So much for getting off to a fast start for the game and the season.

The Cleveland Browns, after dominating the Tampa Bay Buccaneers early, saw that mojo disappear in the the dust of two key turnovers as they lost 17-14 on a hot, muggy and sometimes rainy day at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay.

The loss puts the Browns in a spot they know well, 0-1, to start a season. It also ends the modest 4-game win streak dating back to last season.

With the Browns leading 14-3 and seemingly on their way to, at worst, a field goal late in the first half, the Jake Delhomme that most fans feared might rear its ugly head once the regular season started did just that when he failed to see Ronde Barber closing in on tight end Ben Watson. Barber stepped in front of the pass and took it 61-yards to the Cleveland 2-yard line. From there, Tampa Bay quarterback Josh Freeman, he of the broken thumb and rabid inexperience, found Michael Williams in the back of the end zone that closed the Browns' lead to 14-10. It was an acrobatic catch of a ball that had been tipped by Sheldon Brown.

In fairness to Delhomme, though, on the interception, he really hadn't noticed Barber much that entire first half in avoiding at least two other interceptions.

More importantly, though, it killed what ever momentum the Browns had mustered via a balanced offensive attack that for most of the first half kept the Buccaneers mostly scratching themselves.

The Browns had a chance on their opening drive of the second half to recapture the momentum

and for awhile anyway, looked as if they had. But running back Peyton Hillis fumbled at the Tampa Bay 15-yard line, killing the Browns' last real threat of the day.

From there, the Browns offense played most of the second half scared, except when they were playing desperate. After exchanging punts with the Buccaneers, an exchange that ended up putting the Browns deep in their own territory with 6:39 remaining in the fourth quarter, Delhomme threw late and over the middle and everyone knows what happens when you throw late and over the middle. Corner back E.J. Biggers was there to receive the gift at the Browns' 39-yard line.

The Bucs, on the verge of putting the game away for good, showed why they are who we think they are as fullback Earnest Graham fumbled the ball at the Browns' 2-yard line. Lineback Eric Barton recovered and gave the Browns one last chance, or at least what looked like one last chance at the time.

But there would be no miracle drive and no memories, really, of a preseason that looked more promising. Delhomme couldn't complete the one pass he needed and the Browns turned it back over to the Bucs with at their own 14-yard line with a minute remaining.

But alas! The Buccaneers are who we think they are and they strangely gave the Browns still one final chance to tie the game. Eschewing a field goal that would have given them a 6-point lead and forced the Browns to score a touchdown with just seconds remaining, Bucs head coach Raheem Morris instead had Freeman attempt a pass only to see him get sacked and give the Browns one really last chance. But having burned all their time outs on the Tampa Bay possession, the Browns really never had much of a chance to get the ball into field goal range with any time left on the clock.

Not that it much mattered, but one of the key reasons the first last chance drive probably didn't produce came after Delhomme completed a pass to Josh Cribbs for 6 yards, setting up third and 4. With three time outs in their pocket, head coach Eric Mangini strangely decided the time wasn't quite right and instead hoped, apparently, to catch the Buccaneers' defense off-guard. It didn't work as the offense instead couldn't get set. Floyd Womack was whistled for the false start setting up a 4th and 9 and Delhomme's gasp of a throw to Chansi Stuckey that sailed harmlessly away.

Like a putt that looks good until it finds a way to avoid the cup at the last minute, the Browns looked like a team that knew what it was doing until it found a way to avoid a victory.

New quarterback Jake Delhomme,showing a veteran's poise, and a newly-slimmed down offensive coordinator in Brian Daboll,together involved the entire offense in a first half that would have been much more satisfying had it not also featured the usual mistakes.

In that first half alone, Delhomme completed passes to running back Peyton Hillis and Jerome Harrison and wide receivers Mohammad Massaquoi, Stuckey and Brian Robiskie. The pass to Massaquoi in particular was a thing of beauty, a tight spiral threaded between two Buccaneers defenders that went for 41-yards and the Browns' first touchdown and an early 7-0 lead. The half also featured nearly 100 yards of rushing from the combination of Harrison, Hillis and Cribbs.

But then there was the bad. The Delhomme interception late in the first half followed by the Freeman-to-Spurlock touchdown followed by the Hillis fumble early in the second half effectively put the Browns away. They just didn't know it at the time. From there the offense had four straight 3-and-outs and then the Delhomme interception by Biggers before their final two last gasp attempts.

Credit for that should probably go to the Buccaneers' defense. But a healthy dose of the credit or blame, depending on your perspective, can be laid at the feet of an offensive line that couldn't open up holes for the running game against a defense that was the worst in the league last season against the run. That same offensive line didn't give Delhomme much time either as most of his passes were rushed.

If there was a bright spot of sorts, it was probably the defense. The Buccaneers 17 points were hard earned and should not have been enough to win the game in any event. Tampa Bay's first points came via a 49-yard field goal from Conner Barth. Their first touchdown, which covered all of 3 yards, was set up by the Delhomme interception in the first half. Their second touchdown, a Freeman 33-yard pass to Michael Spurlock who had a step on Haden, was set up by a Reggie Hodges punt from the Browns' own end zone that gave the Bucs the ball at the Cleveland 47-yard line.

While Haden was the victim on the Freeman touchdown pass to Spurlock, he otherwise played well in his first NFL start. The same goes for rookie safety T.J. Ward. And while we're being free with the accolades, the linebackers played effectively throughout as well. In short, the defense was mostly solid.

For a team that thought it would struggle more on defense then offense, when the opposite proved to be the case it cost the team a victory it should have had.

Delhomme, counted on so heavily to lift this team beyond its current bottom-feeder status, was 20-37 for 227 yards, with most of those yards coming in the first half. The running game yielded another 104 yards but again, virtually all of it came in the first half.

The Buccaneers weren't all that impressive either. Freeman completed 17 of 28 passes for only 182 yards. But he had the two key touchdown passes and only turned it over once, an interception by Mike Adams in the second quarter that seemingly set up a Browns score that wasn't because of the Delhomme interception. On the ground, Cadillac Williams had a quiet 75 yards rushing, though he had a couple of good gains called back because of penalties, and Freeman added 33 yards, most of which came on one run.

In the pantheon where all losses go to be evaluated, this will go down as a bad loss for now. But because it came in the season's first week, at least there is plenty of time to recover. Beat a team you shouldn't and all is soon forgotten. Lose to the Kansas Chiefs next week, though, the team and town go into panic mode.

Still, don't read too much into this loss unless you were in the camp that thought the Browns were a playoff team. It's about baby steps now and when baby steps are involved, often times a fall is just around the corner. If the Browns can find a way to quickly stand back up, then this will just be another painful lesson in a very long learning process.