There is no weekly Browns column in existence more comprehensive than The Browns Outsider, and Hiko hits on a number of hot topics with the team as they wind down their season. He starts to talk free agency, mentioning Cardinals LB Karlos Dansby and Giants RB Derrick Ward as two guys that may be wearing orange and brown next season. He hits on Braylon, the team's Pro Bowlers, and some possible head coaching candidates that no one is talking about.

A View From The Cheap Seats
Week 14 - Cleveland at Philadelphia

What's left to say?

Not since the grand ol' year of 2000 have the Browns found themselves so hopeless and non-competitive. Not since Spurgeon Wynn and Doug Pederson have we seen a Browns team so utterly unable to do anything at the QB position.

How did it get this bad this quick? It seems like just yesterday that they were still in contention, or that we were finally going to get a look at Brady Quinn.

Now... despair. Utter despair.

This funeral procession can't end quickly enough. There'd better be some whiskey at the wake.

Let's say that you walked up to me during the 3rd Quarter of the Ravens game in Cleveland with the Browns at 3-4 and up by 14 at home. And you said to me, "Hey, Hiko. Guess what? I've come from the future. The Browns end up 4-12, and Ken Dorsey is the QB for the last 4 games, all blowouts."

"Whatever," I'd have said.

"No, really. It's true. They even lose to Cincinnati."

"Shut your lying hole."

"Sorry, but that's what happens. And you have to watch

the whole damn thing for weeks and weeks on end."

Well, I'd have had no choice but to shoot you.

Pregame

I met my friend Blue at the Canton Quaker Steak & Lube for some drinks and wings. The place was fairly full, but eerily silent. Despite a fair number of people donning their Browns gear, there was no excitement for the game whatsoever, and, most of the time, you couldn't tell a game was actually being played.

First Quarter

Seeing as I was hungry, I ordered a basket of the Atomic Wings, a beer, and a shot of some cut-rate whiskey they were hawking that was like a cheap version of Wild Turkey. I think it was called Angry Pheasant. Darnell Dinkins dropped a sure 1st Down by the Goal Line, and one person groaned.

End of 1st: Eagles 10, Browns 3.

Second Quarter

The Pheasant made my ears burn, and the Atomic Wings arrived, smelling like Chernobyl. It had been a while since I've had the Atomic - the hottest wings I've ever discovered on this planet - and the 1st bite reminded me why. Like sucking flavored gasoline off chicken meat. My eyes watered and my breath became staggered just in time for Ken Dorsey to throw a Pick 6.

Halftime: Eagles 17, Browns 3.

Third Quarter

Three quarters of the bar emptied out at the Half, but I stayed because I am a TRUE fan... ah, hell, I wasn't even really watching the game. I was trying to man up and plow through the last of the Atomic wings. As we all know, beer only exacerbates the heat effects of spicy food, so I was forced to down a couple more shots of Pheasant, the last coming as Philly kicked another FG.

End of 3rd: Eagles 20, Browns 3.

Fourth Quarter

Suffering from a heat-induced endorphin rush and the disenchanting effects of the Pheasant, I began seeing things. A hippo, a yeti, Genghis Khan, and Diana Ross sat at the bar, drinking a round of Flaming Mo's. Paula Abdul entered the room and shot herself, but no one paid any attention. Angelina Jolie and Jennifer Aniston were making out in one of the booths. And the Browns scored a Touchdown.

When I hallucinated that last one, I knew it was time to head for the homestead.

Final: Eagles 30, Browns 10.

Offensive MVP: Braylon Edwards. But then I take it away again because he's from Michigan and I hate Michigan and that's the reason I don't like Braylon Edwards.

Defensive MVP: Brandon McDonald. But then I take it away again because he's from Memphis, and I don't hate Memphis as much as I hate Michigan, but I don't have any special love for Memphis either.

Conclusion

~~~How ‘bout them Cavs?

_____

~~~Right away, we shall deal with Braylon Edwards and his self-fulfilling prophecy.

After the game, Mr. Edwards found it necessary to make the following comment: "It is what it is ... I've learned since being here that I'm very unappreciated. Not by the organization, just in the eyes of the fans and the city. Since Day One, I've been a marked man coming from Michigan. It's just gone that

way."

On Tuesday, he said, "It's just gone that way. Even when things are good, there's heckles. I'm not Paul Warfield, Webster Slaughter or Jim Brown. I've given my all to this city for four years, and I realize it will never be enough. I went to the Pro Bowl last year and resurrected this team from the darkness, and nobody cared."

Sigh. What even prompted this after an away game?

Braylon, Braylon, Braylon... it's comments just like these that underline exactly why people do not like you.

