Chris Hutchison hates this team. But he notes that the opposite of love is not hatred - it's indifference. And the fact that he can still muster up hatred shows that he still cares. Chris also notes that as impossible as it is to fathom right now, things will get better. And games with the Raiders, Chiefs, Lions, and Bengals are on the horizon. In this week's Outsider, Chris looks back at last week's debacle, the curse of the brown pants, the Browns "FraidyCat" offense, and the four goals this team MUST accomplish this season.

View From The Cheap Seats

Week 2 - Cleveland at Denver

I hate this team.

The opposite of love is not hatred - it's indifference. The day I stop giving a damn is the day the Browns are dead to me. The fact that I can still muster up hatred shows that I still care.

At least, that's what I keep telling myself as I numbly watch (what I assume is) another season slide into the abyss. And no matter how illogical it is to damn a team after two games, logic cannot convince me that we won't spend the rest of the year dully watching the Browns sink.

I don't want to give up. I don't want to stop caring. I want to believe that someday, somehow, this team can stop making me feel like my Sundays would be better spent stabbing myself in

the eye with H1D1-encrusted cocktail sword.

Therefore, I hate this team. If I have to muster up some emotion, hatred is going to be it.

Hatred for watching Eric Mangini's team look just like Romeo Crennel's team look just like Butch Davis' team look just like Chris Palmer's team.

Hatred for the endless seasons dead by October.

Hatred for realizing that the Browns are basically a MAC team and the rest of the NFL is in the Big 10; every once in a while, the Browns will pull one out, but basically they're entering every contest with a severe talent chasm to overcome.

Hatred for killing every ounce of enjoyment I have in watching my favorite team play my favorite sport. For killing the Law of Averages. For killing any sense of sports optimism I might have ever had.

Why so down? you ask. *You're over-reacting.*

Maybe. But the Broncos are not a good team. Playing tough for a half and eventually succumbing to a good team like Minnesota is acceptable. Playing OK for a half and eventually getting beat down by a crap team like Denver is not.

Fortunately, the Browns have the Raiders, Chiefs, Lions, and Bengals on the horizon. But if you held a gun to my head (and there were plenty of times during the game that I wished someone would), I couldn't honestly say that I like the Browns' chances against ANY of those teams.

Certainly, they're bound to win some here or there. But every bone in my body is shrilly screaming:

Hold on tight! It's not gonna get any better this year! The Browns do not improve as the season goes on - they get worse! This is a historical FACT!

And while my brain wants me to tell you that these have only been 2 games, that there are 14 more to go, that the Offense is bound to improve... my heart is telling you:

Most likely this ride will end in Hell.

1st Quarter

Denver fumbled on the opening kickoff, but the Browns proved again that they cannot run in short yardage situations, squandering a 1st and Goal from the 7. *Brown s 3, Broncos 0.*

The Browns made the Broncs punt, but were pinned deep. Cribbs dropped an easy pass on 1st Down, and Alex Mack snapped the ball to Brady Quinn's shoe on 3rd, causing Denver to recover at the CLE 9. Somehow, Kam Wimbley was placed on one-on-one coverage on the outside against DEN TE Tony Scheffler, and an easy slant later the

Broncos already had as many points as they would need to win the game.
Broncos 7, Browns 3.

Contrary to popular belief, the Browns did have one decent drive on the day, and this was it, moving 50 yards only to be sabotaged by a 2 yard pass to Josh Cribbs on 3rd and 5 (a trend).
Broncos 7, Browns 6.

End 1st: Broncos 7, Browns 6.

2nd Quarter

Denver embarked on the first of their many long drives, but the Browns managed to finally hold them at the 5 yard line. *Broncos 10, Browns 6.*

3rd and 11 at the DEN 48... and Quinn makes a 5 yard pass to Cribbs. Punt. Denver and Cleveland exchanged short, crappy drives, and the Broncs then went on another long drive that ended with their Kicker shanking the FG attempt.

With 3 Time Outs and the ball on the 30, the Browns bravely knelt and burned off the final 23 seconds.

Halftime: Broncos 10, Browns 6.

3rd Quarter

By this point, the game had become as exciting as watching Prairie View and Morehead State play to a scoreless tie. Maybe the Denver D is really that good?

Nah.

Quinn threw another short pass to Cribbs on 3rd and Long, and this time he fumbled. Denver went on a short drive and

collected another FG.
Broncos 13, Browns 6.

The Browns flopped around pathetically for a few plays, then punted back to Denver, who went on another long, protracted drive that, miraculously, ended in another missed FG. The Browns clung desperately to life with their dirty fingers.

