The 2010 Season

Help us, Obi Wan Mangini. You're our only hope.

We have been captured by our nemesis, Darth Apathy.

Your allies - The Cavaliers and the Indians - have been decimated by Free Agency and an uneven playing field. No one wants to come to their galaxies, or they can't afford to hire the necessary mercenaries to fight their enemies. They still exist - at least, if rumors are true - but they lay in hiding deep on frozen worlds and airless asteroids. There is little chance that they will be able to form any kind of resistance in the near future. They define futility.

Our only chance for rescue is you, Master Mangini. You are the only one with the ways and means of saving us from our cruel captor, and yet you and your troops have spend most of the last space age miserably flailing about the universe, walking into meteor showers and getting sucked into black holes. Your people have done nothing to take advantage of the situations provided to you. You too have defined futility.

But as long as there is life, there is hope (or so my shrink keeps saying). So we send this message to you in this, perhaps the greatest hour of need our people have ever known. We are dying, wasting away, converting to the Dark Side in record droves.

If you fail us now, there may be nothing that can save us.

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Game Recap

Some of you have (rightfully) taken me to task for my lax review of Fake Game 4.

I apologize, but I cannot review Fake Game 4's. They star mostly players that will be sharpening up their telemarketing skills in a week.

Here's my review of the Bears game: Expletive Expletive Montario Hardesty got hurt! Son of a Expletive Expletive! And he looked so good, too.

Yes, it was nice that Colt McCoy hit 100% of his check downs (uh, passes). I could care less what he does until about this time next year. That is when I will want to see progress from him, because he's the one from the '10 Draft Class that has the most potential to be Veikune-istic.

(I don't think he will be, though.)

Brett Ratliff drives the 4th Stringers to a majestic game winning FG, mainly glorious because it avoided Preseason Overtime (an event which is like purposely asking the judge to double your community service). Thank you, Mr. Ratliff, and good luck.

Final: *Browns 13, Bears 10.*

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Conclusion

Don't schedule Fake Game 4 opposite the Buckeyes' Real Game 1.

(Or Half Real Game, if you will, since those opening opponents are usually less than resistant.)

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Cut or Terminated (Contract-Wise)

David Veikune (LB), Billy Yates (OL), DB Chris Chancellor (DB), DL Clifton Geathers (DL), RB Chris Jennings (RB), CB Brandon McDonald (CB), DL Swanson Miller (DL), QB Brett Ratliff (QB), Bobby Engram (WR), Scott Kooistra (OL), C.J. Mosley (DL), Jake Allen (WR), Casey Bender (OL), Coye Francies (CB), Joel Gamble (TE), Joel Reinders (OL), Syndric Steptoe (WR).

Most of these are no-brainers. Veikune I'll say more about later. Jennings was a bit surprising after the Hardesty injury, but I guess they figured other RB's of about equal talent would be around if needed. McDonald wasn't good enough to overcome the likely general disdain. Ratliff was the victim of McCoy being a high pick (and his own general ineffectiveness). Mosley was Just Another Guy.

Geathers was a bit of a surprise, since he was a project pick in the first place. I'm sure that the Browns hoped to sneak him through waivers and stash him on the Practice Squad, but the Dolphins nabbed him up (obviously retaliation for the Matt Roth fiasco). My initial reaction was to be irritated with management for blowing a gamble of that sort, like they did with Don Carey last year.

But then I thought: What the hell did Clifton Geathers ever do?

If he had showed anything, you know they would've stashed him. He was all the talk of early camp, he and Joel Reinders and Kwaku Danso - They're Big! They're Raw! They're Players to Watch!

And if any of those 3 did anything in any of the games, I don't remember it.

So I guess I'll save my Geathers wake until he makes the Pro Bowl.

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IR

Montario Hardesty (RB), Titus Adams (DL), Kwaku Danso (DL), Johnathan Haggerty (WR), Chris Roberson (DB), Dave Zastudil (P).

That's per the Official Site - I thought a couple of those guys were IR-waived as well.

Sigh... Oh, Montario...

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Practice Squad

Larry Asante (S), Paul Fanaika (OL), Travis Ivey (DL), Pat Murray (OL), Brian Sanford (DL), DeAngelo Smith (CB).

Asante was another player whose initial release surprised me, but he made it through waivers. Which is nice, because I've heard he has potential, even though he did nothing noteworthy at all during the Fake Games. And I was watching him specifically during those 4th Quarters, since our other Safeties outside of TJ Ward do unspeakable things to goats.

The rest of them are just injury depth.

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Quarterbacks

Jake Delhomme, Seneca Wallace, Colt McCoy.

