Leave it to the Cleveland Browns to pose the musical question, can a center really lose a football game? If you answered yes, then you're in the camp that blames Alex Mack's ridiculous roughing penalty late in the first half of Sunday's Browns' 16-14 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs as the reason Phil Dawson was unable to convert a field goal for what would otherwise have been the difference in the game. If you answered no, then you're in the camp that blames a stagnant and undisciplined offense that once again failed to score in the game's second half.

Mack's penalty, coming as it did off two plays after Ahtyba Rubin's interception of a tipped Matt Cassel pass, cost the Browns 15 critical yards relatively deep in Kansas City territory. But on the other hand, Dawson is usually reliable even from 42 yards (he's 46-68 lifetime on field goals between 40-49 yards) so it's not as if that particular penalty really cost the Browns the victory.

Besides, a case could be made that Seneca Wallace's ill-advised pass to Chansi Stuckey earlier in that quarter that was picked off and returned 33-yards for a touchdown by Brandon Flowers was far more costly.

But really, none of that matters because the bigger picture is that once again the Browns were simply not good enough in any phase of the game as they handed the sell out crowd the usual dose of home opener blues, this time made a little more bitter coming on Ring of Honor day.

If the Browns ever run out of players to honor, and considering the last 10 years it is a distinct possibility, and start honoring individuals games instead no one will have to root through the archives for a tape of this disaster, assuming they can get their hands on last week's tape from the Tampa Bay loss. The two games were remarkably similar.

Both games featured critical interceptions in the second quarter. Both featured an offense that either made no adjustments at the half or could not counter the adjustments made by the opponent at the half, take your pick. And both featured enough other mistakes and penalties to make one wonder exactly what are the Browns working on during the week.

Seneca Wallace, subbing for an injured Jake Delhomme, became the 15th different starting quarterback of the "new" Browns. He wasn't awful but there was nothing about the performance that gave him a leg up on any of the other 14 either.

Like Delhomme last week, Wallace was able to complete a long pass for a touchdown. Delhomme's was to Mohammed Massaquoi. Wallace's was to his offensive kindred spirit, Josh Cribbs. It came just a few plays after the Flowers return for a touchdown and came, coincidentally enough, when Cribbs got behind Flowers in the secondary.

But from that point forward the Browns offensive fell asleep. They finished the half with two straight punts and the Dawson missed field goal. In the second half, every Browns drive ended in a Reggie Hodges punt and only four plays, including a Hodges punt, took place on the Kansas City side of the field.

In all, the Browns had a dismal 55 yards in the second half, 39 of which came through the air. And yet, despite all that, the Browns had the opportunity for one last gasp had the defense, which otherwise played well once again, been able to stop the Chiefs from gaining a critical half-yard late in the fourth quarter.

With 2:41 remaining in the game, the Chiefs took over at the Browns 45 yard line as the result of a Hodges 37-yard punt from deep in Cleveland's own end zone. With only two time outs remaining, the Browns were forced to use them as the Chiefs kept the ball on the ground in order to keep the clock moving.

After Thomas Jones was held for a 2-yard gain on 3rd and 3, the Chiefs faced a critical 4th and 1 from the Cleveland 36-yard line with two minutes remaining.

Knowing that the Browns only needed a field goal to win the game, Chiefs head coach Todd Haley eschewed a pooch punt and instead decided to try and win the game right there. Cassel handed the ball to Jones and he dove far enough on top of the pile that formed at the line of scrimmage to get the few feet he needed. A review was no help and with the first down, the Chiefs were able to run out the clock to secure the victory.

That's not to suggest that the Browns would have been able to move into field goal position anyway. Indeed, it's fair to suggest that it really wasn't much of a gamble for Haley. Still it served as a gutsy call at that moment, one that gave the Chiefs an unexpected 2-0 start and one that could buoy his team for the rest of the season.

Meanwhile, there was no need for gutsy calls on the Browns' side of the ball. The offense never really gave the coaches that chance. While offensive coordinator Brian Daboll ran a very balanced attached, it's fair to ask what happened to the Browns' running game that literally shredded the Chiefs last season. With Jerome Harrison getting the bulk of the carries, it was mostly non-existent. Harrison carried 16 times for a total of 33 yards. Peyton Hillis had 35 yards in just 8 carries.

In his post game comments head coach Eric Mangini credited a major overhaul in personnel in Kansas City's front seven for the stunning turnaround from last season. Maybe. Perhaps it was just the return of Romeo Crennel to the job that suits him best, defensive coordinator for the Chiefs that was the real reason that the Browns offense couldn't get out of its own way. We'll never really know because Crennel wasn't in Tampa Bay last week and the offense still couldn't perform.

As bad as the offense was again, it's not as if that was the only problem. For the game the Browns had 9 penalties for 78 yards. Mangini wouldn't say directly that a team like the Browns, suffering as it does from talent deficiencies, has to play a nearly perfect game in order to win, but had he no one would have disputed the point.

The Browns mistakes were too numerous for them but not necessarily too numerous for an otherwise decent team to overcome. So much of what happens on Sundays is about overcoming the unexpected. The Browns at this point can't even overcome the expected.

As much as the Browns' two losses seemed to be mirror images, arguably the offensive performance this week was actually worse. Last Sunday the Browns could always point to poor field position for most of the second half as an excuse for playing so conservatively. This week, with Kansas City doing its level best to keep Josh Cribbs from breaking a return gave the Browns decent field position most of the afternoon, including the second half.

But a very ineffective Harrison and a very average Wallace could not make the one or two plays needed to keep any drive going.

On the day, Wallace was 16-31 for 229 yards, the one touchdown and, of course, the one crucial interception. Cassel wasn't anything special, completing just 16 of 28 passes for 176 yards and two interceptions, one by Rubin, the other by Sheldon Brown.

The defense should be credited for handcuffing Cassel and mostly keeping a decent Chiefs running game in check. Indeed once again it played well enough and put the offense in a position to win the game and once again the offense failed to cooperate. If the defense can hang in long enough, at some point they'll be rewarded. But since this is the Browns, there is every reason to believe that if an offensive explosion ever does occur, the defense will probably fall apart in that game.

Things don't get better for the Browns next week, or for the next five weeks for that matter. The Baltimore Ravens may be having their own set of issues on offense but if the Browns can't move the ball against two of the league's more mediocre defenses, one wonders what the over and under for total offense might be against the Baltimore Ravens. One hundred yards and take the under seems a pretty good bet.

There were a lot of pundits that called this week's game a near must win for the Browns. In truth it wasn't. In fact, the Browns haven't played a must win game in years unless it's a must win for a coach to hang on to his job and don't look to play in any this year either.

All you can expect from a team this bad is progress. Unfortunately, two games into the season it is, as the kids like to say, the same old same old.