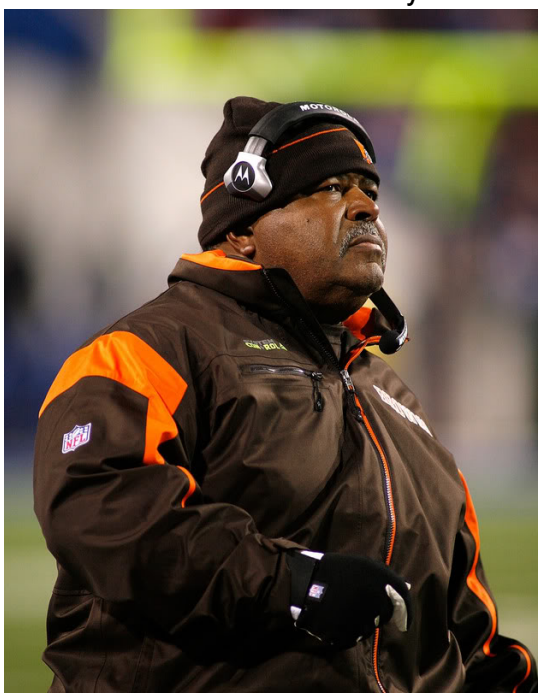
It's Browns Outsider time once again here on the site, your veritable hodge podge of all things Cleveland Browns football. This week, Hiko talks about the Monday night win over the Bills, debates Jamal Lewis vs. Jerome Harrison, looks at some mock drafts, predicts who the Browns would pick today at #11, and takes a quick look ahead to this Sunday's contest against the Houston Texans down at the Stadium.



A View From The Cheap Seats

Week 10 - Cleveland at Buffalo

I've heard many describe this game as an unsatisfactory win.

Personally, I thought it was an exhilarating win. Buffalo hasn't been playing all that well as of late, but they're still a good team, and they were still vying for a playoff berth. This game was a must win for them, and it was at home.

And the Browns came in and stole their dreams from them as surely as would a high school girlfriend announcing she's missed a couple periods (and I ain't talkin' about Gym and Study Hall).

At this point, you know exactly what you've got with most of the team, and there's nothing that can be done about this year. Romeo will be gone next season, but

he's here for 2008, so grousing about the coaching is useless.

The Defense isn't going to get any better - there's just no one coming off the bench that will make a difference.

Braylon's not gonna magically stop dropping balls.

Jamal's not gonna magically regain his speed.

So there's only two reasons to watch the Browns at this point:

•1. Monitor Brady Quinn's development.

•2. Pretend that each game is a playoff game between the Browns and their opponent.

That's what I did for this game. The stress of lost season and expectations is gone - there's only the present contest.

The Browns, of course, will be underdogs in most of the remaining contests, so it will be easy to watch them, despite the poor tackling and lead-blowing. You just go into it thinking that they have no shot to win.

If they do win, then it's a great victory.

If they lose, then it just improves the draft status.

For someone who has completely abandoned the 2008 season as lost, many delusions need to be nurtured in order to maintain any enjoyment for the now.

Pregame

I was more excited for this game than I have been all season, including the opener.

I was pacing around, unable to stay still. I ignored any attempts at conversation. I wandered back and forth from the living room to the bathroom, imploring my daughters to hurry and brush their teeth so daddy could tuck them in and get back to his game.

No, you don't have to pee - you can hold it all night.

If not, just sleep on this towel.

After the goodnights were rendered, I grabbed my coat and hat and watched the majority of the game from my deck as it snowed. That was football weather. The Browns were out playing in it, and I was with them.

I went to 2 college games recently - the last game in the Rubber Bowl (which Akron lost in 4 OT's) and the OSU-Northwestern game in Chicago - and I'd forgotten how much fun it is to get lit on bloody mary's and stand in 30 degree temperatures just yelling your tonsils out.

So that's how I watched the Bills vs. the Browns.

Sadly, I believe that this path has led me to the cold I am currently enjoying. I woke up this morning unsure if I were alive or dead.

If the answer is "dead", then this is Hell.

Is there a way to know?

Let's see... CNNSI.com says that the Steelers are once again Superbowl

contenders and the Browns are once again out of the playoff picture by November.

Yep, this is Hell.