Like most city folk, you just don't get it.

The people of this town just want to win. They don't care where you're from. Sure, you'll get some good-natured ribbing because of the Ohio State-Michigan thing, but when you become a Cleveland Brown, the vast majority of fans don't care

where you came from. You could be from Charles Manson University and people would still accept you, so long as you played up to your hype and helped the team win.

You were the # 3 overall pick in the draft in 2005. If you're a Wide Receiver getting picked that high in the draft, you'd better be the second coming of Jerry freakin' Rice. You should at least be considered one of the best 10 Receivers in the league. And you're not. You're not an elite Receiver.

Terrell Owens, Andre Johnson, Steve Smith, Brandon Marshall, Calvin Johnson, Randy Moss, TJ Houshmandzadeh, Larry Fitzgerald, Anquan Boldin, Reggie Wayne. Pow! There's 10 WR's better than you are. It wasn't very hard to come up with the list. There's probably several more.

But it's not even that as much as it is the fact that you have become a ball-dropping headcase. You must've dropped at least 20 balls so far this season, a lot of them coming on critical downs - horrible, drive killing, game losing drops. Even if you were from Ohio State, they'd be booing you for that. Even if you were from Heaven State, they'd be booing you for that.

Then throw in the point that you're, well, you're an asshole. Sorry, I know you don't think of yourself that way, but you come across as an asshole. Someone who's easy to dislike. You're pampered, spoiled, enabled, whiny, self-congratulatory, and over-sensitive. I mean, YOU "resurrected this team from darkness"? You epitomize everything that people hate about professional athletes - the ultimate prima donnas.

Oh, and you're stupid. I don't want to forget that, because you make it so apparent that you couldn't catch a clue if it hit you in the hands when you reason that the fans have turned on you because you're from Michigan.

That's like saying my ex-wife hates me because I have blue eyes, not that I dumped her.

They booed Derek Anderson. Was it because Oregon State dares have the initials OSU? They booed Tim Couch. Was it because they hate Kentucky? Dennis Northcutt. Because they hate Arizona? Gerard Warren. Because they hate Florida?

Dude, QB's and WR's are the easiest to Boo, because when

they fail, it's clear to everyone watching who was at fault. That comes with the position, with the fame, with the paycheck.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't mention your charities. You do a lot charity-wise for the city of Cleveland, and that is very commendable. Not enough is made of your contributions on that front.

But the point is that you were a highly drafted supposedly elite Wide Receiver on a team that has floundered for the past decade in a city that longs for a winner. If the team were winning, they'd love you, just like they did last year. But the team is losing - again - and some of it is your fault.

Instead of taking responsibility for your performance, you whine and blame it on where you went to college. Yeah, THAT must be the reason they don't love me as much as I love me, you reason.

You, Braylon, have just made a self-fulfilling prophecy. It wasn't about Michigan before, but it will be now. All those people that already didn't like you, that were already upset with your

performance, they heard your gripes, and they will use that against you. All the drunk Yahoos that were cheering when Derek Anderson went down, now they'll be chanting "Ann Arbor is a whore!" at you all game long.

And it's not because they hate Michigan. It's because they hate you and they know it will bother the hell out of you.

Some advice, Braylon: Just keep your mouth shut and do your job.

Because very few people are going to sympathize with your "plight". To paraphrase the great Christmas classic The Ref: "You know what I'm gonna get you next Christmas? A big, wooden cross, so every time you feel unappreciated, you can climb on up there and nail yourself to it."

~~~That being said, any talk of shipping Braylon out after the season is pure nonsense.

He may not be realizing his talent, but talent he does have. It's not impossible for him to duplicate his 2007 season. But it probably is impossible for any other Receiver on the roster.

The last thing this team needs to be doing is creating another hole. So prep yourself for Braylon's return next season, and hope that he gets someone to perform an exorcism on his hands this offseason.

I don't like it any more than you do, but the team needs him. Badly.

~~~Score: Eagles 30, Browns 10. Yards: Eagles 418, Browns 196. Time of Possession: Eagles 37:55, Browns 22:05.

That's just an ol' fashioned butt whoopin'.

