When you're a team that's been down as long as the Cleveland Browns have, almost any small victory is welcome. On Saturday night against as woeful of a team as exists in professional football, the Detroit Lions, the Browns finally gave their fans something more than just a measly small victory; they went out and won the game. In doing so the Browns proved that as bad as things are, this isn't Detroit, and that's not just a statement on the economy. Gary writes about it.

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Surely this wasn't a classic in any sense of the work. But on the pecking order that is the NFL, the Browns did more than enough to demonstrate that they may be near the bottom but it's still a long drop down from there to the Lions. Dominating the Lions in about every way you can dominate a bad team, the Browns gave their fans and the Browns' front office enough hope to think that at least they won't struggle to sell out next week's game against the Tennessee Titans.

To most observers, Browns' quarterback Derek Anderson has played himself back into a quarterback competition that he was supposedly losing to Brady Quinn. While Anderson was mostly sharp, his play all but confirmed why it's nearly

impossible to commit to him full time.

Looking sharp initially, as he tends to when he plays at home, Anderson came out and led the team to its first touchdown in 9 months. Both Anderson and the drive he led were so efficient and effortless it almost made you forget how much this team has struggled just to get first downs. Anderson hit on his first pass, a 24-yarder to Mohamed Massequoi. Three plays later he hit Josh Cribbs for another 20 yards followed up by 14-yard pass to Michael Furrey. In between and to finish it off, Jamal Lewis ran for 15 yards, the last four for the touchdown.

If Anderson's game would have ended there, the so-called quarterback competition would have had a new front runner. But at the end of the first half, the dark side of Anderson was on full display. Following a Detroit fumble with about 50 seconds remaining, Anderson and the Browns took over at their own 28 yard line. With three time outs remaining it was more than enough time to get the team into field goal range.

But all that ended very quickly as Anderson floated a 10-yard pass over the head of running back James Davis that was easily intercepted. It lead to a last second field goal for the Lions and was their only bright spot of the half.

For as well as Anderson played otherwise, he looked flummoxed running the hurry-up offense. In fairness, he had been removed earlier in the quarter in favor of Quinn, but it also wasn't as if he had been sitting around for hours. Still, it wasn't rustiness that caused the interception; it was Anderson's puzzling lack of touch on short passes. Earlier in the quarter he had missed receiver Braylon Edwards on a simple out, firing the ball from just a few yards away when the situation called for a less aggressive pass.

It is this kind of unevenness in Anderson's game that makes it difficult to commit to him. Arguably a player like Brett Favre has the same kind of inconsistency, especially late in his career. But he is Brett Favre. Anderson, on the other hand,

doesn't have the resume to constantly get away with the same kind of bad passes and bad decisions.

This is probably Quinn's single-biggest selling point.

A coach like Eric Mangini is never going to be considered a gambler. Philosophically he is about managing the game and the circumstances. He's far more comfortable playing ball control and shortening a game than taking unnecessary chances that can help a game spiral out of control. In that sense, he's not unlike Jim Tressel at Ohio State.

That's Mangini on his best days. Given what is obvious about this year's team, if it is going to have even a modicum of success it will need to play nearly perfect every game. The team doesn't have enough talent to overcome its own missteps. This is where Quinn better fits the Mangini profile. He takes far less risks with the ball and he can consistently hit the intermediate passes that Anderson cannot.

The long pass may be what fans like to see, but the bread and butter play for any quarterback, including Tom Brady and Ben Roethlisberger, to name just a few, is the shorter routes. Football, particularly the NFL brand, places a premium on field position. Coaches know that they aren't going to be successful having to constantly go 80 yards to score. If a drive is going to sputter, better it be done at your own 42 yard line than your own 26. A punt pins the opposing team back and if your defense can hold, your next drive will be shorter and hence its chance of resulting in points enhanced.

That's why Anderson is going to struggle, under Mangini or nearly any other coach. His personal bread and butter is the long pass. His touch on short passes is as suspect as any quarterback you're likely to see. Too many times he kills drives with interceptions and incompletions simply because he cannot hit that little pass. As good as Anderson looked overall on Saturday, he did nothing to alleviate the concerns about this part of his game.

At the halfway point of the preseason, there's simply no way of knowing who this team's starting quarterback will be on September 13th against the Minnesota Vikings. It's understandable even if detrimental.

Anderson is a tease of major proportions. He's like a rogue husband. You never know if he's on his way home from the office or is about to call and say he's running late, again. There goes another dinner ruined. Quinn, on the other hand, is the reliable steady. He is where he says he'll be, home for dinner and not out carousing.

The problem with this team is that it needs both kinds of personalities at the moment. There is very little swagger to it, understandably, but a little wouldn't hurt. There also isn't enough consistency and reliability. It really is that box of chocolates.

Heading into the Vikings game, the focus is going to be on a quarterback, but it won't be either Anderson or Quinn. It will be on Favre, facing his first real test since his latest grandstanding, it's all about me un-retirement. All that does is present the perfect time for either Quinn or Anderson to step forward and steal the spotlight and with it, the starting job on this team. Locked in a battle that neither is clearly leading, eventually someone has to grab the steering wheel and drive.