Quickly becoming a big part of the core here at the site, Nick Allburn bangs out another fine effort for us tonight with a look at the emerging situation Phil Savage is going to have to deal with at quarterback this off-season. What will Phil do with his talented pair of signal callers? Deal Anderson? Trade Quinn? Keep them both for '08? Nick lays out ALL the options, and tells us what he thinks is likely to happen.

Derek Anderson is playing better than any Browns quarterback in this decade. In a few short months, Anderson has gone from a possible victim of final training camp cuts to a confident starter posting elite numbers and leading the number four offense in the NFL.

In spite of his immense success, Anderson's future in Cleveland is in doubt as a result of Phil Savage's bold maneuvering during last April's draft that culminated in the selection of Brady Quinn.

Derek Anderson will be the quarterback for the duration of the season, that's no longer up for debate. However, take a gander at the message boards , and you'll find that a great schism has developed within the ranks of the fans. A debate that has sometimes bordered on outright hostility has forced fans to back either Anderson or Quinn as the signal caller for '08 and beyond.

Let's operate under the assumption that Anderson continues to play well for the remainder of the season. DA will be a restricted free agent this off season. The Browns could sign Anderson to a long-term contract at or before that point.

If the Browns don't sign Anderson to a lengthy extension, it's a safe assumption that they will give Anderson the highest qualifying offer of $2.35 million for one year, meaning that they would have the right to match any contract offer Anderson accepted from another team. In addition, if Anderson signs an offer sheet with another team and the Browns fail to match it, they would be compensated with the first and third round draft picks of the team that Anderson ultimately signs with.

It seems unlikely that another club would forfeit two day one draft choices to sign Anderson, but if he maintains this high level of play, it isn't outside the realm of possibility. Given how desperately the Browns needs draft choices to fill several defensive holes, they would probably let Anderson go in exchange for two early picks.

All that said, there are three alternate scenarios which seem more likely: **a)** Anderson is traded for draft picks and Quinn is installed as the starter,
b)
Quinn is traded for picks and Anderson is re-signed,
c)
Anderson and Quinn are both retained and they battle for the starting job in training camp.

Here's a look at those three options.

Option A: Trade Anderson

All things being equal, Anderson is probably easier for the Browns to trade. DA will have a season of impressive play coupled with intimidating statistics under his belt, and the Browns don't have guaranteed money invested in Anderson, so getting rid of him won't count against the cap in years to come (e.g. Tim Couch, Courtney Brown). The team who trades for Anderson can then sign him long-term.

Derek Anderson's success might be due primarily to the system the Browns have in place, not necessarily Anderson himself. DA looked very ordinary behind last year's offensive line, which was lousy. Opposing defenses will adjust to Anderson, meaning that they'll eventually determine his favorite routes and work to neutralize them. The Browns might be wise to let the opposition adjust to Anderson while he's playing elsewhere.

Also, Anderson might be a more attractive prospect to the quarterback-deprived due to Brady Quinn's mixed reviews coming into the draft. Don't forget that Quinn fell all the way to number 22, though much of his freefall can be attributed to need-based drafting.

Still, Phil Savage and the Browns were obviously high on Quinn or they wouldn't have dealt a first and second round pick to Dallas for the right to draft him. And in all fairness, Quinn would probably be successful in the Cleveland offense. The Browns have four of their five starting offensive linemen signed long-term (the exception is Seth McKinney), and the receiving trio of Edwards, Jurevicius, and Winslow will also be back for '08.

Quinn played behind a very mediocre offensive line his senior year at Notre Dame, and his receivers (the solid Jeff Samardzija and drop-happy Rhema McKnight) weren't even close to the elite talents of Edwards and Winslow. In spite of playing with mediocre personnel, Quinn managed to post gaudy numbers. There is little reason to believe that Quinn wouldn't have success with the Browns.

Option B: Trade Quinn

Quinn looked awfully good in preseason, but it's well-known that preseason success does not necessarily translate to the regular season, and vice-versa. Case in point, Derek Anderson looked like a career number three this preseason, while J.T. O'Sullivan lead the league in preseason passing. And of course, much

of Quinn's success came against guys who are now bagging groceries.

