It has come to this. For the first time since "The Return" in 1999, Hiko will not watch the Browns play. And in this week's Outsider, he talks about the reasoning behind this decision. And also brings a new name into the mix to be the Browns next head coach: Eric Mangini. Hiko also looks ahead to the draft, talking about a new name popping up on mock draft boards in association with the Browns, who currently would pick #7 overall.

A View From The Cheap Seats

Week 15 - Cleveland vs. Cincinnati

It has come to this.

This Sunday, for the 1st time since "The Return" in 1999, I will not watch the Browns play.

There have been instances in the past where I haven't watched the game live (tape), or didn't watch the whole game (turned it off in disgust), but never once have I not watched the game at all. Not from the most meaningless Preseason game through the horrible ends of the '99, '00, '04, and '06 seasons.

But I refuse to watch this next game.

The reasons are thus:

1. The team has completely quit. There is nothing to be learned from a team that has given up, and nothing good can come of it.

2. They are playing the Steelers in Pittsburgh. I loathe the Steelers. I can't stand their colors, their players, their fans, and those silly yellow rags they wave like hillbilly pom-poms. It pains me to watch them on a good day, and this will not be a good day. The only time it is worth watching the Steelers play is if there is hope they will get their asses kicked, like what happened to them last week. But that will not happen against the Browns, and I have no desire to watch a team I despise kick the manhood out of the team I love. I am not that masochistic.

3. There are lots of other games - good games - on. Games that are essentially the playoffs for the teams involved. Why watch CLE-PIT - a contest that means nothing to either team other than pride (and we know how that will go) - when I can watch Minnesota try to beat the Giants? When the Jets and Fins fight it out for the

AFC East? When Dallas and Philly try to eliminate each other? BUF-NE, CHI-HOU, TB-OAK, all games of playoff import? And who can forget the winner-take-all showdown between the mediocre powers of the AFC West? The Browns are my favorite team, but I don't stop watching the NFL when they go down. Good thing, since it happens frequently.

So have fun, those of you brave/stupid enough to watch our team get ground into meaty gravel at the hands of our archenemy - again. I'll be enjoying a contest between 2 good teams, not 1 good team and 1 accursed dysfunctional f-up franchise that has long since mailed it in. **Pregame**

My 16 year old nephew was up, sporting his shiny new driver's permit. So I took him to a local neighborhood so he could practice.

It was, apparently, the first time he had ever driven. His mother doesn't have a license, and his step-dad won't take him. Thus, I got to teach him, telling him what the driving instructors would expect him to do, and how that was different from driving in the real world. You know, how the driving school would expect him to come to a complete halt at the stop sign, when, in reality, slowing down enough to look both ways and have the option to stop if you HAD to was plenty good enough.

Oh, and how the speed limit signs were merely polite

suggestions, only to be adhered to when taking the driving test or being followed by a cop.

Sadly, it will be a while before he will be ready to follow my simple truths. Left hand turns are severe dangers to mailboxes when my nephew is at the wheel. The brakes are tools to either be forgotten totally or slammed on suddenly.

Beware.

First Quarter

The Browns, just trying to sit quietly at the bar and drink away his problems, heard the door open and the jingle of spurs behind him. It was that pimply Bengals kid from down the street. "*I'm callin' you out, Browns*!" he squeaked. With a sigh, the Browns put down his shot glass and followed the youngster out to the alley.

End of 1st: Bengals 7, Browns 0.

Second Quarter

The Browns fully intended on teaching this punk a lesson, but, as he turned, the Bengals sucker-punched him in the jaw. "*Take that, mister*
!" the Bengals warbled as the Browns hit the cold stones, his mouth all bloody, three of his teeth missing.

Still shaking his head in surprise, the Browns howled as the Bengals suddenly crushed his knees with a sledge hammer.

Halftime: Bengals 14, Browns 0.

Third Quarter

"*Why are you doing this*?" shrieked the Browns just after the Bengals had clamped jumper cables to his nipples.

"*You fired my father*!" answered the gangly youth.

"*That wasn't me!* *That was Art Modell* !" protested the Browns.

Squealing like a microwaved guinea pig, the Bengals took a blowtorch to the Browns' eyes.

End of 3rd: Bengals 14, Browns 0.

Fourth Quarter

The Browns, blinded, hobbled, nipples crushed, feelings hurt, lay quivering in a pool of his own blood. He barely reacted as the Bengals sliced open his belly, grabbing his intestine and duct taping it to the axle of his Yugo. With a self-satisfied grunt, the Bengals drove slowly away, leaving the disembowelment death screams of the Browns to echo throughout the city.

Final: Bengals 14, Browns 0.

