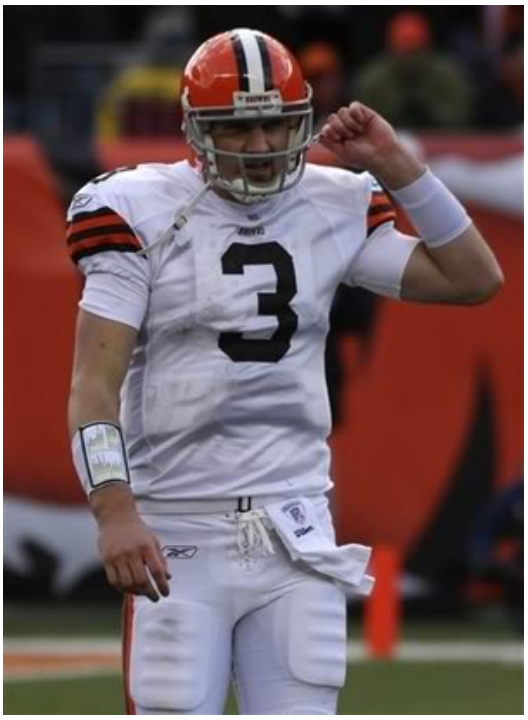
Not an ideal sports weekend for all of us Cleveland sports fans. Derek Anderson completely melted down with a trip to the playoffs on the line, chucking four bone-headed interceptions in a 19-14 loss to the hapless Bungles. At least DA was trying though, which is more than you can say for the Cavaliers. What a way to usher in the holiday! Anyone want to come over my house and kick me in the nuts to finish off the weekend proper? Brian McPeek gives us the weekend wrap ...



Out of Their Hands

Derek Anderson wet the playoff bed.

You can cite DA's relative inexperience, his first time in a 'meaningful' game or whatever excuse you feel better about. But the Browns 19-14 loss in Cincinnati on Sunday comes down to the fact that Anderson was pathetic with a capital S-U-C-K.

Had DA been merely terrible the Browns may have escaped Cincinnati with a win and a playoff spot locked up for the first time since 2002. After all, Carson Palmer and the Bengals seemed more than willing to hand the Browns a win at Paul Brown Stadium. Palmer had as mediocre a day as you can expect from him as he threw for just 115 yards, two interceptions and a TD and he put a goose egg on the board in the 2nd half.

But in just over a minute late in the first half Anderson threw two horrible interceptions that set up the Bengal offense deep in Cleveland territory and led directly to 14 Cincinnati points. Those two picks deep in Cleveland territory went nicely with the other two interceptions that were thrown as the Browns were poised to score and cut into the Bengal lead.

These interceptions were not the garden-variety sort either. They typified everything that is wrong with DA as a QB and everything he needs to work on to improve. Locking onto receivers, throwing late and behind covered receivers over the middle of the field and just generally forcing footballs and displaying a lack of anything remotely close to touch, Anderson put the Browns offense and defense into holes too deep to dig out of.

The biggest shame may be that the defense otherwise throttled a potent Bengal offense and looked poised to help the offense for one of the rare times this season. But at the end of the day the defense was unable to turn touchdowns into field goals as they have so many times this season. Not an unexpected result when on Bengal drive started at the Browns 5 yard line and another at the Browns 20. And we shouldn't overlook the fact yet another opposing running back had a field day running the football. But Kenny Watson's 130 yards didn't kill the Browns like DA did and the Browns defense did turn over the Bengals three times, including an almost critical Watson fumble with less

than two minutes remaining and the Bengals looking to salt the game away deep in Cleveland territory.

Anderson finished 29-48 for 250 yards, two touchdowns and the 4 killer interceptions. Both TD passes went to Braylon Edwards who should be congratulated for breaking the Browns single season TD reception record while being castigated for dropping a couple of catchable balls on a day when his QB was struggling.

Add in a botched snap/hold on a field goal attempt and the Browns simply shot themselves in the foot far too often to expect anything other than what they got.

Exactly what they got was control ripped from them in regard to the playoff race. The loss to the Bengals combined with the Titans 10-6 win over the Jets means the Browns are forced to hope the Colts can take down the Titans next Sunday. Without the Titans falling the Browns are out regardless of what they do next week against San Francisco. And Indianapolis has a history of treating the 16th game like the last pre-season game when they have nothing to gain.