First Quarter

On the first play of the first drive, Shaun Rogers stuck up his moon-sized hand and batted a Trent Edwards pass in the air. Kam Wimbley, who had been blocked so far out of the pocket that he ended up in the backfield, made the pick.

Brady Quinn however did not look sharp from about midfield, and the Browns punted. Edwards , frustrated that his first pick was wasted, promptly threw another one to Andra Davis.

Starting at the BUF 49, Quinn bootlegged and ran for 12.

The drive was looking solid, but Braylon Edwards dropped a very catchable ball at the 5 (after which I will with shame admit that I called him a bad word), and the Browns had to settle for a 40 yd FG.

Browns 3, Bills 0.

The Bills did virtually nothing with it on the following drive, helped by good gang tackling by the Browns D, who seemed eager to clear their good name of besmirchment. But the Browns possession was cut short as well, done in by a jailbreak blitz up the middle that Jason Wright did nothing to quell.
But at least the punt went down to the 1.

Derek Anderson must have disguised himself as Trent Edwards on this night, since DA/Trent threw a 3rd pick almost immediately, this time to Brandon McDonald, who made a good cut on the pass. However, Cleveland called a Reverse to the wrong dude with dreads (Stallworth, not Cribbs) and it lost yards, and Quinn's 3rd Down pass to Kellen Winslow in the End Zone was knocked down, probably with the help of the massive uncalled Pass Interference.

Browns 6, Bills 0.

The Browns D was still flying to the ball carrier, and Trent's 3rd Down pass was flat dropped. The Browns got the punt at their own 4.

End of 1st: Browns 6, Bills 0.

Second Quarter

An Illegal Contact penalty netted the initial 1st Down of the drive, but then Quinn started hitting Edwards all over the place, 3 catches for 48 yards in that drive alone. Jamal actually bounced a run outside, plowing 16 yards down to the BUF 2.

From there, Quinn handed to Cribbs on an End Around.

It looked designed to go to the pylon, but Cribbs alertly cut it inside for the easy TD.

Browns 13, Bills 0.

"*We're up 13, men*!" Mel Tucker told his troops. "*Good job!*

Game's over.

Relax out there, now.

Have fun

."

They listened. On 2nd and 11 from the CLE 18, Edwards threw a short pass to Marshawn Lynch near the sidelines, and he cut it back in.

He should have been tackled more times than stars in the night sky, but was not, taking it all the way for the score.

I could name all the offending Browns whose efforts at tackling were so odious that they actually set back
flag
football, but the list would comprise damn near the entire D squad.

They
all
were guilty.

Browns 13, Bills 7.

The Browns went 3 and Out, so, with 4:42 left, the Bills methodically drove down the field, and Cleveland was fortunate to hold them to a FG.

Good feelings gone.

Browns 13, Bills 10.

Halftime: Browns 13, Bills 10.

Third Quarter

The Browns got the ball first, and it looked like they converted a 3rd Down, but Syndric Steptoe made his contribution by getting hit with an Offensive Pass Interference penalty.

Buffalo got the ball back, and was steadily driving down the field when McD poked the ball out of Fred Jackson's hand as he went down, and Ahtyba Rubin recovered, evidencing the fact that he does, indeed, exist.

Quinn hit Braylon on a beautiful 3rd and 10 pass, but the drive stalled with a sack as Kavika Pittman flew up the middle again - Jamal's fault this time. Quinn's 3rd Down pass to Steptoe had no intention of getting the 1st Down - they just wanted a shorter FG for Phil.

Browns 16, Bills 10.

Cleveland got Buffalo into 3rd and 9 at their own 43, but Edwards hit Lynch on another little screen to the outside, and he ran it back inside again, breaking lots of tackles again. But, in the Browns' Defense's defense, they did make a nice stop on 3rd and 2 at the CLE 12, saving a TD.

Browns 16, Bills 13.

End of 3rd: Browns 16, Bills 13.

Fourth Quarter

Noticing Jerome Harrison finally in the backfield, I screamed, "Bout freakin' time!" at the TV. Sensing my support, Jerome took a pitch to the left, turned upfield, broke a tackle, and was gone. Bam ! - 72 yard TD run.

Jamal Lewis would have to run 36 times to get 72 yards.

