It's been a sloooow couple of weeks for Browns news. But that's all about to end, as training camp looms right around the corner. And this town is starving for football after the disappointments from the Cavs and the Indians. Chris Hutchison checks in with his Browns Outsider, hitting on the annual traning camp QB battle, Jerome Harrison, Kamerion Wimbley, Braylon and Donte's big party, and the recent rash of celebrity deaths.

A View From The Cheap Seats

So... you're looking for actual football news.

Good luck.

The Dead Season is upon us in full force, and there isn't much to discuss that isn't idle speculation.

Well, if idle speculation's what we got, then here's some for you regarding the state of the Cleveland Browns QB's.

Apparently the QB competition between Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn is still in full effect and will not (according to Mangini) be resolved until well into the preseason. Now, I know how you feel. A QB competition used to be the fodder for endless spirited argument and fascination. Who can forget the halcyon days of Holcomb v. Couch? But these days... not so much. If anything, the two camps in this current reincarnation of the Quarterback Challenge are:

1. Those who want Brady Quinn to be the starting QB.

2. Those who don't want Derek Anderson to be the starting QB.

Why is this farce even persisting, we ask. *Everyone knows that the QB is going to be Quinn. Why bother with the façade?*

The reason for this train of thought is that Brady Quinn, a first round pick with an excellent pedigree, can't possibly worse than Derek Anderson.

At least, we hope.

Rumor from the training camps has it that neither QB has looked good. Quinn has put in the playbook hours and therefore got the early nod, but neither guy has leaped up and established himself to a point where the coaching staff feels comfortable handing them the keys. They aren't making the right decisions, they don't have the playbook down, they aren't making good throws, they are inconsistent.

The coaches' thought pattern certainly must be that the 2 QB's have this month to familiarize themselves with the playbook to a point where unfamiliarity becomes a non-issue, and then - hopefully - one of them will take the reigns of this nag. Competition will increase productivity.

For a long time, I too was in the camp that felt that the QB competition was a hollow sham. However, I also felt that, given a fair opportunity, Quinn would blow DA's doors off. Because if Quinn can't blow DA's doors off, we have an serious issue at the most important position on the field.

Here's my reasoning: Derek Anderson is not a starting quality QB in the NFL. He can come in, get hot, and look incredible. But most of the time, he looks like Mitch Williams on acid. We know what Anderson is; it is highly doubtful he will ever be anything more than what he is right now.

If Brady Quinn can't beat him out, then the Browns are screwed.

The table has been set for Brady Quinn to dine. He's the unofficial 1a to Anderson's 1b. The fans want him to win the job. The media wants him to win the job. Hell, even the coaching staff wants him to win the job. But they ain't gonna give it to him on a silver platter just because he's pretty and popular. And they shouldn't.

There are those that will argue that Quinn should start regardless, because he's a high draft pick and he hasn't had much of a chance to play and he deserves an opportunity to prove himself. I say he's getting that opportunity right now. He's been around long enough that he shouldn't need coddled anymore. If he can't effectively beat out Derek freakin' Anderson, then he just doesn't have what it takes. Quinn needs to grab the elephant by the tail and ride, baby, ride. You can't be Tiger Woods if you're struggling to get by Craig Stadler. You can't be Roger Federer if you're losing to Patrick McEnroe.

I have no rooting interest here. On a personal level, I don't care anything about Brady Quinn. I don't know him. I don't have his jersey, his bobblehead, or his rap album. My interest is in seeing a good goddam Browns team on Sundays for once, and a decent QB is a pretty important element in that equation. And

since I've long ago determined that QB is not DA, I guess it sure as hell better be Brady Quinn.

Or else the chants will turn to "*Ratliff!* *Ratliff!*" before the leaves have even hit the ground.

Regarding The Ghost

Rumor also has it that the coaching staff has been wowed by Jerome Harrison so far. Jerome's pretty much been the starting RB in camp to this point due to the injury to Jamal Lewis, and he's been opening eyes. The coaches are surprised and shocked that Harrison wasn't utilized more by the previous regime.

It just pisses me off all over again.

Even my girlfriend's cat knew that Jerome Harrison was under-utilized the last couple season - especially last season.

Even Browns beat writers knew that Harrison needed to be on the field more.

But why didn't it happen? Why wasn't Kam Wimbley moved around to increase his effectiveness? Why didn't Josh Cribbs get more touches? Why did they stick with Derek Anderson so long?

Because the previous regime was the most dysfunctional steaming pile of moose shit that the Browns ever had. Sure, Phil Savage managed to bring in a few talented players, and Romeo Crennel was a nice guy. But the disconnect between two, the pissing matches, the useless struggle to maintain control (to the detriment of the team), the stubborn inability to change or adapt... it drives me berserk just thinking about ALL the mistakes, and the fact that - yes - the average fan could've run that program better than they did.

You know why I like Mangini/Kokinis so much? Because they're not Crennel/Savage.

There's a special room in Hell reserved for those incompetent bastards that at some point screwed up the Cleveland Browns, and it's going to be pretty damn full.