DA picked the worst possible time to throw up all over

himself and play Santa to the Bengals and to the Titans on Sunday.

Stop the Madness..... Please

Enough.

There are a faction of Cav fans out there defending this team's play and advising the Cav are poising themselves for another run deep into the NBA playoffs. That when spring rolls around this gang that can't shoot straight is going to throw some switch to suddenly emerge as a playoff power.

Why?

What is it that you see that brings you solace and confidence watching a team that did nothing to improve itself in the last 6 months and that is struggling mightily right now?

Was it the blowout losses recently to poor New

Jersey, Charlotte and Washington squads? Or was it the blowout loss to the pathetic New York Knicks? Maybe it was the win over the Lakers this past Thursday that heightened your optimism? Are you optimistic after watching this team play so well with LeBron James out of the lineup?

I just don't get it. I don't get it even more after watching Sunday's home loss to the Warriors in a game the Cav were never in.

I see a one dimensional basketball standing before me today. Much as a I saw a healthy, one dimensional basketball take the court on opening night and get run out of their own building by the Dallas Mavericks.

Last May and June are long gone Cav fans. This edition of the Cav is not likely to avoid an early playoff test like last year's squad did. In fact, they

currently stand to be the early round fodder that teams are hoping to match up against.

As long as the Cav have LBJ they are a threat. But asking the kid to carry the burden himself again this spring is unfair and unrealistic.

And if you're expecting that same type of magic from LBJ again, you're setting yourself for a big fall. Not as big a fall as the Cav are experiencing, but there will be a thud and a depression at the end of it.

Etcetera

- After a bit more than a week to digest the Mitchell Report I can honestly say "yawn". Given the fact that the emperor has no clothes this whole ‘investigation' leaves me unfulfilled. There's

nothing substantial or meaningful likely to come from it and there's nothing in the past that's going to be affected or changed. Any chance we can simply acknowledge that steroids and other PEDs were a part of the game and move forward knowing that this generation of players will simply be more careful about who they buy their undetectable PEDs from going forward?

- There is one obvious benefit to the Mitchell Report; we all get to see Roger Clemens squirm like the snake he is. Me thinks he doth protest too much. Me also thinks he should file a lawsuit as soon as possible to clear his name. In fact, I can't possibly think of a single reason that Clemens wouldn't go to court and fight to clear his good name. Except that he's dirtier than a pig in mud. If Clemens is not going to hire the best attorneys money can buy to defend him against these allegations then I hope he just shuts up and goes away. No more

statements issued through agents and through the press, no more monument kissing. Just slink off into the sunset, let time pass and then issue more self-serving and empty statements five years from now when his Hall of Fame candidacy is being discussed in earnest.

- Apparently 20 yr-old kids can find all kinds of trouble to get into in the 8-week period between regular season finales and bowl games. Ohio State is staring at a BCS Championship game without starting cornerback Donald Washington and Florida State is staring at a Music City Bowl against Kentucky without 23 players on their roster. Washington is appealing his suspension for violating team rules. The 23 Seminoles apparently cheated their way to academic eligibility. That's industrious but highly inappropriate. Kids will be kids and they will get themselves into situations that require discipline

to remedy it. But you have to wonder just how much guidance and discipline the kids at FSU are receiving from their ‘leader'.

Bobby Bowden is damn near 80 years old. This is a man whose time has come and gone as far as coaching a big time college football team is concerned. Bowden should be attending the unveiling of his statue, accepting the keys to his office in the athletic center bearing his name and then having a 3pm dinner at Sizzler before getting to bed after the 6pm news. He should not be lording over two-a-days and breaking down game film 120 hours per week.

And perhaps he isn't.

Based on FSU's record over the past couple years it appears he's cutting back somewhere. Aside from being unable to relate to the high school athlete on any level other than playing a grandfatherly game of "In Which Hand Am I Hiding The Quarter", he's also not running the tightest ship in the fleet. So if you're not going to win, graduate players or teach them anything about life off the field, then what exactly are you doing with a whistle in your mouth?

Lastly, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to the readers of theclevelandfan.com. We appreciate your readership and wish you and your families the very best in this holiday season.