With three wins in their last four games, and two winnable home games looming, the Browns season is alive once again. And with the suspension of Kellen Winslow rescinded, that drama is in the rear view mirror as well. One problem though ... the Browns offense has flourished with the more traditional Steve Heiden playing tight end. Erik Cassano has the easy answer to this problem. Make Kellen Winslow officially what he really is. A slot wide reciever.

The frayed nerves around Cleveland have been soothed, at least to an extent.

The Browns are not a bad team. The 2007 season was not a fluke or solely the product of a weak schedule. This is a team with some real talent and ability to win games -- something that couldn't have been said even two years ago.

If the Browns are a team with some serious flaws that start in the front office and work their way down to the field, they're also a team that has shown incredible backbone in rebounding from an 0-3 start, using quality wins against the Giants and Jaguars to put themselves within a win of .500 as the season's halfway point approaches.

A win against the suddenly-mortal Ravens on Sunday and a victory against the stumbling Broncos on Thursday, and Cleveland could have a winning record by next weekend. In late September, that seemed like an impossibility.

In late September, the idea that both Romeo Crennel and Derek Anderson would still have jobs in November seemed outlandish.

The season hasn't yet been salvaged, but three wins in four games has at least

opened the door to the possibility that it could be salvaged. The November and December portion of the schedule might yet be another prelude to a high draft pick. But then again, it might include the intrigue of a playoff race. At least it will be interesting.

But, in true Cleveland form, there's a catch. No, really. There is a real catch. A number of them, actually.

They're the catches that Kellen Winslow will make. Because he's here for the rest of the season, he's going to play, and in order for the Browns to make a playoff push, Winslow will need to be successfully integrated into the Browns offense.

Winslow and Phil Savage have apparently made something of a truce in the aftermath of the media circus that preceded the Jaguars game. Winslow's suspension was rescinded, he was fined $25,000 and the dust settled.

But just as in the Giants game, the Browns offense in Jacksonville looked 100 times better with Steve Heiden playing Winslow's role. Unlike Winslow, Heiden is an effective blocker and he doesn't need to venture downfield to make big plays.

With the extra blocking Heiden provided, Jamal Lewis was able to pick up sizeable chunks of yardage running to his right. With good hands, Heiden can make the safety valve catches within 10 yards of the line of scrimmage.

In short, Heiden does the yeoman's work that the tight end position often demands, throwing the block and making the catch that sustains the drive. Winslow craves the spotlight and wants to make the big play.

The Browns' offense is punctuated by Anderson's vertical passing attack grabbing the headlines (both good and bad), but it is sustained by the punishing ground game of Lewis. With that in mind, it would appear that Heiden and Darnell Dinkins are better fits for what the Browns need in a tight end. It's not a coincidence that Winslow's absence has led to a better offensive flow.

But that doesn't mean that Winslow needs to go away. Letting him rot on the bench for the rest of the season would be the mother of all self-inflicted wounds, in addition to giving the Browns a really bad rap in player-agent circles.

Winslow does need to play. He needs to play to increase his trade stock, improve

his contract bargaining position, and to see if he can improve his relationship with Browns management. It's a long shot, but not out of the question, that Winslow could start the '09 season as a Brown.

Most importantly, he needs to play because he can help the team win -- if Crennel and Rob Chudzinski can find the best way to use him. That's a process that will likely have to involve both parties coming to the conclusion that Winslow isn't a tight end, and as long as he stays in Cleveland, he will not be a tight end.

Winslow needs to specialize as a possession receiver. It's not glamorous, front-page work, but it plays to his strengths more than any other position on the field.

On running downs, Winslow's services on the field aren't really needed, other than as a decoy. Same goes for first- and second-down passing plays, when Braylon Edwards and Donte' Stallworth head downfield, and the likes of Heiden and Lawrence Vickers stay behind as extra blockers and checkdown receivers. In those situations, Winslow is one extra route that Anderson has to process before reaching a decision on where the ball should go. If there is one thing we've all learned about DA, it's that the fewer options he has to consider, the better.

But on those difficult 3rd-and-8 plays, that's when Winslow could really shine. On an underneath route, Winslow's size makes him a nice, big target for Anderson. His hands receive high marks for reliability, and his willingness to fight tooth-and-nail to get to the yard marker is already legendary, making him a tough tackling assignment.

Winslow can fight through a gang-tackle effort and still eke out the extra two yards that turn a would-be punt into a first down.

Winslow could be fantastic in that role. But it would require him to accept a specialist's role instead of top billing. It remains to be seen if Winslow's large ego and fierce competitive streak will allow him to become that humble. It also remains to be seen if Crennel would be able to put his foot down if he encounters resistance from a vocal, sometimes-confrontational player like Winslow. Crennel is not a dominant personality and seems to favor appeasement over conflict.

This might be the issue that determines the fate of the season. With a properly-utilized Winslow, the Browns could become the turnaround story of the

year, one of a small handful of teams to make the playoffs after an 0-3 start. But if the offense goes back to its old, sorry tricks once Winslow takes the field again, it will be time to start focusing on the '09 draft.