It's funny how the worm can turn in professional football. One day Cleveland Browns fans find themselves somewhat giddy despite their team's fourth straight loss this season and 10th overall and the next day they find themselves having to scratch their heads over the misadventures of one of the most misguided players to ever wear a Browns' uniform, Braylon Edwards. Gary talks about last week's game as well as the enigma that is Braylon Edwards in his latest column for us.

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overall and the next day they find themselves having to scratch their heads over the misadventures of one of the most misguided players to ever wear a Browns' uniform, Braylon Edwards.

On the first count, that little hop in the step following Sunday's loss to the Cincinnati Bengals is viewed through the bending light of a prism called progress.

Is it justified? The answer is both yes and no. Against the Baltimore Ravens two weeks ago, the Browns were literally picked clean of what little meat laid on their bones.

It was as ugly of a loss as a professional football team should ever have. More than that, though, it represented a significant step backwards for a team and a franchise that already was up against a brick wall.

In that sense, then, yes Sunday's loss was progress.

Sunday's loss also was progress because of it offered a glimpse of what the future might hold in some regard and that the future may not be as dark as anticipated.

Mohamed Massaquoi clearly has serious ability. Jerome Harrison, assuming he's done icing off all the bruises by this Sunday, showed he can be an every down running back.

Josh Cribbs continues to get better and is making a case not only for a new contract but for the designation of best special teams player in the league.

And Shaun Rogers?

Let's just say that his game on Sunday was a nice illustration of how a defensive lineman on a team this bad could still be a Pro Bowler.

But Sunday's loss wasn't all progress because it was, first and foremost, a loss and to a team that isn't one of the NFL's elites.

The Bengals may be 3-1 at the moment and they have a quality win against Pittsburgh, but when the dust settles on this season the Bengals aren't likely to be one of the survivors. They are far too inconsistent on both sides of the ball at the moment to be serious contenders. The shear number of 3-and-outs they had against a very

suspect Browns' defense speaks volumes as does the fact that their defense gave up 20 points to a team that had one garbage touchdown on offense all season.

Still, on balance, Sunday's loss was a beam of light in a very dark tunnel. But it will only represent that and nothing more until can be replicated on a regular basis. If Massaquoi disappears as quickly as he appeared, if Harrison can be an every down back but not an every week back, if teams stop kicking to Cribbs completely, then Sunday's game will represent more anomaly than trend.

Sunday's game, though, also was memorable for a few things that didn't happen. Quarterback Derek Anderson kept his job but he didn't quite establish permanent ownership over it. Indeed he had a rather typical roller coaster performance.

His ability to throw quickly and long opened up the running game, thus proving you can use the pass to establish the run.

But he was awful early and late and had a critical interception at the Bengals' goal line that arguably cost the team the game.

The other quarterback, Brady Quinn, didn't get to do anything more than assume the position that has defined his career to this point: yawning bystander. Anderson's performance and the fact that he's in the last year of his contract probably means that Quinn is worth keeping around. He's three years into a career that hasn't started and he's been crippled by some bad luck and bad timing.

He fell precipitously in the first round of the draft due to a confluence of events and, in retrospect, some question about his ability. He also has a lousy agent who held him out of camp when he would have been far better off reporting early.

The emergence of Anderson from afterthought to potential superstar wasn't good for the Quinn psyche nor was former general manager Phil Savage's decision to sign Anderson to a contract extension. When Quinn did get a chance to start he showed poise and promise but was hurt too quickly for any final judgments to be rendered.

Then, when he gets his chance this season, his head coach puts him on a very short leash and surrounds him with a running back well past his prime and a second receiver who literally learning on the job. He never got the benefit that Anderson did of having a running back on the right side of his career or a legitimate receiver to complement Braylon Edwards.

If it wasn't for bad luck Quinn would have no luck at all.

And then there is Edwards. He not only didn't catch a pass in a game he's played in for the first time in his career, he didn't do anything afterward to help burnish an image he so wrongly claims is unfair.

