So here we are entering week seven of Year One in the Heckgren Era and I dare say that process progress is in the eye of the beholder. In all probability, dashed are the hopes of a .500 or better season unless you are the truly optimistic sort that foresees a repeat of last season's stunning four win close. I also dare say the perception of this season so far and how you are taking it all in as a Browns' fan lies squarely within your expectation level entering the 2010 season.

You can look at the season so far as say that we're 1 – 5 and that a few mistakes related to play calls and coaching detail are largely responsible. Or you can see that those few plays separate us from 3 – 3 (if not better) and that the points scored and points given up stand at 85 - 128 and that we've lost four games by a total of 22 points.

You can say with some objectivity that the point differential is further mitigated by the fact that we are starting our third team rookie quarterback, are woeful at the receiver positions, and the top two projected running backs are off the active roster. You can tell me that the NFL is all about wins and losses because they play on Sunday; period. Or you can see that the Browns are ranked 17th in scoring defense despite Shaun Rogers really not showing up, Robaire Smith playing hurt, and a secondary where two raw rookies get significant playing time next to a quickly declining veteran and two players who are probably off the roster come next season.

You could look at the offense's offensive point production and scapegoat a young offensive coordinator. Or you can accept that the receivers make you pine for the glory days of JuJuan Dawson and Darrin Chiavarini, and the starting quarterback was so washed up that the LA Rams' Joe Namath and Chargers' Johnny Unitas versions were hollerin' "Retire, please, you're embarrassing yourself". And despite these truths the Browns passing "attack" is ranked 20th in yards per game. Twelve teams, including Minnesota, Pittsburgh and the Sanchized NY Jets of

Braylon Edwards are looking up at that ranking.

So I ask you, Browns fan: *what were you expecting heading into 2010?*

The drumbeat of the myopic has started already. Bruce Drennan had some sports writer on “All Bets are Off” this week talking about “rumblings in the locker room” and how Coach Mangini’s job isn’t safe. Seriously? Really? What’s the fireable offense here resident geniuses? Not scheming Chris Gocong into Ray Lewis? Failing to make Eric Wright successful in coverage? Signing Jake Delhomme for like $ 7 million a year based on the “body of his work” when his corporal body had clearly failed him? Or maybe it is not transitioning Mo Mass and Brian Robiske into Cliff Branch and Fred Belitnikoff?

Eric Mangini is smelting copper into swords when the rest of the league is using honed steel. If you can not see that for what it is without my even presenting a case, I can not convince you. If you can not see that this team has purged the bad apples and has instilled a professional culture that readily displays toughness and dedication, I can’t make you. If you can’t appreciate what it takes to have this bunch in every single game, keep on hollerin’ for John Gruden. You see a petulant and awkward Augustus Gloop. I see a team reminiscent of young Marty Schottenheimer’s that is led by a coach with more football acumen.

The problem is the UFL-caliber ‘talent’ at too many positions.

You can tell me that due to the absolute disaster of the 2009 offseason that Mangini and George Kokinis orchestrated squandered precious resources and produced this bed that Mangini must now lie in. I agree Eric Mangini was a horrific general manager who set the team back two seasons at minimum. That’s “if” he was in fact the general manager. It’s hard to say that with any certainty because no one in the Cleveland media, neither mainstream nor blogosphere, with knowledge of the situation will spill what really happened last year in the organization. That is a travesty, by the way, but much like Rudolph’s cameo appearance in the Rankin and Bass “Santa Claus is Comin’ to Town”, but that’s another story for another day.

The salient point here is that Eric Mangini the GM was summarily crap-canned. Only Coach Mangini remains. Nothing else is relevant except that cranking up a run-out-on-a-rail campaign only means yet another system turnover, roster purge and starting from zero. And when this

organization, too often defined by the words “rudderless suck”, starts from zero, we’re talking zero Kelvin. Enough people. Enough.

