If the third preseason game is supposed to be a dress rehearsal for all that's to come in the regular season then this much is certain: the Cleveland Browns aren't ready. They are really, really not ready. Struggling on offense and being over accommodating on third down on defense, the Browns' were again outplayed on both sides of the ball on their way to losing their third preseason game, this time a 26-6 hobbling at the hands of the Detroit Lions.

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The game was the much hyped debut of Browns' backup quarterback Brady Quinn. If there ends up being a quarterback controversy on this team, it won't be as a result of this game. Quinn struggled in the same way that Derek Anderson usually struggles on the road. At least Quinn showed some poise. Most of the rest of the team couldn't even make that claim, outside of perhaps defensive lineman Shaun Rogers who was making his first trip back to Detroit since being acquired by the Browns in the off season and kicker Phil Dawson.

To a certain extent the struggles were hardly unexpected. The Browns were playing their second game in five days and were missing not only Anderson, but also starting running back Jamal Lewis, starting receiver Braylon Edwards and kick returner Josh Cribbs and that was just on offense. Brodney Pool, Sean Jones and Antwan Peek (who has missed all of preseason) weren't available to the defense either.

Given all that was missing, and given the whooping the starters took earlier in the week, it seemed that all the elements would coalesce to create something much closer to a controlled scrimmage than an actual game. It wasn't even that entertaining. Pity the poor Lions fans that decided to waste their Saturday afternoon inside Ford Field.

If Lions' quarterback Jon Kitna had watched any film on the Browns first two preseason games, he had to be drooling at the prospect of padding his own stats against a porous Browns defensive secondary. And that was before Pool and Jones were declared out for the game. Maybe that's why Kitna and the Lions came out throwing, eschewing a huddle and forcing the Browns to play them straight up.

Though the defense was essentially up to its old trick of bending far into the other team's territory, it was doing it in a mostly atypical way, at least in contrast to previous years. The defensive line, anchored by Shaun Rogers, played as advertised. Unfortunately, though, so did the defensive backfield, at least for as long as the Lions kept in their key offensive starters, which was all of two series. But that was plenty for the Lions, who were able to run up two quick Dave Rayner field goals.

The Lions' defense was hardly as accommodating to Quinn. In three straight series, the Browns were three and out. In all, they gained 19 yards in nine plays covering just over one quarter of play. You did have to admire the moxie of Browns offensive coordinator Rob Chudzinski though. He unleashed Quinn on his very first play as a starter, calling for a long pass at former Browns' defensive

back Leigh Bodden. The pass to Donte Stallworth was incomplete, due mostly to a defensive holding penalty on former Akron Zips player Dwight Smith. Still, the thought was good. The execution was lacking, which was really the predominant theme throughout.

Quinn's third possession was particularly frustrating because the Browns started inside Lions territory. He hit tight end Kellen Winslow on a quick hitter on first down, but a Jerome Harrison run went nowhere. On third down Quinn was under pressure and couldn't connect. All told, in slightly more than one quarter of play, the Browns ran nine offensive plays for 19 yards.

The Lions had no such struggles. Not only did Kitna have his way, mostly, with the Browns' starters, so did backup quarterback Dan Orlovsky. All he did in his second possession was move the Lions 80 yards in five plays. For good measure, Orlovsky made the key block on the final play of that drive, a 35-yard run by Kevin Smith, taking out three Browns' players in the process.

By the time the score stood 13-0, Browns' starters were once again in the now familiar position of hanging their heads. Fortunately, the fact that the Lions aren't the Giants is what kept the game relatively close. Quinn eventually was able to find some semblance of rhythm just not enough. After finding their way to first and goal at the Lions' eight-yard line, the offense just as suddenly found itself third and goal from the Lions' 21 as a result of a Winslow holding penalty on a pass to Stallworth, and two incomplete passes. It led to a Phil Dawson 39-yard field goal.

On their next possession, the Browns moved the score to within a touchdown thanks to a 53-yard field goal by Dawson. The problem was that settling for a 53-yard field goal when you start the drive inside the other team's territory isn't much of an accomplishment. The Lions meanwhile ran a mostly effective two-minute drill to close out the half and pushed the score back to 10 on another Rayner field goal.

Quinn's only possession of the second half was essentially a rerun of the two possessions that preceded it-a little promise a little frustration. Quinn looked sharp initially but couldn't connect on two short passes, one to Stalloworth and the other to Harrison on fourth and two that ultimately doomed the opening drive of the half. The Browns were forced to punt.

The Lions, again, didn't feel so constrained. Orlovsky, again moving the ball mostly at will, had the chance to effectively put the game out of reach had Lions offensive coordinator Jim Colletto felt so inclined. Instead, with the ball resting at the Browns' 17-yard line, Colletto called for three straight run plays. The Lions had to settle for Rayner's fourth field goal and a 13-point lead. It effectively put the game out of reach anyway. For good measure, Orlovsky made sure it was the case by following that up with a five-play 69-yard touchdown drive for the Lions' final score.

When Quinn's game ended, the box score will show that he went 14-24 for 106 yards and no interceptions, though the Lions were close on at least two occasions. It wasn't awful, but it wasn't sponge-worthy either. He also didn't have any touchdowns and never really came close on that either. If nothing else Quinn's performance demonstrated the underlying importance of both Lewis and Edwards to the offense. Without those two key playmakers, the Browns were forced to rely far too much on the inexperienced Quinn. It showed.

As for the defense, it was hard to say that it suffered as much the impact of losing two of its starters. With or without Pool and Jones, the defensive backfield proved quite capable of giving up huge chunks of yardage to quarterbacks, both good and mediocre. This week's perpetrator was Orlovsky, a career backup playing not so much for his job but because the Lions are so thin at the position. In all, the Lions had 257 yards through the air and, with their starters in, seemed to complete every third down they really needed. Certain trends, apparently, are harder to break than others.

The Browns now find themselves winless in the preseason, which, frankly, is the

least of the problems. Success in the preseason is as overrated as failure. The larger issue is what this preseason has revealed thus far about the defense and how far it needs to go to be credible. As expected, defensive coordinator Mel Tucker tried a variety of blitzes early on to disrupt both Kitna's and Orlovsky's rhythm. It didn't work often enough to be effective. It's downright scary to think how it might fare against Tony Romo and the Dallas Cowboys. Heck, it's scary to think how they might fare against Jessica Simpson and the Dallas Cowboys.

Thankfully the preseason ends this Thursday at home against Chicago. It will give the Browns the nine days they'll need to both heal and figure out exactly how to stop anyone on third down. They better use the time effectively.