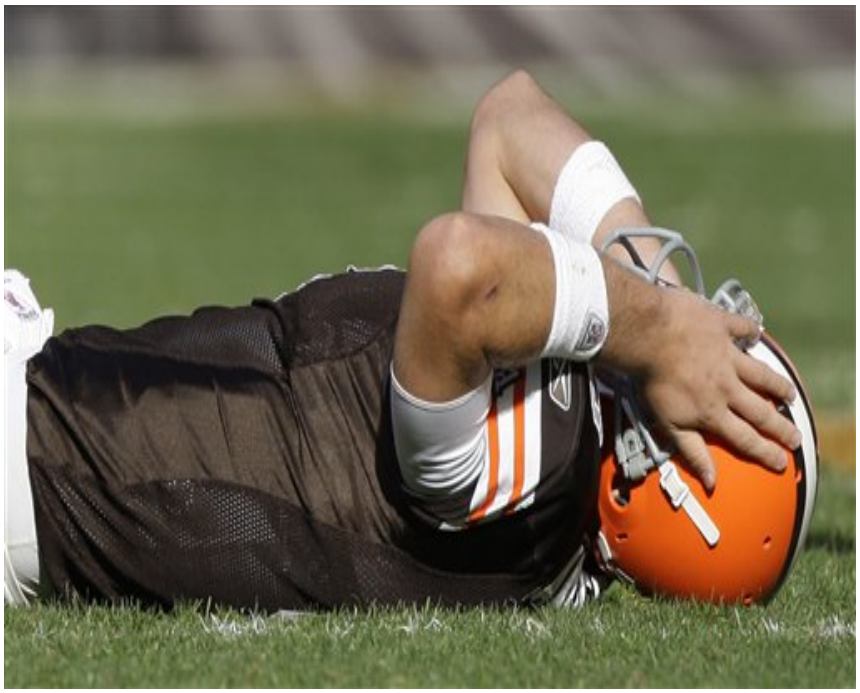


Here's a case of what goes around comes around. In a recent story from ESPN.com, a NFL coach, discussing his quarterback situation and whether or not he was ready to name a starter for the regular season replied, "Who knows? Maybe we'll keep them guessing."

Sure it sounds like Cleveland Browns head coach Eric Mangini circa 2009 vacillating over whether to start Derek Anderson or Brady Quinn at quarterback, but the coach in question is Arizona Cardinal's Ken Whisenhut. Yet Anderson remains the common denominator. Same problem, different team.

If you really want to understand the difference thus far between this year's Browns and last year's Browns you only need to see the havoc that Anderson's presence is causing for Whisenhut and the Cardinals to appreciate why teams simply can't enter the regular season indecisive about their starting quarterback as the Browns did last season.

Mangini always seemed bright enough to understand that a quarterback controversy is never healthy for a team. Yet he got sucked right into a vortex of his own creation when he announced an open competition that ultimately divided the team and left them unprepared for the regular season. Mangini never could get comfortable enough with either Quinn or Anderson to give a full-fledged vote of confidence and as a result the offense suffered greatly. (The defense didn't have any such excuse. It's problem then as now is that there aren't enough good players.)

But this isn't about revisiting past sins so much as it is to illustrate why the Browns are on a better path now than the Cardinals unless Whisenhut does what either Phil Savage or Mangini

should have done—dump one of the "starters" before this cancer spreads.

When Mike Holmgren became the president of the Cleveland Browns, he understood better than most the quarterback situation. It's his raison d'être. It wasn't just the pros and cons of each player that he grasped. More so he understood how Mangini's frustration with each quarterback's various deficiencies was making him indecisive about the key position in football and ultimately impacting the team.

Holmgren quickly determined that the Browns shouldn't make any effort to re-sign Anderson. Holmgren was less certain about Quinn, mainly because Quinn never really had a chance to develop. But he was certain at least that Mangini wasn't a Quinn fan. Having committed to Mangini, Holmgren deemed it foolish to force feed him a quarterback he didn't want and had new general manager Tom Heckert trade Quinn, which actually worked out pretty well.

That paved the way, of course, for a far more settled situation at quarterback for the Browns. They signed Jake Delhomme and traded for a firmly established number two quarterback in Seneca Wallace. They then drafted Colt McCoy on the if-come. It's really a textbook example of how to populate the quarterback position and it has settled this team in ways that the preseason can only hint at.

Meanwhile, in Arizona there is a churning controversy between Anderson, who thought he was signing as a back up, and former first round pick Matt Leinart. Somewhere between Anderson's signing and now, Whisenhut and his coaching staff fell in love with Anderson's strong arm and the cut of his jib and their infatuation with Leinart and his potential fell accordingly.

All of this culminated with Whisenhut unexpectedly naming Anderson as the team's starter for the third preseason game, traditionally the most important game in the preseason, thus creating the inevitable quarterback controversy. Leinhart didn't help things of course by taking his case to the media.