So where is “The Process”? It is year two and we will be entering bye week after playing the defending champions, on the road, and with them smarting from coming off an unexpected loss. And, oh yes, they have Drew Brees and his gang squaring off against Eric Wright and Sheldon Brown. What do we have here after this one?

I see an entrenched organizational culture of professionalism. Play hard, compete, prepare. Keep your mouth shut through thick and thin. I see an offensive line that is mostly solid and in need of tinkering more than overhaul. I see the potential (and I refuse to Zeier / Couch us again, but the *potential)* of having a prospect at quarterback who could mature into a bona fide quality NFL starter. One game is not a way to judge a player, certainly not a quarterback. But if there was ever a situation where a player was set up to fail and acquitted himself into sweet mediocrity, it was Colt McCoy this past Sunday in Pittsburgh. He simply has to start the rest of the season, Delhomme needs to be moved away from the team dynamic and released as soon as he is healthy. Wallace and Ratliff should then settle into their defined NFL roles of having among the best jobs on the planet that aren’t held by Adam Levine .

As for the rest of the offense? We run the ball hard and play physical football. That has and will forever be the foundation of a winning team. “If” and this is a massive “if”, Colt McCoy can show promise for the rest of the season he may be a player worth investing prospect development time in as he goes through his inevitable ups and downs. If Andrew Luck wisely stays in school and Buffalo drafts Ryan Mallet as any idiot would, there is nothing with this offense that a top-shelf receiver and a productive veteran wide- out can’t solve. You get us a vertical threat and a chain mover and between Peyton Hillis hammering at about 15 carries an game and Montario Hardesty coming back, well, this is minimally an average offense tomorrow with the potential to be much more as they play together, improve, and add another season or two of talent.

I see a defense that is so tantalizingly close it drives you to drink. Well, maybe you all since I drink anyway. I am drop dead serious when I say that had we faced Charlie Batch or Dennis Dixon last Sunday we walk away with a 14 – 7 win, assuming Chansi Stuckey still can’t make a routine 9th grade play. Then it is 14 – 0 if he can field a punt like a high school freshman. This game was determined by Ben Roethlisberger making about five plays that only he can make.

Go ahead and re-watch the sequence from the Pittsburgh end zone. One half-second or less and Roth buries him. Another millisecond and there's a possible turnover at about midfield. You get this defense two more competent defensive backs, and most importantly, a big time playmaking front seven defender – our biggest need other than wide-receiver I believe – and keep adding line depth, and this could be a top five NFL defense as scheme and system continue to be refined and players actually start to play together.

Or, you could look at the surface level and decide to blow it all up and start from 1999, 2005, and 2008. Again.

The Process is proceeding sports fans. This team is getting better and the close losses are a blessing in disguise. We should walk away from this in a position to draft very high given the injuries sustained, the brutal schedule, and what should now be a developmental quarterback process.

Unless you really thought we were playoff bound and 2010 wasn't a continued rebounding season, or you see a certain utility in seven wins instead of say, three or four, in the football universe for Lord knows what reason, we have The Process right where we want it: A tough but smart team that has the right culture on and off the field, a general manager who has shown promise in his first draft with this organization, and the calm, wise leadership of a legitimate football man.

As challenging as this year is to sustain, and it is frustrating, next year promises to be worse. I expect a labor impasse and work stoppage. If we are lucky as fans we will get to see the return of Shane Falco and David Greyson while the millionaires make ludicrous statements continuing to embarrass themselves and expect sympathy for assuming none of the risk of production. It will be two more drafts and 2012 before we see this bunch and the additional talent come to fruition. We'll need one more developmental year to gel, and then come lucky '13, we should be ready to contend for a division or better. The timing of this completion of The Process couldn't come at a better time as it will arrive at a state of fruition just in time for the debut of the Las Vegas Cavaliers and the opening of the inaugural great pumpkin festival and fall soap box derby classic in Progressive Field.