_____

~~~The Browns got 4 players into the Pro Bowl: Joe Thomas and Shaun Rogers were selected to the team, and Josh Cribbs and Phil Dawson were chosen as alternates.

I was a bit surprised that Shaun Rogers made it, what with the plethora of good DT's in the AFC and the suckitude of the Browns' D, but he deserved it, and I'm very glad to see him go.

I'm not sure, however, that Joe Thomas deserved it. He seems to have taken a step back from last year, and has given up a number of bull-rush sacks as of late. This pick almost seems more like name-recognition than accomplishment. Still, getting selected to the Pro Bowl will probably help to amp up Joe's confidence, and that can't be a bad thing.

There should be no Pro Bowl ever played where Josh Cribbs is
~~~

not a starter on Special Teams. He's probably just an alternate this year because his returns were down (hampered by the early high ankle sprain), but if you take into account what he does as a gunner on the kick team, there really is no better overall Special Teams player in the NFL.

And, other than 3 inexplicable and uncharacteristic misses in the last 4 games, Phil Dawson has been solid all season. His 56 yarder to win it in Buffalo was damn impressive.

That brings us to all the Browns players who were snubbed, players that performed week in and week out, yet were somehow overlooked by the fans, players, and coaches that vote on the Pro Bowl roster.

Here's a list of those Browns who deserved better:

That's all.

_____

~~~What are the Browns greatest areas of need?

Well, almost every position could use some TLC, but I have to assume that the most pressing positional holes reside in these two areas:

Linebacker

Running Back

You could almost put Linebacker on there twice, since 2 new starters are really needed, 1 inside and 1 outside. Which almost assuredly makes Linebacker the position of greatest need.

Here's the top of who's available in Free Agency at LB :

Eric Barton, UFA, New York Jets
~~~

Karlos Dansby, UFA, Arizona Cardinals

Ray Lewis, UFA, Baltimore Ravens

Mike Peterson, UFA, Jacksonville Jaguars

Bart Scott, UFA, Baltimore Ravens

Jonathan Vilma, UFA, New Orleans Saints

Jordan Beck, UFA, Denver Broncos

Monty Beisel, UFA, Arizona Cardinals

Angelo Crowell, UFA, Buffalo Bills

Channing Crowder, UFA, Miami Dolphins

James Farrior, UFA, Pittsburgh Steelers

Tyjuan Hagler, UFA, Indianapolis Colts

Willie McGinest, UFA, Cleveland Browns

Carlos Polk, UFA, San Diego Chargers

Sam Williams, UFA, Oakland Raiders

Zack Thomas, UFA, Dallas Cowboys

There're actually a lot of possibilities on this list, assuming they make it to Free Agency, which is a big assumption. The ones

that pop out at you are from the division rivals that already run a 3-4, like Bart Scott, Ray Lewis, and James Farrior, but I just don't see any of them coming here, especially Lewis, who I'm sure will finish his career in purple.

Even if you get a big hit in Free Agency, though, maybe nabbing a Karlos Dansby to play pass rushing OLB, you still have that disturbing hole in the middle next to D'Qwell Jackson. I think that there's little doubt the LB position will have to be addressed early, likely in the 1st Round of the draft.

Here's the top of who's available in Free Agency at RB :

Steven Jackson, UFA, St. Louis Rams

Brandon Jacobs, UFA, New York Giants

Derek Ward, UFA, New York Giants

Shaun Alexander, UFA, Washington Redskins

Cedric Benson, UFA, Cincinnati Bengals

Rudi Johnson, UFA, Detroit Lions

Kevin Jones, UFA, Chicago Bears

LaMont Jordan, UFA, New England Patriots

Maurice Morris, UFA, Seattle Seahawks

Ricky Williams, UFA, Miami Dolphins

Darren Sproles, UFA, San Diego Chargers

J.J. Arrington, UFA, Arizona Cardinals

Correll Buckhalter, UFA, Philadelphia Eagles

Jesse Chatman, UFA, New York Jets

Heath Evans, UFA, New England Patriots

Ryan Moats, UFA, Philadelphia Eagles

Aaron Stecker, UFA, New Orleans Saints

It's unlikely that either Jackson or Jacobs escapes their respective teams, and most of the rest of the list is a bunch of has-beens and never-will-bes. However, Derek Ward intrigues me. He's got good power, decent speed, and great hands. But he's gonna get paid somewhere; probably overpaid.

What that means is that we're likely looking at having to replace Jamal Lewis with a rookie RB. That will certainly need to be addressed in one of the first 2 rounds as well.

