If the question is, how did the Browns do in the draft, then the answer is simple: they drafted for the right positions. Of course on a team with the abiding level of need that the Browns seem to have each year, they could have gone in a completely different direction with each pick and the answer would still be the same.

Beyond just that statement of fact, there's almost no point in assessing the draft in terms of the quality of players because there is absolutely no way for anyone to offer up any sort of meaningful judgment on a group of college kids who played at different levels and haven't yet gone to to toe with one actual NFL player.

But of course that won't stop a few of the paid draftniks out there from offering curb side opinions and grades. My advice: give them all the attention that you did Tony Grossi's 10 or 12 different mock drafts.

The transition from college to professional football is a leap across a very wide canyon. It takes a special kind of player, a special kind of person to make that jump. It isn't always about talent. Desire, persistence and attitude are most often the difference makers. While projections can be made, the first test come in training camp. From there each exam is tougher than the previous one. At this stage there's just no real way of knowing who will fall and who will stand tall and to write authoritatively as if you do rings falsely.

Besides, most people who tend to offer immediate assessments of a team's draft do so by looking at the first two rounds and then the positions the players in the later rounds played in college. That's because outside of people who do this for a living, like football general managers, no one much knows anything about a fourth round player.

But it's just these later rounds and the players that populate them that make up the heart of any team's draft. Add to that group the 10 or so undrafted free agents that teams sign afterward and it's from that entire group where teams really build their depth and their special teams.

The problem right now is that with the NFL back in lockout mode, teams can't sign any undrafted free agents. That means the Browns' latest foray into mass player acquisition isn't yet quite complete. And yet if the Browns are truly going to have real success in this or any other draft, they simply have to do a better job then previous regimes did in every aspect of the draft, not just the first or second rounds.

While grading the draft is an exercise in thumb sucking, that doesn't mean there aren't other points to consider.

One thing that can fairly be pondered is simply that the Browns' first three picks all have character-related red flags to overcome. It's never surprising when teams draft these kind of high risk/high reward players. It's a little surprising when a team's first three picks fall into that category. Generally speaking character counts, whether it's hiring a new accountant or signing a new player on a professional sports team.

A player flagged as having the ubiquitous "character issues" is like the cheap stock of a start-up company with a killer new idea just looking for those one or two angel investors. There's a chance he could be the next Facebook but there's probably a much better chance that he'll be one of the hundreds of start-ups that never quite get the financing they need to really build their business.

It's always a great story though when a team hits on one of these character question marks. It becomes a heartwarming story of redemption, the chance taken being rewarded 10-fold because the player overcame the odds and his background to be even more productive than you ever imagined.

There are plenty of those stories sprinkled throughout professional sports, enough so in fact that it's no longer crazy to take the chance. Yet teams that take too many end up getting burned in

the end. The story of the Cincinnati Bengals for the last 20 years is of a frugal franchise that kept taking fliers on players who known character issues because those players come more cheaply early on. Yet the Bengals having lived by the sword have died by it as well. They've had two winning seasons in those same 20 years but their off-the-field troubles have been 10-fold that amount.

None of that is to even suggest that the Browns are headed in that direction just because their first three picks have had their past problems. Indeed one of the few positives about the Browns' current roster is that it features a number of high-character players already. If you're general manager Tom Heckert, that has to weigh heavily into the thinking when you draft or sign someone who is a little more questionable.

The New England Patriots under Bill Belichick have had a history of populating its roster with high-character players who helped rehabilitate the more questionable players on its roster. Time and again its worked to the Patriots' advantage.

Contrast that with the Oakland Raiders. Al Davis seems to go out of his way every year to find as many questionable players as he can as some sort of tribute to a fading legacy of the Raiders being the outcasts, the badasses. That has tended to feed the worst instincts in its more questionable players and as a result the Raiders have struggled for years almost as much as the Bengals.

Given the composition of the Browns' roster, Heckert is clearly taking the Browns down the Patriots road at the moment. His plan may blow up in his fact but at least he has a plan and after seeing that it can work, there's no reason for anyone to panic about what the Browns did.

It's kind of self-serving to try and rationalize or minimize the trouble that led to Phil Taylor, Jabaal Sheard, and Greg Little getting tagged with issues as way of justifying drafting them. What is a little less self-serving though is to think that the rest of the roster can help them find the right path. So for now it makes sense to give Heckert a pass on this aspect of his draft for now.

The other more notable aspect of the Browns' draft is how it really is the story of Heckert's growing stature in the organization.

A year ago, Mike Holmgren seemed to have the loudest voice in the Browns' draft room. He was the looming father figure that hovered over the proceedings to occasionally make sure that the kids weren't doing something stupid. When Holmgren wanted Colt McCoy in the third round, he got Colt McCoy in the third round, even if Heckert had other ideas.

This year, according to all reports, Holmgren was far more in the background, leaving Heckert and his new head coach (key words, "his new head coach") to fill out the roster together. It's what a good supervisor does, trust the people he's put in charge to make the right decisions.

Probably the best evidence of Holmgren's decreased presence on day-to-day matters is that there is no new quarterback on the Browns' roster. A hallmark of any Holmgren draft is the taking of a quarterback in the later rounds. In fact earlier in the week Holmgren even said he expected that to happen again.

Maybe it's the way the draft broke that the opportunity to draft a quarterback didn't present itself that makes it seem as though Holmgren's role was reduced. But the Browns had a chance to break the draft how they wanted and it was Heckert's deliberate moving around the draft that made it break for the team the way it did. If Holmgren wanted a quarterback, for example, Ricky Stanzi could have been had. Heckert didn't want to go in that direction and ultimately Holmgren allowed his voice to carry the day. Holmgren left Heckert to his own vision and with that Heckert addressed the holes on this team that he thought were far more of a concern than quarterback.

The only questions any of these really raises are exactly what will Holmgren's role will be going forward and how long will he be satisfied with it. After taking himself out of the running to coach again and then allowing his general manager (key words, "his general manager") to fully take the reins in his second year, Holmgren has finally grown into the broader role of team president.

Maybe this was always the design—mentor a young general manager until he can fly on his own and then move on to the next challenge somewhere else. If that ends up being the case, then at least he will have left the Browns in better shape than they were when he got here.

Those are issues for another day, of course, but they are issues nonetheless. More pressin is for the NFL's labor situation to get some clarity so that the promise of the draft and the other signings to come and the overall direction of the franchise can actually be assessed and realized. That's when the real fun begins.