We've always known Hiko to be a bastion of even-handedness through all his years penning about the Browns for us here on the site. No matter how bad things seem, Hiko always is rational and puts things in the proper perspective. But this draft? He doesn't understand it, and thinks the Browns played it too safe when they had a chance to make a splash and add impact guys. He gives us a comprehensive review of the draft in today's Browns Outsider.

A View From The Cheap Seats
Draft Aftermath (aka "Draftermath")

Thursday morning I woke up with a sore throat and uncomfortable nasal drainage. "*Feces*," I said to myself. "*You're getting sick*."

So I took 50 Vitamin C pills, downed a gallon of OJ, and hoped it would go away.

It did not.

By Saturday morning, it had turned into a full-blown flu/cold/sinus infection, mixed with the always-enjoyable stomach issues. Quite possibly a mild case of the Plague. My routine was sniff, sniff, blow nose, cough, sniff, wince at headache, breathe heavily through mouth, sniff, whine to my girlfriend about how miserable I am, cough, run to bathroom, use bathroom, curse the Fates, sniff, blow nose, leave bathroom, sit on couch, sniff, wince, sense stomach issues are not over by a long shot, hope for the sweet release of death.

So I decided to forgo the Draft Party. I was loathe to miss the company of you good people, but I wasn't going anywhere on Saturday except from living room to bathroom and back. I was just going to sit on the couch and try to comprehend the intricacies of the NFL Draft from the depths of a flu-induced haze.

And now that my illness has cleared up somewhat, I'm still not sure I understand it.

Let's recap, I guess.

Trade # 1

At overall pick # 5, the Cleveland Browns managed to entice the New York Jets to come up to take Mark Sanchez.

Prior to the draft, from the comfort of my death-couch, I texted a few people and proclaimed that if Sanchez were still available at # 5 and they couldn't get anyone to bite, they should pick the USC QB and hold him for ransom. Of course, you're taking a chance of getting stuck with him, but several teams wanted Sanchez, and owning the rights to the player is a lot better a bargaining chip than the threat of owning his rights.

However, that was unnecessary, as the Jets gave the Browns DT Kenyon Coleman, S Abram Elam, QB Brett Ratliff, their 1st Round pick (# 17), and their 2nd Round pick (# 52) for the honor of moving up to # 5. I've heard some complain that the Browns didn't get enough in return for their Top 5 position, but it's very difficult to say, as what's the draft pick value you place on those 3 players?

Hell, as far as I'm concerned, you're gonna get a player

at 17 that's probably every bit as talented as that player at # 5, and so much cheaper. If they traded 5 for 17 straight up, I'd shrug and say "*At least they don't have to pay him like a Czar*
." So 17, 52, and 3 players (2 of whom might start) is plenty worth the 5. I was celebrating as best I could in my decrepit state.

So, essentially, this trade produced 3 picks that yielded:

Kenyon Coleman - DT/DE

Kenyon started at 3-4 DT/DE for Mangini the last 2 years in New York. He led the league in tackles as a defensive end with 83 in 2007. He's heading into his 8th season, but he didn't play a whole lot his first few seasons, having been drafted in 2002 by the Raiders in the 5
th
Round out of UCLA. He may not set the world on fire, but he should provide solid play as part of the DT/DE rotation with Corey Williams, Robaire Smith, and Louis Leonard. Which is probably about what you'd expect out

of a guy drafted in the 3rd or 4th Round.

Abram Elam - S

The Browns tried to get Elam before, signing him to a contract as an RFA, which the Jets eventually matched. Elam was probably the key component to this trade - it's obvious that Mangini views him as a starting caliber Safety. Elam went to Kent State and went undrafted in 2005, signing with the Dolphins as a Free Agent. Last year, he had 69 tackles, 2 sacks, and 1 pick (returned for a TD). He seems to be coming into his own in the NFL, but is expendable to Rex Ryan because the Jets coach brought in his own guy (Jim Leonhard) to play S. Getting Elam fills a position of great need. To what extent he fills it is yet to be seen, but, certainly, his value to the Browns is probably akin to a 2nd

Rounder.