My girlfriend alleges that I claimed at that moment that I should be GM. I recall no such thing. ***Browns 23, Bills 13.***

And since the Browns despise success, they allowed Leodis McKelvin to return the kickoff for a TD. Good feelings gone. ***Browns 23, Bills 20.***

Harrison stayed in and had a nice 9 yard run to the right, which got +15 when the BUF defender shoved Jerome into the bench for the Personal Foul. Then Quinn hit Harrison on a nice touch pass for 21 on 3rd and 7.

But 1st and Goal equals Death for the Browns, so they didn't get in, again.

Browns 26, Bills 20.

The Bills next possession was effectively killed by a Holding penalty. T he Browns shut ‘em down from there and got the ball back.

But Quinn was hit as he threw (Jamal's bad again), and the ball floated harmlessly in the air, getting picked.

However, that crafty Romeo challenged the call, and replays confirmed that the ball did indeed hit the ground.

So Quinn calmly converted the 3rd Down to Winslow.

The next 3rd Down pass, however, was brutally botched by Braylon Edwards, the *Demon Butcher of East 9th Street*.

Buffalo got a long punt return, and shortly after that, Lynch broke at least 12 tackles on a 28 yard run to the CLE 1 (difficult to do when there

are only 11 defenders). Fortunately, the Bills punched it on the next play, thus saving a little time. ***Bills 27, Browns 26.***

The Bills were coming hot & heavy, and Quinn did a nice job finding Edwards and Winslow and moving the ball to the BUF 39. But his 1st Down attempt was nearly picked, and the next 2 throws fell incomplete, so Phil Dawson came on to try a 56 yard FG.

5 years ago, this kick was well out of his range.

Not today.

Bang - right through with room to spare.

Browns 29, Bills 27.

Of course, the Bills had another long kickoff return, so it didn't take but one play for them to move into FG range. But they went conservative from there, running 3 straight times.

Romeo wisely used the Browns Time Outs there, saving about 40 seconds in case the Buffalo kicker, Ryan Lindell, made it.

I have no idea why Buffalo seemed content to settle for a 47 yard FG try into the wind, but they were. So they almost deserved it when Lindell pushed the ball just right. Quinn and the Browns came out and assumed the Victory Formation.

Good feelings.

Final: Browns 29, Bills 27.

Offensive MVP: Jerome Harrison. His dreamy 72 yard TD run would have cinched it, but throw in his 21 yard reception along the sidelines, and, in 4 measly touches, he easily outdistanced everyone else on the field.

Defensive MVP: Brandon McDonald. Cornerbacks need short memories, and he proved that he is capable of forgetting.

He had a pick, a forced fumble, a tackle, and 3 assists.

More importantly, he was a big part of shutting Lee Evans out.

Nice recovery, McD.

And much love to Phil Dawson as well. Keep taking whatever pills it is that you're taking, brotha.