Offensive MVP: Jamal Lewis. Really, no one deserves this, but Jamal did go over 10k yards for his career, so this is his congratulations from me.

Defensive MVP: Eric Wright. No one really stands out here either, but the fumble that E-Dub forced was a thing of beauty.

Conclusion

~~~How ‘bout them Cavs?

~~~I f-ing hate this team. They make me violent and violently ill. I've never hated a Cleveland Browns team more than I hate this squad of soulless f-jobs.

~~~Seems that Shaun Smith and Brady Quinn got into a little altercation last week. Shaun was talking some smack (he seems barely coherent in interviews, but he apparently runs some good smack) to Quinn, and Quinn talked back, and Smith hit him or something. Rumors have weights being thrown, people's wives getting dissed, and a goat getting sacrificed.
~~~

Here's what this story means to me: Yawn.

Fights happen sometimes on football teams. They happen on the field all the time. One guy gets angry, the other guy gets angry, and they go at each other. Afterwards, most of the time, it's no big deal.

The only reason we're even talking about this at all is that there isn't a

goddam thing else to discuss at this point.

~~~You've gotta admit - Romeo's going out with a blaze of glory.

I refuse to believe that even he could be this bad accidentally. No, I'm convinced that he's perpetrating the most destructive plunder since
~~~

the Visigoths sacked Rome. He knows he's gone, and he's taking the house down with him. Not even a table will be left standing when he's done, just a huge flaming mass where the Cleveland Browns used to be, and mad shirtless Romeo sitting on top of the heap like Kurtz chanting "*The Roof!* *The Roof!* *The Roof is on fire* !"

Burn, mother-f. Burn.

~~~And while he razes this team to the ground, Romeo still has the audacity to beg for his job after Sunday's game. It is assumed he will meet with owner Randy Lerner next week sometime, at which time he will make this case for himself:

&quot;*We won 10 last year, so I feel like we can win 10 again or win more.* *That's not in my hands,*
~~~

that's not in my control. All I can do is make a case for myself and say that, given the chance, I'd be able to get it turned around. If I'm given that chance, I know that I'd do everything I possibly can ."

Heh heh. Does that crack you up too?

According to Romeo, he thinks he still has a shot at convincing Randy:

"*He's the owner, and he's got a lot of different things he's got to consider and look at. He'll make that determination in January after the season's over. At that time, when I get the chance to sit down and talk with him, then I can make my case. And he's going to have to decide whether I've made a good-enough case and whether he wants to stay with me in this job.*

Later in the week, he detailed a bit of what his "case" might entail, pointing out the Browns victory over the Giants earlier this season:

"*I think we can look at that Giants game and say if we prepare like we did for that game and play like we did in that game, that is what the future can be* ."

Which brings up the inevitable question of why - in all the other games - your team didn't prepare like they did for that game or play like they did in that game? Aren't you almost demonstrating your own lack of control by pointing out *Hey, this can be a good team, we just need to prepare better*
?

So why didn't you? You're the Head Coach, aren't you? That's your responsibility, isn't it?

Uhhhhhhhh....

Dude, this is one of the most pathetic ploys I've ever seen. You have demonstrated gross incompetence this season. Your job has been forfeit since the Houston game, and the team has only gotten worse as the year winds down. And you still think there's a chance you can make a case for keeping your job?

You'd have a better chance making a case that you're hotter than Scarlett Johansson.

~~~Doesn't look like Kellen Winslow will play this week at PIT.

That means it's very possible you have already seen K2's last game with the Cleveland Browns.
~~~

~~~Future Hall of Famer Ken Dorsey was put on IR this week, which means that the Browns are down to their 4th string QB Bruce Gradkowski, a guy who was begging for change in front of my Circle K last week.

I imagine Phil Savage lying in bed late at night, staring at the ceiling, tightly clutching his
~~~

armadillo Webkinz, muttering "Woe is me".

~~~This week, many NFL Head Coaches have been rumored to be on their way out. Amongst them are:

Dick Jauron, Buffalo. Eric
~~~

Mangini, Jets. Marvin Lewis, Cincy. Mike Shanahan, Denver. Herm Edwards, KC. Tom Cable, Oakland. Mike Holmgren, Seattle. Jim Haslett, St. Louis. Wade Phillips, Dallas. Andy Reid, Philly. Jim Zorn, Washington. Rod Marinelli, Detroit. Brad Childress, Minnesota.

Personally, I think that Lewis, Shanahan, Reid, Zorn, and Childress all will stay. I'm also

guessing that Jauron, Mangini, and Phillips all have to win this week in order to remain. That leaves Edwards, Cable, Holmgren, Haslett, and Marinelli as certain to be gone.

