With Thanksgiving quickly approaching and millions of American families making plans to visit relatives and acquaintances for the holiday, the Browns would host a pair of old friends four days before the turkeys would be carved.

Even after his team's tough loss in Pittsburgh, Art Modell was flying high. His Browns were 7-4 and very much in the playoff hunt. There was less to be thankful for along Ohio's southern border, as the 3-8 Bengals were once again limping through a miserable year – what promised to be their third consecutive double-digit-loss season.

But Bengals owner Paul Brown was hopeful that things would soon start to turn around for his team under its new field general, another blast from the Browns' past: Forrest Gregg.

Though it depended on how you interpreted the accounts of Gregg and Brown leaving

Cleveland, the common opinion was that Modell had fired them both. And not surprisingly, both had departed angry and embittered. Nothing would please the two former Cleveland coaches more than to sabotage their former boss's magical season.

With a light drizzle falling from a gray sky at kickoff, the Browns tried to set the tone by taking the opening possession and marching inside the Bengal 30. But Don Cockroft's season-long struggles continued when he missed a 40-yard field goal wide right – his fourth miss in five quarters.

And following a short Cleveland punt on its second possession, the Bengals jumped to a 7-0 lead in the final minute of the first quarter. With the Browns looking a bit drained after their exhausting game in Pittsburgh the week before, the capacity crowd at Municipal Stadium settled in for what appeared would be a November cat fight on the lake.

The Browns rebounded in the second quarter and landed a trio of blows. First, Brian Sipe hit Reggie Rucker for the game-tying touchdown 30 seconds into the period, then Curtis Weathers blocked a short Cincinnati field-goal attempt.

After a Clay Matthews sack of Ken Anderson spoiled a potential scoring drive, the Browns offense got rolling, marching 84 yards on 11 quick plays in the final two minutes of the half. They surged ahead when Sipe hit Calvin Hill from five yards out and took a 14-7 margin to the locker room.

After five straight weeks of watching their team's fate be determined in the final minute of the game, Browns fans braced themselves for another wild second half. Instead, perhaps in the spirit of the upcoming holiday that week, the Browns finally gave them a day off.

They went for the jugular in the third quarter with two more Sipe scoring passes, giving him four on the day to go along with 310 passing yards. The fourth touchdown was a 55-yard bomb to sparingly used wideout Ricky Feacher that made it 28-7 late in the quarter after the Bengals missed another short field-goal attempt.

When a desperate fourth-down pass by Cincinnati early in the fourth quarter failed, the Browns coasted home. Clay Matthews added the final highlight when he intercepted Anderson in Cleveland territory, then tossed the football to Oliver Davis for an additional 47 yards on the return, setting up a Cockroft field goal to make the final a very un-Kardiac Kids-like 31-7.

The primary excitement for Browns players and fans alike in the final minutes came via the Stadium scoreboard, which relayed the news of a stunning overtime victory by the 2-9 New York Jets over the 8-3 Houston Oilers at Shea Stadium. Plus, with the Steelers falling in Buffalo, the now-8-4 Browns pulled into a tie atop the division with the Oilers, whom they would visit Thanksgiving weekend for an old-fashioned Texas shootout.

And while the week off from sweating bullets down to the final gun may have been refreshing, it was an aberration: each of the Browns' four remaining games would be decided in true Kardiac Kids fashion.

The climactic finish would start in the Houston Astrodome seven days later.