Nick Allburn checks into his regular Friday slot with his weekly "Heroes & Zeroes" column. In it, Nick hands out dawg bones and demerits to the previous weeks best and worst players for the Browns, keeping running standings in both the heroes and zeroes columns as the season progresses. DA's three first half INT's earned him more demerits this week, and the positive side of the ledger had some of the same usual suspects as well.

You can say what you want about the Cleveland Browns, but up until their game against the Patriots, they had been both unpredictable and pretty damn entertaining.

However, Sunday’s game was eerily predictable. At least on the scoreboard, it ended as most thought it would. And during a year when the starting quarterback was permanently replaced in the second quarter of the opening game, then subsequently traded just days later, predictable simply hasn’t been the norm.

The Patriots had talked of avoiding what they viewed as a possible “trap” game against the Browns, stressing that mental preparation would help them avoid a letdown. Apparently, the thought of their week six date with undefeated Dallas represented an irresistible Siren call, because to say the Patriots played sluggishly would be an understatement.

The fact that New England looked far more like the grisly undead in a George A. Romero film than a football team, is a testament to how poorly the Browns played. But that's what good teams do; they get away with bringing their C-game every now and then.

Make no mistake, the New England Patriots are a very good football team. Although the loss was frustrating, there's no shame in losing to a team that many consider a serious threat to achieve the elusive undefeated season.

This Week's Zeroes

Five Demerits: Derek Anderson

The Browns marched down the field on the first drive of the game, and found themselves deep inside the New England red zone. A touchdown would have been great, but when in the red zone, you always have to come away with points, and a chip shot field goal from Phil "The Thrill" Dawson would have tied the game, 3-3.

Instead, Anderson forced a third down pass into heavy coverage and it was intercepted by Junior Seau. Jason Wright was wide open on the left side, but Anderson didn''t go through his progressions and he never saw Wright.

Anderson threw two more interceptions in the game, along with two touchdown passes. One of the interceptions wasn't really Anderson's fault, but on Asante Samuel's interception, Anderson looked right through the Patriots'' layered coverage and failed to see Adalius Thomas, who batted the ball to Samuel.

In the second half, Anderson became increasingly gun shy, and was hesitant to throw downfield for fear of another turnover. In other words, he was playing not to lose, from behind, which is hardly a recipe for success.

Fact: Anderson had a lousy game. But what's far more disturbing is that DA is developing a serious Jekyll/Hyde complex; nobody knows what to expect of him from one game to the next, and that kind of inconsistency at the most important position on the field will not get the job done.

DA, like D.A. Harvey Dent of the Batman universe, is a Two-Face.

In the four games Anderson has started, his quarterbacks ratings, respectively, are 121, 57, 109.5, and 59. It's worth noting that both of his lousy games were on the road, and both of his stellar games were at home.

The good news is that Anderson is due for a better game this week. The bad news is that there's isn't any way of knowing which DA will show up on Sunday.

Four Demerits: Willie McGinest

At this point, the Willie McGinest signing has to be viewed as a failure.

Since joining the Browns, McGinest has often been injured, has rarely been

effective, and has looked quite lethargic. In two games since returning to the field, McGinest has three total tackles, and not a single solo tackle.

McGinest had a great run in the league, but he's turning 36 in December, which is well past retirement age for the vast majority of NFL linebackers. If McGinest wasn't Romeo's buddy from New England, would he really have retained a roster spot after a poor 2006 campaign?

It's probably an exaggeration to compare McGinest to Keith Hernandez during his time with the Indians, but like Hernandez, it's becoming quite clear that McGinest is simply cashing one last paycheck.

The Browns need Antwan Peek to get healthy so McGinest can return to his natural position: left bench.

Three Demerits: Andra Davis

Andra Davis has never been a playmaker, but when healthy, he's usually very solid. That said, an inside linebacker in Romeo Crennel's 3-4 scheme should have more than 22 total tackles through five games.

Davis has never been very fleet of foot, but he's always made up for it with good positioning and sound tackling. It's quite conceivable that Davis'' skills may be diminishing.

During Crennel's first year in Cleveland, Davis totaled an impressive 149 tackles, 9.3 per game. Last year, that number dropped to 104 total tackles, 7.4 per game (in 14 games played). This year, Davis is down to 4.4 tackles per game.

Part of that dip can be attributed to splitting some time with fellow backers Leon Williams and D'Qwell Jackson, but that's still a serious nosedive. It''s probably time for a changing of the guard; we should see more of Williams and Jackson, and less of Davis.

Two Demerits: New England Defense

The Patriots of the Belichick era are quite admirable. Their entire roster seems to be expendable from year to year (with the exception of Tom Brady), and each year they keep winning.

The Patriots' performance in the standings has only been outdone by their class as an organization. Belichick's guys have traditionally just played football, leaving the exotic end zone dances and smack talk to their opponents, who usually find themselves on the short end of the stick.

That said, I was both surprised and disappointed to see the Pats doing everything but worm dancing on Sunday.

Tedy Bruschi apparently has added a goofy sack dance to his repetoire, very disappointing from the fellow once described as "half man, half god, half possible centaur." (If you haven't heard WGR Buffalo's parody-commentary of Bruschi's

first game back since suffering a stroke, make a point of doing so.)

And Mike Vrabel's hot-headed antics near the end of the game were out of line, also.

Dear New England Patriots,

There is a reason that everyone hates the Baltimore defense, and it's not just because they're good; it's because they're a bunch of jerks. Please don't emulate them.