Quinn responded by having his drive killed by three straight deflected passes.

End 3rd: Broncos 13, Browns 6.

4th Quarter

The Browns D was done, and it now broke like an egg being hit by a piano dropped from space. Brandon McDonald suffered the ultimate indignity of being toasted by Kyle Orton on a 49 yard pass play to the CLE 2, and Denver scored on the next play. *Broncos*

20, Browns 6.

Ball game.

Quinn valiantly tried to lead the Erie Warriors back by getting sacked a bunch of times and throwing crappy short passes to Cribbs. The Broncos tacked another

easy TD on for good measure, and the public humiliation was mercifully over.

Final: Broncos 27, Browns 6.

Gameballs

No Gameballs this week.
Not after that atrocity.

Honorable Mention

Braylon Edwards - Really the only member of the Offense that looked like he belonged in the NFL.

Waterboys - The players looked properly hydrated.

Wall of Shame

Hank Poteat - Terry Cousin lives! As part of his witness protection plan, he had his name changed but fooled us all by staying put. Is there some kind of rule in Berea that states that all Nickel Backs must suck (I know there's a rule that states *Nickelback*

sucks)? Hank Poteat should not be in the game. There's NO WAY Coye Francies is worse, and even if he were *just as bad*, he'd at least be getting experience to possibly *get better*. As a reader astutely observed, " *Now I know why Kelly Holcomb threw for 400 yards so easy - Hank Poteat*

."

John St. Clair - Left me longing for the solid blocking efforts of Kevin Shaffer. When you give up 4 sacks on your lonesome, maybe you're not doing a very good job. When horses get old, they get made into glue. When dogs get rabies, they get shot behind the barn.

What should we do with Mr. St. Clair?

Eric Mangini - If you're gonna be a giant prick, you'd better back it up by being successful at your job. Nice guys like Romeo Crennell can lose too.

Brady Quinn - I've heard lots of excuses out there - WR drops, new Center, St. Clair sucks, Daboll sucks. It doesn't matter. I've said since the days of Tim Couch that QB's are ultimately responsible for their performance. Do you think the Browns Offense would look this bad with Drew Brees at the helm? I held DA accountable for his crap

efforts, and Quinn has to be held accountable as well.

Everyone - To Hell with it. The entire team goes on the Wall of Shame. Even the Waterboys.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Minnesota - 32:44, Cleveland - 27:16

Total Yards: Denver - 449, Cleveland - 200 (yep - that's right)

First Downs: Denver - 25, Cleveland - 11

You want to know a sad reality?

The Browns' offseason is always more interesting and exciting than the actual games.