Conclusion

~~~The Philadelphia Eagles and the Cincinnati Bengals fought to a 13-13 tie on Sunday. I watched some of the game, and it is best described as something that the Geneva Convention should outlaw as inhumane.

After the game, Donovan McNabb stated that he didn't know a game could end in a tie, then wondered what would happen if a playoff game or the Superbowl were to end the same way.

As a professional football player for 10 years, how can you not know this?

As a professional football player for 1 year, how can you not know this?

As someone of any age level that has watched any amount of NFL football with even a passing interest, how can you not know this? The freakin' ref even tells the freakin' players about it right before the freakin' coinflip to start freakin' Overtime!

It's like someone saying that they didn't know the earth was round, or
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that Michael Jackson had a little work done on his face.

In blunders Ben Roethlisberger, defender of ignorance and stupidity everywhere. "*I bet 50 percent of the players didn't know that*," Ben told reporters, a number which he pulled directly from his derrière.

Turning to a local writer, he asked, "*50 percent... that's like almost half, right*?"

The reporter, being from Pittsburgh, just shrugged.

Then along comes Braylon Edwards, who, in a Dumb-Off, refuses to be outdone by anyone. "*I would say it's even more than that. I would venture to say 75 percent to 80 percent don't know that*."

Please people. This is not the Tuck Rule. This is Overtime. There was a Tie just 6 years ago between the Steelers and Falcons.

Was no one paying attention?

Why is everyone so eager to jump into this arena? Why does everyone want to demonstrate their cluelessness?

Are you just sympathizing with McNabb, or are you really trying to tell the average NFL fan that you don't have even mundane knowledge of the game that you get paid millions to play?

Because Joe Fan won't understand. 95% of us know a Regular Season game can end in a tie, and 99% know that Playoff games go to multiple Overtimes.

Not that I'm just making up random percentages, mind you.

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~~~I liked the press conference with Romeo after the game. In my recollection, it went something like this:

Romeo: *I thought we came out and fought hard and made some plays and... our kicker was pretty good... and (* standing and defiantly staring at the room and pounding his fist on the table *) I THOUGHT WE DIDN'T QUIT.*
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WE DIDN'T QUIT!

I TOLD YOU WE WOULDN'T QUIT, AND WE DIDN'T, YOU CLOCK-SUCKERS!

I'M A MAN!

THIS AIN'T INTRAMURALS, BROTHER!

THEY ARE WHO WE THOUGHT THEY WERE!

And then he stops his tirade, chuckles to himself, bends over, laughing harder and harder, and holds out a hand apologetically, trying to get himself under control. After he regains his breath, smiling, he says...

Romeo: *I'm sorry. I thought it would be funny if I could pull that off. I can't.*

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~~~Speaking of Romeo, I just left his house.

I sat in a darkened corner, patiently waiting until the click of the key entering the lock could be discerned. I watched as he entered, tossing his coat over a chair, walking into the kitchen.

The light flipped on, and the added illumination of the open refrigerator door hit the far wall.

The clink of bottles and containers being knocked together seeped into the room.

I rose and strolled silently to the doorway. Romeo grunted in surprise as he squatted at the bottom drawer, eagerly pulling out a ham leg.

Sensing the time was near, I held up my weapon - a huge, inflated plastic toy bat that squeaks when you hit something with it.

As Romeo turned, obliviously gnawing on his meat supplement, I swung with all my force and hit him upside the head.

WHACK-SQUEAK!

Surprised by the blow, Romeo fell on his can, ham slipping from hammy fist. He stared up at me with shock, feeling his reddened cheek.
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Romeo: *What did you do that for? Who are you?*

Me: *Do you remember Mo Carthon?*

Romeo (confused): *Of course I remember...*

Me: *Why did you keep him so long?*

Romeo: *I... what?*

Me: *Why did you keep him so long when he was obviously inept?*

Romeo: *Well, he... I... he just...*

WHACK-SQUEAK!

Romeo cowered down, taken off guard by yet another attack from the big bouncy bat.

Romeo: *What the hell is wrong with you?*

Me: *Why did you stick with Derek Anderson so long?*

Romeo: *Derek?...*

WHACK-SQUEAK!

Me: *Pay attention! Why did you stick with Derek Anderson so long?*

Romeo: *Well, we thought that he might...*

WHACK-SQUEAK! WHACK-SQUEAK!

Me: *It was obvious to everyone that he was hurting the team! He was a one hit wonder, but you kept sticking his sorry ass out there over and over and over again!*

It was VERY disappointing!

WHACK-SQUEAK!

Romeo: *Come on! That thing hurts!*

WHACK-SQUEAK!

Me: *Good! And now... Jamal Lewis has lost a step. Jerome Harrison has been nothing but effective, and yet he's still only getting 3 or 4 touches a game!*

WHACK-SQUEAK!

Romeo (desperate): *Why do you keep hitting me with that?*

Me: *Because it takes you way* (WHACK-SQUEAK!) *too*
(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
long
