With success comes expectations, and in the case of some of the Browns' young stars, those expectations involve the smell of legal U.S. tender, counted in high denominations, preferably guaranteed. Sean Jones is looking to score a new contract and is a free agent at seasons end. Braylon Edwards is scheduled to hit free agency after 2009. And both Kellen Winslow and Josh Cribbs have expressed their desire to have their deals reworked. Who do the Browns pay? And when? Jesse tells us.

With success comes expectations, and in the case of some of the Browns' young stars, those expectations involve the smell of legal U.S. tender, counted in high denominations, preferably guaranteed. Sean Jones is looking to score a new contract to replace his current rookie deal which runs out after the 2008 season. Kellen Winslow, newly represented by Drew Rosenhaus, would love to re-structure his already re-structured contract. Braylon Edwards is scheduled to hit free agency after the 2009 season. And Josh Cribbs, in only the second year of the six-year pact he signed in 2006, "couldn't help but notice" the fat deal his NFC doppelganger Devin Hester was just rewarded by the Chicago Bears, and would not object in the slightest if a similar bounty were to be offered his way.

The problem is, there's only so much lucre to go around, and the Browns have already spent an awful lot of it to sign Shaun Rogers and Corey Williams and re-sign Derek Anderson and Jamal Lewis. Of course, there will be more money available this next off-season, and there's the possibility of a cap-less year in

2010. Sooner or later the dollars will be available to retain the services of Jones, Edwards, Winslow and Cribbs.

The questions are; should they be retained, and when?

Braylon Edwards

Age on Opening Day: 25

Contract Status: Signed through 2009

Winning teams finish drives with touchdowns, not field goals, and Braylon is the finisher. His physical talent is off the charts, and he augments that talent with a highly polished public persona that makes him an ideal "face" for the organization. He drops enough passes for it to be noticeable, but it's hard to complain when he's compensating with plays like these . He stretches the field like no one else on the team, and he's the go-to guy when it's time to stick it in the end zone. No more double-reverses inside the five: just put it up for BE and let him do the rest. In Rob Chudzinski's scheme, Braylon is the indispensable man.

Pay him? He's the best receiver this franchise has seen since Paul Warfield. He's a franchise player, and you don't let those types walk. Pay the man.

Kellen Winslow

Age on Opening Day: 25

Contract Status: Signed through 2010

Marty Schottenheimer says that when the game is on the line you look for players, not plays, and Kellen is that player for the Browns, the guy who will make the catch in traffic to extend a clock-beating drive, the guy you can count on. Aside from his blocking, he's as technically proficient as a tight end can get- flypaper hands, flawless receiving technique, and superb route-running. He's also fearless, fiery, and possesses a desire to excel and win that is impossible to slake. Along with Josh Cribbs, Kellen might be the most popular player on the team among fans, who have embraced his skill, emotion, and toughness.

Pay him? Kellen has Hall-of-Fame genes, Hall-of-Fame hands, and a Hall-of-Fame work ethic. But he doesn't have a Hall-of-Fame knee. With the questions about K2's health and a possible tight end of the future on the roster in Martin Rucker, there's no reason to move rashly. Let the contract play out and go from there.

Josh Cribbs

Age on Opening Day: 25

Contract Status: Signed through 2012

The ebullient Cribbs has turned into one of the team's signature players, a guy so popular that people will gladly burn a half-hour of their lives watching him engage in mundane tasks on TV. *("On the next 'Josh's Cribbs', me, Darnell Dinkins, and Jason Wright get our tires rotated, and later we get the couples over for Pictionary."*) Without question he is the best special-teams player in the NFL, a wicked combination of Steve Tasker, Eric Metcalf, and the Predator. Despite his duty on both return and coverage teams, there's no reason to believe that Cribbs, a strapping 6'1", 215, will have the

durability problems that limited the prime years of some other great return men. With his size, elusiveness, and ability to line up at quarterback in certain offensive packages, his overall value should only increase.

Pay him? Can a special-teams player be a cornerstone of your team? He can be if he's Josh Cribbs. He's one of the team's most dynamic playmakers and personalities. If the current Browns commissioned a Mount Rushmore, the sculptor would be carving dreadlocks. Pay him. Don't pay him quite yet, there's no need- but pay him.

Sean Jones

Age on Opening Day: 26

Contract Status: Signed through 2008

Jones was outstanding in his breakout year of 2006, and although he started slow in '07 along with the rest of the defense, he finished strong as he grew into his role as leader of the secondary. He's shown himself to be stout in run support, and he's adept enough against the pass to have snared five interceptions in each of the last two seasons. The knee injury that sidelined him for the entirety of his rookie season notwithstanding, Jones has been a durable player, starting thirty-two straight games for the Browns the last two seasons. He isn't a superstar, but he's a good, solid player and he's young enough to get better.

Pay him? Yes. Jones is the most experienced member of Cleveland's callow secondary. He will also easily be the best safety in the 2009 free-agent class, most likely better than anyone the Browns can bring in to replace him. Best to sign him as soon as possible; or at least before Al Davis does something else stupid
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So in order, the priorities should be:

1. Jones
2. Edwards
3. Cribbs
4. Winslow

With Braylon's retention ultimately being the most important. Sean Jones comes first simply because his present deal ends first. Cribbs isn't going anywhere, so his status isn't a matter of urgency, but if his 2008 season is anything like 2007, he'll certainly deserve a raise. Hell, if I kicked as much ass at my job as Josh Cribbs does at his, I'd sure be looking for a bump. With Kellen, it's a matter of wait-and-see. It's just tough to reckon how much time he has before he simply can't hold up physically.

Either way, the increased expectations and the increased demands are nothing to get in a tizzy about. It goes with the territory. You put together a core of excellent young players, they win some games, they want to get paid. There are worse problems to have in this league.