Regarding The... Wimbley

Speaking of Mr. Wimbley, I discussed him and the rest of the LB corps in my last article, and made the point that without increased pass rush production from the group as a whole and him in particular, the Defense would continue to struggle. Here's part of an article from The Sporting News that somewhat reiterates what I was intimating:

One of the secrets to exploiting the Browns' defense is controlling nose tackle Shaun Rogers, which isn't easy to do, especially with one blocker. But teams are able to have success because they double- and, at times, triple-team Rogers without fear of being hurt by players left unattended.

There are two keys to playing and executing the 3-4 defense: One of them is having a dominant nose tackle, which Rogers provided in his first season with the Browns, while the other is a dominant outside linebacker who can rush the passer and make big plays.

Having one is mandatory, having two is a bonus, enjoyed by such few 3-4 teams as the Steelers and Chargers. And that's what the Browns lack.

Kamerion Wimbley was supposed to do that after being a No. 1 pick in 2006, and he showed some of that his rookie season (11 sacks). But his sack totals have steadily declined (9 1/2 combined the past two years) and he does a poor job of collapsing the pocket, often running himself out of the play.

Tackles have learned to push Wimbley outside because he doesn't have the inside move to counter, and the result is he is often coming from too far outside to get the quarterback. Until the Browns find or develop a playmaking linebacker, they will continue to struggle on defense.

Now, before you go committing hari-kari (because I know you were going to), take some heart from this comment by Defensive Coordinator Rob Ryan from a recent Terry Pluto article :

Ryan said this about Wimbley: "The young man has great ability to rush the passer. . . . the guy has great talent. . . . he's a hard worker and does what the coaches ask him to do. . . .

We've asked him to concentrate on pushing the pocket and using more bull rush and speed rushing. . . . the guy does it every day. I really think he is going to have a tremendous year for us."

I'm not really sure how effective Wimbley (6'3, 255) will be bull-rushing 300 lb. Left Tackles, but at least they're mixing it up. With his speed, the occasional bull-rush could catch a Tackle off guard. And if they're gonna line him up all over the field - which I begged Romeo to do last year - then he'll get a shot at better utilizing his speed against blockers who don't know where he's coming from and when they're going to get him.

So, despite the fact that I'd given him up for lost a long time ago, I actually feel an inkling of hope for The Wimbley this year.

Regarding Braylon and Donte's Big Party

It has recently come out that Donte Stallworth was drinking with Braylon Edwards in some Miami Beach hotel the night

before his fateful accident.

And Braylon dropped around $3500 on alcohol that night.

To which I respond:

1. For those of you that have lived in Miami, you already know that ridiculously overpriced alcohol is a constant on Miami Beach.

2. If you can afford to spend $3500 on booze, then bully for you. It's your damn money. You spend it however you want.

3. Braylon spent the night at the hotel. He didn't drive anywhere.

So I'm not going to sit here and bitch about Braylon or his so-called involvement with the Stallworth tragedy. I dislike Braylon as much as the next guy, but I'm not gonna be spiteful for the sake of being spiteful.

My reasons for wanting Stallworth gone involve the fact that he contributes nothing near the value of his inflated contract, and he has essentially been replaced already by draft picks and Free Agency acquisitions. If the Browns can use his situation to get some cap relief, more power to them.

But I also refuse to crucify Stallworth for doing something that 95% of the people reading this have done at one time or another - driven when they probably shouldn't have. It was bad judgment and it ended horribly. There's a price to pay for that, and it's up to you to individually decide if the punishment was enough. Maybe it was. Maybe it wasn't.

In the end, I'm sick of this damn story. This is my last on it, because as much as I love football, I don't love the *As The World Turns*
bullshit that the offseason has become.

And speaking of tragedies...

Regarding Michael Jackson

He was a fantastic musician and pioneer in music videos. And he was a freak and purposely distorted himself to look like some bizarre comic book villain. It's hard to look upon recent pictures of him without screaming aloud in horror.

At least the Joker had his deformities imposed upon him.

Regarding Farrah Fawcett

She was pretty hot in that poster that I remember so well from the 70's, but so un-hot when she was whacked out of her mind on Letterman
not so long ago (if you haven't seen it, it was a train wreck of epic proportions).

Poor girl - she died on the wrong day.

Regarding Billy Mays

Why is it that Billy Mays' death caused me the greatest anguish of this triumvirate? He seemed (for a lifetime salesman) like a pretty good guy, and the random-bump-on-the-head-leading-to-death trend (see Natasha Richardson) is most distressing.

Regarding Steve McNair

I feel badly about this one too, but I'm ill equipped for poignant prose. Let his situation be a lesson to you all - Crazy Girls just aren't worth it.

I went through my own Crazy Girl phase. Couldn't get enough of ‘em. The crazier, the better. They're fun, they're uninhibited, they're possessive, they're obsessive, and they're good in bed.

But then came the knife incident and the death threat incident and the second knife incident. And then I decided that maybe Crazy Girls just weren't worth the drama.

Maybe if McNair had gotten them out of his system when I did (20) instead of the age we both are... were... now (36), he'd still be alive today. But he was probably a lot more busy at 20 than I was.

It's startling how quickly a seemingly tame situation can turn into Hell. Life... what a F***ed up ride.