Did you ever see that movie, Holes? Neither did I. Out of curiosity, I wonder if it was about the Browns? It just seems like it would be.

~~~Watching Tony Dungy win another playoff spot, it started me thinking about coaches that failed with their original team, were fired, then went on to great success at their 2nd stop.

Tom Coughlin, Bill Belichick, Tony Dungy, Mike Shanahan are all coaches that were fired from their 1st team, eventually got another Head Coaching gig, and went on to win Superbowls. John Gruden won his championship with his 2nd Team too. One could argue that their initial job was a learning experience, giving them the valuable knowledge they needed to succeed with their next opportunity.
~~~

So that brings us to a pack of possible Head Coaching candidates that no one is talking about - the so-called retreads. Men that had Head Coaching gigs, failed, and have bided their time, hoping for a 2nd shot. The list includes Dick LeBeau, Gregg Williams, Mike Martz, Marty Mornhinweg, Mike Nolan, Cam Cameron, Jim Mora, Jr., Rod Marinelli (assuming he is fired), Marvin Lewis (assuming he is fired), and Mike Tice. Hell, you could even toss Brian Billick into the mix, because even though he had success and won a Superbowl with his 1st Team, he was still fired.

I'm surprised no one has mentioned LeBeau, Defensive Coordinator for the Steelers, as a prospect. He's successful, he's from Ohio, he went to Ohio State, hiring him would weaken a division opponent, and his players love him. He failed in Cincy, but so does everyone.

Well, the reason no one is talking about him is this: He's 71 years old.

I have some interest in Gregg Williams, and just a little less in Mike Nolan, although he was just miserable with the 49'ers. Both are Defensive coaches and relatively young. I also have a

slight curiosity about Rod Marinelli, who I think could be a good coach... just not in Detroit.

Marvin Lewis, no, he didn't have enough control over his team. Mike Martz, no, too Offensive minded for the AFC North. Cam Cameron, Mike Tice, no interest. Jim Mora Jr. will be taking over the Seattle job, and Marty Mornhinweg... you gotta be freakin' kidding.

That leaves Billick, who seems to be the candidate that many are starting to back as it appears that neither Bill Cowher or Marty Schottenheimer are interested in the job.

I don't have a good feeling about Billick. He was an Offensive guy, yet never managed to have a good Offense in Baltimore. They were carried by the Defense and its Coordinators. The Ravens are certainly not suffering with Billick's absence, and, honestly, I just don't like the arrogant prick. I think the only reason some of you out there are touting him is because he has experience and won a Superbowl. Nice credentials, but it doesn't necessarily make him the best choice for the job.

Given this list of candidates and nothing else, I'd probably go with Gregg Williams. But, honestly, outside of Cowher, I'd be more apt to go for one of the never-been-a-head-coach Coordinators out there like Steve Spagnuolo, Josh McDaniels, or Jim Schwartz next rather than unearth one of these retreads.

Even if they might have the potential to be the next Bill Belichick, they also have the potential to be the next Dick Jauron or Dave Wannstedt.

_____

~~~Props to Tony Grossi for getting a laugh out of me on this bleak December day with this quip:

Zastudil (who is hurt) is also the team's holder on placekicks. His replacement in that duty might be backup quarterback Bruce Gradkowski or -- you guessed it -- Josh Cribbs.
~~~

Holding is something Cribbs did as the starting quarterback at Kent State. He never returned kicks, covered kicks or played receiver, as he has in three years with the Browns.

"Josh does everything," Crennel said. "I'm gonna give him a [coach's] headset, I think."

Fill in your own punch line here.

~~~How ‘bout them Cavs?

Moot Points

~~~On my way to work the other day, I noticed a new billboard alongside the road. It read: &quot;It's OK to say Merry

Christmas." - Jesus.

Now, I'll admit that I haven't read the whole Bible, but I really don't remember Jesus saying that. Especially since Christmas didn't come into existence as a recognized holiday until well after his death.

So that made me wonder why a Christian would go around attributing false quotes to the Son of God to further their own agenda. Seems a little dangerous, doesn't it? Presuming to know Jesus' opinion on this or any matter is very arrogant and self-aggrandizing. It's like erecting a sign that says "Vote Palin" - Jesus, assuming that Jesus would like Sarah Palin, when, in fact, he might think she's a giant twit. We just don't know.

There's probably a special level of Hell just for people who further their own beliefs by claiming that their deity shares their viewpoint. It's all well and fine that the lady or gentleman responsible for this sign might have noble intentions, but little solace will that be for them as they roast in the eternal human barbecue.

To try and save this individual, and others like him/her, I shall now pay to have a billboard erected right next to that one that says: "Don't put words in my mouth." - Jesus.

_____

~~~Another great commercial has hit the airwaves. Two ladies sit in a coffee shop, drinking their expensive caffeinated beverages, when one of them mentions that McDonald's has lattes now.

Lady 1: McDonald's? That's great!

Lady 2: I know! Now I can read gossip magazines!

Lady 1: I can talk about reality TV shows!

Lady 2: I don't have to know where Paraguay is!
~~~

Lady 1 (never heard of it): Paraguay?

