It's been a rough year for Phil Savage. Staph infections, injury cover ups, accusations of treating players like pieces of meat, Donte Stallworth, no draft picks, resigning DA, a 4-7 record after a winless preseason, a quarterback controversy, and The F Bomb Heard Round The World. But Peeker cautions our readers, don't judge Phil on all that riff raff. Judge him on the talent he's put on the field.

Let's try and keep it professional people.

All this venom and hatred directed toward Browns GM Phil Savage is piling up but some of it just isn't fair.

I know he's over paid for some free agents and then tried to kill them. I know he's asked other players (apparently via letter or email given his reluctance to phone them) to endure vicious rumors about the source of their medical problems so that he could keep the ebola outbreak from becoming a story.

And I know that he's a wee bit rough around the edges as far as people skills go given his latest "F-bomb" email reply to an angry fan. But he wasn't

hired to be the greeter at Wal-Mart. He wasn't brought here to respond delicately to the twisted tools who would pepper a GM's email account after midnight on the night of a win. And he's not alone in hitting that send button before really thinking through what chaos it was going to cause and who was going to see it.

Who among us hasn't dived at the ‘enter' button just after sending off an inappropriate response to someone who shouldn't have gotten it? Who among us, upon receiving a company email advising that exterminators would be servicing a part of the building we work in, hasn't forwarded that note onto a less than hygienic friend and colleague suggesting he go to that part of the building, strip naked, and get himself hosed down? Who among us hasn't sent that very note and cc'd everyone on the original distribution list?

These things happen.

I'm not going to bust on Phil for running the dirtiest facilities since the 4077th. I'm not going to ridicule him for not having even the interpersonal skills of the man who hired him in Cleveland years ago, Bill Belichick.

Nope. I think we most fairly judge Phil not on the staph-infected facility he lords over or the unique way he treats his customers, but rather solely on the field. He's a GM. His job is to procure talent and see to it that a quality team represents this city. So let's be fair and judge Phil Savage solely on what matters.

Savage came to Cleveland with the reputation as a top flight talent evaluator. Working in conjunction with Baltimore Ravens GM Ozzie Newsome, Savage was on watch as the Ravens consistently loaded up with premier talent regardless of where in the draft they picked.

Players like Ray Lewis, Jonathan Ogden, Jamal Lewis, Adalius Thomas, Ed Reed, Bart Scott, Terrell Suggs, Chris McAlister, Peter Boulware and Todd Heap were drafted onto the roster and those players were the core of a team that won a Super Bowl and of a defense that became one of the best and hardest hitting in NFL history.

When the Browns hired Savage in 2005 they were expecting to get one of the game's best talent evaluators and a man who could and would quickly put in a place a recipe for winning football: solid drafts and smart free agent signings.

We were told Savage and Newsome built the Ravens through those judicious drafts and supplemented and finished off the roster via smart free agent acquisitions. They seemed to understand that drafting effectively was the foundation for success and that you used the money available for free agency to get the players that would help put you over the top, plug leaks or who were a luxury.

Let's just flash ahead to 2008. Don't you have more respect for Ozzie today than you did the day the Browns stole the "real" brains of that operation away?

Savage has had 4 drafts under his watch for the Browns. It's hard to really gauge a draft until a few years afterward but at the end of the day, the early returns on Phil's first couple of years are starting to come in and they are nothing to write home about. Unless you're writing home about crap.

Browns 2005 Draftees- Braylon Edwards, Brodney Pool, Charlie Frye, Antonio Perkins, David McMillan, Nick Speegle, Andrew Hoffman, Jon Dunn.

Doesn't that list make your heart thump? I mean, out of the two guys left from that draft what's not to like? Well, except for one of them. Phil has two guys still here from his initial effort and one is a guy he picked 3rd overall who couldn't catch crabs at a Suzy Kim's truck stop spa. The fact he is a WR makes that even more problematic.

The argument could be made (and is, in fact being made) that Edwards was a huge over draft at #3. He clearly has some talent but he lacks the focus and consistency that a 3rd overall pick should have. That pick should not be a developmental player in regard to focus and concentration. Edwards has speed, athleticism and playmaking ability. He also has a maddening issue with dropping balls that hit him in the hands and his bark is often way bigger than his bite.

Thus far Poole has been solid. He can support the run and he can defend the pass adequately. But that's it for that draft; a steady DB in the 2nd round and Edwards. Hindsight indicates we're not off to a rousing start under Phil.

Browns 2006 Draftees- Kamerion Wimbley, D'Qwell Jackson, Travis Wilson, Leon Williams, Isaac Sowells, Jerome Harrison, DeMario Minter, Lawrence Vickers, Baba Oshinowo and Justin Hamilton.