(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
to get things!

And if you keep missing things that are so goddam obvious, then I guess someone needs to

(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
beat
(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
them
(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
into
(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
your
(WHACK-SQUEAK!)
head!

When I left him, he was curled up on the kitchen floor in fetal position, crying softly and hugging his ham leg.

I hated to do it. I really did. I like the guy, and, in general, I'm a peaceful dude.

But, for the greater good, it was something I had to do. I felt I owed it to him.

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~~~And that kicks off my weekly plea to turn the Jamal Lewis/Jerome Harrison tandem into Willie Parker/Jerome Bettis. Yes, Harrison is the Parker, and Lewis is the Bettis.

That means 15-20 carries for Harrison, certainly the bulk of the 1st and 3rd Quarters, and another 10-15 for Lewis, mowing down a tired Defense in the 4th Quarter.

Maybe 2 series for one, then 2 series for the other.

I'm sick and tired of Jamal needing 30 carries to &quot;figure out&quot; the Defense. And I'm bored to tears of Jamal taking the handoff, stopping at the line of scrimmage, tapping his toes into the turf about 30 times, then &quot;plunging&quot; into a wall of players for a 2 yard gain.

He's not quick enough to hit the hole any longer.

When he takes the handoff, he heads for his hole, but, by the time he gets there, it's either closed or closing, and he doubts his ability to get through it.

So he churns the ground with his happy feet.

If you stuck a vat of grapes by the line of scrimmage, you'd have wine after a Jamal Lewis run. Jamal's tap dancing puts Sammy Davis Jr. to
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shame. And who needs a backhoe when you can just have Jamal come out and toe punch some sod for a while?

I am not advocating that Jerome become the unquestioned starter. Hell , as far as I'm concerned, you can even have Jamal run the first series if that's what his ego demands.

But Jerome should be getting damn near 50 percent of the carries (back to arbitrary numbers).

His speed and his ability to bounce it to the outside and cut back MUST be utilized.

Plus, he's a hell of a receiver for a back.

People like to say that he lacks as a blocker, but it wasn't him out there giving up the rush up the middle. That was Jason Wright and Jamal Lewis. I'm sure Jerome's been beat before, but I've also read how he spent a great deal of time the last two offseasons bulking up so he could improve his blocking.

I still like Jamal and I like what he brings to the table as a closer. But he's WAY too ineffective in the early going.

He's so ineffective that teams don't even have to honor the run anymore, even though the Browns stick with the run almost to their detriment.

I'm sure that the coaches are a little scared to make this move because they don't want an angry Jamal on their hands. Tough. Their job is to make the decisions for the best of the team, not to placate individual players.

And there's no one on earth that can convince me that status quo at Running Back is the right decision.

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~~~Ladies and Gentlemen, Pimps and Hos, I have an announcement to make! Andra Davis, Middle Linebacker for the Cleveland Browns, MADE A PLAY ON MONDAY!

Yes, for the first time all season, I noticed him somewhere other than flat on his face as the opposing Running Back/Wide Receiver/Tight End/Quarterback/Punter ran by him.

His interception of Trent Edwards in the 1st Quarter was a thing of beauty, bringing his total of great plays this season to... uh... one!
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Keep it up, big guy.

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~~~As I mentioned before, there's little that can be done about the Defensive woes at this point.

It matters not if the problem lies with the players, the coaches, or the talent level. None of those equations will change this season. You can't just bench Andra Davis and bring in someone that will be an improvement.

There isn't anyone.

Sure, I'd like to see more of Alex Hall (and, conversely, less of Kam Wimbley), but he's already playing fairly significant time, and I doubt any increase would drastically change the overall Defensive performance. And I guess it wouldn't hurt to see Beau Bell, but I'm not nearly as excited about him as a lot of others are. Let's not forget that he was a 4th Rounder. Just
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because he was the Browns' 1st pick doesn't mean he's a 1st *Round* pick.

So if the Defensive talent can't change, then how about it's performance? I am highly doubtful that they can learn to tackle better in the span of a week.
If a team has tackling problems, the Regular Season is way too late to get that corrected.

Especially for these guys, who tackle like they think opposing Running Backs are made of Staph.

So the talent and tackling can't change. Well, I guess the coaches will have to make up for it with their Defensive schemes. Except, well, they've not demonstrated the ability to do that.

Even with Romeo Crennel at the helm, a man who did wonders with schemes as D Coordinator for those Patriot Championship teams.

