With the Kardiac Kids on a roll, the eyes of the nation were pointed toward Cleveland as October turned to November.

Following the Browns' thrilling one-point victory over Pittsburgh, seen by a national television audience, presidential candidates Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter squared off in a much-anticipated debate in downtown Cleveland, each trying to secure enough votes for victory just a week before Election Day.

Then, on the eve of the 1980 election, the Browns would host the Chicago Bears on *Monday Night Football*
, and a capacity crowd of 83,224 - the largest crowd for a Browns game in eight years and the biggest to attend an NFL game in 1980 - packed into Cleveland Stadium hoping to see the home team continue its winning streak. Those fans unlucky enough not to have scored tickets held up signs offering to trade their vote the next day for admission to the game.

With a “Brian Sipe for President” banner adorning one end zone, the red-hot quarterback from San Diego State led his team to a field goal on its first possession, but then was intercepted twice in Chicago territory in the first half, thwarting potential scoring drives.

Fortunately, the Browns defense hung tough. With backup linebacker Bill Cowher filling in for an injured Robert L. Jackson, Cleveland continually stuffed All-Pro Chicago tailback Walter Payton and the Bears didn’t pick up a first down until late in the second quarter. Payton, averaging better than 95 yards per game in 1980, would finish the night with just 30.

After Chicago missed a short field goal just before the two-minute warning, Sipe caught fire, driving the Browns 80 yards in just over a minute and extending the lead to 10-0 when he connected with a diving Reggie Rucker in the corner of the end zone. Having out-gained Chicago 241 yards to 62 and with 18 first downs to the Bears’ two in the first half, the Browns were once again poised to coast to an easy victory.

They extended the lead to 13-0 on the first possession of the second half, but just as the third quarter neared its conclusion, versatile Chicago quarterback Vince Evans scored on a seven-yard bootleg to cut the margin to six points going into the fourth quarter. The game was unfolding eerily similar to the Green Bay contest two weeks before - which had seen the Browns squander a double-digit lead in the second half and required a miracle reception by Dave Logan to secure victory in the final minute.

Ron Bolton intercepted Evans on the first play of the final period, then Mike Pruitt took over. He tallied five carries on the ensuing drive and pushed the margin back to a comfortable 20-7 when he crashed into the end zone from the 1 with seven minutes remaining. But naturally, it couldn't be that easy for the Kardiac Kids.

Aided by a pair of critical penalties that resulted in first downs, the Bears scurried into Cleveland territory and made it a game again when Evans hit Ohio State alum Brian Baschnagel for an 18-yard score in the back corner of the end zone with four and a half minutes to play. As if foreshadowing another wild finish, Bob Thomas' extra point dinged off the upright, then spiraled through the goalposts anyway to make it 20-14. The capacity crowd, energetic all night, began to squirm.

Their nervousness lasted two plays. On third-and-one at the Cleveland 44, Mike Pruitt took a pitchout, barreled through the line, broke a tackle, and was in the clear. He sailed down the field unimpeded for a 56-yard touchdown run that gave him a season-high 129 yards, broke the game open once again, and apparently clinched victory with 3:35 on the clock.

But of course, it couldn't be that easy.

With clocks on the East Coast ticking past midnight, the Bears scrambled 70 yards in 10 plays and made it 27-21 on another Evans scoring pass with 36 seconds showing. Better than 83,000 fans held their breath in anticipation of the onside kick, which spun crazily off the dewy Stadium

turf across midfield. Instead of flubbing it as they'd done in Tampa Bay in Week Four, giving the Buccaneers new life in the final minute, Judson Flint smothered the football at the Cleveland 47. Sipe, who, with 298 yards on the night, had become the Browns' all-time passing yardage leader, took a knee, and the Browns had triumphed for the fourth consecutive week.

Now 6-3 and tied with the Oilers for first in the AFC Central, the Browns would march into the month of November in better shape than they'd been in years. But any hopes of coasting to a landslide division title just as Ronald Reagan did in crushing Jimmy Carter at the polls the following day were unrealistic.

With trips to Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Houston coming up before the end of the month, nothing would come easy for the Kardiac Kids.