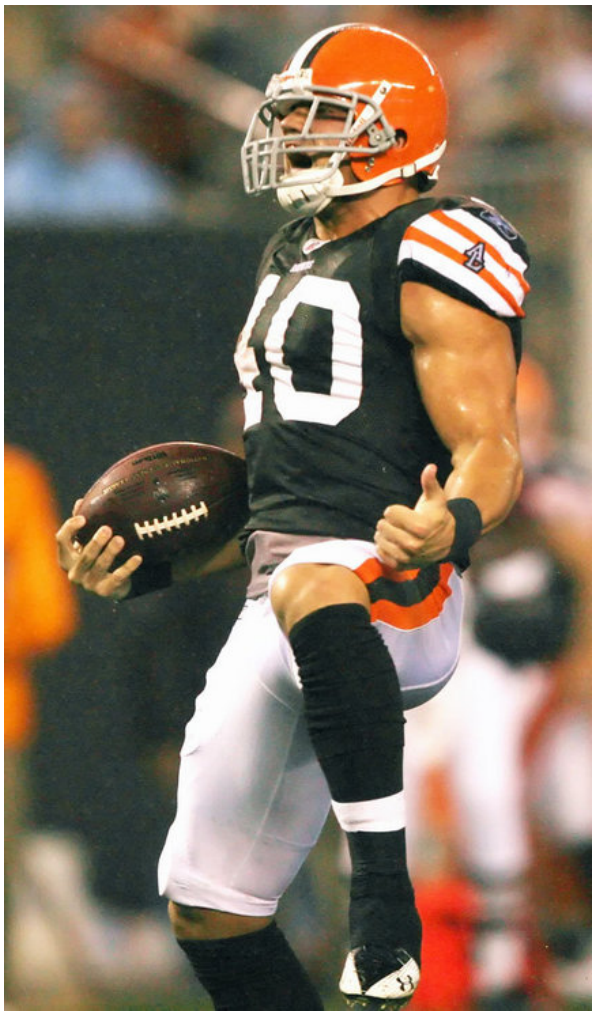

One of the truly great things about a desperate city is how it latches on to any good news. The Cleveland Browns won a game they weren't favored to win and all of the sudden the fans in this town, so needy to believe in just one of their sports teams, quickly forgets the three games that preceded it.

All this is quite fine, actually. This town needs good news. It needs a team to believe in. The Indians on Sunday closed out another 90+ loss season without much hope for marked improvement next year. The Cavaliers have their first preseason game this week with a new head coach, a new general manager and a team full of George Harrisons and Ringo Starrs. The Browns are their best hope.

The Browns' victory on Sunday was an outcome that wasn't so much a sum of its parts as a turn of fate that finally went their way. Carson Palmer shredded the defense all day with a steady diet of Terrell Owens and yet couldn't quite score enough touchdowns to pull out a victory. It's about time that happened to someone else.

The Browns couldn't much move the ball in fourth quarter and looked to be heading toward their

fourth straight game without a fourth quarter first down until their running attack more or less took over. It literally clinched a game that was seriously in doubt. If it all seemed unexpected it's only because the expected results in Cleveland usually have the fans crying in their coffee on Monday mornings.

The victory doesn't necessarily make a talent-deprived team more talented. The victory didn't come because the Browns finally eliminated mistakes. They still commit way too many penalties. The victory came because the Browns have begun to take on an identity that may finally get this fan base out of living in the mid 1980s.

Meet Peyton Hillis.

It's not really clear why the Denver Broncos seemed so willing to part with Hillis. All he does is run the ball and play the game with the same passion that Chris Spielman played linebacker for so many years in the NFL. There's no task too small to take on, no yard to unimportant to dig for. Hillis has the attitude that every coach wishes he could bottle.

It's not as if any of that is really new. Hillis had that same reputation in college and even with the Broncos. It's a trade Denver will come to regret if they don't already.

What makes Hillis such a great story is that he's not the most talented player in the game. That puts him in good company because it's been several generations since the Browns were the most talented team in the league. He's exactly the kind of player a town like this embraces and is the perfect complement, really, to someone like Josh Cribbs—overachievers in a town that's usually counted out.

Hillis was a 7th round pick out of Arkansas. Cribbs was an undrafted free agent. When you enter the league in either of those slots, no one gives you much of a chance to carve out a career.

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