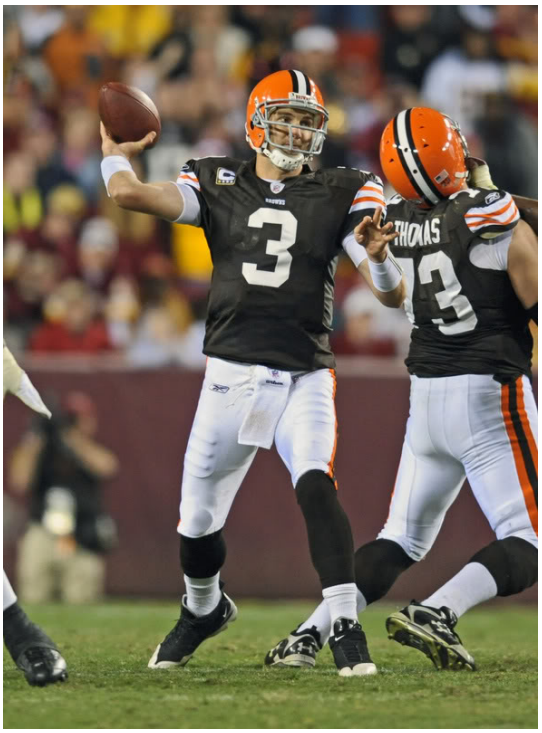
This was a bad week to be a Browns fan. Derek Anderson's play left us yearning for Tim Couch, Kellen Winslow and Phil Savage had a childish spat in the media, and the team had their slim playoff hopes essentially squashed by losing a mind-numbing contest in Washington. Nick Allburn looks back on the Skins Game and also gives us his Heroes & Zeroes from the loss.



This was a bad week to be a Browns fan. Derek Anderson's play left us yearning for Tim Couch, Kellen Winslow and Phil Savage had a childish spat in the media, and the team had their slim playoff hopes essentially squashed by losing a mind-numbing contest in Washington. And although the Redskins got the win, they hardly played like winners, and neither team's fans won when you consider the lackluster product they were forced to watch which masqueraded as professional football. Do you know who the real winner was on Sunday? Joe the plumber!

This Week's Zeroes

Five Demerits: Derek Anderson

Anderson's stat line: 14-for-37 (37.8%), 136 yards (3.7 Y/A), 1 TD, 57.9 rating

Do you remember when we were having a debate on who should be starting at quarterback? It seems like years ago. Any Browns fan who thinks that Derek Anderson should still be starting is a strong candidate to be euthanized. Fortunately I think we all have enough sense that Dr. Kavorkian won't be receiving

any calls.

Derek Anderson put on a display in the first half that was nothing short of stunning. It started with a screen pass that was beautifully conceived -- until Anderson did his best Rick Vaughn impression to muck it up. He wasn't helped by Braylon Edwards' propensity for distraction or some more questionable play calling from Rob Chudzinski, but Anderson redefined the word "erratic" on Sunday, and the onus for this loss fell most squarely on DA's shoulders.

DA's confidence is shot, the team no longer believes in him (see: Vickers, Lawrence), and the playoffs are solidly out of the picture. Furthermore, Anderson has once again reverted to the gun shy behavior that plagued him earlier this season. Without playing to his greatest strength, the deep pass, Anderson is nothing more than a decent backup.

We know that Brady Quinn can throw short and intermediate passes more effectively than DA, we know that Quinn is more mobile, and we know that Quinn is a better leader. The playoffs are no longer a possibility and this season is now screaming for some shadow of purpose. With all of that in mind, there's absolutely no reason why Brady Quinn shouldn't be the starting quarterback for the balance of the season, or until his play becomes so pathetic that even a neutered Derek Anderson is a markedly superior option.

Four Demerits: Braylon Edwards

After that Giants game, a few idiots (namely me) declared that Braylon Edwards was back, and I come before you humbled by another pathetic display from Edwards. The drops were back in full force. This kind of inconsistency would not be tolerated in most scenarios, but Edwards is still starting based on what he did last season and the fact that the Browns simply have no realistic alternatives.

Last season Edwards grabbed 80 catches for 1,289 yards and 16 touchdowns. Based on his stats so far this season, Edwards projects to have 53 catches for 819 yards and 5 touchdowns. That's a spectacular drop in production.

Some of Edwards' troubles can be attributed to play calling that doesn't take advantage of his strengths, and of course the horrible play of Derek Anderson. Even so, Edwards never dropped the football like this in the past, and he was a guy who was known for the occasional gaffe. Not unlike several other key

Browns, Braylon was probably going to be looking for a new contract this off-season, but if his numbers don't spike during the last 10 games that request is going to fall on deaf ears.