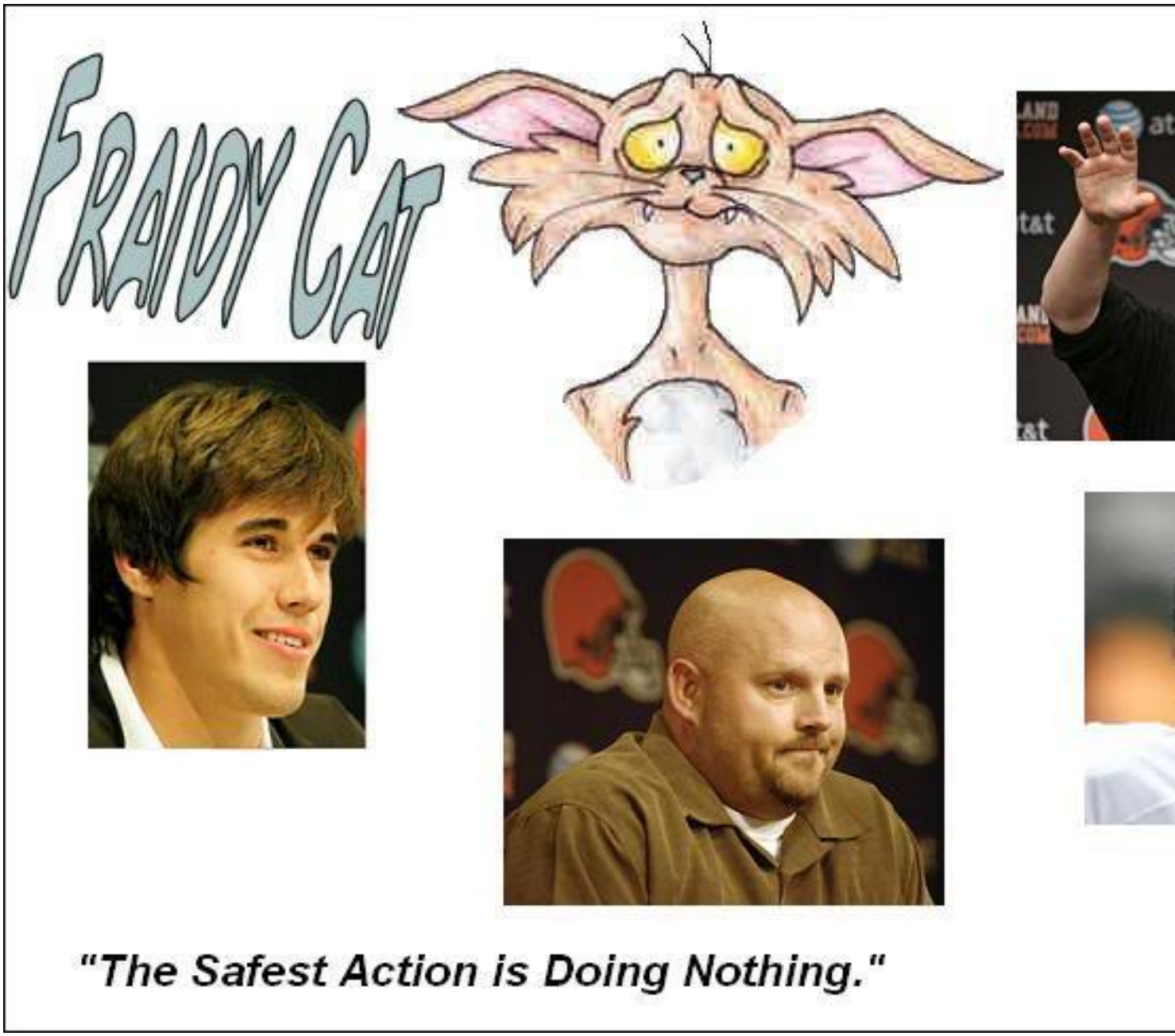
That, and many fans are already looking ahead to 2010.

I don't know what it will take for Mangini to acknowledge the *Curse of the Brown Pants* ™, but he'd better

get on it in hurry.

Many teams around the league have employed an Offense package that people like to call the Wildcat.

Through the first two weeks, the Browns have unveiled a detailed Offensive package of their own. It's called the Fraidy Cat.


FRAIDY CAT
"The Safest Action is Doing Nothing."

They're afraid to throw the ball down the field. They're afraid to be aggressive on 3rd Down. They're afraid to open up the playbook. They're afraid to pull out the trick plays.

Is it Quinn? Is it Daboll? Is it the lack of

playmakers on Offense, the pedestrian right side of the Offensive Line, or the fact that Josh Cribbs is the best they can do at # 2 WR?

We don't know yet. But the Offense sucks, no matter whose fault it is.

Once again, there's no way in Hell I'm ready to give up on Quinn yet, but he's really looking non-good. He's actually made me long for DA once or twice, and that's like longing for syphilis.

If Mangini and Daboll are

frightened to employ the entirety of their playbook because of Quinn, then what the Hell is he doing in there? If that's not the problem, then what good is the conservative approach when you're getting your ass kicked anyway despite the fact that you're not taking chances?

You lost by 21. What, are you scared of getting beat by 28 because some aggressive play ended up as a Turnover?

You are a BAD team. Play like you have nothing to lose because YOU HAVE NOTHING

TO LOSE.

—

And I'm not going to make excuses for the Defense this week. Sure,

the Offense didn't give them much of a break or provide them with any support whatsoever, but no one forced them to surrender long time-sucking drives over and over again. No one forced them to give it up on 3rd and Longs like a 10 cent whore. No one forced them to avoid

getting near the QB like he had West Nile.

They're just good enough to play pretty well for a while, but they can't shut a team down. They might be acceptable if they played for, say, New Orleans,

but for the most part they are sub-standard in every way.

No speed. No pass rush. No playmakers. I actually respect Rob Ryan for keeping them from looking worse than they already have (poor

Rob - it'll be forever until he gets his head coaching gig like brother Rex if he's doomed to toil away on totally terrible teams ‘til eternity).

I can at least say this for the Offense - there's

PLENTY of room for improvement.

With the Defense... sigh... this is really-probably-sadly about as good as they can get.

Where does that leave us?

Well, until the Offense can get their shit

together and score some points and eat up some clock, the Defensive deficiencies will continue to rear their ugly heads come the 3rd and 4th Quarters. So this team will not win until the O improves a LOT.