Brett Ratliff - QB

At first, Ratliff seemed to be a throw-in. But the more I think about it, the more intriguing he is. Ratliff was in the mix for the starting position in New York prior to the Sanchez selection, and I hearken back to the Browns-Jets 2008 Preseason game where Ratliff just LIT the Browns up, proving to be the best QB on the field for either team on that day (14 for 20, 252 yards, 2 TD, 145.8 rating). I looked up my game review for that contest, and here's what I wrote:

Jets' 3rd String QB Brett Ratliff looked very impressive. He did a lot of damage against the

Browns 2nd String D. He had a good arm, made smart decisions, and was very accurate.

Thing is, he may not even make the Jets squad. [Brett Favre] *will start. Kellen Clemens will be the backup. And the Jets drafted Erik Ainge in the 5th Round, whom they may not be willing to let go.*

If New York does cut Ratliff, I implore thee, Mr. Savage, to pick him up. You always want to improve your team depth at every position, and there can really be little doubt that Ratliff has more potential and talent than our current 3rd String QB [Ken Dorsey].

I checked his stats from the other Preseason games last year, thinking tearing down the

Browns was no great feat, but his rating in the other 3 games went 91.6 (vs. WAS), 95.8 (vs. NYG), and 154.2 (vs. PHI).

Ratliff went undrafted out of Utah in 2007, but he's 6'4, 235, 23 years old, and somewhat talented. Let's put a 5th Round grade on him, because Ratliff is really just potential at this point, but he could end up to be the steal of the trade. At the very least, this allows the Browns some comfort in sending DA packing for... something (what, I don't know - maybe a 40 or a burrito).

Trade # 2

If you're like me, you were watching the draft unfold on its way down to the Browns' pick at 17 and focusing on one name: Rey Maualuga.

Well, that's not entirely accurate, because I would've been just as good with Jeremy Maclin. But the now-valid image of the Browns having their own crazy-haired tackling machine was oh so tempting. So when it was announced that the Browns had once again traded down, I was flabbergasted. Pleasantly shocked I was - picking up more draft selections could be nothing but a GOOD thing.

The Browns traded down from 17 to 19,

swapping spots with Tampa Bay so the Bucs could pick up Josh Freeman. Cleveland received Tampa's 6th Round pick in return for moving down 2 spots. I don't find it very constructive to over-criticize draft picks when there's no way to know who will pan out and who won't. But I can criticize the compensation the Browns received for the trade down. As has been pointed out, the Ravens had to give up a 5th Round pick to move from 26 to 23. Moving from 19 to 17 should cost AT LEAST as much.

Trade # 3

I sweated out the Denver pick at #18, cuz the Donks are gonna run a 3-4 this year too, and who wouldn't want a franchise Inside Linebacker? Apparently not them, as they passed on Maualuga too. Yes! He's still available for the Browns to pick... ARE THEY TRADING DOWN AGAIN?

Yep. They got another 6th Rounder to move down 2 more spots to 21, allowing Philly the opportunity to take Maclin. I shook my head. Just a 6th

Round pick - again. I wish the girls at my high school had given it up that easy.

Pick # 1 (First Round - # 21)

The Lions took a Tight End at # 20, so the Browns were back on the clock again, and Maualuga was still on the board. To trade down 3 times and still get your guy - I was very impressed with the Kokinis/Mangini draft so far.

And they didn't trade it, so here it finally was, 4th time's a charm.

Say it! Say it! Say "Rey Maualuga"!

With the 21st pick in the 2009 NFL Draft, the Cleveland Browns select...

I waited on the edge of my seat -

my ailment forgotten.

Alex Mack.

If one could have seen my face, I'm sure you would see an anticipatory grin just melt.

Alex Mack? The Center? Really? I mean, sure, Center is a need, and I wanted to get Mack,

but... sigh.

Alex Mack - C - Cal - 6'4, 311

Mack is the consensus # 1 Center in this draft. He's big, strong, fast, and smart. Usually, the First Round is a bit high to be taking Centers, but no way was Mack lasting to the 2nd Round, and if the Browns had him as clearly superior to the other top

Center prospects, then they had to take him here, especially with Center-needy Minnesota poised to draft next at 22. He certainly wouldn't have been there at 36 - another Center got taken later in the 1st Round.

