Week 12 – Cleveland vs Carolina

What a victory!

There's nothing more enjoyable than watching two great teams locked in an epic struggle that puts the term "Clash of the Titans" to shame, such as what we witnessed at Cleveland Browns Stadium on Sunday. These magnificent franchises stared each other down like unfettered Gods and refused to blink. Back and forth the momentum swung - the tension thicker than the earth's crust.

The crowd was whipped into a playoff intensity for this Battle Royale. The din was so incredible that I'm surprised the windows didn't blow out of the nearby Rock n Roll Hall of Fame. From start to finish, no one sat down as this war took place on the field. Cloud Nine was 40 stories down for the joyous throng.

Jake Delhome proved once again why he was in such high demand during the offseason, brushing off his bout with injury and playing what can only be described as a near-perfect game. His veteran savvy was in technicolor display, slinging the ball around the field with a precision that would make Mercedes Benz jealous.

And the coaching match-up was the most incomprehensible battle of minds since Bobby Fischer defeated Boris Spassky. "Genius" is really too tame a term to describe it accurately. Maybe I'll understand it at some point in my lifetime after the inevitable novels and films attempt to capture the glory, but I somehow doubt it.

Yes, the bards will sing of this magnificent contest from now until the End of Days. And you and I were fortunate enough to witness it.

Our great-grandchildren will be born green with envy.

I can't wait to watch it again.

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And yet there's no denying even a BS win like that feels better than a loss.

This must be what Steelers fans feel like.

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Game Recap

I was struck Monday morning with what can only be the Bubonic Plague (or the flu - it's a toss-up), so this is late in delivery. Thus, I'll be brief.

The Browns slept through Carolina's first drive, allowing the lowly Panthers to be the only team to score a TD on them on the game's initial drive this season. But the Browns quickly turned it around under the accurate and WR-laden passing of Jake Delhomme and the power running of Peyton Hillis, who racked up the first 3 TD's on his runs. So, with about 9 minutes left in the 1st Half: *Browns 21, Panthers 7.*

That's where the team - a team that has no sense of the killer instinct when it comes to "lesser" teams - relaxed. They think they're just so frickin' good that they can get these big leads and coast to victory like they're Ohio State playing the Little Sisters of the Poor (regards to Dr. Gordon "Dooshnozzle" Gee). So the Panthers got a couple stops and had a couple of drives that resulted in FG's, and the score at Halftime was closer than it really needed to be. *Browns 21, Panthers 13.*

Delhomme came out of the Half on fire - if "on fire" describes someone rushing to throw the other team the ball. Two passes, two picks - the second a Pick 6 on a play that was so bad that I could see the Pick 6 happening from the moment he looked that direction. "No..." I muttered before he threw. "Don't do it... Don't you DO IT!" Too late. He didn't hear me. *Browns 21, Panthers 20.*

The rest of the contest could best be described a dog game between two dog teams fighting for Draft position. The Browns went on a long drive at the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th, but got stoned on 4th and 1 when they called a predictable run up the middle that also got blown up. So much for out-physical-ing teams.

The Panthers then went on a FG drive and took the lead, much to the chagrin of the 20,000 fans that still cared to watch (slight exaggeration). The heroic figure of Delhomme then led the Browns on an epic 46 yard drive for a FG to put them up 1 with 2:42 left. *Browns 24, Panthers 23.*

After Joe Haden picked off a mostly inept Jimmy Clausen and inadvisably sat down (I suppose he didn't think about the fact that the Panthers still had all 3 Time Outs), the Browns went 3 and Out and punted, pinning Carolina at their own 5 with 59 seconds and no Time Outs left.

Naturally, the Browns gave up big plays.

A screen turned into 32 yards (where have I seen a late-game screen pick up big yardage against the Browns before?), and the Clausen's only nice pass of the day was caught at the CLE 24 with 4 seconds left. The play was reviewed to see if he caught it, and, while he did catch it, replays showed that he was touched down in bounds, which would've kept the clock running and ended the game.

But Browns fans are used to getting screwed. You'd think they grew up in prison.

There is some justice in the world, I guess, as the Carolina Kicker Kasay doinked the left upright as time expired, and the Browns somehow managed to walk off the field a winner, heads held high. Or... slightly upright.

Final: Browns 24, Panthers 23.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Cleveland – 31:44, Carolina – 28:16

Total Yards: Cleveland – 379, Carolina - 326

First Downs: Cleveland - 26, Carolina – 16

What this tells me is that although the Browns were clearly superior in every area, they still gave up 151 yards rushing to a team with a backup RB and no discernable passing game, not to

mention a last second drive to a crapstick rookie QB.

