The Hornless Rhino feels the Browns will play MUCH better this week, and I totally agree with him. Will it be enough though? Against a Bengal team loaded with offensive weapons ... and sure to be revved up for their home opener. In his game preview, the Rhino says stop Rudi Johnson and establishing the run will be the keys. And that the Browns will be hard pressed to walk outta the Queen City with a W.

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

I've never understood the allure of Cincinnati chili. I've eaten at Skyline and I think the stuff tastes like the spaghetti sauce they served in your grade school cafeteria. On the other hand, I can definitely recommend the ribs at The Montgomery Inn. I just wish I could recommend this weekend's football game to Browns fans, but I can't.

The Cincinnati Bengals are living proof that if you have enough monkeys banging randomly on typewriters, they will eventually type the works of Shakespeare. After more than a decade of being the worst team in football (and having one of the first five picks in the draft almost every year), the Bengals woke up one morning and found--through no fault of their own--that they had a number of decent players and, finally, a coach who wasn't a complete moron. The next thing you know, they're in the playoffs (although things went downhill fast once they got there).

It's hard to imagine the Browns playing as poorly as they did last weekend, and I don't think they will. People always say that the biggest improvement in a football team occurs between the first and second game of the regular season, and I expect that will hold true for the Browns. I just don't think it will be enough to compensate for the Bengals' significant overall talent advantage.

There are still problems with the offensive line (as this game preview from The Orange and Brown Report suggests, one of them may be Joe Andruzzi), but I think another week of practicing with Fraley at center will help smooth out some of the kinks that made the running game so ineffective last week, and should also result in some improvement in pass protection. I also expect to see the Browns trying to use Frye's mobility to counteract some of the line's shortcomings by rolling him out or otherwise moving him around in the pocket.

By the way, the Browns damn well better improve their pass protection. The Bengals sacked Trent Green and Damon Huard seven times last week. What's more, Robert Geathers knocked Trent Green out of the game with a controversial hit late in the third quarter. The Green hit should make everybody uneasy, because Charlie Frye appears to have some sort of martyr complex when it comes to protecting himself.

Of course, the biggest way to help out Frye will be to run the ball effectively. That's something they showed no signs of being able to do last week. On paper, the Bengals look like a team that you can run against. Last week, the Chiefs averaged 4.5 yards per carry against the Bengals, but that's a little deceptive. Larry Johnson got only 68 yards on 17 carries, and most of the other rushing offense was represented by Trent Green and Damon Huard running for their lives. Still, Reuben Droughns doesn't suck, and even a modest improvement by the line--along with less brain dead play calling--ought to give them a chance to at least establish some kind of rushing offense. At least I hope so.

Defensively, the Browns will have their hands full with the Bengals' receivers, but with Rudi Johnson in the backfield, they shouldn't even bother making the trip to Cincinnati if they don't dramatically improve their run defense. Johnson loves playing against the Browns, and if I averaged 165 yards in each of the past three games against them, I think that I would too. Romeo Crennel's got the right idea about what needs to be done defensively, but the question is whether the Browns can execute on his prescription.

I'm afraid that the Browns just don't have the talent to get it done this weekend, but I think they'll show more offense and the game will be closer than many people expect. Bengals 28, Browns 20.