In my view, the fact that Gene Hickerson is not in the Pro Football Hall of Fame is one of the biggest taints to that fine institution. The Browns organization hasn't retired his number yet either, and new center Ross Tucker was the latest player to be assigned a number no other Brown should wear. I couldn't agree more with The Rhino here.

Visit the Vinny & The Hornless Rhino weblog at
http://www.vinnyandthehornlessrhino.blogspot.com/

I did a double take when I saw the photo of center #4 that accompanied today's propaganda dispatch from the Browns' website. Seriously, why would they hand out Gene Hickerson's number to a faceless journeyman?

When the Browns do little things like this, I just shake my head. Don't get me wrong--I've got no beef with Ross Tucker, and like every fan, I hope he steps up in a big way. My problem is with the front office. They really just don't understand what the Browns and their history mean to fans, so they hand out Gene Hickerson's number to the stiff of the week, and trot out Jim Brown as a shill for the party line every time the shit hits the fan.

Still, this little injustice pales in comparison to the far greater one perpetrated by Hall of Fame voters against Gene Hickerson and some of the other great offensive linemen of the 1960s. They let the greatest linemen of the era, Jim Parker, into the Hall, but while Hickerson and the Packers' Jerry Kramer both made the all-decade team , neither of them has been deemed worthy of admission to Canton. They aren't alone. As this article from Sports Illustrated's Dr. Z bears out, there are at least six offensive linemen from that era who deserve serious consideration for a spot in the Hall.

There's not much the Browns can do to get Hickerson what he deserves from the Hall, but there's one thing they can do to show that they understand the magnitude of his contribution to the Cleveland Browns: retire the man's number. With all due respect to another great #66, Tackle Tony Jones , it's Hickerson's number, and nobody should wear it again.