During the draft, there were numerous teams who were lukewarm on Quinn due to the perception that he wasn't a big game quarterback in college. Accuracy was also a concern for Quinn heading into the draft. Although Quinn's losing record in bowl games was mostly due to playing on an over-hyped, overrated team, the accuracy concerns may have had validity. There's no way for the Browns to know for certain whether or not Quinn can perform at a high level until he sees significant regular season action.

Although many teams were down on Quinn, there were just as many that, like the Browns, had Quinn in the top five on their draft boards. Brady would be an upgrade for many teams. By keeping Anderson, the Browns would be maintaining continuity on offense, while removing the risk of starting an unproven quarterback who would essentially still be a rookie.

There are some who view Anderson as the "veteran" quarterback, believing Quinn has more upside. While Quinn certainly has vast potential, Anderson isn't exactly Vinny Testaverde. DA is only 24 (just 16 months older than Quinn), so it's highly unlikely that he's hit his production ceiling.

If the Browns keep DA, they will sign him to a long-term contract. Anderson's new contract could prove more costly than Quinn's , and Tony Romo's recent extension
could be a barometer for the cash Anderson would command.

The Browns would take a salary cap hit for Quinn's guaranteed money ($6 million remaining after this season) if they traded him, but they'd probably receive a first round draft pick in return. It is possible that the Browns won't want to absorb Quinn's guaranteed money next season because they will probably be active in free agency yet again, particularly to make some defensive upgrades.

Option C: Keep Both Anderson and Quinn

This is obviously the most conservative (non)move the Browns could make, as they could have a sequel to last summer's quarterback competition, hopefully with better results. If the Browns keep both quarterbacks, it would allow them to make a more educated decision on which quarterback to retain for the long-term.

There are obvious downsides to this decision. Obviously, training camp is several months after the draft, so the Browns would not be able to upgrade next year's club with an additional draft pick from a trade. Furthermore, if the Browns chose Quinn, they would have the choice of trading Anderson during or after training camp, when his value will be diminished, or keeping Anderson as a backup.

If the Browns kept Anderson all year, he would become an unrestricted free agent in 2009, meaning that the Browns would receive no compensation if Anderson signed with another team (unless they placed the franchise tag on him, which would further complicate things).

If the Browns chose Anderson, they would have the choice of trading Quinn during or after training camp (when, as was stated previously, his value is diminished), or trading him during the 2009 off season. Unfortunately, there is no way to predict the demand for quarterbacks that far down the road.

Regardless of whom they might choose, the Browns will miss a golden opportunity to improve their team if they don't trade Anderson or Quinn next off season.

What Will Happen?

Unless something completely unexpected happens (e.g. Browns in the Super

Bowl), Derek Anderson will be traded during this off season. The Browns simply have too much invested in Brady Quinn to change course at this point in time. It would be quite a luxury to have two quality quarterbacks on the roster, but the Browns have too many holes to fill on defense to choose quarterback depth over a potential blue chip player at defensive line or linebacker.

My Call

Let me reiterate what a great situation we have with two capable quarterbacks. Teams will always need quarterbacks, and they'll pay a premium for them. With that in mind, I agree with trading one of our two QBs in exchange for a draft choice(s). The Browns need to use this quarterback surplus to improve the defense.

Picking which quarterback to unload is going to be tricky. As fans, we don't see Quinn in practice, but let's assume that he's capable of running the offense effectively (at or close to where they are with DA), because otherwise this entire argument is purely academic.

The Browns should let the market dictate which quarterback to trade. If they can command a significantly higher price for one of the two quarterbacks, then that's the guy they should trade. If there is little difference in the value of the quarterbacks, the Browns should choose the guy in whom they have the most confidence. If that's the case, it's difficult to pick against Anderson.

Whomever the Browns choose, it's imperative that they make the right choice, as a wrong decision could cripple for the franchise for the next half dozen years or so. We've been there before , and it's not a cool place to be.

Mr. Savage, the ball is in your court.