With the 1980 season once again teetering on the brink of utter disaster, 30 years ago this week the Browns had to cram onto a plane and fly 2,400 miles to face an up-and-coming team that appeared to be developing faster than themselves.

Like the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Seattle Seahawks were born into the NFL as an expansion team in 1976. But unlike the Bucs, the Seahawks had made gradual progress in their first few seasons, posting a winning record in their third year, followed by another 9-7 mark in 1979 – including a surprising November victory in Cleveland that ultimately kept the Browns out of the playoffs. Now, following a 26-7 thumping of the powerful Houston Oilers in the Astrodome in Week Five, the ’80 Seahawks stood at 3-2 and were poised to shake up the AFC West Division.

With the suddenly flailing Browns limping into the Kingdome at 2-3 after donating a victory to Denver the previous Sunday, the table was set for the Seahawks to take one more step toward elite status.

True to form, on the game’s first possession, improving quarterback Jim Zorn swiftly guided Seattle down the field to the Cleveland 19. But Lyle Alzado rose up to haunt his former divisional rivals when he stripped the football from Seattle fullback Jim Jodat and the Browns recovered, dodging an early bullet. Yet still demonstrating the charitable nature that had defined their previous game, they handed the football right back when Mike Pruitt couldn’t handle a handoff from Brian Sipe and Seattle recovered. The Seahawks ended up missing a long field goal, but the day had already taken on a sour flavor for the Browns.

It began to change on the next possession as Sipe and Co. drove 66 yards in 11 plays and drew first blood when Mike Pruitt crashed into the end zone from two yards out. Seattle responded with a field goal and then got the ball back, but Alzado stepped up again with a third-down sack to halt a productive drive.

The Browns took over at their own 9. After Sipe completed passes to Pruitt, Dave Logan, and Ozzie Newsome to push them into Seattle territory, he scrambled away from pressure and launched a 39-yard scoring pass to Keith Wright. The ensuing extra point was blocked (Don Cockroft's third failed conversion in six games), but the Browns took their 13-3 lead into the half.

Once again, they had control of a game. Yet back in Cleveland, fans waited for the Seahawks to make their move and turn this into another dogfight. But midway through the third period, facing third-and-10 near midfield, Sipe hit Newsome for a 44-yard gain. A play later, Charles White sliced into the end zone to make it 20-3. The prospect of a dogfight looked slightly less likely.

Naturally, Seattle responded with a long drive into Cleveland territory before facing fourth-and-1 at the Browns' 20 with two minutes left in the third. Seattle coach Jack Patera opted against the safe field-goal attempt and went for it. The Browns' Robert L. Jackson stuffed Jodat for no gain and the Browns took over with a chance to turn the lights out early. And for the first time all season, they succeeded.

On the next drive, Mike Pruitt rushed five times for 38 yards, capped by a 22-yard scoring run over right guard that made it 27-3 two minutes into the fourth quarter. The Seahawks made one final attempt at a comeback, marching to the Cleveland 2 as Zorn tied an NFL record by completing 15 consecutive passes. But after back-to-back sacks – including the third of the day by the resurgent Alzado – Zorn's fourth-down toss fell incomplete, and the Browns took over.

Switching to power football, Pruitt and White carved through the Seattle defense as the Browns converted on four third downs – stretching the Browns' string to seven straight third-down conversions in the second half – and ran out the final eight minutes of the game. The final gun sounded and the Browns were back to .500 after a revitalizing 27-3 victory.

Better still was the word trickling into the Browns locker room about a pair of nearly miraculous occurrences during the day's early games. The 4-1 Steelers somehow lost by a point at home to the 1-4 Bengals, while the Oilers dropped to .500 with a second straight stunning loss, also by one point, in Kansas City to the 1-4 Chiefs. Put it all together and the Browns, dead in the water just hours before, were a tied for second place in the Central, a game out of first, and back in the playoff hunt.

"Hold everything," Russell Schneider wrote in Monday's *Plain Dealer*. "The Kardiac Kids are not dead. And there is a race once again for the Central Division championship of the American Conference."

Though it was a surprisingly "easy" triumph for the Browns in the Pacific Northwest, it would be the last non-dramatic finish the Browns would experience for a while. Over the next three months, all but one of their remaining 11 games would be decided in the final two minutes by a margin of less than seven points.

The Kardiac Kids were about to take center stage.