Nothing has been more frustrating to Browns fans over the last eight years than the teams offensive line woes. The blocking problems however, says Jesse Lamovsky, date even farther back than that. It's been close to twenty years since the team sported an above average line, and he's sick and tired of it. In this fantastic piece, Jesse takes a closer look at what has contributed to the Browns woes on the offensive line, and how it has badly hurt this franchise.

The one positive thing you can say about the ongoing disaster that is Cleveland's center position is this: the problem is at least isolated.

The shock of it, though; the reason why even Phil Savage is crying "woe is me" and heading for the hills these days, is that everyone, from Phil & Romeo down to you & I, thought the situation upfront was finally starting to see dawn. LeCharles Bentley was going to anchor a revamped and re-powered line, and we could finally worry about something else for a change.

… and that was before LCB's season ended in a scream of negation on the first play of 11-on-11 drills. And before Bob Hallen got the willies at the thought of starting a half-hour from his hometown and fled like a war criminal to California. And before Alonzo Ephraim- who wasn't with the team going into training camp- got docked four weeks for a substance violation committed before he even became a Brown. Now the starting center is Ross Tucker, who I'm unashamed to say I'd never heard of before he joined the Browns a couple of weeks ago.

The Meat Puppets might have told us that some things never change. We are still talking about the offensive line in Cleveland. And if there's been one real constant in the last two decades with the Browns, it's that the offensive line will be injury-riddled, manned by nobodies, and unable to 'get a good push', series after series, game after game, year after year… and decade after decade.

The Browns haven't had an even above-average line since the Marty Schottenheimer years. It was under Marty that the line fell apart for the first time, in 1988, the year the Browns went through four different starting quarterbacks. It's been pretty much all sacks, stuffs, and stonewalls ever since. Even the best team since the Schottenheimer years, the 11-5 team of 1994, had a line that was just decent, at best. The line is the reason the Browns haven't finished

better than 18th in the league in total offense since 1987. It's the reason the Browns went 16 straight seasons without a 1,000-yard rusher. And it's the reason Bernie Kosar's potentially great career was aborted by injuries; why his skills diminished years before they should have.

The offensive line has been lousy under Schottenheimer, Carson, Shofner, Belichick, Palmer, Davis, Robiskie, and now Romeo Crennel. You'd think it was an issue in Berea. But every year at draft time, even as Browns fans hope, plead and beg for early-round line help, management apparently doesn't think it's all that much of a priority:

2003- Jeff Faine, C, 1st round, 21st pick

2002- Melvin Fowler, C, 3rd round, 76th pick

1993- Steve Everitt, C, 1st round, 14th pick

1991- Ed King, G, 2nd round, 29th pick

1987- Gregg Rakoczy, C, 2nd round, 32nd pick

See this? It's the sum total of offensive linemen taken in any of the first three rounds of the last 20 Drafts. Note the heavy emphasis on a.) centers, and b.) marginal players. None of the selections had a long-term impact. Rakoczy fell flat on his face after replacing Mike Babb in 1988. King started as a rookie, played fairly well, then dropped out of sight shortly thereafter. Everitt, the best of the group, went with the team to Baltimore. Fowler and Faine are both ex-Browns. As for tackles, the last one of those the Browns picked anywhere in the first three rounds was the late Sam Clapham, selected in the 2nd round in 1979, who never played a down in Cleveland.

Free agency hasn't served the Browns much better. Prior to LCB this winter, the team's biggest free-agent offensive line signing since 1999 was Orlando Brown, and he played less than one season in Cleveland before being half-blinded by the pellet in a penalty flag and forced to quit. In the meantime, the line has been manned by the likes of Paul Zukauskas, Kelvin Garmon, and Steve Zahursky, a "tackle" who was so overmatched by Michael Strahan in a 2000 game that Strahan was moved to verbally express sympathy for him afterward.

For years, this Browns fan has watched Kansas City in slack-jawed awe, like a Soviet kid listening to Western rock in 1977, as the Chiefs' road-graders blasted defenses off the ball. I've gazed transfixed at Peyton Manning with all day to throw, coolly going through his progressions, not harried into the standard Browns play of dinking the ball short of the marker. It's almost alien. Is that how it's supposed to be done? Yep. Believe it or not, that's how it's supposed to be done. But unless you're over the age of thirty, you've never seen it done like that in Cleveland.

The line is the wellspring of the success for the offense, and the catalyst for its failure. It allows everything, and disallows everything. If you have a good line, you have a good offense (see the 1990 Giants, who had mediocre receivers, an ancient Ottis Anderson, a backup quarterback, and still won the Super Bowl, because of their great line play). If you have a poor line, guess

what? You have a poor offense- slipshod, sloppy, and damn near unwatchable. That's what we've had in Cleveland for two decades. We thought this year might just be different. As it turns out, it's looking like another season of the same old, same old.

And that sucks.