If rumors are true, Whisenhut is actively trying to solve his problem by trading Leinart. Good luck there, on both fronts. Anderson has one year of superior performance under his belt. The problem is that it was in 2007 and since when he hasn't been injured he's been awful. And it's not "awful" in the sense of it being bad-luck awful. The guy simply has no touch on the

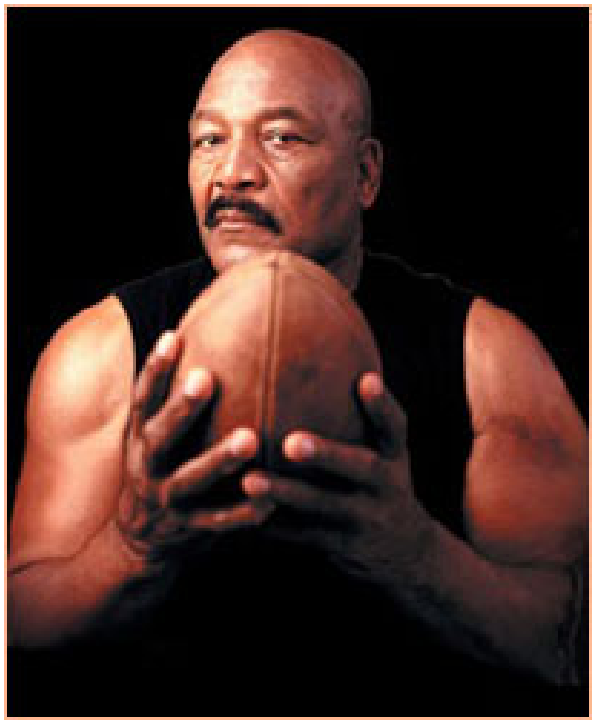
mid-range passes that are so crucial to an offense's success. Couple that with an inability to scramble and a deer-in-the-headlights approach to reading defenses and you end up with someone who shouldn't start for any team except in emergencies.

But Leinart hasn't shown much either and probably never will. He was overrated coming out of college and eventually will become some other team's pain in the butt.

All of this is of course a cautionary lesson about quarterbacks in general. They can have the right size and the right arm and still not make it. It really comes down to what's between the ears and is why someone like Tom Brady can make it and someone like Matt Leinhart cannot.

Having learned that lesson, the Browns are now far better off. For Cardinals fans, it's going to be a long year.

**



The Jim Brown controversy continued nearly unabated this past week but in the most unusual way. For reasons that make little sense, Brown leaked to the media his letter to Mike Holmgren

and Randy Lerner about why he won't be part of the Browns' Ring of Honor ceremony.

Accuse the Browns all you want of being tone deaf on this or any other matter, but Brown is at least as tone deaf, particularly if he thought this letter would somehow garner him much sympathy for his position in a dispute that is much ado about nothing.

As usual, and as he's done with almost everything else in his life, Brown has decided to take the road less traveled and for no particularly good reason.

That Brown sees himself as the oppressed in every situation is a given and unless you've walked in his shoes as a youngster or even as an adult and were exposed to the kind of racism that formed the core of his belief system, it will always be hard to relate to his thought pattern, let alone make sense of it.

And yet, why is it that when all of this is stripped away it seems like Brown's complaints really boil down to money? Owner Randy Lerner, of his own volition and probably just to show everyone that he really is a Browns fan at heart, kept Brown coming around. Sure Brown carried an "advisor" title, but really he was basically a well-paid greeter. Brown saw his role much differently, if you believe the letter he wrote to Holmgren. He claims he was paid to offer his intelligence and logic to advise Lerner on football matters, reporting only to Lerner.

It doesn't seem like Lerner saw it quite that way since he went out and hired Holmgren to play that same role in a much more formal sense. For good measure, Lerner then foisted Brown on him.

But just taking Brown at his word on his role (which, by the way, explains plenty about why Lerner made such a mess of things), it still begs the question as to why Brown's so offended in the first place. That's where the money part comes in. Something tells me that if Holmgren would have kept Brown's reportedly half million dollar salary in place, Brown would still be coming around offering his sometimes bizarre insights, even if it was to someone who knows better. But Holmgren wanted to formalize Brown's role into what he essentially already was and cut the salary accordingly. Brown balked and hence the standoff.

Brown didn't help his cause by intentionally misquoting Holmgren to make it appear as if Holmgren was a racist or that Holmgren's invitation to Brown to attend the ring ceremony had any underlying racial implications. All Brown really did was make himself look like a fool and a whiner. The ceremony will go on, with or without Brown, and Brown's name will be in the Ring of Honor, whether or not he's there and whether or not he likes it.

Brown has always been a compelling but difficult personality and he's proven that once again. With Brown both the good and bad about him is that you can't change the past.

***

There was an interesting segment on ESPN recently in which the talking heads debated the number of games the Browns would win. The over/under was 6. I can't recall how that debate came out, as if it actually matters, but I appreciated the attempt by ESPN to build enthusiasm. Which leads to this week's question to ponder: Are you more excited about the Browns or the Buckeyes?