There are as many ways to devalue wins as there are ways to make losses seem even worse. It all depends on what point you're trying to make. But when it comes to the Cleveland Browns' entirely probable win against the New Orleans Saints on Sunday night, there are points to be made but not at the expense of cheapening the most solid win since the last time this team beat a reigning Super Bowl champ, or even the time before that.

No win is going to be perfect, anyway. And in Cleveland, where wins are about as common as smooth roads in winter, fans would take every imperfect win the team would care to throw at them. Besides, what was so imperfect in the first place?

Football coaches often preach the fact that there are three phases to every game: offense, defense and special teams. You don't need to win all three phases to win the game but if you lose all three phases you will lose the game.

If you assess Sunday's game under that construct, the statistics would suggest that the Browns won because of defense and special teams. If that's the case, no apologies are needed anyway. Plenty of games are won with defense and special teams. Baltimore won a Super Bowl that way.

The defense on Sunday was spectacular, with much credit going to the semi-reckless grand wizard defensive coordinator Rob Ryan. With New Orleans head coach Sean Peyton likely giddy all week at the very thought of having Drew Brees spreading the ball all over the Browns' defensive secondary, it probably never occurred to him that Ryan was just crazy enough to throw the Saints a roundhouse that they never saw coming.

When the Browns' were prepping for the Pittsburgh Steelers last week, Steelers' quarterback Ben Roethlisberger had commented that the many looks of the Browns' defense were confusing. It sounded mostly like happy talk, the kind of non-controversial verbal cotton candy athletes say so that their quotes don't end up on the other team's bulletin boards.

But now we know it wasn't just talk. Brees had that wide-eyed look of bewilderment all game, never quite figuring out why all those players seemed to be standing around uncommitted to any particular position. It's like the soldier who leaves basic training for a war zone and then freezes because the enemy doesn't act quite like he practiced. Brees never found a rhythm the entire game, mainly because while he knew Ryan is blitz-happy, he never quite knew from where the pressure might be coming.

It also helped, too, that Ryan kept the safeties in significantly deeper drops than normal, taking a way one of Brees' greatest strengths, downfield passing. That seemed to confuse Brees almost as much. The Browns' defense wasn't exactly in prevent mode but they were playing to contain a deeper passing game in favor of allowing Brees to attack the middle of the field.

If you started Brees in your fantasy league, you're probably pretty happy with his statistics. But judging from the cut on the cheek that Brees was sporting in his post-game news conference and the look on his face, it was pretty clear that he never saw the bus that hit him.

As for the special teams, it was nice for once to see head coach Eric Mangini pull a little piece out of the college playbooks. Both Wisconsin and Michigan State used fake punts to their great advantage on Sunday. As for the lateral from Josh Cribbs to Eric Wright, that was straight from the Bill Belichick playbook, which was just fine as well. The Browns' return game this season has been mostly ineffective because teams are afraid to kick to Cribbs. Give everyone else in the league something to think about and it should open things up for Cribbs down the road.

As for the offense, it wasn't great certainly, but it didn't need to be. Colt McCoy's passing statistics looked like they were cribbed from Derek Anderson's page in profootball-reference.com But McCoy was effective nonetheless not because of any particular pass, though there were a few of them, but because it's pretty clear that he has a certain "it" factor that neither Anderson nor Brady Quinn had.

McCoy just acts like he belongs. He's like a 19-year old kid who strolls into the nightclub using his brother's fake ID. He pulls it off because he acts like there isn't a problem and doesn't get rattled at the first sign of trouble.

Likewise with a new quarterback. It's the hardest position in football because coaches make it out to be. As the center of the universe, if you don't look ready the team won't be ready. But show confidence, act like you've been there and the rest of the team will follow.

In McCoy's short time as a starter and given how he was thrust into the role before conventional wisdom said he should have been, McCoy has demonstrated great leadership skills and the response of the rest of the offense more than proves that point.

With Anderson and Quinn even the players seemed surprised when they'd actually get a first down. If you think that's an exaggeration go back and look at the tapes of game after game when neither quarterback could get the team in the end zone.

Most of the time a quarterback's reputation is earned on a particularly key pass at a particularly key moment in a game. But often overlooked is the leadership demonstrated in willing a team to sustain a run-oriented drive late in the game that buckles the knees and breaks the spirit of the opposing defense.

That's exactly what happened with the Browns' drive late in the game that put the team up 23-13. Most of it was on the back of Peyton Hillis, certainly, but McCoy kept his composure when someone else might have been soiling himself and that level of confidence tends to wear off on the others. Give McCoy credit, too, for helping secure the key first down on the pass Hillis threw to him. It kept the clock moving. (As an aside, as good as that pass was from Hillis to McCoy, it was also incredibly risky given the state of health of the Browns' quarterbacks. Still, give Mangini and offensive coordinator Brian Daboll some credit for having the courage to take that chance. And give credit generally to Daboll for managing the game in a way that takes advantage of McCoy's best attribute right now, his leadership, while minimizing his short comings, like reading defenses.)

There also doesn't seem to be any lingering sense that McCoy is merely a caretaker. The receivers, such as they are, run patterns like they believe McCoy can get them the ball. McCoy has even been able to pull off the inexplicable by finding Brian Robiskie, for goodness sakes. True, McCoy had very little choice otherwise, but at least it proved that if Robiskie can get open for a second, McCoy can get him the ball.

None of this means that McCoy is a better quarterback right now than either a healthy Seneca Wallace or Jake Delhomme, but it does mean that perhaps there isn't any reason to artificially inhibit his progress anymore either. Mangini and Daboll should continue to let out a bit more slack on the rope and resist the urge, post-bye week to yank him back on to the bench.

So, yes, the Browns' offense wasn't stellar, statistically. And yes, it's true, that more times than not, an offensive performance like that will get you more losses than wins. But a win doesn't hinge on the offense every week anyway. Besides, what's even more important right now is that the Browns finally enter a bye week and for once the talk isn't about another extreme makeover.