Oh, and that thing about not knowing how to close again.

Some days I wonder if this team could close with a hooker they'd already paid.

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Gameballs

Peyton Hillis – This seems to be his Domain. Too bad the Coaches are gonna get him killed.

Joe Haden - Some nice hits, and another pick. The Rook is looking solid.

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Honorable Mention

Reggie Hodges – Great play on a high snap during a FG kick, and a clutch punt inside the 5 at the end.

Carolina Penalties – Really gave the Browns a bunch of breaks.

Brian Robiskie – 7 catches is by far his most productive day as a Pro, but most of those were

slants

Matt Roth – Nice sack.

Abe Elam – I actually noticed him on the field, again! Maybe he'll see that contract after all. Wouldn't that be nice, not having to replace him too?

Shaun Rogers – Gotta admit, effective and disruptive again. If only we could find an everlasting solution to the motivation problem...

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Wall of Shame

Tackling - They are getting worse and worse. Everyone seems to have caught onto the "strip-em" fad, which is nice when it works (which is rarely), but devastating when it fails (which is frequently).

Jake Delhomme - Way to pass the Panthers back into the game, just like the old days.

Torry Holt & Chris Rose - It was Torry's first game as an announcer, so I guess we can excuse his stopping mid-sentence every time he spoke (I especially liked when he started "
When Peyton Hillis was a boy
..." and that was it), but Rose was particularly hellish too. I assume that the CAR-CLE game got the bottom of the barrel announcers... Lord, I hope the Browns get better soon.

Offensive Line - Can't get your ass kicked on 4th and 1 like that.

Run Defense - Scott Fujita was apparently much more important than we thought.

Play Calling - THROW. THE. BALL. DOWN. THE. FIELD. Just a couple times. It may not work. It may not have much of a chance. But you've gotta at least make them think there's a SHRED of an IOTA of a POSSIBILITY that you might take it deep. Cripes.

Phil Dawson - Yeah,

Jake Delhomme started his second game of the year, and looked pretty much the same as his first start. Which is: Good at first, then make a terrible throw to get the opposition right back in the game, followed by hanging on for dear life and hoping the other team misses a FG at the end.

Uh... how soon is Colt coming back?

And... what's wrong with Seneca?

Truth is, either one of those guys is markedly superior to Delhomme at this juncture.

OK, fine, I get that you wanted the guy to get the start/win against his former team. That's nice. It also goes a long way in the locker room - guys think you have their backs. But not only does Delhomme make tons of highly questionable decisions with the ball, he is also by far the least mobile of the 3. Really, at this point, I don't know what the guy brings to the table. The fact that he's better than either Brady Quinn or Derek Anderson? Well, duh, but that was his selling point in Training Camp. Now that you have 2 - count 'em, 2! - superior options at QB, I really don't know how you justify starting this guy any more.

And I really question the judgment of a Coach that opts to start him.

A lot.

But, word has it that we'll be seeing Jake lining up behind Alex Mack again this weekend. Colt's still hurt and Seneca is... well, screwed, I guess.

And so are we. So is everyone. Except those Miami Corners.

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2010 5th Round pick Larry Asante got nabbed off the Browns' Practice Squad this week by the Tampa Bay Bucs. Chalk that up as another draft pick with potential wasted.

This has become a bit of a problem for the Browns as of late, and perhaps they should reconsider the concept that the Practice Squad is just a safety stash for developmental types. Last year, the Browns lost 6th Rd pick Don Carey when they waived him, thinking to sign him to the PS, only to have the Jaguars steal him away (he now starts for them). They tried the same thing this year with 6th Rd pick Clifton Geathers, so Miami stole him.

Now, make it 3-for-3 with Florida teams stealing late-round picks from Cleveland.

The thing that makes me shake my head a bit is that it's not like the Browns don't need DB's. They're signing guys off the street that are getting PT, but a guy like Asante - well, either he wasn't as good as advertised (which is quite possible), or the Front Office got robbed again.

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Let's see what the box score says... hmmmm... Mike Bell... 2 rushes, 14 yards. Huh, that's like... carry the 2... 7 yards a carry.

I wonder if there would be any merit to giving your starting RB more of a breather and getting his backup a few more reps? Gee, there's a thought.

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After dropping the easiest game-winning TD pass in NFL history in last week's Buffalo-Pittsburgh game - a pass that not even Braylon Edwards could drop - Bills' WR Steve Johnson used Twitter to yell at God . Which in itself is hilarious - Tweeting God. If God exists - which I doubt - then you probably could contact him/her without the use of Social Networking tools.

