Week 3 – Cleveland at Baltimore

Anyone that actually watches the Browns' games knows that they are not that bad of a team.

Too bad that doesn't make them any less 0-3.

It's difficult for me to sit here and blow rainbows up your colon. It's not like we're talking about an über-talented team that has just had a few bad games and can be back in championship contention if they just pull it together. No, this team is mediocre at best, and that's if they don't make mistakes, if they maximize their opportunities, if they don't give games away.

Otherwise, they're 0-3.

Still, despite those realties, it is hard to not be extremely frustrated. The mistakes, the penalties, the turnovers, the questionable coaching moves, the sins of player acquisition past, the unkind schedule, the seemingly endless hopelessness...

The fact that no matter if they have lost 3 by a combined 12 or a combined 92, they're still 0-3...

The frustration is excruciating.

Look no further than Kansas City to see how this could have gone. You win that game in Tampa - a game they REALLY should have won - and you're 1-0. You squeak one out against KC, and you're 2-0. Then you go into Baltimore with a shot at 1st place and a cushioned early record and... *You Start To Believe*.

And when that happens, you can outplay your talent level. You start to win those close games that you would otherwise lose if you were, say, 0-2 and starting to sink back into that ol' familiar quicksand.

So maybe a 2-0 team has the belief to win that game on Sunday (as that 0-2 easily could have done).

Imagine it - a mistake less here or there, a certain player benched there or here, and this team is 3-0. And instead of the reactionaries talking about firings and drafts and walk-outs and sit-ins, they're talking about the Playoffs.

This is the kind of team that - for the most part - will neither blow anyone out nor be blown out. That means the margin for error is very thin. The Browns were just that close to a completely different universe. We look at Kansas City, we've played Kansas City, and we know perfectly well that had the Browns changed maybe one or two plays in each of their games that THEY'D be the KC of the league right now.

That is the most frustrating aspect of all.

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Game Recap

It's Wednesday. If you don't already know what happened, then you probably are reading the wrong article.

TJ Ward dropped a Pick 6 - but I love him all the same. Peyton Hillis ran like a beast possessed by Beastazor, the patron God of Beasts. Eric Wright missed some coverages. The Browns played well enough to win, finally putting a stop to all the turnovers, but they couldn't stop Joe Flacco (well, one guy couldn't) and they had some more untimely penalties.

They finally played the way they did at the end of last season, which is encouraging. But moral victories are still losses.

Final: Ravens 24, Browns 17.

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Conclusion

Time of Possession: Baltimore – 30:08, Cleveland – 29:52

Total Yards: Baltimore – 365, Cleveland - 304

First Downs: Baltimore - 19, Cleveland – 18

A lot more even than any of us thought it would be going in, eh? Imagine if one of our Corners hadn't chosen that day to suffer a nuclear meltdown.

Really, I think we have to be encouraged by the Rushing totals: 173 for the Browns, 109 for the Ravens. Don't look now, but, even with 2 poor rushing games (at least poor for what we expected) the Browns are 11th in the NFL.

That number will continue to rise. Better days are ahead.

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Gameballs

Offensive Line – For some impressive run blocking against a very stout front. Welcome back, Mr. Pashos.

Lawrence Vickers – I know you had a hand in the run blocking too.

Peyton Hillis - The Brady Quinn for Peyton Hillis and a pick trade is probably the best trade in the history of the world. Nay - the universe. I'm afraid he'll get hurt eventually at the bottom of one of those piles he inevitably drags around, but it's fun to watch while it lasts.

TJ Ward – Just cuz.

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Honorable Mention

John St. Clair – For getting hurt and thus making a wise personnel decision for the coaches,

since they couldn't make it themselves.

Sheldon Brown & Joe Haden – Because they weren't Eric Wright.

Ben Watson – 5 catches for 47 yards and a Touch. Not too shabby.

Seneca Wallace – Efficient, turnover free, and made some Day-Um! type throws. Two beefs: pitching the ball to people that aren't there, and deep passes down the sidelines.

Wall of Shame

Wide Receivers (other than Josh Cribbs) – Your paycheck is evidence of embezzlement.

Pass Rushers – Without Marcus Benard, they can't sniff the QB.

D'Qwell Jackson – Another wasted pick from another lost regime (at least as far as the Browns are concerned). If you were there for one of the opening days of Training Camp, you saw DQ in a Browns uniform for the last time.

Rob Ryan – For your personnel decisions and certain package choices.

Brian Daboll – He lives here, so I don't want to exclude him from the festivities.

