Gary B checks in again with his Lingering Items from the win over the Bengals. In this week's piece, Gary says that if you look deeper into the numbers, it's a myth that the Browns defense has been holding this team together. Gary also offers up commentary on the Browns second half offensive woes, Braylon's end zone celebration, and his thoughts on whether or not the bye week is coming at the right time for the team.

There's a myth out there that the Cleveland Browns' defense, surprisingly, is the unit holding this team together. It's a myth mostly because it suffers from a faulty premise-that this team is holding together. Going into the bye week this persistently mistake-prone team without a recognizable leader is at 1-3 and knowing that it will take a 7-5 record just to get to 8-8 and a 9-3 record the rest of the way to just get back to where it was last year.

That doesn't sound like a team hanging in there to me, but hey, maybe I'm just a pessimist.

So what we do here at Lingering Items is not only head back to the videotape but also over to the big book of statistics to see if a case can be made to support the half-full crowd. From the looks of it, it can't, but maybe I'm just a pessimist. You decide.

In terms of total defense, the Browns rank a respectable 10th in the league, yielding around 313 yards per game.

Yet, every team above them has a better record.

Does that mean the offense is really holding this team back?

Possibly, but at least a little of the gloss on the defense's ranking starts to fade when you consider that three of the four teams the Browns have played are near the bottom of league rankings in offense.

Baltimore, of course, is a perennial, but both Pittsburgh and Cincinnati are struggling on offense as well.

Baltimore has a rookie quarterback, Pittsburgh's Ben Roethlisberger has become a human punching bag, having been sacked more than a can of Starkist at Acme.

The Bengals are simply a mess and also feature a gimpy-armed quarterback and a backup with about as much business playing in the NFL as Sarah Palin has running for vice president.

The fourth team, Dallas, is second in the league in offense.

Ah, Dallas. The only legitimately good offensive team the Browns have faced thus far. All Dallas did was put up 28 points on this defense and could easily have scored more if necessary.

That tends to fade a little more gloss.

Then take into account that a bad offensive team like the Ravens, featuring a rookie quarterback of questionable pedigree, also laid 28 points on this defense. That more than anything argues against the premise that this defense has been holding this team together, but again, maybe I'm just a pessimist.

So I ask: Do you know how many times the Ravens scored 28 or more points last season?

Exactly once, in a 33-30 loss to the Browns.

I'm not so much into wagering nor am I much for following the oddsmakers in Vegas, but assuming there is a book on such things, the over and under for the number of times the Ravens will score 28 or more in a game this season has to be two.

They've already done it once and, conveniently, have another date with the Browns in a few weeks.

When a bar is set as low as it's been for this defense, stepping over shouldn't be much of a problem. But having stepped over it doesn't necessarily mean that this defense is solid.

Far from it.

To the extent that anyone perceives this defense as a pleasant surprise, it is because the offense has played so poorly that the pressure on them has only increased.

In that context, the fact that the defense hasn't completely wilted is somewhat remarkable.

But that is far different than concluding it's essentially the savior of a season that otherwise would be lost.

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One of the more remarkable streaks that the Browns finally put to bed last Sunday was the failure to score a second half touchdown all season. Though the Browns had their collective heads handed to them

in last year's opening game against Pittsburgh, at least they managed a second half touchdown. True, it was their only touchdown, but a touchdown nonetheless.

The fact that the Browns waited nearly four games before scoring a touchdown in the second half is more than reflected in their statistical rankings. Right now, the Browns are tied with the Minnesota Vikings for the league low in points averaged, 11.5 per game. To fully appreciate the drop-off of the offense, consider two things.

First, the Browns scored more in last season's first game against Cincinnati, which was the season's second game, then they've scored in four games this season.

Second, after four games last season, the Browns were averaging over 27 points a game, an incredible two touchdown difference.

In that context, it is hard to believe they are even 1-3.

Last season, the Browns outscored opponents by a grand total of 20 points which isn't much when your team is otherwise 10-6. Only the Tennessee Titans, who ended the season with the same record as the Browns, had a worse differential among teams with a winning record.

This season, the Browns already have been outscored by 32 points, which is about what you would expect with a team that's 1-3.

Indeed, the Browns are tied with Kansas City in that category with only four other teams faring worse, including the St. Louis Rams, who just fired their head coach, checking it at a point differential of a whopping -104.

For perspective, that's 50 points more than the next worst team, the Detroit Lions, which just fired their general manager.

If you're looking for good news, hang your hat on that.

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This may not be apropos of much, but exactly why was receiver Braylon Edwards celebrating in the end zone last Sunday and why, having chosen to do so, was he celebrating by strumming an air guitar? Edwar ds, as much as anyone, is responsible for the huge drop off in offensive production.

He may not have dropped any passes against Cincinnati, which is a major improvement, but he still committed a costly and ridiculous personal foul that nullified a first down and forced punter Dave Zastudil to kick from the back of his own end zone.

In this regard, I'm not necessarily old school, although I tend to favor the Penn State approach best exemplified by Joe Jurevicius. Just hand the ball to the referee and act like you've been there before.

Mostly, I see end zone celebrations are harmless and sometimes humorous.

But there is context.

A baseball player who hits a home run when his team is 10 runs behind should put his head down and run the bases quickly.

A football player whose season is characterized more by his drops than his catches shouldn't do anything more than matter-of-factly spike a ball after his first touchdown catch that took four games get and was prefaced by a lot of bad play.

Until Edwards vastly improves his play in every facet of the game, he has no business celebrating anything. By celebrating as he did on Sunday, all Edwards did was draw attention to the fact that he's been nothing short of a major disappointment.

One catch against one really bad team is hardly the stuff of which Pro Bowl years are made.

Edwards will need to catch a few more balls in a few more crucial situations before he even begins to mitigate the smell from the odor that has been his season thus far.

If he wants to actually maintain Pro Bowl status, he's got a far longer climb.

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Given how poorly this team has played fundamentally, this week's question to ponder: Is a bye week really what this team needs?