Mansfield Lucas checks in this morning to give us his thoughts on the Browns draft in this excellent piece. In it, he first looks at organization philosophy Mangini & Kokinis seem to be employing here in Cleveland. Mansfield then goes on to break down round one, round two, day two, the trades ... and the big picture once the dust had settled on this year's draft. There was some things he liked, some he didn't, but one thing appears clear: Their moves will elicit strong opinions and fraternal dogfights on the forums as we kick around the pros and cons that are so intertwined with these two's accomplishments.

I leave draft weekend with one solid conclusion among many questions: this Mangini - Kokinis management team will defy over-simplistic, black and white analysis. It is impossible to categorize the collection of their decisions thus far as "good" or "bad". One needs to examine each as discrete occurrences, and then look closely as to how they fit into a much larger plan and scheme. What they do cannot be easily encapsulated by the Shills nor Hatas into a neat category among us fans. Their moves will elicit strong opinions and fraternal dogfights on the forums as we kick around the pros and cons that are so intertwined with these two's accomplishments.

## The Framework

The most important thing to accomplish before even discussing this draft is to agree on a framework for evaluation, or else what you get is a cacophony of dunces making noise and calling each other names. Failure to do the up-front work means all the jive is just about fixation on individual players (and I remain as guilty as anyone!), so let's get two things straight right now. No matter how much you know and how much time you invested as an amateur or semi-pro draftnik, you don't know these players like those who have the resources and full-time

commitment know these players, and you don't know the inner workings of the team. Second, this is all a crap shoot, anyway. You can either go-for-broke and take risk for pure athletic upside, like Marvin Lewis; or you can play the middle of the fairway like Kokinis and Mangini did Saturday. Time will tell who was right. The issues of the cap, how skewed the scale is for unproven rookies, and the future unknown status of the collective bargaining agreement all plays into how a team manages risk.

The Browns entered Saturday with a lack of talent and leadership on defense from 2008. Adding two veteran linebackers and a veteran defensive lineman via free agency made some progress, but the talent level leftover for a team ranked near the bottom of every meaningful defensive statistical category is still nowhere near playoff contention. Meanwhile, the offense scored fewer than 60 points in the last six games. That is a team with holes, amigos. Arguably more important than talent level issues on this club was the dearth of chemistry and football intelligence. As gaping as the holes were, this team was still under-achieving and being coached down. The first thing needed in my book was a big, giant cultural high-colonic to get rid of the stupid, me-first, mistake-ridden football culture that permeated both the Davis and Savage eras as far as I'm concerned. This was more or less a dumb, inexperienced football team that utterly lacks professionalism. So entering this off season the Browns had talent holes, bad chemistry, and a crappy corporate culture. No matter who was in charge, this is pushing faces up against a cliff side like the NFL's Omaha Beach.

## Round One

The Browns, plain and simple, lucked out. The meteoric rise of a guy who couldn't beat out John David Booty for two seasons became the most sought after athlete after something like 16 starts in the most quarterback-friendly college program in the nation. There is no doubt that Mark Sanchez has above-average talent and moxie, but there is no way this guy is the second coming of John Elway to warrant all the fuss. (BTW - Mark, you can thank me later. My track record predicting quarterbacking success just guaranteed you multiple pro bowls.) The Browns' rode this work-out wonder miracle to do what has become nearly impossible in this cap driven league in a down draft year talent-wise; they traded out of the

cap-busting area of the draft. Had they stayed and taken B.J. Raji, for example, the cap commitment to the defensive line would have been crushing in the future. While they did not get full value as established on the draft value charts, you have to make some allowances for how the rookie salary structure is altering the patterns established in the early to mid 90's when it comes to value. The first pick, obviously, was Alex Mack, who will excite absolutely no one. By most accounts it was a 5 - 10 slot reach. However, there ended up being a small run on centers that the Browns started - amazing. Furthermore, the Browns play in a 3 - 4 dominated division and are staring down the barrel of the ghosts of draft mistakes years' past with Ngata and Hampton on the schedule four times a season, as well as the Bengals playing in a 3 - 4, and the hated Appalachians also drafting perhaps a young nose tackle with their first pick. Strategically, this is the Jeff Faine pick all over again, except Hank Frahley is done. There was a crisis in the center of the line that most were diverted from seeing while they watched the speed rushing ends abuse Kevin Shaffer instead. Let's just hope that Alex Mack is a Dermotti Dawson building block rather than a flash in the pan, like Steve Everett, or a snake-bitten bad fit for a chosen scheme, like Jeff Faine.

