Almost exactly fifteen years to the day before Art Modell announced it would be a one-way trip, the Cleveland Browns headed for Baltimore.

It was there, in rain-soaked Memorial Stadium, that the Kardiac Kids would try to keep their momentum alive and extend their winning streak to five games - what would be their longest in four years. More importantly, the Browns had to keep winning just to remain tied with the equally cruising Houston Oilers atop the AFC Central.

Coming off a rousing win on Monday night and enduring foul weather on the road against a playoff contender, the Browns' 10th game of 1980 had "letdown" written all over it. Instead, over the course of the first 30 minutes, Cleveland looked as dominant as it had since its glory days of the 1950s.

The Colts made the ill-advised decision to come out in a man-to-man defense, and Brian Sipe chewed it up like a hungry Doberman. Starting with their first possession, the Browns tore through the Baltimore defense, tallying 112 total yards on their first 14 offensive plays and twice cracking the goal line - once on a Charles White sweep from five yards out, and again on a long touchdown pass from Sipe to Dave Logan. Poised to score again on their third possession, the Browns halted their own drive when Mike Pruitt fumbled, giving the Colts new life.

Baltimore quarterback Bert Jones responded by quickly directing his offense into the end zone, but kicker Steve Mike-Mayer missed the extra point - a mistake that would loom large before this gloomy afternoon came to a close.

The Browns picked up right where they'd left off moments later, this time marching 80 yards in 11 plays and extending the margin to 21-6 on another White scoring scamper. With the resurgent Cleveland defense continually frustrating Jones, the lead held up until halftime. For the second straight week, a Cleveland blowout appeared eminent.

The Browns' offense had looked unstoppable, rolling up nearly 300 yards in the first two periods as Sipe feasted on Baltimore's man coverage, completing 15 of his first 17 passes. At the intermission, the Colts wisely switched to more zone packages, and the second half would prove to be more difficult for the Browns' attack.

After Cleveland punted on its first two possessions, the Colts embarked on a long drive of their own and cut into the lead on a short touchdown run by rookie tailback Curtis Dickey. But the Browns responded with yet another prolonged march, and at the Baltimore 12, Sipe read a Colts blitz perfectly and looped an outlet pass to Greg Pruitt, who tight-roped the sideline and tiptoed into the end zone to push the margin to 28-13 two minutes into the fourth quarter. Following a quick three-and-out by the Colts on their ensuing possession, it appeared the Browns would finally get to enjoy a comfortable final period.

Instead, reserve tailback Cleo Miller fumbled after a 17-yard pickup and the Colts were granted a stay of execution. Following an exchange of punts, Baltimore managed to narrow the margin again with another touchdown, but with only 1:43 left, the Colts were running out of time, particularly after the Browns recovered the subsequent onside kick.

Yet as if purposely trying to keep the game entertaining, the Browns once again gift-wrapped an opportunity for the home team when Mike Pruitt fumbled on the second play of the series and Baltimore recovered at the Cleveland 40. Four plays later, Jones fired his third touchdown pass of the game to make it 28-27 with 19 seconds to play. Mike-Mayer's botched extra point in the first quarter was now all that separated the two teams. As a result, the Colts were forced to once again attempt an onside kick.

And once again, the Browns added some drama to the proceedings. Thom Darden stepped up to catch the floating football, then immediately dropped it and a mass of humanity piled up, scrapping for the ball. With Clevelanders holding their breath as they watched their television screens in disbelief back home, they could finally sigh with relief when Autry Beamon emerged

from the scrum with the football.

Once again, the Kardiac Kids had escaped by the hairs of their chinny-chin chins with their second one-point victory in three weeks.

“We can’t seem to do things the easy way,” Sam Rutigliano lamented afterward. “This team has to learn how to take the melodrama out of the fourth quarter or I won’t be coaching much longer.”

Though the offense had topped 400 total yards for the fourth consecutive week, including a season-high 211 on the ground, three critical fumbles had allowed the overmatched Colts to hang around until the very end. Conversely, the Browns’ defense appeared to finally be coming into its own, controlling the line of scrimmage for much of the game.

Now 7-3, the Browns remained tied with the Oilers atop the division. But extending their winning streak to six games would be a tall order. Looming in Week 11 was a trip to Three Rivers Stadium - where the Browns had never won before - to face the defending world champions.

The plot of this marvelous fairy tale was about to thicken.