Three Demerits: Romeo Crennel

Anybody else wondering what kind of horrific performance Derek Anderson would have to unleash to get himself benched? You're not alone. Anderson was 3-of-14 for 17 yards at the half. Wrap your head around those numbers. That's a completion percentage of 21-percent, and an anemic 1.2 yards per attempt. Even after struggling for the vast majority of a season that's nearly halfway gone, apparently those numbers are good enough for Romeo Crennel.

Romeo's fixation with Derek Anderson has reached a crisis level. After Crennel is canned (either before or after game 16), he may have to enter some form of rehab. You thought Eric Wedge's love for Casey Blake was bad? It's nothing compared to Romeo's thing for DA.

What's even more hysterical about this situation is that playing Quinn may be the only way that Crennel would have even a slim chance of keeping his job. If Quinn succeeds and the team finishes say, 8-8, maybe Romeo can avoid the guillotine. But even if Quinn struggles, developing him would give the season some sort of purpose, and may grant Crennel one more chance on a very short leash, a la 2007.

But as for the actual coaching, once again the Browns came out flat and lost a game that they easily could have won. There was another questionable field goal -- although questionable this time because Romeo chose NOT to kick it. And kicking deep instead of onside kicking? It worked, but once again, it was a questionable choice given how Clinton Portis had gouged the defense all day long. At this point, Crennel's instincts are so out of whack that he may want to take a page out of George Costanza's book and just do the opposite.

"Hi, my name is Romeo. I'm unemployed and I live with my parents."

In a few months, at least half of that statement should be true.

Two Demerits: Phil Savage

In spite of the problems the team has had this season, I generally give Phil Savage the benefit of the doubt. Savage isn't perfect, but since his arrival he's significantly upgraded the talent on the team, and he's given us something resembling a GM for the first time in a long time. But Savage dropped the ball in a big way with this Kellen Winslow situation.

Winslow's hospitalization and comments to the media are old news by now; Winslow went to the Cleveland clinic with a staph infection and his injury was hushed up by the Browns, who didn't want another staph infection made public. The fact that the Browns tried to sweep Winslow's injury under the rug only made it more intriguing, simply because nobody actually knew what was wrong with Winslow. But then Winslow came out and told the world that he did in fact have a staph infection, and also voiced some dissatisfaction with how the team had treated him.

Winslow's comments about Savage failing to call him in the hospital and being treated "like a piece of meat" are likely contract frustrations manifested in a public outburst, but the (failed) deception taking place at Berea is worrisome. To make matters worse, even after lying initially, Savage suspended Winslow for speaking out against the team -- basically for being a snitch. Winslow was slapped with a one game suspension that could cost him about a quarter of a million dollars if he doesn't win his appeal.

This move makes no sense. Number one, it hurts the team on game day. Number two, it's as if Savage went out of his way to alienate one of the Browns' best players. It would be most unfortunate, but you can't help but wonder if this is the beginning of the end for Winslow in Cleveland. Savage already drafted Martin Rucker last spring, and Rucker could indeed play the Kevin Boss to Winslow's Jeremy Shockey. Regardless of what happens in the long-run, this incident is just another example of unprofessional, questionable decision making

that has tormented the Browns since they returned almost 10 years ago. What's the one constant in that equation? The Lerner family. Draw your own conclusions.

One Demerit: Rob Chudzinski

Last year, Rob Chudzinski looked like the type of coach we'd been struggling to find; young, intelligent, creative, and instinctive. Out of the coaches, Chud was most responsible for saving Romeo Crennel's job last season. What a difference a year makes.

The genius of Chudzinski's system was that it took advantage of the Browns' strengths, especially in the passing game; a strong-armed quarterback who had big, athletic receivers to catch the football. That cast of characters really lent themselves to Chudzinski's vertical passing game last season, and they thrived in it. But this season most of those deep passes appear to have been removed from the playbook, and I can't understand why.

It looked like Chud finally got the message when Braylon Edwards caught that bomb from Derek Anderson in the Giants game, but the Washington game brought back the same old song and dance. If you want to run an offense with lots of slants and quick hits, Derek Anderson isn't your guy. As long as Anderson is under center, this play calling needs to change or the Browns will continue to struggle in the passing game.

This Week's Heroes

Five Gold Stars: Sean Jones

Sean Jones was back after four weeks on the shelf, and it was great to see him in the defensive backfield. Jones didn't look too rusty, as he

recorded a game-high 10 tackles (all solo) and forced Clinton Portis' late fumble, recovered by Brodney Pool. Although Jones' 10 tackles are encouraging, the fact that he had so many opportunities indicates that the seven guys up front weren't doing their jobs.