Oh, and it leaves us with a horrible talent deficiency.

How is that possible year after year in the NFL?

Well, we've established a culture of losing that doesn't necessarily attract prime Free Agents - therefore, we

have to overpay for Free Agents that are often past their prime.

We've had a series of GM's that have consistently missed on an alarmingly amount of high draft picks.

We've had a series of coaches that don't have many philosophies in common - except a lack of coherent goals and the inability to know how to achieve said goals.

And we have an owner that seems to have no clue how to find GM's or coaches that break this mold of non-success.

Not to mention a fan base that's so beaten

down and pessimistic that they will bail on everyone and everything Browns-related at the drop of a hat.

As has been said before and ‘twill be said

again - eventually, even this blind squirrel will find its nut. All it takes is lucking into a good situation one time.

Is it this time? I don't know. It certainly doesn't feel like it right

now. Mistakes have been made, poor decisions rendered - in the draft, in Free Agency, perhaps in personnel.

But it's still been only 2 games. That's too

quick for even us knee-jerks to be passing judgment.

In the end, here's the juice: We knew this was going to be a bad team going into the season. We knew they wouldn't be vying for a playoff spot. So here are the goals that this team MUST achieve this year:

1. **Find out what you've got in Quinn.** There is no one out there that hasn't been disappointed by Quinn's performances so far. However, he's only started 5 career games and he's working with an Offense full of

inexperienced players. It may take time for them to gel. It may take time for him to develop. Crying to replace Quinn with DA at this point does ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to advance this organization for the future. If Mangini

benches Quinn before Week 9, then he should be fired for incompetence. Neither of these games so far has even remotely made me think " *Gee, we would've won that one if we had DA in* !" Plus, DA got half a season last year

to prove his worth before they benched his sorry ass. Quinn deserves the same.

2. **Learn Mangini's system.** Years of poor coaching and craptacular execution

have left many of the players on this team adrift mentally. This is why coaches and GM's routinely clean house when they come into a new franchise - they want to cut loose the Culture of Suck that permeates. Now, there are many that argue

that Mangini sucks as a coach as much as his predecessors. That may yet be proven true, but in lieu of the fact that he's all we've got right now, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt and hope that the last two debacles are the product of new and

young players still not understanding and embracing the system rather than some fatal flaw.

3. **Fix Alex Mack.** He CANNOT be a bust. He simply can't. He is

way too important to the success of the Offensive Line and the O as a whole to fail. He'd better survive this trial by fire and emerge stronger from it, because if he doesn't, that's just another position (of so g-damn many) that will need to

be addressed before this team can ever really contend.

4. **Improve as the season progresses.** You can't enter an offseason on the downer that the Browns

did last year. I mean, 6 straight games without an Offensive TD? That's a helluva cross to bear even across the yawning chasm of time. This team HAS to improve as the season goes on in order to carry over some confidence into 2010,

because, yes, that shit does matter.

Does Cribbs know how

to run a route over 10 yards?

I was all for Cribbs being the # 2 WR... if he's used like a WR. But if he's just being used as a short-pass-run-after-cat

ch guy, then he's just taking up space out there. He's got the speed and size to be an intermediate to long-range threat - he needs to start doing that. Because catching a 5 yard pass on 3rd and 10 ain't helpin' no one out.

And that weak version of the Wildcat they run when he's in there? As unpredictable as if it will be above or below 80 degrees in Fargo in February.

I don't know if it's the

fact that Josh just ain't a WR or that Daboll (who is looking like a freakin' genius right off the bat) isn't utilizing him correctly, but it certainly doesn't help a struggling Offense to have a starting WR that is essentially useless.

I'd give Cribbs another 2 games to prove his worth at the position before sticking him back at Gunner and giving Mo Massaquoi a go.

According to a report on Yahoo, Mangini fined a player $1701 (the max allowed under the CBA) for failing to pay for a bottle of water at a

hotel the team was staying at during the Preseason.

I don't know what the big deal is. That's probably how much it cost in the first place.

Anyone else already sick of hearing about Mark "The Sanchize" Sanchez? Two games into the season, and

the national media's already jumping his jock. Why? The media says it's because he "led" his team to a 2-0 record and is the second coming of Joe Namath.

The last time I checked, Sanchez doesn't play Defense, and that's what's won the first 2 games for the Jets, not the QB play. Certainly, Sanchez has done a decent job of managing the position - I won't take that

away from him - but 435 yards passing, 2 TD, and 1 INT over 2 games is definitely not lighting the world on fire.