Now it's Showtime, Mr. Delhomme. You were a pleasant surprise during the Fake Games. Now they're Real.

However, as I have stated repeatedly, I am not overly worried about Jake. I don't think he'll be as good as he was during the Preseason, but I don't think he'll be anywhere nearly as bad as he was last season, and he's bound to be vast leaps and bounds better than Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn.

And if he does suck, then Wallace is there to take over. I have as much confidence (if not more) in him as I do in Delhomme.

From Wallace to McCoy is a huge dropoff. Really, if they could've gotten away with stashing Colt on the Practice Squad, they probably would have. But that never would've flown. And it's not like Ratliff was any better.

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Running Backs

Jerome Harrison, Lawrence Vickers, Peyton Hillis, James Davis.

For all of those that are in love with Hillis, the Hardesty injury is the best thing that could've happened to you. Hardesty surely would've taken a big chunk of carries away from Hillis (and Davis, for that matter), but now both will see plenty of time in relief of Harrison and in situational duty.

Losing Montario was a blow, there is no doubt, but that doesn't mean that the backfield isn't still talented and dynamic. They'll still be good, and I bet people in your fantasy league will be scrambling to pick up Hillis & Davis at some point.

The unit's just not as deep as it used to be a week ago. Which is why they have Chris Jennings on speed dial.

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Wide Receivers

Mo Massaquoi, Josh Cribbs, Brian Robiskie, Chansi Stuckey, Carlton Mitchell, Evan Moore.

Yes, I put Evan Moore here because this is where he belongs. Can't block and gets lined up in the slot and out wide. Hmmmm... sounds like a Receiver to me.

Mo is a quality WR. I want to doubt him, but I just can't.

Now Cribbs and Robiskie as the #2... those guys I can doubt. I want to believe that Cribbs has turned the page and become a viable WR. I want to believe that Robiskie has overcome his rookie errant ways and morphed into something productive. But seeing is believing in this case - probably more so than with any other spot on the team.

Stuckey is a decent slot guy, and Mitchell... well, watch for those Reverses.

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Tight Ends

Ben Watson, Robert Royal, Alex Smith.

Let's hope Watson stays healthy, because he's the only legit pass catcher amongst the three. If he does, look for a big year from him. He and Jake seemed to have formed a bond that Superglue would be jealous of.

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Offensive Linemen

Joe Thomas, Eric Steinbach, Alex Mack, Shawn Lauvao, Tony Pashos, Floyd Womack, John St. Clair, Steve Vallos

Only 8 deep, which is about right from what I saw in the Preseason. Make no mistake - this unit is the key to the Browns' season more than any other. Should one or two of these guys go down, it will be the opposite of pretty. Steve Buscemi opposite of pretty.

Thomas is one of the very best in the game, and Mack is looking solid. Steinbach is serviceable, and Lauvao (who I assume will start at RG) has plenty of potential. Pashos will likely start at RT, but I think he will eventually give way to Womack (once Porkchop is healthy and Pashos gets hurt and/or just blows).

I don't know much about Vallos, and what I do know about St. Clair makes me pray for health.

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Special Teams

Phil Dawson, Reggie Hodges, Ryan Pontbriand.

Phil's as solid as they come. The same cannot be said for Mr. Hodges at this point. He should be fine (if unspectacular), but you'd be surprised how many games are decided by a Punter error (no, I didn't do the research, but it's probably more than you think).

What a nice little career Pontbriand has made for himself long-snapping. Butch Davis' best draft pick.

Defensive Linemen

Ahytyba Rubin, Shaun Rogers, Robaire Smith, Kenyon Coleman, Brian Schaefering, Derreck Robinson.

Rubin is now the most important player on the D Line, what with him starting at Nose Tackle and staying a lot more healthy than Mr. Rogers.

That being said, I am eager to see how the line performs with Rogers back in there, working this time from one of the End positions. Throw in Robaire Smith on the other side, and they have the potential - just *potential*, mind you - to be solid and to create some havoc.

Coleman and Schaefering provide decent depth, and Robinson is the reason that Geathers was released. The Browns could take a chance with maybe losing Geathers - they couldn't with Robinson. He was disruptive and effective throughout the entire Fake Season. His ability to penetrate and make plays in the backfield is exactly what this D Line needs.

Now, if that also leads to him abandoning gap integrity and giving up big running plays... boo.

Cornerbacks

Eric Wright, Sheldon Brown, Joe Haden, Derrick Roberson.

I'm assuming Wright and Brown will start, at least at the beginning of the season. As the ineffectiveness of the 2nd Safety and the fact that Haden is just better comes into fruition, I believe Brown will be moved to Safety, Roberson will be moved to Nickel, and Mike Adams will be moved to Dime. But that won't come for 6 or 7 games.

