Well, at least the new uniform pants looked good and the final score was close. Other than that, it would be hard to find much positive about the Cleveland Browns 2008 national television debut on Monday night against the New York Giants. With both teams starting units on the field, the Giants raced to a 30-3 lead, embarassing the Browns in front of a massive audience. Gary hits on the ambush from the defending Super Bowl champs in his latest.

Well, at least the new uniform pants looked good and the final score was close.

Other than that, it would be hard to find much positive about the Cleveland Browns 2008 national television debut on Monday night against the New York Giants. Good thing it was preseason, though, otherwise the Giants would have played their starters far later into the game and the final score would have been much worse. Instead, after the domination was secured late in the second quarter, the Giants rested. The final score may have been 37-34, but anyone who thinks it was that close was clearly watching the Olympics or The Closer. Either would have been a better choice, actually.

Demonstrating why they are the Super Bowl champs and the Browns are merely wannabes, the Giants' starters were pretty much able to do most anything they wanted at almost anytime they wanted. The Browns' starters on the other hand, though missing a few key pieces, weren't able to do much of anything except cause themselves a healthy dose of embarrassment in about every way a team can be embarrassed outside of the regular season.

With less than a minute gone in the second quarter, the Browns' starters were down 30-3 due to a combination of penalties, mistakes and simply bad play. That

27-point differential is far more representative of what really took place than the final score.

The story of this game occurred from about the middle of the first quarter until quarterback Derek Anderson was sacked and left the game with a potential concussion with 13:17 left in the second quarter. In that brief time, the Browns put together some of the worst football you're likely to see. Consider the evidence:

- At 8:47, Giants quarterback Eli Manning connected with the University of Akron product Domenik Hixon for the first of two touchdown passes. Manning's pass came at the expense of Eric Wright. But to be fair to Wright, Manning was working on a short field. Of course that was due to a 53-yard pass interference penalty on Wright three plays earlier, but why pick nits?

- After the touchdown, the Browns immediately went three and out. Adams, not wanting to be upstaged by Wright, interfered with the returner leading to another penalty. On the plus side, it was only a 15-yard penalty.

- The Wright penalty though did lead to Manning's second touchdown pass to Hixon, this one for 24 yards. But at least it wasn't at the expense of Wright. This time Hixon beat cornerback Mike Adams by a mere five or so yards on the play. Of course it could have been more but for an entertaining interlude on the play proceeding the touchdown. Linebacker Andre Davis took a swing at an unidentified Giants player and missed. For that effort, he cost his team 15 yards, which only would have given Hixon even more room to run by Adams. Had Davis connected on his ill-advised swing, he undoubtedly would have had an earlier exit. Maybe that was his intent.

- The Browns responded well to this second touchdown by throwing another three-and-out at the Giants, though they did gain three yards.

- The Giants, perhaps showing mercy or perhaps wanting to now work on their running game, gained only one first down in its next possession. It was a tease because then things got interesting...

- Anderson hit fullback Charles Ali on a short pass. Tight end Kellen Winslow nullified it with an offensive pass interference penalty. A Jamal Lewis run for -2 yards and two incomplete passes later, the Browns were forced to punt from their own end zone. Officially, Reuben Droughns was credited with the inevitable blocked punt. In actuality, it was blocked by Browns rookie Travis Thomas, whom Droughns merely pushed into punter Dave Zastudil. Fortunately the ball took a favorable bounce for the Browns and the Giants only got the safety.

- On the ensuing free kick, Zastudil kicked it to, guess who?, Hixon, who immediately returned it virtually untouched for an 82-yard touchdown. Then things got even more interesting...

- On the kickoff, and with Josh Cribbs in the locker room, Syndric Steptoe took the ball to the Giants 9-yard line. Anderson passed to Ali who took it down to the three-yard line. It was Anderson's high water mark. On the next play, Anderson and Lewis couldn't execute a simple handoff. Safety James Butler picked up the ball at the 5-yard line and went almost untouched for a 95-yard return. Game, set and match.

Eventually, though, things settled down once Anderson got hurt, though it wasn't necessarily because he got hurt. Mostly it was because the Giants, thankfully, had seen enough of most of its starters by the time Brady Quinn went in for the injured Anderson. The Browns, on the other hand, were mostly playing their starters, if only to provide an added measure of confidence. It seemed to work, to a degree.

Quinn was able to move the team in his second possession and close the gap to

30-10 with two minutes left. Then on the Giants next possession, and with perennial back up Anthony Wright at quarterback, the previously malinged Adams and Wright combined to close the gap to a mere 13 points at the half. Adams, on a corner blitz, forced Wright to launch a duck that fell ever so gingerly into the hands of Wright. Wright proceeded to high-step into the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown return. Why Wright was hotdogging it is anyone's guess.

Most of the rest of the game went pretty much as expected, meaning it when it wasn't outright painful to watch it was otherwise boring, and vice versa. Rookies and undrafted free agents littered the field like discarded hot dog wrappers, moving about and committing all manner of mistakes. Quinn, for example, was credited with a 44-yard touchdown pass to Steptoe that brought the Browns to within six at 30-24, but it the ball was underthrown. Giants' cornerback Kevin Dockery actually had the interception for a moment then bobbled it back into Steptoe's arms as he was entering the end zone.

Quinn, for his part, didn't embarrass himself, though which is a good thing. He was 7-12 for 124 yards, but it was mostly against the opposing team's second and third string players, as usual. Ken Dorsey made Bernie Kosar proud by leading the Browns to their final touchdown, an 8-yard pass to fellow Hurricane Lance Leggett, a play that the ESPN crew didn't seem to realize had taken place until the Browns kicked off. The Giants were able to run out the clock afterward, officially drawing the curtain on a game for which the real curtains had been drawn far earlier.

To the extent there is anything meaningful to be gleaned from this entire mess, it came when both teams played its starters early on. And the most salient of all points is that the Giants are quite comfortable in the limelight. The Browns? Not so much.

The lure of trying to minimize the destruction by focusing on the final score is tempting. There are now injuries to wrestle with, including those to Anderson as well as Josh Cribbs and Brodney Pool, though the extent are not yet known. But

for however meaningless the game might otherwise be, the fact that the Browns starters were pushed around like college kids by the physically superior Giants is going to linger, especially when these two teams meet again in mid October. That will be the real coaching challenge for head coach Romeo Crennel. His team knows that the butt whooping it took wasn't the result of coming out flat. His young team with high expectations will be looking to him for answers and a way to rebuild some of the confidence it had surgically removed on Monday night. If Crennel can't find those answers, it will be a long season, just not the kind originally envisioned.