So, after my initial disappointment, I began to consider:

1. Alex Mack fills a position of need.

2. Alex Mack is a safe pick, someone that will probably play at a high level at that position for the next 10 years.

3. You can never have too many good Linemen.

The more I think about this selection, the more I like it. So I'll give this pick a **B+.**

Pick # 2 (Second Round - # 36)

Somewhere around pick 26, I

started to wonder if one of Clay Matthews or Rey Maualuga might fall, and if Mankinis was counting on that eventuality, they were Riverboat Gamblers. Then Matthews went off the board right there, leaving only Rey as a possibility.

I fully expected the Steelers to take him at 32 to complete a nightmarish scenario, but they passed. Then I expected the

Patriots to take him at 34, but they passed.

And glory be, he fell to # 36. Surely, this time they would take the USC LB. 5th time's a charm. Or Everette Brown, the pass rusher from Florida State, who had dropped out of the Top 20 range he was projected into.

The Cleveland Browns select...

I was mouthing the words "Mauw Uh Loog Uh".

Brian Robiskie - WR - Ohio State - 6'3, 209

All the talking heads on the NFL Network and ESPN were lauding this pick, but I didn't share their enthusiasm. I've watched many many games featuring Robiskie, and he is utterly unerringly unremarkable. He's not overly fast or physical, and his hands are overrated. He has no potential to be anything ever but a # 2, and likely just a # 3 possession receiver.

But the experts kept going on and on about his route running and his hands and his dad and how he was the most polished WR prospect in the draft and blah blah blah. They made me feel a little better - as good as I could feel on a day where every orifice was raw and chafed.

OK, fine. WR is definitely a

need. And since the Browns were obviously not going to trade Braylon (since all viable trade candidates had taken 1st

Round Wide Receivers), Robiskie wouldn't be asked to be the #1 receiver, and would probably be a decent complement, taking over the role that Joe Jurevicius vacated when his knee went on a staph binge. I'll give this pick a

C

, even though I am no fan of Brian's.

Sure enough, Maualuga went 2 picks later to the Cincinnati Bengals. Word has it that he free-fell due to character issues. That doesn't make me happy. I'd much rather he fell due to knee issues or pass

coverage issues. Lots of great players fell on draft day due to character issues, and went on to Hall of Fame careers. If Maualuga does that (and with the frickin' Bengals, no less), passing on him at # 36 might go down as the worst draft decision in Browns history.

Which is really saying

something.

Pick # 3 (Second Round - # 50)

When # 50 rolled around,

there were several names left on the board that were just jumping out at me - amongst them were LeSean McCoy (RB - Pitt), William Moore (S - Missouri), Phil Loadholt (T - Oklahoma), and Sean Smith (CB - Utah).

So who'd they take?

Mohamed Massaquoi - WR - Georgia - 6'2, 210

Yup, another freakin' receiver.

They just took a receiver. They were keeping Braylon Edwards. They needed a guy to eventually replace

Jamal Lewis at RB, they needed depth at Safety and Cornerback (even if they see Elam as the starter), and they needed a Right Tackle. And they took another receiver, this one with questionable hands?

Just frickin' dandy.

My head began to throb, my nose began to run, and my bowels began to growl like a rottweiler locked in a trunk for a week with a beehive.

In retrospect, I can still find no logic in this pick. Honestly, this selection just craps all over the entire draft. If you took out Massaquoi's name in

replace it with LeSean McCoy, then you have a great draft. To me, this feels like a total waste of a pick. Thus, I give it a **D-**, but only because all of the pundits also felt this was a solid pick, and that he was "good value" at this spot. Otherwise, it would get a Fail.

Of course, I was thinking the only way this made sense would be if a trade for Braylon Edwards had been consummated. I kept waiting for the trade announcement - it never came.

Now... if the Browns do trade Braylon at some point between now and the

beginning of the season (or possibly even next year), let's say for some high 2010 picks or a player like Ronnie Brown, then I will retract my displeasure with the Robiskie/Massaquoi selections.

Until then, that pick blew goats.

Pick # 4 (Second Round - # 52)

I was still in shock when the Browns picked again 2 spots later, and they took:

David Veikune - DE - Hawaii - 6'3, 257

I didn't know anything about this guy, but it was clear that he would play OLB in a 3-4. Since I haven't seen him play, I can't really comment about him. We need a pass rushing OLB; Veikune would fit that bill. I've seen him labeled as a workout

warrior, but if you look at his stats, he was very productive. He's got just as good a shot of successfully transitioning to 3-4 OLB as the next guy, and at least the Browns finally picked Defense.