## Round Two

I don't think there were many of us who weren't on the edge-of-our-seats-excited about round two, hailing Kokinis and Mangini as conquering draft day heroes. We had three picks lined up to land solid starters; keeping in mind the opportunity cost to get them was Winslow and a more explosive, impact player than Alex Mack. Still, three second rounders is an amazing credit card to have on draft day.

With the first pick, the Browns selected Brian Robiskie. Had they gone after Rey Maualuga, I am reasonably certain that the fan base would be more excited than even 2007. One can only hope that the nasty rumors about his issues and the overall Bengalness of the Bengals will prevent us from being as haunted as knowing that the old Browns ended up drafting Ray Lewis with the other pick we got for Eric Metcalf. But there is no question that wide receiver is a position of tremendous need, and represented another positional crisis. Robiskie does have the potential to be a fine position receiver to pair with Edwards. Additionally, if he drops passes Edwards can hear us boo him and get the bug out of his crevice

about his alma mater lineage. So we got THAT going for us, which is nice. Just as important is that Robiskie is a pretty big kid. Last year, trying to use a kick returner like Syndric Steptoe at wide receiver hurt not only fade and crossing routes, but also hurt the running game. A receiver's ability to block is underrated, and sub six foot, under 200 pound players better run like (the Carolina) Steve Smith to play offense on Sunday. Most boards had Robiskie going mid-to-late in round two, so the value was almost there, and the need was acute.

If I have personal issues with day one that result in disappointment, they come with the next two selections. Once we had obtained a legitimate possession receiver prospect, it is mind-boggling to me that they replicated the pick with the very next selection. Mo Massaqoui strikes me as an organization outsmarting itself by overvaluing a late riser. There were several legitimate very good right tackle prospects on the board. By adding a tackle prospect to the Mack selection, and the Porkchop Womack signing, the Browns could have solidified an offensive line that, on paper, would be the envy of the NFL for the next half-decade. Imagine AFC North football, physical-smash mouth violent-as-Scarface-football, anchored by Joe Thomas, Eric Steinbach, Alex Mack, Porkchop Womack, and Phil Loadholdt. Imagine the running game behind that group? The pass protection? Instead, the Browns went with another possession receiver who runs in the 4.6 40 range allegedly because of a great workout. Huge, huge opportunity cost as far as I'm concerned. I despise this pick and I fail to see any strategy at work stockpiling possession receivers. If you have shown a pattern of drafting for need with the first two choices, and you give me a choice of starting John St. Clair with no reliable backup, and having Edwards and Robiskie start with Steptoe, Cribbs and Patten fighting it out for slot, third receiver, there is no question I go with an offensive tackle and finish the project of getting stronger at my lines, which they did on the defensive side very nicely this off season. Did I mention that Mo was rated the 155th best prospect by Scout.com and 74th best by Great Blue North? He became a Brown with the 50th overall pick.

While I was smarting from the redundancy of the first two picks, the David Veikune selection left me beside myself. Sure, like everyone else the front seven defense made me sick last season. But Mangini has apparently taken the tack that he can't fix everything in one season and he brought in two veteran linebackers to be patches as the defense learns a new scheme. Plus, the organization really seems to like the steady if unspectacular D'Qyell Jackson and it is one season too early to give up on KamRahn Wimley. So deferring quality help at linebacker as the defensive line is solidified by trades and singings and the offensive line is retooled would make sense to me. But this projection of a sleeper 4 - 3 college defensive end almost everyone saw going on day two to a 3 - 4 linebacker and taking him in round two is simply a stunner. It is reminiscent of Butch Davis' infamous Chaun Thompson reach. Setting aside any bias that no decent defensive player has ever come out of the Rainbow Warriors' program (not that there's anything wrong with that), Veikune was rated by the Great Blue North as the 104th best prospect, and the 107th according to Scout.com. He became a Brown with the 52nd overall selection. Just as with Massaquoi, most who are objective would call this selection a profound reach. Shon Green to spell the aging Jamal Lewis and run behind that new dream offensive line would have been nice, or Kraig Urbick could have represented the right guard who could have made that line even better.

