Let's face it. Training camp hyper-analysis has gotten to the point of near silliness. We create a feeding frenzy about a catch here or a drop there into the crucible of our 24 hour news cycle and it creates a Madre Hill. But that's not gonna stop Mansfield Lucas from playing, too. In his latest piece for us, Mansfield gives us his thoughts on the Browns incoming rookie class, and what we should expect from them in 2009.

I was thinking about Brian McPeek's ring tone and got the idea for this piece. He only recently replaced "Girl You Know It's True" with "The Greatest Love of All"
. And hey, who doesn't believe the chihdrihn are our future? Who doesn't want the coaching staff to teach them well, and let them lead the way? Show them all the beauty they possess inside? Let's face it. Training camp hyper-analysis has gotten to the point of near silliness. We create a feeding frenzy about a catch here or a drop there into the crucible of our 24 hour news cycle and it creates a Madre Hill. But that's not gonna stop me from playing, too. I fully admit that these takes are based wholly on an amalgamation of reports from sources hither and yon, so love ‘em, hate ‘em, but don't take them seriously for another 24 to 26 months. Or at least the fourth quarter of the X game next weekend if you're impatient.

The talk of the camp has been James "Thunder" Davis, the late round running back from Clemson University. Browns fans always seem to fall into two camps: the wildly overly optimistic bunch that sees in James after a few practices the second coming of a 10th round pick from nearby East Carolina in 1984, or the jaded that have the scent of Ben Gay fresh in their memories. Time will tell what James brings to the table, but here is what I deduce. The most important time for a running back isn't the 40. It isn't the old school 100. It's the 10; maybe even just the 5. In the game of football, there will always be room for a running back of some size that can just hit the damn hole drawn up in the playbook at lightening

speed, and if something is there, take it. Can the man get to the linebacker level and get 4 to 5 yards instead of trying to be Barry Sanders on every play only to look like Denny Terrio instead? That's the question. Davis may just have that skill set. All fans can agree that we want to see more of him this X season, and less of a known quantity like Jamal Lewis or Noah Herron.

The reports are what you might expect from the two kid wide outs. Robiske looks the part of the coach's son, reportedly running crisp routes and getting open, and Mo Mass is showing flashes of some top-end athleticism even as he's less polished. Both have had reports of rookie jitters resulting in early drops. Patience is in order and this curve is to be expected. So far, so good. Both should see extensive playing time before this season is over.

Count me in as one of the many disappointed that the Browns seemed to write off Rey completely on draft day. For a team with zero defensive playmakers and game changers, I'd have put up with a little risk. On the other hand, I'm not all Yvonne Elliman about it. David Veikune arrives as the reasonable or unreasonable facsimile of a player like Rey, depending on your point of view. The Big Veikuna is said to be playing with the intelligence that puts him in the right spot, but also with extreme aggression that allows him to love the game and love the contact that the change from last year's Camp Snoopy to this year's Paris Island has allowed. If this guy can use the size and strength measurables and shows up as a bona fide hitter and he's moved around like a chess piece, the whole complexion of the defense changes. I remain hopeful this guy shows me how little I know and how smart ManKok is so I'll be eating crow with hot sauce for my draft day meltdown for a long, long time.

Conversely, when do we start to worry about Alex Mack? Do we worry about these reports that have him not just getting beaten by Shaun Rogers - who isn't? - but also his back-up Rubin and everyone's favorite corpulent indoor discuss thrower (< --- seen here talking to Brady Quinn.)? Or do we worry when he's a journey man offensive guard like Jim Pyne in three years? Yikes. When you reach for a non-skill, non-impact player at a position that is almost never taken in round one on a guy who is supposed to be a finished product, whip smart, and strong as a field of raw onions, and he struggles when the NFL pads come on, you furl your brow just as when you're told we drafted a power center from Cal. Expecting a power offensive lineman to help re-commit to a running game to come from Cal is sort of like expecting normal, educated diction to emanate from the capital of Appalachia. But I accepted the hypothesis in April. Now I see the start of the experiment in August. Maybe this is ancient history, but I saw Mike Babb as a rookie. I saw Steve Everitt as a rookie. Both had their stuff together from day one. In fact, both pretty much were taking names right away, and sending Tom Deleone and Jay Hilgenburg into the dustbins of football as rookies.

