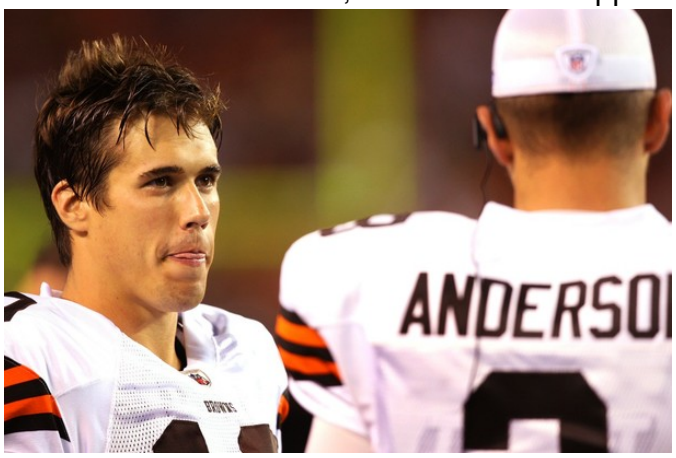
Monday's spot decision to send Derek Anderson to the bench and elevate Brady Quinn to the starting quarterback position may not be the magic elixir that will instantly restore the Browns franchise to health and respectability. But Jesse says it's a move that had to be made, and one that has been inevitable for a while now. And in his latest, talks about the opportunity the team missed on with DA this summer.



Monday's spot decision to send Derek Anderson to the bench and elevate Brady Quinn to the starting quarterback position may not be the magic elixir that will instantly restore the Browns franchise to health and respectability. It may not turn around a season that seemed to be limping on the rim since the first weeks of the preseason. But it was a move that had to be made, a move that was probably inevitable, going all the way back to the end of 2007.

Never an overly popular personage in Cleveland, DA irrevocably lost his shaky grip on the sentiments of Browns fans during a tortuous ten-game stretch that begin with his one-man meltdown in Cincinnati last December, with the Browns on the cusp of a playoff berth and a possible division championship. Since that fatal afternoon, DA has produced a meager 66.8 passer rating and is completing less than 52 percent of his passes, and the Browns are 4-6. Worse than the raw numbers was the maddening inconsistency of a quarterback who could go from awful to great to awful again, week by week, quarter by quarter, series by series. You never knew what you were going to get from Derek Anderson, and that kind of uncertainty generated by the most important position on the field is almost impossible for a team to overcome.

That's not to say the problems of this team lie completely on the shoulders of Derek Anderson- far from it. The offensive line, a smoothly running machine in 2007, has been chopped up by injuries. The defense has been questionable. Joe Jurevicius, DA's third-down security blanket, has been on the shelf the entire season. The leading playmakers, Braylon Edwards and Kellen Winslow, have been flaky, spotty, counterproductive distractions, dim shadows of their brilliant

2007 selves. DA might still have his job today had Braylon pulled in a sure touchdown on a perfect bomb early in the fourth quarter of Sunday's loss to Baltimore. Defeat might be an orphan, but the misshapen spawn that is 2008 contains the DNA of this entire organization.

In the end, none of the mitigating factors mattered. ESPN's Chris Mortensen referred to the quarterback change as "organization and fan-driven." Injuries, roster upheaval, and butter-fingered receivers were mere details. The fans were fed up with Derek Anderson, so he had to go. Trent Dilfer, not exactly an impartial observer, lambasted the organization for being too quick to appease the fickle passions of radio-show callers and message-board posters. And maybe there's a grain of truth to that. But the situation was what it was. With Brady Quinn hovering over his shoulder, DA had to be better than good to survive in Cleveland- and he wasn't even close. At the end of the day, he didn't get the job done.

Besides, if it weren't for vocal fans, there wouldn't be a team in Cleveland today- such as it is.

The sheer inevitability of the decision leads to an obvious question- why on earth did the Browns not allow Derek Anderson to become a restricted free agent last spring? Brady Quinn wasn't drafted to be a backup. The fans were never going to truly accept DA, warts and all, and DA's performance had been trending downward basically since the second Steelers game in the middle of the 2007 season. At some point Derek Anderson's inaccuracy and inconsistency, combined with the pro-Quinn momentum, was going to cost him his job. And instead of being proactive, instead of gambling from strength by allowing DA to be plucked for draft picks, Phil Savage went supine and reactive. He didn't make a choice. He upheld what amounted to an unsustainable status quo.

Now what are we going to get from Derek Anderson? Bullocks. He'll either stay in Cleveland as a backup, or be released at the end of the season. Either way, his days as a starter in an orange helmet are over. He was always fool's gold, and now everybody knows it. Phil had a rare opportunity to cash in before DA's

coach-and-four went back to being a pumpkin- the extent of the cashing-in I don't know, but he could have gotten *something*- and failed to pull the trigger. Given the way Anderson's deal was structured, the cost was relatively low- but not low enough to offset the benefit of dangling him before the highest bidder. It might end up being the single biggest failure of Savage's tenure in Cleveland.

I know; it's easy to criticize with hindsight. But you could see this coming. Eventually, Derek Anderson was going to be the odd man out. It's just a shame Phil Savage was unwilling, or unable to see it. Now we get behind Brady Quinn, and wonder what might have been.