Of the names that might go, Holmgren and Mangini stick out to me. Holmgren has won a Superbowl with one team, and led his 2nd team to another. He has seemed burnt out the last couple seasons, but his

experience and rate of success are hard to argue with (even though he doesn't really excite me as a candidate).

Mangini has only been a Head Coach for 3 years. He's 37 years old, the youngest coach in the NFL. In his 3 years, he's gone 10-6, 4-12, and 9-6 (so far). The 10-6 team of 2006 certainly over-achieved, and the 4-12 team of 2007 lost a lot

of close games. He's turned the team around from last season and has them on the verge of the playoffs for the 2nd time in 3 years... and they want to fire him.

The issue is that the powers that be got him Brett Favre, assuming that the addition of one over-the-hill overrated QB would turn a 4-12 team into an instant Superbowl

contender. And they got everyone overly excited by playing above their skill level with the 8-3 start. But 3 losses in the last 4 have got the New York press screaming for blood, and Mangini might actually be gone with a home loss to Miami on Sunday.

Honestly, should he be let go,

I think Mangini would be a great candidate for the Browns Head Coaching job. That Jets team isn't that good. 9-7 is about what they should be. Favre as much holds his teams back as helps them these days. The Running Backs are mediocre, the Wide Receivers even more so. 2 winning seasons out of 3 is a scenario that Browns fans just dream of. Mangini has experience, he's young, and

he has Cleveland ties. He started his NFL career with the Browns, and he's married to Mark Shapiro's sister. Here's Wikipedia's take on Mangini's Cleveland years:

"*Mangini worked his way up in the NFL under the tutelage of Bill Belichick. He began his career as a ball boy*

with Cleveland at the age of 23, and later became an intern in the public relations. While working as a ball boy, he was often quoted as saying "no job is too small in the NFL." He worked 18 hours a day in the PR department, and at night he took copies of stats in the copyroom. Bill Belichick, at the time the head coach of the Cleveland Browns, found him there, and liked him so

much that he asked the general manager if they had another job for him. Mangini was given the job of putting film together for the Browns coordinators ."

Yes, I am very intrigued. I have to admit, should he become available, Eric Mangini would probably jump right to the front of my Head

Coaching list.

~~~*Mangini would even jump Bill Cowher????* , you ask. No. Cowher is still numero uno on my list. But I have come to terms with the vast probability that Cowher is not coming to Cleveland. You
~~~

hear the rumors everywhere, most lately in a PD article about Dan Rooney, rumors stating that Cowher is comfortable in his job and doesn't want to come back to coaching at this time. I mean, all you need to do is watch that CBS commercial where the studio guys are tossing a ball around and Cowher drops it and they all laugh like schoolgirls to know that Bill is

having way too much fun living the high life.

So, as a Cleveland sports fan is wont to do, I'm writing him off in lieu of getting my hopes up. Bill Cowher will not coach the Cleveland Browns in 2009. Take it to Vegas.

That leaves my front-line wish

list at Mangini, Josh McDaniels (with Scott Pioli), and Steve Spagnuolo. Secondary candidates include Holmgren, Marty, Jim Schwartz, and Rex Ryan.

We shall see. I have to admit I'm getting excited for Firing Day. What a ghoul I am.

~~~Dear Santa,

I am returning the gift you gave me this year - the 2008 Cleveland Browns. If you call this a present, you are one sadistic bastard. I'd rather have coal. Or a bag of pig vomit.
~~~

If you give me anything similar to this next year, I'm putting a Rottweiler in the chimney.

~~~Christmas is a time for sharing, so I will share some e-mails with you.
~~~

"I notice that you rip on Ben every chance that you get. Jealous much? It must be tough going through life so envious of the Black and Gold." - Random Hilljack, Some Trailer Park.

Random,

There are many teams in the

NFL whose success I envy, but the Saints are not one of them. The Browns have been bad as of late, but they do have 8 Championships on their resume. I'm not going to take the time to bother looking it up, but I'd have to imagine the Saints are the losingest franchise in NFL history. You guys invented the bag over the head, for Pete's sake.

I am assuming, of course, that you were referencing the New Orleans Saints. I can't think of another NFL team that wears black and gold.

"What in the hell is wrong with you? Beanie Wells doesn't have game-breaking potential? Do you even watch the Buckeyes? Can I have some

of what you're smoking?" - Disgruntled Buckfan, Some Ohio College.

Disgruntled,

First question - no one seems to know.

