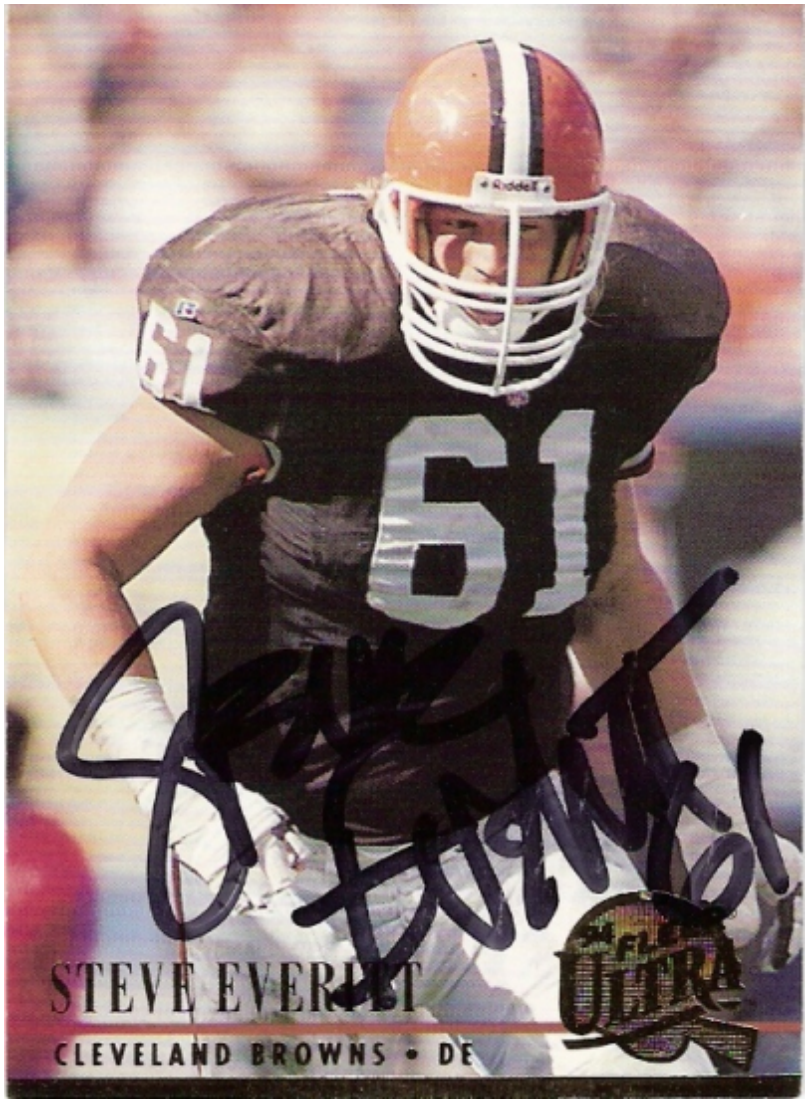
Today's mass-media monster provides the entertainment we'd hate to live without. Of course, the hype it produces can be over the top. Much in our culture is overrated. Examples? Oh... Andy Warhol. *Seinfeld.* The University of Michigan (spit).

However, some things don't get as much appreciation as they may deserve: George Harrison's *Brainwashed*
CD. Apple cider and powdered donuts in the Fall (mmmm). NFL centers.

In my best Harry Kalas football voice (queue the trumpets of an NFL Films soundtrack): Steve Everitt was a center who was drafted by Bill Belichick of the Cleveland Browns in the first round of the NFL draft in 1993.

OK, OK, out of Michigan. In an early Monday Night Football game that year, vs. the San Francisco 49ers, Everitt caught the full attention of Pro Football Hall of Fame lineman Dan Dierdorf. Dierdorf (also from, uh, Michigan) gushed over the ability of Everitt to pull on screens and sweeps like an All-Pro guard. The future of Steve Everitt's career was so bright, he was actually getting some national 'run' as an offensive lineman.



Everitt's first three years in the league were with the Browns. His career lasted about seven seasons, with his last meaningful seasons in Philadelphia (he got cut as a 'cap casualty'- at one point, his salary was greater than the sum of Eagles quarterbacks Ty Detmer, Rodney Peete and Bobby Hoying). He was on the roster of the early stages of the Greatest Show on Turf St. Louis Rams in 2000 (with eventual Browns lineman Ryan Tucker), when injuries finally short-circuited his career.

