WHOA!!!!! What a ball game! The Browns and Bengals combined for 96 points and over 1,000 yards in total offense today, with the game ending in an exhilirating 51-45 Browns win. Gary chimes in with some immediate reaction to today's thrilling victory, trying to put into words how the Browns could post two polar opposite offensive performances just one week apart. And all of the sudden, the Browns are 1-1 with a game against the lowly Raiders looming next week.

It wasn't so much that the Browns scored 51 points in their win Sunday over the Cincinnati Bengals that made the game unbelievable. In fact, it wasn't even so much the final score of 51-45 either. It was the last play. When quarterback Derek Anderson took a victory knee on the last play of the game it was official: Browns fans have seen it all.

There isn't a casino in the country, check that, the world, that would have given odds on an Anderson victory kneel happening. Not just Sunday. But at any point this season. And with all due respect to one of the greatest athletes in Cleveland history, LeBron James, serious thought ought to be given to painting over his James' likeness on his "Witness" billboard downtown with a picture of that last play. Who knows when we'll see it again.

Conjuring up the ghosts of 2004 when Kelly Holcomb and Carson Palmer engaged in an eerily similar shootout, Palmer and Anderson again riddled the respective opposing defenses like they were playing Notre Dame. Only this time the Browns didn't come up on the short end. But it was close.

Leigh Bodden, who did nothing to keep his nemesis, Bengals receiver Chad Johnson, in check the entire afternoon nonetheless came up with the one play that counted most—an interception on the Browns 27 with 26 seconds remaining that sealed the improbable win. Until that point, the only Cleveland fan watching that game who didn't think the Bengals would score and send the Browns to defeat is a liar. After all this is a team and a franchise that has conditioned its fans to demand the least and expect the worst.

With the victory there were at least two clear points that emerged. First, GM Phil Savage will get his wish: more time to develop backup quarterback Brady Quinn. Anderson's performance on Sunday gets him a few more starts, at least, even if he throws up on himself next week against Oakland. Second, it's time to call Dr. Finklestein and tell him he can forget about mom for awhile, we've got a whole new set of issues to deal with. This time on the defensive side of the ball.

Actually a third clear point emerged as well. The Cincinnati Bengals are a fraud. As bad as the Browns defense played, the Bengals were far worse than the six point difference on the scoreboard or the 23-yard difference in total yards would otherwise suggest. For example, the 51 points scored in Sunday's game is more than the Browns have scored in their previous five regular season games, combined. Similar games can be played with most of the gaudy statistics the Browns offensive compiled on Sunday. But even more striking is the fact that the Bengals didn't record a single sack. Not one. And this against an offensive line that gave up six last week.

Nobody expects the Browns to do anything this year, so the fact that they gave up 45 points to an offense as explosive as the Bengals isn't much of a surprise. But the Bengals have Super Bowl aspirations; at least they claimed to have after their opening day victory against the Baltimore Ravens. Giving up 51 points to anyone, let alone the Browns, is a legitimate cause for panic.

The Bengals can claim fatigue from expending all their energy on the Ravens game last week. But just as Baltimore's self-proclaimed offensive genius Brian

Billick can't seem to create a consistent and coherent offense for his team, neither can self-proclaimed defensive genius Marvin Lewis create a credible and consistent defense for his team. The Bengals have been mostly awful on defense for the bulk of Lewis' tenure and his team's ridiculous showing against a Browns team in near-total disarray this entire week isn't going to do wonders for his reputation.

Though whether the Bengals were suffering a hangover, took the Browns too lightly, or are really that bad hardly matters right now. What does matter is that the Bengals defense, in one game, essentially did something Romeo Crennel hasn't been able to do in his two-plus years as head coach, build some confidence for a team and a city starving for it.

Unlike last week's game against Pittsburgh where virtually nothing went right and the few positives were so far outweighed by the negatives as to render them meaningless, Sunday's game had a season full of highlights. Running back Jamal Lewis, demonstrating that classic style of a bruiser, wore down the defensive line with small but hard runs early to set up huge hard runs later. In all, he totaled 217 yards rushing, including a 66-yard touchdown run with six minutes left in the third quarter.

But Lewis was hardly the only star. Josh Cribbs is a legitimately feared return man with legitimate Pro Bowl aspirations. Receiver Braylon Edwards had the break-out game we've all been waiting for with eight catches for 146 yards and two touchdowns. And while he didn't catch it, you couldn't help but respect the attempt he had in the first quarter after the Browns took over following a Sean Jones intercepted. Edwards leaped high over the middle on an Anderson pass and was punished greatly for it. He got up a bit shaken but otherwise in tact. Edwards is a lot of things, but soft isn't one of them.

Tight end Kellen Winslow turned in another solid game with six catches for 100 yards and one touchdown while receiver Joe Jurevicius had four catches for 44 yards and two touchdowns. And Anderson, anointed the starter when GM Phil

Savage finally got his way by dumping Charlie Frye on Seattle, was 20-33 for 328 yards and five touchdowns. Though Anderson can best be described as a work in progress, give him credit. He started shaky and ended strong which hasn't exactly been a formula for any Browns player of late.

But back to Dr. Finklestein, who, if can get Marvin Lewis off his couch, will likely find Browns defensive coordinator Todd Grantham cooling his heels in the waiting room. Grantham's defense needs help. Let's not forget that the Bengals had 531 yards of total offense themselves, 401 of which came off the arm of Palmer. Rudi Johnson chipped in with another 100-yard game against the Browns. In short, but for the Bodden interception late and the Jones interception early, it wasn't as if the Browns defense provided much of a speed bump to the Bengals. Throw in the 365 yards the Browns gave up to the Steelers last week and in just two games the Browns already have given up 900 yards.

The problem, of course, is not too difficult to pinpoint. It all starts up front, whether it's offense or defense and right now the Browns defensive line is awful. Ted Washington, who is about the size of two C.C. Sabathias, takes up space and that's about it. He's showing every one of his 16 years in the league. Orpheus Roye, the only credible player on the line right now, still is playing like he's hurt. Robaire Smith, another Savage free agent signee this off-season, is essentially a non-factor.

With a defensive line that can't seem to stop the rush or put much pressure on a quarterback, it leaves a relatively thin defensive backfield exposed. It's not that the Browns defensive backs are without talent, it's just that there isn't an abundance to spare. The fact that rookie Eric Wright is a starter tells you all you need to know. Wright may develop into a quality back eventually, but right now he's awfully green. He played only 22 college games or slightly less than two full seasons split between USC and UNLV. To put it charitably, he still has much to learn.

While it's doubtful that the Browns are as good as they looked against the

Bengals, the victory at least gave some credence to the theory that the Browns aren't as bad as they looked against the Steelers, either. And in a town suffering so mightily for their football team, this qualifies as a legitimate piece of good news.

As for the Bengals, put it this way. For the same reasons that the Michigan Wolverines should be barred from entering the Top 25 at any point this season as a result of their loss to Appalachian State, the Bengals should be barred from any list of this year's Super Bowl contenders. If you can't stop Cleveland, you can't stop anyone.