One Demerit: CBS Broadcasting

This is a given, and it almost feels lazy after bashing Rich Gannon in this column twice in four weeks. However, it's not so much the broadcast team that I took issue with on Sunday as the network itself.

CBS treated us to Greg Gumbel, who is very good, and Dan Dierdorf, who is awful. But the real issue here was not the broadcasters themselves, but what can only be presumed as an order from CBS higher-ups not to talk about the Patriots' video taping scandal (I refuse to attach a "-gate" at the end of it).

Honestly, was the spying incident mentioned once? How can that be? It was arguably the biggest story of the year in the NFL thus far.

Nobody''s expecting Dierdorf to split the atom, but Gumbel is an excellent broadcaster, and there is no way that he forgot about the spying incident. CBS must have ordered its broadcasters not to mention that the Patriots were caught cheating. That''s bad form, CBS.

This Week's Heroes

Five Dog Bones: Robaire Smith

The only explanation for Smith's markedly improved play against New England is that he was abducted by aliens, who taught him the innermost workings of the universe, possibly the meaning of life, and apparently, how to rush the passer.

Smith was all over the field against the Pats, making six solo tackles and wreaking havoc in the backfield all day long, although he came up empty in the sack department.

It appears that Smith may have finally found a comfort zone in the Crennel/Grantham defense, and not a moment too soon.

Four Dog Bones: Jason Wright

One of the biggest question marks for the Browns prior to the season was whether or not they had a capable replacement running back in the event of a Jamal Lewis injury. For at least one week, Jason Wright was up to the task.

Wright had 102 yards on 19 touches against a very good New England defense, accumulating his yardage with slashing, vertical runs. Wright's success is a good barometer for the extensive growth of the offensive line.

It remains to be seen whether or not Jason Wright can carry the load for multiple games, but in the short term, he proved a very capable backup.

Three Dog Bones: Braylon Edwards

It was business as usual for Braylon, who posted his second 100-yard game of the year.

You can''t say enough about Edwards, who has gone from one of the team's most volatile entities in 2006 to the Browns' most consistent skill player in '07.

Edwards'' yearly totals now stand at 485 yards receiving, good for fourth overall, along with four touchdown grabs. If he keeps this up, Braylon will be booking a February flight to Hawaii.

Two Dog Bones: Eric Wright

An early injury to Leigh Bodden meant that Wright drew the difficult assignment of guarding the rejuvenated Randy Moss for most of the afternoon. Wright responded by holding Moss under 100 yards and keeping him out of the endzone

for the first time all year. In fact, Moss only caught three balls for 46 yards.

Furthermore, Easy-E was solid in run support for the second straight game. Wright made six tackles (five solo), showing the open field tackling ability we heard so much about on draft day. It took a few weeks, but it looks like Wright is figuring things out.

One Dog Bone: The Offensive Line

The line had its worst day since battling the Steelers, but they still performed well in the first half. It wasn't until the second half, when the Patriots blitzed their brains out, that the line broke down a bit.

In the first half, the line gave Anderson time to throw and opened up some running lanes. If it wasn't for bad quarterback play, the Browns would have been very much in the game at halftime.

In the second half, the Patriots brought the house, as almost every down was an obvious passing situation. However, you have to tip your cap to the Pats as much as you wag your finger at the offensive line for what happened in the third and fourth quarters.

The line really came up big in the waning seconds, when Mike Vrabel bull rushed Derek Anderson when he was obviously spiking the football. Eric Steinbach responded immediately, defending his quarterback and shoving Vrabel to the ground. Joe Thomas and Hank Fraley dove into the fray immediately thereafter.

The result was one of the most curious no-calls you'll ever see.

At any rate, major props go out to Steinbach and company for backing up DA after Vrabel took a cheap shot on the defenseless quarterback.

Standings

Dog Bones

Offensive Line---15

Braylon Edwards---9

Joshua Cribbs---7

Kamerion Wimbley---6

Kellen Winslow---5(t)

Robaire Smith---5(t)

Demerits

Romeo Crennel---10

Derek Anderson---9

Rich Gannon---7

Willie McGinest---6

The Secondary---5

Bradywatch

It's getting to be about that time. Either this week, or the Rams game following the bye were the two dates that most identified as the best time to hand the reigns to Brady Quinn. Obviously, Quinn will not start this week, but don't be too surprised if he sees his first action against Miami.

Consider this. Charlie Frye played in two games (Miami, Minnesota) in '05 prior to his first start against the Jaguars. Also, this game is at home against a lousy opponent, so the Browns should have a double-digit lead in the second half, and Quinn won't have to deal with a hostile road crowd.

It's time to start getting Quinn some reps and begin his development, because the Browns are almost certainly not playoff-bound this season, and he could very well be better than Derek Anderson **right now**. Although Quinn is a rookie, it's not too

presumptuous to think that he could give the team more consistency than Derek Anderson has up to this point.

Up Next: Miami Dolphins, 1:00, Cleveland Browns Stadium

With the Tribe in the ALCS, the October limelight has shifted from the Browns, at least for a while.

The hapless Dolphins will battle the Brownies without starting quarterback Trent Green, who suffered a career-threatening concussion against Houston last week. That leaves second-year signal caller Cleo Lemon at the helm for the Fish, and it means the Browns will get back to .500 this week.

Although Ronnie Brown poses a serious threat in the running game with 425 yards on the ground this season, the Dolphins are pretty one-dimensional, and the Browns' defense will have one of its best games of the year.

The Browns will win in blowout fashion.

My Call: Browns 34, Dolphins 13