One thing you have to realize, Stevie, is that if God exists - which I doubt - he's a Steelers fan. There is no other way for the inexplicable luck that franchise receives on a weekly and yearly basis. If you need further proof, just watch the Pittsburgh/Seattle Super Bowl again. You think an experienced Ref would penalize Matt Hasselbeck for a chop block when trying to make a tackle if not under the influence of a higher power? Pop Warner Refs don't make that call.

Yep, if God exists - which I doubt - then he's sitting up there next to his double-wide in the sky, basking in the tub he's got on his front lawn (which he refers to as his "hot tub"), picking at his tooth with an old dipstick and twirling a dirty yellow rag in the air while he hoots and hollers for the Stillers.

People ask me all the time about my non-belief. I *start* with the fates of the Browns and the Steelers in my lifetime.

Not believing is much more comforting than the concept that someone is doing this on purpose.

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My my, Derek ... I guess maybe Browns fans aren't the only mean ones in the universe.

Did you ever wonder if maybe the problem was you?

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The one pervading topic of interest in NEO this week seems to center around the return of this basketball player that used to live in the area and then left in melodramatic fashion. His team comes back to Ohio to play our team, and many feel the need to get their frustration out.

For me, personally, to even watch the game would be the height of frustration. The Ohio team is playing very poorly right now, and the talent level is low. Their record isn't much different than the Florida team, but I have a feeling that this contest won't go well, and the whole ugly affair will come off as some national vindication for the miscreant in question.

And someone will say "Get over it", which is complete hypocrisy coming from anyone who is a fan of anything, because unhealthy obsession is the nature of a "fanatic". Each fan base gets to choose what they want to obsess about. Other fan bases don't get a vote.

Not to mention the likelihood of some person (or persons) hurling objects at the player or onto the court, causing a ruckus and probably some further stereotyping by the tools that don't live here. And that's if the fans are gentle.

No, I think the opportunity for me to just go ballistic on the TV - I'm talking about literally break it

- is just too prescient for me to enjoy this occasion. Looks like re-runs of *That 70's Show* for me.

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Next Up

Miami Dolphins (6-5).

There's a song I like to play for my girlfriend each week before the Dolphins play (she's a Fins fan, you see). It goes a little something like this: *Chad Henne is a joke! A [muffle-flocking] joke!*

And so on.

I bring this up because Chad Henne IS a joke. He was benched earlier this season and has his job back due to injury. He'll never be anything but mediocre in this league, and is to be feared like a hangnail.

Unfortunately, the Browns can make the Jimmy Clausen's of the world look competent, so just imagine what they can do for a joke like Chad Henne.

Plus, the Fins have a D good enough that they will press the line, take away the run, blitz the QB, and dare the Browns to beat 'em deep. Which the Browns won't even try. This will result in a minimum of 3 Delhomme turnovers, and probably a very unpleasant contest to behold.

Miami 26, Browns 9.

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Thing That I Dislike More Than Aaron Goldhammer

Scrappy Doo

Unless you're part of the generation that helped colonize the West, you know who Scooby Doo is. Scooby Doo and his Stoner friends were the Kings of Cartoon through much of my childhood, grabbling with creepy creatures whilst sating the munchies, but the Powers That Be couldn't leave well enough alone.

After an unfortunate season that had Scooby & Gang meeting up with random celebrities each week (both real and imaginary, from the Globetrotters to the Adams Family), they decided to go off the deep end and introduce a sidekick nephew.

Thus was born the monstrosity that was Scrappy Doo.

We no longer were able to enjoy Scooby and Shaggy getting scared senseless by some mummy or headless ghost... oh no, instead of that, we had this stupid little Scrappy character acting all brave and saying "*Let me at 'im*" and - even worse (far worse) - "*Puppy power!*"

I mean, what kind of dipshit walks up to a 10 foot lizard and says "*You don't scare me!*" If there were justice in this world, that 10 foot lizard would've been real and eaten that little runt.

It took about 2 episodes for me to determine that Scrappy's bravery came from the fact that he was, indeed, Satan. Satan has nothing to worry about from mummies and headless ghosts. He gave them their evil powers in the first place.

And what fun is it to watch a show starring Satan wrapped in the guise of frickin' annoying puppy? Like waxing your testicles with duct tape.

Naturally, Scrappy was the end of the Scooby Doo show as we know it. Sure, it sputtered on a few more years after that, taking even further bizarre plot paths (like keeping Scrappy and getting rid of Daphne, whose hotness I appreciated even in pre-pubescence), but no show can survive a nuclear bomb of the Scrappy-degree.

Attention Hollywood: Please, pay attention. There is no need to inject these cutesy suckwad characters into an already-established formula. Just ask JarJar Binks.