The defensive backs have been one of the few pleasant surprises this season, with Brandon McDonald and Eric Wright progressing more rapidly than anyone imagined. Unfortunately, the Browns are also incredibly thin at defensive back, and just one injury could leave us with the doomsday scenario of Terry Cousin cracking the starting lineup. That's why it's so crucial that Jones and Brodney Pool are healthy. If those two are out there, then Mike Adams (when he's fully healthy, of course) becomes the nickel back, thus greatly reducing Cousin's playing time.

Four Gold Stars: Shaun Rogers

Whenever you hear the phrase "great job by the Browns' defensive line," it's a safe assumption that someone's talking about Shaun Rogers. The revamped defensive line has thus far been a disappointment, with Corey Williams looking like a bust until proven otherwise and the Smiths both suffering various degrees of injury. But Rogers continues to impress, delivering the Browns' lone sack against the Redskins, giving him three sacks on the year.

It is too bad that Rogers' impressive season will probably not garner much attention because the Browns have been so disappointing and the defensive line isn't playing well on the whole. But if Rogers can produce at this level for the next few seasons he gives the Browns a crucial building block on defense. The Browns have tried to run the 3-4 without a nose tackle, and they've discovered that it's damn near impossible. Nose tackle is the most important position in the 3-4, if for no other reason than they're incredibly difficult to find. Between Rogers and the young secondary, the Browns have a good start on defense.

Three Gold Stars: Jamal Lewis

The first half played like a broken record. "Derek Anderson incompletion, Jamal Lewis run, Derek Anderson incompletion, punt." With Derek Anderson's incredible impotence on full display, it's nothing short of miraculous that Lewis averaged 4.2 yards per carry in Washington. The Redskins had no reason to respect the pass, and why they didn't have at least eight men in the box at all times is beyond me.

Lewis picked up tons of yards after contact, and there were likely several Washington defenders who woke up with some bruises on Monday morning. Although he doesn't quite have that breakaway speed that drove Butch Davis to drinking (I have no evidence to back that up), Lewis grinds as hard as ever, keeping his legs churning and running with a good lean to pick up tough yards even when the blocking is sub par. As one of many who believed Lewis to be washed up when Phil Savage signed him in 2007, I've never been happier to be proven wrong.

Two Gold Stars: Kellen Winslow

Kellen Winslow's whining about being underappreciated and "treated like a piece of meat" were unfortunate. Um, Kellen, you're a pro football player making millions of dollars. There are lots of people who would allow themselves to be treated much, much worse for that kind of cash.

But there's no denying Winslow's passion and toughness. The Soldier was back on the field despite that staph infection, and God love him, he was finding soft spots in that Washington defense. Winslow only had two catches for 17 yards, but those numbers would have been much more impressive had the Human Sprinkler not been playing quarterback. Kellen Winslow isn't Mr. Rogers. He never will be. But he

plays hard all the time, he plays through a ton of pain, and he hates losing just as much as the fans do. I respect that.

One Gold Star: Gerard Lawson

Joshua Cribbs has developed a cult following over the last two seasons, and rightfully so. Cribbs is a terrific special teams player on returns and coverage who has a huge effect on the Browns' field position. But if anyone tries to convince you that Cribbs is somehow irreplaceable, they're wrong.

Of all the things Cribbs does for the Browns, returning kickoffs is probably his most notable contribution, and also his most overrated. Returning kickoffs is much easier than returning punts due to the way the returner has to track the ball, and Cribbs' most underrated role is probably as a gunner on punt coverage. But back to the kickoffs, Gerard Lawson should serve as a reminder of why the world would continue to turn if Joshua Cribbs were not returning kickoffs.

Lawson, an undrafted Oregon State product, returned a kickoff for 43 yards in the second half. All you have to do on a kickoff return is run north and south, run hard, and hit the seam as best you can. Gerard Lawson showed us that there are tons of guys who can do that, even if they all aren't as good as Cribbs. There's no doubt that Cribbs is a very valuable part of the team, but if he thinks he can get Devin Hester money strictly for playing special teams, he's out of his gourd.

Up Next: 10/26, At Jacksonville Jaguars, 4:05,

Jacksonville Municipal Stadium

It's easy to look at this game on paper and chalk it up as a loss, but this isn't the Jacksonville team that beat the Steelers in the playoffs last season. Treading water at 3-3, the Jags have been fairly ordinary on both sides of the ball. The running game that fueled their offense last season has been brought down to earth due to some injuries on the offensive line, and their defense hasn't been as dominant as it has in the past. Jacksonville has had to lean heavily on David Garrard, who has struggled because his offensive line and receivers have been awful.

This looks like a game that the Browns will have a shot at winning. But with Crennel still coaching, Anderson still quarterbacking, and the way this team has played the last few seasons on the road, I can't pick the Browns without being a homer. I'd take the touchdown the Browns are getting in Vegas, but I don't like them straight up.

Prediction: Jaguars 17, Browns 13