It's been 2 games, folks. Let's wait a little

while before we crown his ass.

The real reason that the over-embellishers have tagged him Wonderboy is because he plays in New York. If Sanchez played in,

say, Kansas City, he'd get a footnote in a Peter King column rather than the blessed headline (usually reserved for Brett Favre). And he'd likely be struggling and 0-2.

Worse yet are the bridge-jumpers that - after 2 games - are already wailing that the Browns didn't pick Sanchez in this year's draft. As if Sanchez would be 2-0 with the Cleveland Defense backing him up. Some days I'm embarrassed

to be called a "fan" when it's all too often a synonym for "dumbass".

And speaking of synonyms, the

national media has jumped on Rex Ryan's jock too, never missing a chance to fawn in his presence and quote his quips. I've read many a media guru describe Rex's style as "refreshing".

I agree, if "refreshing" is a synonym for "fat, loud, obnoxious, and annoying".

(Not to say that I wouldn't seriously

consider trading "fat, quiet, and overbearing" for "fat, loud, obnoxious, and annoying" at this juncture.)

This new

Jets-fascination has me longing for the subtle days where the press just reported Tom Brady's every waking moment.

Yep, you guessed it. For no particular reason - since it's nothing but foolish to abandon hope only 2 games into a season - it's time to instate:

QB-O-RAMA -

Version 2010!

Yes, each week we, just for shits-n-giggles, will keep track of the juicy crop of top QB's coming into the NFL next year. Here's what they did this

week:

Sam Bradford - Oklahoma (vs. Tulsa) - Did not play, injured.

Colt McCoy - Texas

(vs. Texas Tech) - 24 for 34, 205 yds, 1 TD, 2 INT, 5 yds Rushing.

Jevan Snead - Mississippi (vs. SE Louisiana) - 16 for 28, 209 yds, 3 TD, 25 yds Rushing.

Tim Tebow - Florida (vs. Tennessee) - 14 for 19, 115 yds, 1 INT, 76 yds Rushing, 1 Rushing TD.

I haven't seen much of Snead, but he's on Thursday Night

football this week, so be sure to check that out.

If I had to pick one of them right now, it would probably be Colt McCoy. The doe-eyed bastard irritates me,

but there's no denying he's got a ton of talent.

But there's just something about Tebow's leadership intangible... if I could be convinced that he

has NFL-quality passing abilities, I'd easily be swayed in his direction.

Disclaimer *That is, if the Browns needed a franchise QB, which I'm not saying they do.*

Apparently, there is no sporting event that LeBron James doesn't attend.

I was at the Akron Zips game on Saturday, and LeBron was down on the sidelines for the 1st Half (apparently wearing a shirt that said "LeBron", which must be handy for him when he goes in his closet and

doesn't know which shirts are his).

Then he's at the Dallas Cowboys game on Sunday night.

See, LeBron? You don't have to go to New York for exposure. The City That Never Sleeps could never promote you as much as you promote you.

I'm not really sure why all those people in Dallas spent all that money to go to that big stadium and

watch that big TV that hangs over the field. Think of how much money they would have saved on beer if they'd just stayed home and done that.

Reader E-mail

From Mo Doe, Santa

Barbara: "*Do you think there's a possibility that Mangini knew what he had at QB and planned a losing season in order to get Tebow or Bradford?* "

I highly doubt any NFL coach would play to lose (just ask Herm Edwards), but some of the play calling so far looks like they're not playing to win. However, if Mangini knew the QB's both

sucked, why not just trade Quinn before the draft while he had some value and take Sanchez at # 5? Why wait a year if you already know that what you got is a bucket of chum?

And coaches with evil-genius type plans to lose badly to get a high draft pick might find themselves the victims of their own cleverness on the unemployment line - especially with Bill Cowhers and Mike

Shanahans and Jon Grudens floating around out there.

Next Up

The Baltimore Ravens

The Ravens' Defense

isn't exactly what it used to be. Weakened by age and defection, the vaunted Baltimore D has given up its share of yardage and points the first couple weeks.

Fortunately for them, the Offense has become quite proficient at just the right time. Joe Flacco is greatly improved, the three-headed RB club of Ray Rice, LeRon McClain, and Willis

"Ouchie" McGahee has been very effective, and Todd Heap is back to Pro Bowl form.

They will score plenty enough points to put

this game away early, and even though the Defense isn't what it used to be, it's plenty good enough to shut down Cleveland's sorry excuse for an Offense. Start scanning the schedule for alternate

games to watch during the 2nd Half - you know, just in case.

Ravens 33, Browns 13.