The mitigating issue with Veikune is all about projection. Perhaps the hardest assignment on draft day is finding a quality 3 - 4 OLB. We know that colleges don't tend to play the NFL 3 -4, and it is always dicey trying to project a player into a position that doesn't exist on their level, unless you are the Pittsburgh

Steelers. They tend to have it down to a science. To my way of thinking, Dave Veikune is a bigger risk-reward gamble than a character issue player. At least with those, you know they can play if they want to. The "Big Kune-huna" ™ isn't without promise. He's huge, put in some interesting times in some (meaningless) drills, and is a pure projection / need selection. The 3 - 4 OLB cupboard was pretty bare by this pick. This decision based purely on need will be evaluated with the hindsight 20/20 vision brings, but clearly he represents a reach of at least a round, maybe a round and a half.

## Day Two

Having to sit out round three for previous trades, Magini and Kokinis returned to my good graces with their fourth round selection, Kaluka Maiava. Coach Mangini says he'll come in as an inside linebacker. But at 230 ponds I am still intrigued by him as a project. The Browns don't have that cover 3 strong-safety athlete on the roster. Depending upon down, distance, or opponent, the thought of converting him to an old school monster back / strong-safety and creeping him up to a run stuffing eight-men in the box situational defense is very intriguing. To my way of thinking, project players belong on day two and not round two and that's why I like this pick and not the Big Kune-huna. Even if he stays at ILB, he may well provide the quickness currently missing from the position,

and perhaps he can add pounds to his frame. He can also be a mainstay on special teams. I hope Beau Bell is renting instead of owning. Similarly, out last pick, James Davis represents some value, as according to many, he fell as a result of staying in school his last season only to see that work against him. As for Don Juan and the other guy? Defensive backs on day two always make sense, as would have some interior offensive linemen. If these guys make the team, they overachieve. I have no beef here.

## The Trades

Lost in the discussion of the picks are the veteran additions. While I've heard all the jokes that the Browns are in discussions with Captain Sullenberger to come to camp as a consultant because they have too many Jets, the two future starters represent great value. Obviously, there was a gaping hole at safety. Abram Elam plugs that up nicely, arguably as good or better than whom we could have picked in round two for next season. Kenyon Coleman completes what I believe to be a fine job of solidifying the defensive line into a very, very nice rotational group; one that is ready to be joined in

hopefully the next draft to a set of impact linebackers to establish a quality 3 - 4 defense. Very nice job here by Kokinis and Mangini.

## The Big Picture

Draft day for me was a series of manic highs and lows. I loved the trade downs even as we possibly overpaid based on chart points. I can understand and support the choice of Alex Mack. I didn't want the Robiskie pick at that slot given Maulaluga and the offensive linemen on the board, but I see the dire need at the receiver position, and Robiskie should be serviceable while not spectacular. The next pick was probably the most disappointing of the weekend, and I see the Veikune pick as a huge reach on a projection.

There is no question whatsoever which side of the need versus best available player philosophy that the Mangini - Kokinis axis falls. Every single pick represented a need on this team, with the early picks focused on acute needs. The players brought in by the draft day trades

also fit into this category. Additionally, many picks represent significant reaches by any objective measure whatsoever. Of course, different teams and scouting staff rate players differently. That is a given. But in a few cases the reaching was so profound there is no question the selections were need based.

On the other hand, the mental capacity of almost all of the selections is incredible. If Mangini, an alumnus of one of the highest academic profile colleges in the nation, wanted to change the culture of this team from one that couldn't spell "Leon" if you spotted them the "L" and the "N", he's off to a nice start. There is something to be said for a team that works hard, competes hard, and will never be out prepared in the film room, so long as they are also tough and athletic enough not to look like Ohio State against an SEC team. If item one on the "fix it" list was a cultural change, you can argue they are off to a nice start with his former players and a slew of really intelligent clean cut rookies; many among the brightest in the entire draft.

In summary, real-time I was bitterly, bitterly disappointed with round two, enough so to sour me on the entire

weekend. Upon reflection, I can get behind the Alex Mack pick if he is what he should be, although the way the day went down you can certainly legitimately entertain the notion that a Jeremy Maclin and Unger combination trumps a Mack and Robiskie haul with the first two selections. Still, I can see Robiskie really helping this team. I can even drink enough draft day Kool Aid to see Massaquoi as providing needed depth and insurance if Edwards departs, and that the Big Kune-huna will be a smashing sleeper success project and fill the elusive NFL 3 - 4 OLB position to finally give us outside rush and some strength needed to bull elephant rush the passer. Even I, the consummate pessimist and Hata, can force myself to get excited today.

I think I'm gonna give these new guys a chance. They need to show me by doing smart things like playing Quinn, but I'll give them a chance. Given what this organization has turned in lately, that is a quantum leap for this fan.