The injury tally over his career included a dislocation of his right thumb at Michigan - Everitt compensated by snapping the ball with his left hand. During a game against Notre Dame, he broke his jaw. A plate and four screws were inserted to hold it in place. About a year later, he was having dinner with his parents when one of the screws came out. His father began telling people he had a screw loose. Once he reached the NFL, the injuries continued in a manner befitting a lineman: a broken foot; a sprained ankle; a sprained knee; a torn pectoral muscle; painful neck and back injuries which required post-career surgeries. In 2007, at age 37, he told

the Baltimore Sun that "I'm still a kid at heart, though the rest of me is falling apart."

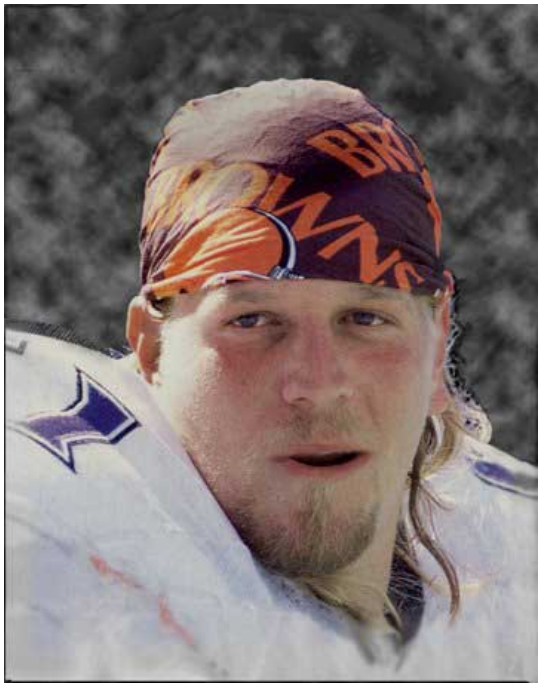
Cleveland fans loved the center's personality. A heavy metal buff who was known to skip showers and who seldom cut his hair, his non-football passion was drawing (his work was displayed at local art exhibitions, and his caricatures of Tommy Vardell and Vinny Testaverde were a hit among his teammates). But it was Everitt's personal habits that were legendary among fans and the team alike. When traveling with the team, he occasionally carried his belongings in a plastic trash bag. He almost always wore a white T-shirt and camouflage cargo pants, which he'd wash perhaps every two weeks or so. He'd scrape up leftovers from team meals into his pockets- or a gym bag. One day, a teammate put a dead fish in Everitt's locker. It took two days for the smell to become ripe enough to be suspiciously worse than his ordinary smells. The odor grew so overpowering until he was compelled to root through the locker and find the source.

Steve Everitt was one of the many Browns players who were swept up in the crazy emotions of Art Modell's move of the team to Baltimore. Everitt had bought a home near Cleveland in the fall of 1995, and he said that David Modell went out of his way to congratulate him. This was while the Modells were secretly plotting the move; Everitt has said that ever since, when he has shaken David Modell's hand, he has tried to break it.

The Browns' entire offensive line went to get tattoos together in 1995, and Everitt had a huge dagger tattooed down the length of his spine. It has been reported that the tattoo symbolizes the knife in the back administered to Cleveland by Art Modell.

After the final game before the move in 1995, a decisive victory over the Cincinnati Bengals, Everitt was one of the many Browns players who sprinted to the Dawg Pound to greet and thank the tearful fans amid the dismantling of the seats in the stadium.

Most Browns fans know the defining moment of Steve Everitt's football career- the day he wore a Cleveland Browns bandana as a Baltimore Raven during an exhibition game in 1996. According to *Scene Magazine*:



"It was my way to reach out to the fans," he says. "I felt like I didn't get a chance to say goodbye, so I hid the bandana in my bag and then put it on when I got on the field." The move instantly cemented his place in the hearts of Browns fans. "I got so many letters from Browns fans, some even sent money to help me pay for the ($5000) fine the NFL gave me."

Regarding that fine: Everitt was amused that in a letter, the league declared that the $5000 would come out of his *Browns* paycheck.

These days, Steve Everitt is known to participate in various charity golf events. He has coached some high school football near his home in the Florida keys (he grew up in Miami), and he has also worked on some art projects around the house with his wife, Amy. Again, from *Scene Magazine* :

He keeps in touch with his old teammates and makes his way back north on occasion (Amy hails from Youngstown). "The Browns have an untouchable fan base," he says. "If you could draw up a football stadium, the old stadium would be it. It was a great atmosphere to play in."

Thank you for reading. Next week: Blast From The Past: Doug Dieken (or "Holding, Number 73, Offense").

Many thanks to the unknown Browns fan who publicly shared this photo of Everitt. It was signed with a special message:

STUDDS
96