So, **C+.**

Who cares if some scouts had a 3rd Round grade on him? The Browns didn't have a 3rd Round pick. If you want the guy, gotta take him at 52. If he turns out to be productive, who give a good goddam if he wasn't considered "good value"?

I'll definitely wait to see him play before passing judgment on this pick.

As I always do when subjected to a disappointing sporting

event in which I had a vested emotional interest, I immediately turned on a movie following # 52 in order to erase my mind (which took very little in my catatonic state). This night I chose *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* , which is just a great movie and your life is less interesting if you haven't watched it.

Pick # 5 (Fourth Round - # 104)

This is the area where the common fan has only heard of 1 out of every 10 guys. As this was Day 2 of

the draft, I normally would not have bothered to watch, but I didn't feel noticeably better on Sunday than I did on Saturday, so I popped some more meds and laid down on the couch for another productive day, flipping between draft coverage and playoff basketball.

Kaluka Maiava - LB - USC - 6'0, 229

"*Tee hee hee*," the talking heads said, " *the Browns finally got their USC Linebacker* ."

Maiava is the forgotten USC Linebacker, the only one not considered a 1st Round pick. Yet, when you look at his resume, you see that he's very productive. He was the Defensive MVP of the Rose Bowl, not Maualuga, Matthews, or Cushing. Why was Kaluka getting no love?

Oh, his size.

Yes, Kaluka is undersized for a Linebacker, and many have him converting to Safety. Here's what NFLDraftScout had to say about him:

Maiava's versatility was both a blessing and a curse for the Trojans, as his ability to play all three linebacker positions made him a valuable reserve during his first three years at the university. Finally given the opportunity to start as a senior, he played the part of the good soldier, quietly

going about doing a stellar job while the team's other linebackers basked in the spotlight.

In 2008, Maiava became the full-time starter at weak-side linebacker. The second-team All-Pac 10 Conference selection

and Rose Bowl Defensive MVP registered a career-high 66 tackles (41 solos), ranking third on the team. He delivered 7.5 tackles behind the line of scrimmage, deflected five passes and intercepted another.

Compares To: FREDDIE KEIAHO, Indianapolis -- Like Keiaho, Maiava's ability to play a variety of linebacker positions and also perform on special teams makes him an inviting late second-day pickup for a team looking for depth, but he is not starting material. He is too undersized to stand

up to the rigors in the trenches. He has above average quickness, agility and decent short-area pass coverage skills, but his size prevents him from generating good success playing inside the box. He lacks pass rush moves top impact the pocket, but is best playing on the move, as

he gets engulfed too often when taking on offensive linemen in the trenches. He could possible shift to strong safety, but poor play in zone coverage will make him a liability there.

So he's solely a Special Teams pick, depth at

Linebacker, or a Safety project. Which is why he fell this far.

Oh, and he's related to a bunch of Professional Wrestlers, including The Rock, which would be very exciting if I gave even half a damn about

professional wrestling.

No grades down this far - everyone's a projection.

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Pick # 6 (Sixth Round - # 177)

Don Carey - CB - Norfolk St. - 5'11, 192

It was hard to find a lot of info on this guy, a sort of

sleeper pick from tiny Norfolk St. Apparently, he could've gone to Yale, but didn't have enough money (who does?). He's got decent size and speed, but will be a bit of a project due to jump in competition talent level (although he apparently did quite well at the East-West Shrine Game).

Oh, and the Steelers and Patriots were looking at him. I found information from several articles posted on this one message board

:

(from NFL.com) *Positives: Adequate height and a fair build throughout for his frame. ... Plays physically at the line and in coverage. ... Good straight-line speed and excellent recovery speed. ... Gets back into the play even if a receiver makes a nice head fake to get an advantage. ... Very*

capable of reading the quick screen or supporting the run on the outside.

Negatives: Lacks top-end speed and great strength. ... Will be a little too physical at times, might be susceptible to pass

interference calls. ... Gets moved too easily by receiver blocks. ... Played against a lower level of competition and must speed up his recognition. ... Inconsistent hands for the interception.

(from the Pittsburgh

Examiner) *Carey plays very physical at the line and in coverage and he gets back into the play even if a receiver makes a nice head fake to get an advantage. He has also done a good job with run support.*

A four-year starter, he was second-team All-MEAC as a junior and was named on the first team in 2008. He accumulated eight interceptions and 14 pass breakups over those two seasons. One thing that makes him intriguing to teams such as the Steelers is the fact he is

versatile and can play both safety and cornerback.

