The Cleveland police working that beat bring new meaning to the word "surly" when you try stop your car long enough to pick someone up outside of baggage claim. Unless your loved one is actually standing outside with bags in hands, don't even think about stopping. You'll be forced to circle the airport, again, and the police won't be very polite about directing you out of the way.

That doesn't mean of course that Bodden gets to be rude in return. In fact, it's never seemed like a good idea to pick a fight with someone wearing a badge and packing a gun, particularly at an airport. But it is to suggest that there probably is a little something to Bodden's claim that there is another side to the story and that there are many of us who will have an understanding nod in his direction when that side is told.

Whatever other side there actually is to that story know this: the legal process, such as it is in a case like this, will run its course and Bodden will likely plead no contest and pay a small fine. And then it should and will be over. Neither the

Browns nor the league is going to suspend Bodden and six months from now it will disappear off of his record, assuming it even makes it on it in the first place. But while we're waiting for this to happen, take heart that the local media will turn it into the circus it shouldn't be. They already have.

There was Channel 5 (and others, probably) doing a live remote first, from Hopkins Airport and next from the Justice Center to explain in breathtaking fashion the hard-charging breaking news about this major, major story. The local newspapers weren't much better. The Plain Dealer had two reporters on this story for goodness sakes. It was almost as if Bodden was pulled over on his way to a cock fight while transporting HGH, a pack of pit bulls and a bazooka.

What our local media never seems to get is that by playing up a story like Bodden's, they unwittingly make it even more difficult for the rest of us to discern a real news story when one does come along. It's like trying to figure out when something really is on sale at Macy's.

If a relatively minor player like Bodden getting into a relatively minor verbal hassle with the local police over a parking matter is worth this kind of coverage, what can we expect if/when a major local sports figure actually gets into some real trouble? You think you're sick of hearing about Michael Vick? Wait until something like that happens here.

A player, any player, getting arrested these days for anything hardly seems like news anymore. But it does happen here and in every city with professional sports and when it does the media seem to take it more seriously than the ever-increasing body count in Iraq. Not to sound like an old curmudgeon yelling at kids to get off of my lawn, but the coverage Bodden's arrest has received

makes me yearn for the days when a player could get into a fight in a bar and not have it splashed across the front page of the morning paper.

I completely understand that the value this society places on its professional athletes dictates that their antics off the field get covered as well, so returning to the supposed good ol' days isn't going to happen and probably shouldn't. And there is something to the notion that off-work conduct can have an impact on a person's work. But can anyone legitimately argue that's the case here with Bodden? Not every misstep into a pile of dog crap merits a mention in the news.

Unfortunately though that's what we're left with when there isn't enough actual news for our local media to cover. So strap yourself in for Bodden's next court appearance. Channel 5 is likely to pre-empt General Hospital to cover it. And while you're at it, pray that that Kamerion Wimbley doesn't blow down I-77 at 70 miles an hour after the game Sunday. With the kind of coverage that would get on local TV, we might not ever see regular programming again.