Thank you, McDonald's. It wasn't good enough that you make so many people so fat with your... I guess you call it food. But now you celebrate stupidity! Yay!

Fat, drunk, and stupid is no way to go through life... unless, apparently, you're at McDonald's.

Draft Update

The Browns have climbed all the way to # 7 this week, and don't look to have the moxie to relinquish any of the ground they've gained in the latter part of this season. But, with only 2 games left, one of the hardest schedules in the league (a draft position tiebreaker), and the likes of the Raiders, Seahawks, Bengals, Chiefs, Rams, and Lions ahead of them, it appears unlikely that Cleveland will be able to move up any further.

I'm going back to WalterFootball.com this week since I haven't been there for a while and they update their Mock draft weekly (a lot of sites do it once a month):

1. Detroit - Matthew Stafford, QB, Georgia

2. St. Louis - Andre Smith, OT, Alabama

3. Kansas City - Brian Orakpo, DE, Texas

4. Cincinnati - Michael Oher, OT, Ole Miss

5. Seattle - Michael Crabtree, WR, Texas Tech

6. Oakland - Eugene Monroe, OT, Virgina

With the 7th Overall pick in the 1st Round, the Cleveland Browns select:

Cleveland - Chris Wells, RB, Ohio State

A few minutes after the Eagles trashed the Browns on Monday night, I received an e-mail from Jon S.: "And you still want Beanie Wells for Cleveland? Give me a break... Defensive line, defensive line, defensive line."

Well, I agree. The Browns need help almost everywhere on defense. My former roommate Dennis was at the game, and he told me the crowd was laughing at the Browns because they pressured with just three people, yet every Eagles receiver/tight end was open downfield.

But Jamal Lewis sucks too, and Chris Wells is the best player on the board. I'm serious about the former; I've never seen a slower running back in my entire life. Lewis really needs to save face and retire at the end of the season. He recently had a game where he gained seven yards on seven carries! Jerome Harrison, meanwhile, isn't an every-down runner. Wells can

help take Cleveland's offense to the next level, assuming Brady Quinn emerges as the prospect he was billed to be coming out of Notre Dame.

I'm getting really sick of everyone giving us this pick. Yes, we need a Running Back and, yes, he goes to Ohio State, but I really don't think Beanie is the answer. Now, if the Browns were picking somewhere around 15-20, and Beanie was still there, then fine. But not at # 7 overall. Not with his injury history, and not with his lack of game-breaking potential.

As I've already outlined, RB should be addressed in Free Agency or the 2nd Round. The 1st Round pick needs to be a Defensive playmaker.

Here's what WalterFootball.com says about Beanie :

Strengths:

Outstanding size with great bulk in upper and lower bodies ...

Dominantly powerful ... Shakes off the first hit in the open field like it's nothing ... Textbook stiff arm ... Nice second gear ... A game-breaker despite being a bigger back ... Solid vision to cut back into running lanes ... Instinctive runner ... Has nice speed turning the corner ... Keeps shoulders square to the line of scrimmage in approach ... Extremely productive back and has a lot of upside ... Durable ... Hasn't been overworked for multiple seasons.

Weaknesses:

Very questionable hands out of the backfield ... Doesn't hit the hole very hard and running lanes do close on him sometimes because of this ... Doesn't put much effort into pass protection and lacks awareness in this area.

Summary:

Beanie Wells is kind of back who can carry a franchise ... He's an elite talent - very near to the same grade I gave Adrian Peterson ... Dominant player who could fall a bit in the NFL Draft because the demand for running backs in the NFL is

extremely low.

Player Comparison:

Bo Jackson. Beanie is very similar to Bo from a size and athletic standpoint. Both were extremely powerful runners who punished opponents. I know this is a bit of a stretch, but it's hard to find players to compare Wells to from a size, speed, and style standpoint at his position. It's simply rare.

Of course I'd like to have him. But that Defense needs help in the worst way, and decent RB's can be had in 2nd and 3rd.

Next Up

~~~The Cincinnati Bengals
~~~

Offense: PTS - 12.4 (32nd), YDS - 239.4 (32nd), PASS YDS - 159.0 (30th), RUSH YDS - 80.4 (29th)

Defense: PTS - 25.6 (28th), YDS - 343.3 (22nd), PASS YDS - 218.4 (18th), RUSH YDS - 124.9 (23rd)

This game will be televised in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Hell.

Take 2 of the worst teams in the league, 2 of the lamest Offenses led by 2 highly mediocre reserve QB's, and you have a game that even a mother couldn't watch.

However, the Bengals have been showing more spine lately than the Browns, so...

Bengals 14, Browns 6.