Depth at Corner and Safety is a need, so maybe Carey turns out to be a steal.

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Pick # 7 (Sixth Round - # 191)

Coye Francies - CB - San Jose St. - 6'1, 185

Francies has good size for a Corner, and did well at the Senior Bowl, as this note from NFLDraftScout demonstrates:

Used his wiry strength to hit receivers whenever possible in the light-contact scrimmages.

In addition to his toughness, Francies has fluid hips and good ball skills.

But he ran slow at his Pro Day - around a 4.6 - and his stock dropped. He also got kicked off of Oregon State's team due

to possession of a loaded gun. Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't that one of those "character issues" that I keep hearing about? You know, like the one that kept the Browns from selecting a certain USC Linebacker? Ah, but I digress.

Compares To: DOMONIQUE FOXWORTH, Baltimore -- Like Foxworth, Francies will surprise a receiver with his impressive strength, despite his lean frame. He uses his arm length and upper body power to excel in press coverage, but needs to add bulk to his frame to

compete with the bigger, more physical receivers at the next level. He has valid ball instincts and will at least bring instant value in the sub package, as he excels at getting to the ball while playing in the open field.

We'll re-visit this one in 3 years.

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Pick # 8 (Sixth Round - # 195)

James Davis - RB - Clemson - 5'11, 218

I watched some video of this guy, and Running Backs like this are a dime a dozen in the NFL. But what do you expect at the ass end of the draft?

Davis earned a second-round grade from the NFL Advisory Committee in 2007 after rushing for more than 3,000 yards and 36 touchdowns over his first three years at Clemson. But the two-time first-team All-ACC pick elected to return for his senior season, again

showing a player's stock doesn't always increase by returning to school. He rushed for only 751 yards and 11 touchdowns in 2008; still, Davis flashed the speed, power and aggression to run over defenders to be a fine NFL back in his limited chances behind a struggling quarterback

and offensive line. In the right system, he could contribute immediately.

I tell ya - it seems every late round draft pick ever had a 2nd or 3rd round grade on somebody's chart. I guess I could put on a happy face and

accept the above analysis as gospel, or I could determine that the guy is just ordinary and hope I'm wrong.

Either way, he's already friends with Jamal Lewis, so we don't have to worry about the vet

taking the rook under his wing. And he'll probably be as effective as Jason Wright, which isn't a slight on Wright - it's a statement that both Wright and Davis aren't NFL game-changers, but they can be important role players.

Wrap Up

Basically, the Browns emerged from the draft with the following

players:

Starters: Alex Mack - C, Abram Elam - S, Kenyon Coleman - DE/DT, Brian Robiskie - WR

Quality Depth: Brett

Ratliff - QB, Mohamed Massaquoi - WR, James Davis - RB

Developmental: David Veikune - OLB, Kaluka Maiava - LB, Don Carey - CB, Coye Francies - CB

Four starters in one draft ain't too shabby, but only one of those 4 starters is likely to be amongst the best in the NFL at their position. The rest are filler.

In fact, here are the only two players I feel have

even the *potential* to be future Pro Bowlers: Alex Mack and David Veikune. And Veikune is obviously a real stretch.

In my opinion, the Browns played it too safe in the draft. I don't

mind safe, but there's a certain point when folding every hand prevents you from ever getting into the game. Really, only Mack is a pick that makes me say "*Yes, that was a really good selection* ."

I mean, the best thing that can really be said about this draft is that it is clear that Mankinis has a clear idea of what they want this team to be like and what kind of players they want on it: Tough and Smart.

I like that. But I also like: Talented and Potential.

The Browns came into the draft with the following needs: Safety, OLB, ILB, WR, Center, Right Tackle, Running Back, Cornerback.

How many of those holes did they realistically deal with? I know, it would have been impossible for the Browns to fill their plethora of gaps with one draft, but it feels to me like this draft didn't fill nearly as many as it could have.

Obviously, I could easily be proven wrong, and I hope I am. But the incredible weight of previous draft failures is pushing our heads under the water, and I can't help but feel that we're about ready to drown once again.

There should be a bar near the stadium called Davie Jones' Locker.

Final Grade: C-