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The Seventh Ring of Hell

This is a new category for this week only (I hope) because the Wall of Shame just isn't strong enough to emphasize how truly dreadfully godawful this certain player was.

Eric Wright – Never before have I seen a single non-QB Brown have such a horrible day. He wasn't just getting beaten, he was trampled to death. Anquan Boldin was wide open - then started to get wider open. And once the Ravens realized that Wright couldn't cover a marble with a beach towel, they just went after him no matter where he was. Their entire offensive philosophy became " *Throw it to whomever Eric Wright is covering*", and it worked.

I can't blame Wright entirely. It was clear that he just didn't have it. We've all had those days. Somebody needed to put out the invisible fire that was consuming him. You let him try to play through it for a while, and then you have to realize that whatever it is that is wrong with him is not getting better and you need to sit him down. Maybe not for the whole game, but at least for a series or two. At the very least. So what if that means throwing Mike Adams at them? I'd rather have had Ahtyba Rubin out there on Boldin than Wright at that point. At least Rubin could get a decent jam at the line of scrimmage.

In football, very rarely is one player so utterly singled out and humiliated. It doesn't bode well for Wright, especially at a position where confidence is a premium. He'll need to forget last week in a damn hurry and get ready for the Bungals, because you know Carson Palmer is gonna come after him early and often.

I think that Mangini is right to start Wright again this week and hope that the Ravens game was just some weird tear in the space-time continuum. But if Wright gets fried again this week, he might very well be done. It'll be in his head and he'll have a bullseye on his back. In a few weeks, you'll have to ship him off to the Ha-Ha House where he can mumble and play checkers while Dr. Labotomy pumps him full of funky meds.

That's how bad his performance was - potentially career ending. You might think I exaggerate, but I do not. Wright will have a helluva challenge moving on past this one. Good luck, Easy E.

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The chants have already begun. "*Fire Mangini!*" they say. "*Fire Heckert!*" *Fire Holmgren!*"

OK, the anti-Heckert and anti-Holmgren chants are just absurd, and they come from a vast minority of... um... people... who are completely... um... not right. No need to deal with such hysteria.

Now, the anti-Mangini chants? Well, those are louder. There have been many just lying in wait, eager to roast the guy again and hire Fan Choice X to replace him, and the sooner the better. Inevitably, out come the pro-Mangini contingent, hell bent upon apologizing for and excusing Mr. Eric from any and all team shortcomings. Everyone seems to be in one corner or the other.

Me? I'm neither. I'm not pro or anti.

I don't see any reason to fire Mangini at this point. He was able to turn it around at the end of

last year, and I still think this team will have to be reckoned with as this season unfolds. Unless he totally loses the team and they go into the tank, there is absolutely no reason to make a move until after the New Year.

On the other hand, if they did randomly fire him at, say, the Bye Week, I would just shrug and wish him well. To me, Mangini is a fairly run-of-the-mill, mediocre coach. He preaches the fundamentals and smart football and the right way and the process, but he seems to lack creativity and the ability to adjust quickly and the ability to inspire and motivate. I like the guy on a personal level, but I could take 'im or leave 'im as a Coach.

I obviously want him to do well, because I'm sick to death of the losing. But if he can't stop said losing, then I could care less if the Powers That Be order his positional decapitation.

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I've heard a lot of hullabaloo this week about the Quarterbacks and how awful they are and how the team can never win with QB's that bad and how it's the Front Office's fault that they burdened us with such obvious wastes of space.

A. The QB's are not terrible. You can win with them. Not consistently, not a Super Bowl, but you didn't expect that anyway, did you?

B. Who did you want the FO to get? McNabb? Well, they tried. They were shot down. So they went to plan B and brought in Wallace and Delhomme. Philly's price didn't drop until later, and the ship had sailed by then.

Vick? Oh, so YOU were the genius that saw this coming. Assuming he was available anyway.

Who else was out there?

They drafted a QB that they feel they can possibly develop into a starting QB. They brought in serviceable vets to mind the store until the position can be finally addressed, be it Colt McCoy or someone else.

You'd think that at least it would be acknowledged that the current QB's are better than what we had last year, but even that reality has slipped by some people. I even saw where one... person... was pining that we never should've gotten rid of DA because he's 2-1 in Arizona.

(As if their 2-1 record had anything to do with DA).

Please. If DA were still here, the Browns would somehow be 0-6 right now. The losses would be so bad they would count double; that's just how awful Derek Anderson is.

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I can't believe I'm about to say this, but here it goes:

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