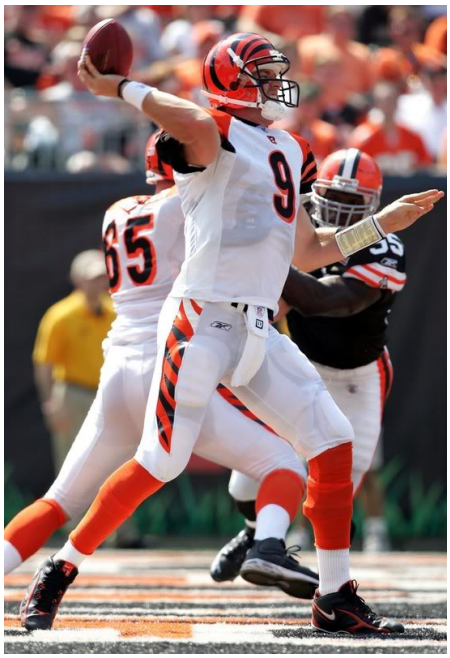
Wouldn't it be nice to wake up on Sunday mornings, genuinely excited for the Browns game, and supremely confident that they would win? I remember those days. So does Erik Cassano, who was just disgusted with the Browns performance in The Nati this past Sunday. Cassano's regular "Morning After" piece reads more like a report from a crime scene this week than it does a recap of a NFL game. Someone pass the scotch.



Bengals 34, Browns 17

Record: 0-2
Divisional record: 0-1

Here is the true essence of the Cleveland Browns, pretty much since they returned to the league:

It doesn't matter how talented the players are, how well-prepared the coaching staff is or how sharp the front office is.

Because no matter how good one player or coach or front-office suit is, something else is always there to compromise their performance.

The Browns have some players with Pro Bowl potential. Romeo Crennel has the pedigree of a winning coach, and Phil Savage has proven for years that he can evaluate talent.

Football is the ultimate team game. A player or coach is only as good as who he is surrounded with. A great individual can quickly be lost in the shuffle of a bad team performance.

That's where the Browns have been since 1999, and that's why no matter who they draft, who they sign, who the coach is, who the GM is, they never appear to be building toward anything.

It doesn't matter that Kellen Winslow Jr. could change a game on one catch, because Charlie Frye can't get him the ball. It doesn't matter if Frye has what it takes to be a solid NFL quarterback because the offensive line can't protect him and his receivers keep dropping the

ball.

It doesn't matter if Reuben Droughns can be a dominant rusher because the line can't run-block for him.

Winslow and Droughns can be the horses that carry the offense, but Crennel and offensive coordinator Maurice Carthon have sat them on key third-down situations repeatedly these first two weeks of the season.

It doesn't matter if Kamerion Wimbley can become a sack machine, because the run defense is so porous, quarterback sacks are rendered irrelevant. The Browns sacked Bengals QB Carson Palmer four times Sunday, and Cincinnati still cruised to a 17-point win.

Even if Wimbley finds the quarterback, the play in the secondary is so weak, chances are the opposing quarterback is going to be able to find an open receiver before anyone can close on him.

It's something that happened repeatedly Sunday as Palmer toyed with the Browns coverage schemes.

The Browns can put up respectable individual numbers game after game, but it won't lead to wins because those performances will be nixed by something else.

We are quick to lay a lot of the blame at the feet of Carthon, and he hasn't exactly shined in his role to this point. But something tells me he wouldn't look nearly as bad if the offensive line would open holes for Droughns and protect Frye, and if Dennis Northcutt and Braylon Edwards would do what they are paid to do and hold onto the dang ball.

I could sit here and dissect what went wrong Sunday, but it's not worth it. More or less, it would be a carbon copy of what has gone wrong in every Browns loss for the last four years.

This week's strengths are next week's weaknesses. A solid performance from Player A is cancelled out because Player B didn't block, Player C didn't catch, and coach D didn't run the right play.

And Players E, F and G were all called for holding, sucking the life out of three separate drives.

This is why the Browns are spinning their wheels. This is what I mean when I say the Browns are a bad football organization. It's not an indictment of Crennel or Savage or Frye. It's not a condemnation of the players on the offensive or defensive lines. Indeed, there are capable players and leaders throughout this organization. But when you try to put it all together, it's a mess.

It's been that way for seven years, and it looks like it will continue to be that way for a while.

Up next: Baltimore, Sunday, 4 p.m.