The reports on Alex Mack resemble writers trying to manufacture something good. To paraphrase, "Mack got housed into the backfield by the 4th depth chart nose tackle, then ran a lap for a mental mistake, but he made up for it with a sorta-kinda OK block." They aren't what we read about Joe Thomas by any stretch. If the NFL draft teaches you one thing, it teaches you that "can't miss" players frequently do just that. Miss. Here's hoping Mack finds a lit light bulb over his head, and soon. If you see Hank Freh ley

start even the first X game with the first team, bite a nail, or be in some denial. Not saying it proves Mack is a bust, just saying it will be a red flag you really don't want to see. Yeah, yeah, yeah, call me an overreacting moron by overreacting to what I'm writing. I'm used to it. Just also don't be putting James Davis in Canton yet at the same time, OK? I know it is prematurely early to come to any conclusions. Reread paragraph one. All I'm sayin' is after all the hype on this kid about how he's freaking Alfred Einsteen meets Franco Columbu meets Chuck Norris, you'd expect not to read all about how hard the center position is to learn in the NFL and how so-so back up nose tackles regularly beat him in drills. I guess I'm hypercritical because I hate hyperbole. I hate it. The org built him up. I didn't. I'm just holding to that standard. And if you can't beat out Hank and get the best of Shaun Smith in a drill? Well then....

Don Carey? We hardly knew ye. Might want to be rethinking that decision to blow off Yale for Southeastern Norfolk State A & T about now, huh? Just sayin'. Hope you get better soon, and here's a helpful link for you. Stuff happens, especially when you actually hit in camp. Losing this draft choice may be that cost of doing business. You run a tough training camp and one minute you're a had, and the next you're a Hadnot. Good luck young man. As for the decision to draft him? Can't quibble. This wasn't Jeremiah Pharms. Maybe he clears waivers and gets on the taxi squad and gets his medical bill covered.

Not much has been written on Kaluka Maiava, but odds are good the young man is plugging away on the special teams. He's in a numbers game with Beau Bell, Bo Ruud, and some others (maybe Bo Peep) to land a role as a backup as Josh Cribbs' team mate. (Have you stopped complaining about being a multi-millionaire when you're not a starter yet, Josh? Just checking in there, boss. Maybe we can do some bocci ball and have some brats and brewskis on September 13th after we catch the game at B Dubs. You in?) Pretty much the same for Coye Francis, who is in a mass numbers game at a position that is refreshingly deep for a change.

"Word is",

Coye is making the most of his shot and is right behind the young starters and the two vet backups pushing for time.

And that's the segue. Slowly, surely, but ever so deliberately, I am becoming a believer in the Mangini Way. You can't get ready for a season with an inexperienced team without a tough camp. Injuries will happen, so you can't run a tough camp if you don't have depth. You can't hold players accountable if you don't have depth. Whereas Phil the Shill placed his cap resources into a precious few players, and then also handed his draft choices jobs and positions on the 53 man roster, Mangini and Kokinas brought in players 18 through 50 on the roster with a vengeance so Mangini

could actually coach a football team. They may not be all that good just yet, but I'm starting to get the feeling that they just might not embarrass me either. For now, I'll take it. After ten years of The Browns; The Next Generation ™, brought to you by the fan of Baltimore fueling Art's greed, Paul Tagliabue's opportunism and timidity to do the right thing, and the Lerners' expertise, my expectations have been "managed" to that level.

And some y'all thought I couldn't be upbeat and optimistic? Sheeeeee.....oooot.

Let me close with a shout out to my man Titus Brown, whose making some noise according to Mangini. Raise your hand if you knew he was on the roster last year? Liar. I hope anyone names "Titus" sticks, and it is about damn time we find some hidden talent at the 3 - 4 OLB like he and Alex Hall, as those-who-can't-be-named do with regularity two hour to the southeast. Titus, you go

man.

This has been a quarterback controversy free organic column. No animals were harmed (nor will any be until the cat gets chucked at the TV when they count for real).