Makes you wonder who was responsible for that D -

Romeo, or Bill Bellichick?

Hmmmmm... I wonder...

So there you have it. The Defense cannot improve. The y can't tackle.

They can't rush the QB.

The only thing they can do is force a turnover here or there, and hope that's enough to stem the tide.

That, dear readers, is how you blow two 13 point leads in a row, and come within a gnat's testicle of blowing a third.

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~~~The Kickoff coverage was PUTRID in this game. It almost single handedly cost the Browns the game.

Here's where the Bills drives started after Kickoffs:

BUF 44, BUF 20, BUF 49, BUF 41, BUF 42, Touchdown, BUF 42, BUF 44.

That's an average starting field position of about the BUF 48 yard line. Basically, they started every drive at midfield.

That's what made up for the 4 Turnovers. That's why this game was even close at all.

That's all I have to say about that.

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~~~The Browns went 11 days between the Broncos and the Bills games, an NFL record for length in between 2 games not involving a Bye Week.

I don't even have to look that up to verify it. That's the kind of hard-hitting analysis you get here at the Browns Outsider.

Draft Update

After their win, the Browns moved up (or down, depending how you look at it) to #11 in the 2009 Draft Sweepstakes.

This week, we're experimenting with a site called The New NFL Draft . It appears they are kind enough to update their draft weekly, and this particular Mock came out on 11/18/08.

Here's how their Top 10 looked:
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1. Detroit Lions: Sam Bradford, QB, OU
2. Cincinnati Bengals: Michael Oher, OT, Ole Miss
3. KC Chiefs: Colt McCoy, UT, QB
4. San Francisco 49ers: Eugene Monroe, OT, VA
5. Oakland Raiders: Michael Crabtree, WR, TTU
6. Seattle Seahawks: Vontae Davis, CB, Illinois
7. St. Louis Rams: Andre Smith, OT, Bama
8. Houston Texans: Rey Maualuga, ILB, USC
9. San Diego Chargers: Brian Orakpo, DE, UT
10. Jacksonville Jaguars: James Laurinaitis, ILB, Ohio St.

My only comments on that are: I don't see KC going QB now that Tyler Thigpen has looked so good, stupid Houston Texans, and poor poor poor Michael Crabtree. Oakland - where careers go to die.

For the Browns, they have:

11. Cleveland Browns: Malcolm Jenkins, CB, Ohio St.

The Browns were supposed to be a better team in the 2008 season as well but they have been bad. Brady Quinn looked

good in his start but they are going to continue to lose games if they don't fix the secondary. Malcolm Jenkins is one of the top CB in the 2009 NFL Draft who should be a great addition to this team. The 2009 NFL Season could be a good season if the Browns are able to stop the pass. So look for the Browns to go defense a lot in the 2009 NFL Draft and maybe add a RB for the future.

To be honest, with Taylor Mays, S, USC still sitting out there, I might be more apt to go in that direction, although I'm sure that will be dictated by whether or not Sean Jones stays. Still, I wouldn't complain about getting Jenkins. He has the size and speed to be a true shutdown Corner, freeing Brandon McDonald up to play the Nickel, which alone would vastly improve the cover ability of the secondary.

And with Maualuga gone, there's really no Middle Linebacker worthy of being selected this high.

Other players of interest to me that are available in that area: *Sen'Derrick Marks, DT, Auburn, William Moore, S,*

Mizzou, Knowshon Moreno, RB, Georgia, Alex Mack, C, Cal.

For whatever it's worth, New NFL Draft has the Browns' 2nd Round pick as:

43. Cleveland Browns: Javon Ringer, RB, Michigan St.

The Browns don't really have an understudy or someone that will be an eventual replacement. Ringer I think has shown he is a top tier RB that could go in the first day of the NFL Draft. He is both fast, agile and powerful when he needs to be. If Jamal Lewis has 1 or 2 more years I think they will complement each other well and then Javon Ringer will be the eventual starter.

I'm not sure that Ringer impresses me all that much. In all fairness, the only game I've seen him play this year was by far his worst (vs. OSU), but, to me, he seems to be pretty ordinary.

Next Up

~~~The Houston Texans.

Offense: PTS - 23.6 (11th), YDS - 370.1 (5th), PASS YDS - 255.8 (5th), RUSH YDS - 114.3 (15th)

Defense: PTS - 28.7 (30th), YDS - 343.3 (22nd), PASS YDS - 210.8 (17th), RUSH YDS - 132.5 (24th)

What do these numbers tell you?

They tell me that Houston has a pretty good Offense, and a porous Defense. Just like our Browns. So, the game will most likely be a high scoring affair with numerous wince-inducing Defensive gaffes. You know, kind of like the last two games.

The Browns can certainly win this game. And they can certainly lose it. Jamal should have a decent game, and Jerome Harrison - if able to play - should get a couple more long gains.
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Edwards, Quinn, and Winslow - if able to play - should also look good, provided that Joe Thomas does his job against Mario Williams.

And if you have Steve Slaton on your fantasy team... play him. I'm guessing he'll ring up damn near 200 all-purpose yards.

Yeesh.

In the end, I haven't picked a Browns win yet this season, so I'll continue with the only path that has led to victory...

Texans 30, Browns 24.