Savage hit on a couple of picks in the latter rounds of this draft in Harrison and Vickers. You applaud the man for that even while shaking your head that Savage can't or won't get his head coach to utilize Harrison out of the backfield on a regular basis.

But what about those 1st four picks? You can argue that Jackson has been a decent player and that Wimbley was outstanding in his rookie year, but if you did you'd be overlooking the here and now. Wimbley hasn't come to close to approaching his rookie numbers nor has he come close to improving in any given element of his game. Jackson is just a body and an undersized one at that. He's a guy on the field. That's it. Very little else to get excited

about.

Wilson was a joke from the jump and played his way out the door in nearly record time. Leon Williams is another special teams/backup LB. The fact that that's all he is on a team with rotten linebackers in front of him says everything that needs to be said.

I'm not sure if the biggest problem with this draft was the selections themselves or the growing thought that Phil was played like a guitar by his old mentor in Baltimore. The Browns and Ravens completed a trade in the first round of this draft. The Ravens moved up to 13th and the Browns dropped to 14th and received a 6th

round pick for their troubles. The Ravens selected Haloti Ngata with the 13th pick, a huge, increasingly dominant nose tackle who is perfect in the 3-4 defenses both teams employ.

The Browns took Wimbley at 14th and selected Oshinowo with that 6th round pick. Phil strutted and crowed about getting over on the Ravens. Yet here we sit a few years later on the short side of that stick. Phil took a guy who had just over 10 sacks in his entire college career because he was convinced he could make him a monster rush linebacker in Cleveland. He passed up on a dominating nose tackle who dominated the position at the collegiate level and was nothing close to a projection.

That's ego at play there folks. That's ego telling you that you and the people you hire can take something and turn it into another thing while passing up on the better option. Sometimes being smart means not over thinking. Oshinowo is gone, Wimbley is failing and Ngata is dominating the line of scrimmage and making all of the Raven LBs better for it.

Not to mention the sheer stupidity of it in regard to the numbers game. You don't find NTs like Ngata laying around waiting to play in your defense. Linebackers like Wimbley (which is to say one dimensional and not close to impactful) are typically there whenever you want them (see Alex Hall). So Phil either was

arrogant and egotistical or just flat out stupid to select Wimbley with that pick based strictly on hindsight being 20/20 and how the careers of Ngata and Wimbley have developed. An arrogant egomaniac becomes a headstrong, charming rogue when he wins. But Phil ain't won shit.

What's more, this mistake in choosing Wimbley over Ngata and the failed Travis Wilson pick directly affected the entire roster this season in Cleveland. There's no Ngata killing everything in the middle here on the north coast. And the Browns correctly determined they needed one of those. So they traded a pick and a decent CB in Leigh Bodden to

the Lions for Shaun Rogers. Then they paid Rogers ridiculous coin to play here. Because Wilson was a bust they needed to go out and sign Donte Stallworth to multiple years and multiple millions too.

Instead of money being available to put a team over the top the Browns are spending it to patch holes that Phil punched in the roster with useless picks.

It's the same principle on the offensive line. Not until the 2007 draft did Savage go get a first day lineman. That catches up to you in a big way.

How?

Well, if you can't rely on good OL of your own then you have to spend at a premium to get guys to come to a town with a losing culture that you created by blowing draft picks to begin with. LeCharles Bentley, Rex Hadnot, Kevin Shaeffer, Eric Steinbach, etc., etc. etc. all came at a premium or inflated price.

It's a failed process and Phil's compounded that by blowing the picks he did make in many cases. A staggering number of draft picks from Savage's first couple of drafts are either

out of football altogether or no longer with the Browns. And it wasn't like those guys were drafted onto a deep roster with talent oozing from every spot on the depth chart.

He's simply messed it up.

Maybe the 2007 draft pays off huge. Thomas and Quinn along with Eric Wright give you some hope. The Derek Anderson/Quinn debacle has been beaten to death here and everywhere else but Phil lost a ton of leverage by not dealing Anderson when the young QB had his highest value. I understand the

rationale and that DA's contract is team friendly after this season. But the point is that Savage erred again when it comes to the scoreboard and it would have been nice to recoup a few more picks for next April for whoever is making them. That ship has also sailed.

So let's not judge the guy on the fact he's lost all control of the team's medical facilities and that he's done a piss poor job in trying to cover that up. Don't judge him based on the fact his personality suggests he's an egomaniacal jackass who can't think through the ramifications of sending a vile email message to a customer.

You know as well as I do that most fans would tolerate Josef Mengele heading up the surgical team in Berea and Ghengis Khan as the director of public relations if it meant winning.

Judge Phil solely based on winning and the talent that he has put on the field. It's only fair.