The only person that didn't see this coming was my buddy Ron and that's only because he stopped following the NFL the last time they went on strike.

Frankly, writing about Edwards as misanthrope is getting rather repetitive. To paraphrase Edwards, it's something fans have dealt with for five years now. They aren't even worried about it

anymore. He signed a five-year deal.

If Edwards taking out his frustration on a man about half his size ends up being his ticket out of Cleveland then at least something could came of it. For whatever good he does and for whatever statements he makes about being unselfish and a team player, Edwards has proven time and again that he cares only of himself and courting an image as a player, both on and off the field.

At the moment, he's neither. He's as sad and pathetic of an excuse for a player that the Browns have ever had. I f he had no talent, he'd be an afterthought.

But because he has some ability he is a never-ending source of frustration.

It's hard to tell if there is just one reason Edwards' bad-ass attitude spilled over early Monday morning into a fight outside of a Cleveland bar but the smart money says probably not. Maybe it was the balls that bounced off his hands Sunday.

Maybe it was the emergence of another legitimate receiving threat in the form of Massaquoi.

In that regard about the only thing that could have made that worse news for Edwards is if it had been former Buckeye Brian Robiskie instead.

Maybe it was just that Edwards really is sick of all the love that this town gives LeBron James and, by extension, his friends at the expense of

carpetbaggers like Edwards who somehow thinks he's more Cleveland than James, for whatever that means. Maybe he just didn't like the way his drinks were being mixed.

Whatever it was Edwards once again undid any good he thought he was doing by positioning himself earlier this season as all about the team and all about being unselfish.

Working out of classification by playing pop psychologist is always dangerous, but I'll wade in those waters anyway. Edwards has a certain amount of demons but he isn't alone in that regard.

He's always had an outsized sense of entitlement, but then again so do most professional athletes.

He also seems to carry a chip on his shoulder because he feels he's never been completely embraced.
Some of the league's best players carried similar chips.

But the real issue with Edwards is that he's always been just a paycheck player. He has no heart and it shows week in and week out. It may be that things have always come too easy for him that he's found it unnecessary to develop the humility a professional athlete needs to cope with the inevitable failures.

You decide but simply put, Edwards is hardly worth the sum of his parts.

Edwards can practice catching balls on the sidelines all he wants but he's always going to drop more than he should because he's not playing the game for the right reasons. In college it was about getting to the pros. He wanted to be the flashy receiver and was because it got him noticed.

But in that process teams like Cleveland had to ignore the simple fact that Edwards had trouble with the routine plays.

At the pro level it's been much the same. Edwards has always seemed far more interested in demonstrating his flash appeal.

Get to the Pro Bowl.

Get the love on the big stage.

Get the next big contract.

But his penchant for not making the routine plays is something he's becoming far more known for these days.

The first ball that he dropped on Sunday was classic Edwards. Anderson hit Edwards between the numbers on a very routine route and Edwards couldn't execute.

Even if he has as good a head for football as any receiver in the game, his lack of heart will continue to hold him back.

You can point to the good deeds Edwards has done in the community and draw whatever conclusions you'd like but in context they come across as insincere efforts designed more to bolster his image than to

further something Edwards deeply cares about. They also were probably a tax strategy.

And that is the crux of the problem. Edwards seems to only really care about Edwards. He comes across as someone who doesn't care about this team or the game he plays.

He doesn't honor either through hard work and commitment and sullies both through lip service and indifference.

By this point it may be too late for Edwards to find his inner child and the reason he put on that first pair of shoulder pads in a midget league game.

I do know this, though.

Until Edwards rediscovers that spark and embraces it, the riches he dreams about will always be in someone else's wallet.

As for the lingering impact of this escapade, let's just say that it's going to further the gulf between Edwards and his teammates and vice versa.

Mangini may handle it in house but he's not going to turn a blind eye.

And if there's something that players hate more than being punished for their own picayune offenses it's being punished for someone else's.