Derek Anderson just had one of the greatest seasons for a quarterback in the history of the Cleveland Browns franchise. And while Nick Allburn says he needs a little more time to formulate his opinion on what the Browns should do at QB, he doesn't think it will matter. In his latest, Nick says it's very likely the Browns will move DA this offseason, and annoint Brady Quinn as the starter ... and feels there were three events that took place late this season that hint at DA's departure.

While the entire NFL was surprised by Derek Anderson's success, no team was more astounded by Anderson's sudden emergence than the Browns. Anderson posted gaudy numbers in 2007; 3,787 yards passing and 29 touchdowns, statistics which dwarf the accomplishments of other expansion-era Browns quarterbacks.

Of the numerous expansion-era Browns signal callers, only Tim Couch has broken the 3,000 yard barrier (3,040 yards in 2001). To find a Browns quarterback who threw more than 29 touchdown passes, one must look back to 1980, when Brian Sipe threw for 30 scores and over 4,000 yards. Browns fans have not watched a quarterback enjoy this kind of statistical success in the last two decades, yet here we are, discussing the possibility of trading Derek Anderson this off-season so that the keys to the offense can be handed to a red-shirted freshman quarterback who has only thrown eight regular season passes. On paper, it looks like lunacy.

But I don't want to dive into the DA versus Quinn debate, at least not yet. No, instead I'd like to take a look at a few events that took place during the time frame of the Browns' final pair of games. These events, some of which were very unlikely, may have tipped the scales in Quinn's favor.

Browns at Bengals: The Anderson Meltdown

The Browns had a chance to clinch their first playoff birth since 2002, and all they had to do was sink the rudderless Cincinnati Bengals. But the Browns choked, losing in the Queen City 19-14 due almost solely to a catastrophic showing by Derek Anderson. DA threw four interceptions, two of which gave the Bengals laughably short fields which resulted in touchdowns. Prior to this game, some of the more sophomoric Cleveland sports talk show hosts were ready to canonize Anderson, as they mocked anyone who even alluded to Quinn getting a shot at the starting job in ‘08.

Derek Anderson was faltering somewhat, even prior to the Bengals game. Anderson hadn't had a rating of over 100 since week eight (at St. Louis), defenses were starting to figure him out, and his play had cost the Browns one game (at Arizona) and contributed heavily to the Browns' second half collapse in Pittsburgh. And if one objectively reviews the game video from the entire season, even the most ardent Anderson supporter would have to concede that DA consistently left points on the field. This is witnessed in the fact that the Browns never blew out an opponent, even in games that the Browns controlled from start to finish (Houston, New York Jets, San Francisco).

That said, the Cincinnati game was the most costly loss for Derek Anderson; he missed an opportunity to lock up a playoff spot, he missed an opportunity to possibly cement himself as the Browns' starting quarterback next season, and he probably cost himself millions of dollars in the event that another team tries to sign him or trade for him (signing him to a long-term deal afterwards).

It was only one bad game, and everyone's entitled to one, but for many Browns

fans, that game allowed Derek Anderson to make a complete transition from hero to goat. While Anderson is far from a finished product, the Cincinnati game glaringly exposed two of his largest flaws; inaccuracy and making lazy reads, bird-dogging receivers. The door had been opened for Brady Quinn.

Browns Re-Sign Ken Dorsey

The Wednesday after the Bengals game, the Browns gave third string quarterback Ken Dorsey a three-year contract extension. This started speculation that the Browns were essentially re-committing to Quinn, as Dorsey had been given the mantle of being Quinn"s "mentor" during the pre-season.

Truth be told, as a number three quarterback with vast knowledge of OC Rob Chudzinski"s system, Dorsey was also instrumental in Derek Anderson's development. But there's little doubt that Dorsey is probably more important to Quinn than Anderson, both personally and professionally, as Quinn once described Dorsey as "a mentor, [and] a friend". It was Quinn, not Anderson, who issued a public plea for Dorsey's return after the Browns waived him in their last wave of training camp cuts. While it was hardly a public vote of confidence in Quinn, re-upping with Dorsey may have been an indicator that the Browns were starting to lean in Brady's direction.

Quinn Gets His Chance

Following a week of speculation on whether or not Quinn would play, Romeo Crennel foolishly resolved to play Derek Anderson for the entirety of the Browns' final game against San Francisco, taking imprudent risks with the health of the quarterback who would have invariably started had the Browns qualified for the playoffs. Frankly, playing all of the starters for the vast majority of the game was lazy and uncreative thinking on Crennel's part.

Quinn would get his chance anyway, and whether it was fate or dumb luck, a mid-second quarter injury to Derek Anderson's throwing hand allowed Quinn to lead the Cleveland's final drive of the half. Quinn played as well as anyone could have hoped, leading the Browns deep into San Francisco territory and ending the drive with a field goal. In fairness, Quinn, who was victimized by three drops (including two in the end zone), played much better than his stat line (3-8, 45 yards) indicates.

Quinn played as well as the Browns could have hoped, which has been Quinn's modus operandi since he signed his contract. On and off of the field, Quinn has done everything the Browns have asked. During the pre-season, Quinn moved the offense effectively whenever coach Crennel called his number. And during the regular season, Quinn never complained about holding a clipboard behind Charlie Frye or Derek Anderson. Actually, Quinn has made most of his noise in the marketing department, serving as a pitchman for sports supplement giant EAS
and starring in a goofy ad for
Subway
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What It All Means

Nobody''s saying that Anderson is garbage; he's a pretty good fit for Chudzinski's offense and he can probably be an average or above average quarterback in Cleveland for years to come. The question for Phil Savage and friends is whether or not they have more confidence in Brady Quinn, and whether or not they want to bank on Quinn's vast, albeit untapped, potential.

It seems unlikely to me that the Browns will start next season with Anderson and Quinn on the roster. To do so risks a schism in the locker room, a media circus, and ignores an obvious opportunity for the Browns to trade one quarterback this off-season to upgrade their lackluster defensive front seven.

So what **will** happen? To me, it looks like the Browns will trade Derek Anderson and install Quinn as the starter, and it looks like the three events I highlighted above have greased the wheels for such a decision. The Browns have too much invested in Quinn to give up on him. The investment isn't so much financial (Quinn's contract is very manageable), but rather in terms of draft choices and philosophy. Phil Savage staked his reputation and quite possibly his career in Cleveland to Brady Quinn when he traded up to select him in last April's draft. And for better or worse, those investments will keep Savage in Quinn''s corner.