So with what we've got as of right now... yeah, it's OK. I think Wright will be good this year. His tackling/aggressiveness has certainly improved (as his showboating). Hopefully he can keep that up.

Brown is solid, but I have my worries. I just have a sinking feeling his best days are behind him, and if he gets beat a couple times, he might start to believe it too. Once a Corner believes that, they be Toast (otherwise known as Hank Poteat).

That's why I like Haden to finish the season as a starter. He's quick enough, he's aggressive, and he's physical. He'll make some Rookie mistakes, but he doesn't seem prone to getting down on himself.

You'll be seeing lots of spare cash being thrown at his jerseys during the offseason.

Safeties

TJ Ward, Abe Elam, Mike Adams, Nick Sorensen, Ray Ventrone.

Paper thin and not-overly talented. Thank Dog that they picked 2 in the draft.

I like Ward a lot and think he'll be solid (even if he will give up more than his share of plays over

the middle). It's the rest of that crowd... basically, they're there because of Special Teams. Ventrone and Sorensen probably won't see the field on Defense.

Please, don't let them see the field on Defense.

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Linebackers

Matt Roth, Chris Gocong, D'Qwell Jackson, Scott Fujita, Eric Barton, Marcus Benard, David Bowens, Titus Brown, Blake Costanzo, Kaluka Maiava, Jason Trusnik.

I felt better about this crew before the Fake Season began than I do now. I still think there is good depth there, but playmakers? Very few. Now, it's nice to have a plethora of solid, but if the entire Front 7 is devoid of real difference-makers then it will be an interminably long season.

As I've said before, I'm not overly concerned about who starts, or where. Roth and Benard are probably the best Pass Rushers. Fujita, Gocong, Jackson, and Bowens are all fairly high quality (I give Bowens a Fake Season pass because he was injured and because of what he did last year). The other guys are depth and Special Teamers. The way the Browns use LB'ers, they need a lot of 'em.

And the fact that they need so many and they kept so many makes the tale of the following individual all the more frustrating...

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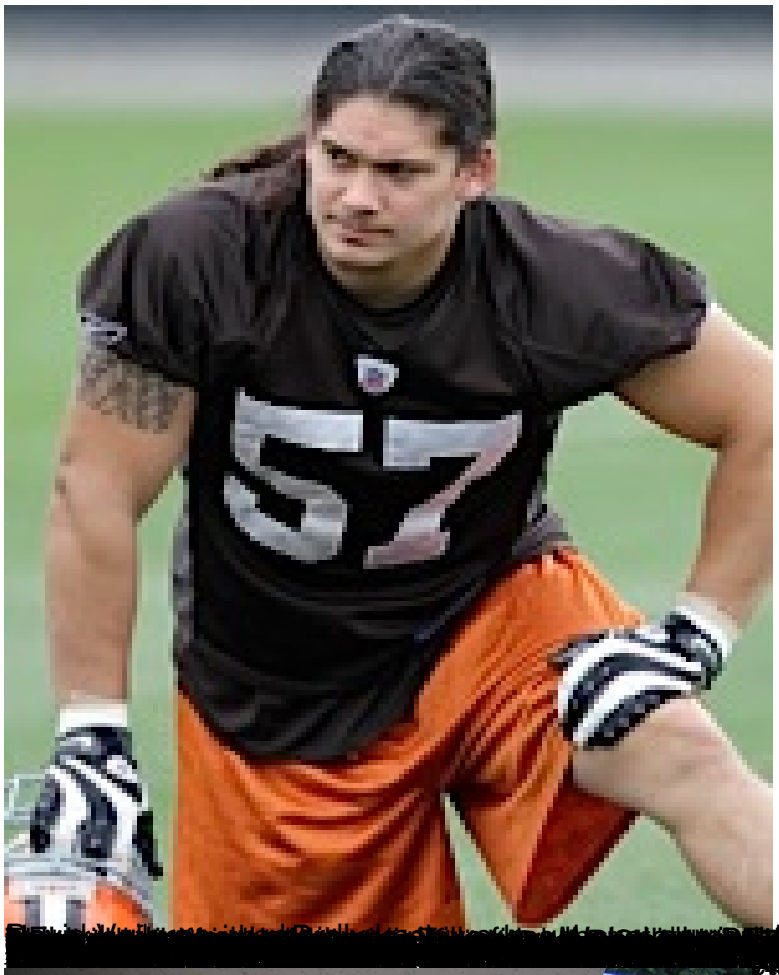

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