Second and third question combined - I watched every OSU game this season, and, obviously, that Offense dies with Beanie out. He's a very good Running Back. I freely admit that. But I just don't put him on the level of an Adrian Peterson or LaDainian Tomlinson or, well, the kind of RB that you should be getting if you're picking him that high. He has good straight ahead speed and can jump over the

occasional Defender or two, but I don't feel that he has the vision, the cutback ability, or the elusiveness of a truly Elite Running Back™. I certainly wouldn't mind having him in Cleveland, but not at the sacrifice of a pick that high in the draft. Sorry, that's just my opinion.

Fourth question - no.

"Will you just do the world a favor and die?" - Angrily Anonymous, Somewhere.

Angrily,

Are you that girl from D.C. in '95? I'm sorry I didn't call you, but I had serious beer

goggles on that night, and, well, you're not supposed to try and tear it off. At one point I thought you were trying to start a lawnmower. Those were shouts of pain, not pleasure.

~~~How ‘bout them Cavs?

Moot Points

~~~What's the gift you give to the person who has poor circulation and no self-awareness?

The Snuggie!

Yes, there's a new commercial for this product, which is basically a blanket with sleeves so you can wear it. Click on the above link and watch the ad. It shows that regular blankets are very confusing and hard to use,

but, with the Snuggie, you too can sit around the house looking like some kind of Satanic monk.

If people want to wear blankets around the house, then that's their prerogative. It's OK to look like a Star Trek reject when in the privacy of your own

home.

But the commercial loses me when they show a family wearing Snuggies to a football game. Yes, the mom, dad, and little sister sit in red potato sacks, cheering, smiling, and giving each other a high five. Now, the problem

with that image is that a) the daughter is not completely mortified to be seen in public like that and b) no one has thrown hot dogs, beer, nachos, gerbils, etc. at those blanket-wearing lead paint eaters.

Not on my watch!

Draft Update

The Browns are still at # 7 overall this week, and, unless Oakland beats Tampa or Seattle beats Arizona, are unlikely to climb any higher. That's fine. Plenty of talent available at Numero

Siete.

This week we're going with one of the few sites to update their mock this week (updated 12/24/08), a site called Draft Empire :

1. Detroit - Sam Bradford, QB, Oklahoma

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

3. Kansas City - Matt Stafford, QB, Georgia

4. Cincinnati - Eugene Monroe, OT, Virgina

5. Seattle - Michael Crabtree, WR, Texas Tech

6. Oakland - Aaron Curry,

OLB, Wake Forest

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

Everette Brown, DE,

Florida State.

This is a new addition to the normal bunch the pundits have been giving us, and someone I'm not too familiar with. Here's what Walter Football says about Everette:

Height: 6-4. Weight: 250.

Projected 40 Time: 4.60.

Projected Round (2009): Top 25 Pick.

11/16/08: Everette Brown's production has been amazing this season. In nine games, he has 15 TFL and nine sacks, which could prompt him to declare early.

7/30/08: A future right

end or 3-4 rush linebacker, Everette Brown has proven to be a terror to quarterbacks; as a sophomore, Brown registered 11.5 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks. As an added bonus, Brown is reliable; he has yet to miss a game in his career as a Seminole.

FF Toolbox chimes in:

Even when Everette Brown was a freshman and played a limited role on the defense, the defensive end was very productive. He only started three games as a freshman in 2006, but he

managed to tally 13.5 tackles-for-loss and three sacks. As a sophomore Brown started nine games, mostly at left end. On top of his 37 tackles, Brown ended the year with 6.5 sacks and 11.5 tackles-for-loss. The 2008 season has gone pretty well for Florida

State. The Seminoles have started the season 6-1 and the defense and Brown deserve a lot of credit. In those seven games, Brown (who has started every game so far in the 2008 season) is leading the team with 11.0 tackles for loss and 6.0 sacks.

That production has warranted some looks from NFL scouts. Brown has good size at 6-4 and 252 pounds, but he could stand to add some more strength. His speed and quickness are great assets, but he can get pushed around on occasion.

The good news is that Brown has room on his frame to add some more muscle and NFL teams should be willing to work with him since he has skills and instincts that cannot be taught. If Brown does declare early for the draft, and his junior year continues to go as well as it has so

far, Brown could be a second round selection.

Here are my personal thoughts: A somewhat undersized DE from Florida State that will need to be converted to OLB in the 3-4. Where

oh where have I seen that before?

Not that you can judge a player by the productivity of a player that came from the same position and school that he did... but I am. There are much greater needs,

and much safer bets.

Nonetheless, I'll be watching him closely during the Champs Sports Exhibition Game between FSU and Wisconsin.

Next Up

~~~The Pittsburgh Steelers

The Steelers have a great Defense, the
~~~

Browns will be starting their 4th string QB on an Offense that hasn't scored a TD in 5 straight freakin' games. The Steelers Offense isn't all that, but they don't have to be.

Steelers 34, Browns 0.