For the bulk of the last 2 weeks, I was in London on my honeymoon. When I left, the greatest Free Agency bonanza in the history of the NFL was about to explode. I brought my laptop to (subtly) monitor it, but my hotel had issues with their wi-fi, and service was intermittent at best (at least during the few hours we actually spent there). I also refrained (as much as possible) from using my Blackberry to access football news since the data charges were probably expensive enough to force America into bankruptcy. And Sky Sports just kept showing endless hours of mind-numbing cricket.

So I had no idea what was going on during this historic free-for-all.

The return trip on Friday featured many exciting layovers, and that finally allowed me to catch up on all the big Browns moves, and... and... and...

Insert sound of balloon deflating. The anti-Viagra.

Let me try to sum up what has happened with everyone's favorite team since the lockout ended:

Lost: Lawrence Vickers (HOU), Chansi Stuckey (ARI), Kenyon Coleman (DAL), Shaun Rogers (NO), Blake Costanzo (SF), Jason Trusnik (MIA), Eric Wright (DET), Sabby Piscatelli (KC), Abe Elam (DAL), Porkchop Womack (ARI)

No Longer On Team (But Still Available): Jake Delhomme, Mike Bell, Greg Estandia, Robert Royal, John St. Clair, Titus Adams, David Bowens, CJ Mosley, Robaire Smith, Eric Barton, Matt Roth, Nick Sorensen

Free Agents Retained: Seneca Wallace, Alex Smith, Evan Moore, Jayme Mitchell, Derreck Robinson, D'Qwell Jackson, Marcus Benard, Billy Yates

Free Agents Acquired: Brandon Jackson (GB), Dimitri Patterson (PHI), Usama Young (NO), Richmond McGee

Traded For: John Greco (STL)

Drafted Rookies: Phil Taylor (DL), Jabaal Sheard (DE), Greg Little (WR), Jordan Cameron (TE/WR), Owen Marecic (FB), Buster Skrine (CB), Jason Pinkston (OL), Eric Hagg (S)

Undrafted Free Agents/Exclusive Rights Free Agents/Training Camp Bodies: Johnathan Haggerty (WR), Branndon Braxton (OL), Auston English (LB), Travis Ivey (DL), Pat Murray (OL), Jordan Norwood (WR), Dominic Alford (OL), Kyle Anderson (DL), Andre Caroll (DL), LJ Castile (WR), James Dockery (CB), Archie Donald (LB), Jabari Fletcher (DL), Calton Ford (OL), Evan Frosch (TE), Carl Gettis (DB), Eric Gordon (LB), Darian Hagan (DB), Benjamin Jacobs (LB), Chris Matthews (WR), Juan Nunez (WR), Jarrod Shaw (OL), Armond Smith (RB), Brian Smith (LB), Sidney Tarver (LB), Jarrett Brown (QB), Tyler Clutts (FB), Quinn Porter (RB), Ko Quaye (DL), Troy Weatherhead (QB), Rod Windsor (WR), Jeff Wolfert (K), Ramzee Robinson (DB), Scott Paxson (DL), Brian Sanford (DL), Phil Trautwein (OL)

As you can see, the Browns didn't lose a lot. Lawrence Vickers is a good player, but the Browns

had already decided to move on from him when they drafted Marecic. Shaun Rogers has some value, but - at this point in his career - his loss is not devastating, and they supplanted him with Phil Taylor. Eric Wright had moments (prior to 2010), but he is easily replaced by Dimitri Patterson. Womack was solid, but the Browns have thrown their lot in with Shawn Lauvao, and Usama Young for Abe Elam is at least a wash.

Everyone else they lost is (mostly aged) fodder.

So Cleveland certainly shouldn't backtrack from a year ago. However, that is hardly a glowing review. That's the equivalent of being dropped in the middle of the ocean and then being told you can't get any wetter.

How did they improve? Jabaal Sheard and (supposedly) Jayme Mitchell should (in theory) put more pressure on the QB than last year (we hope). Greg Little is probably already the Browns best WR (maybe). Brandon Jackson is a 3rd Down back that will actually contribute, and Hardesty is back, so the RB corps should be noticeably better than last season's Hillis-Or-Bust attack.

But that's about it.

I like the guys they added. I've watched a lot of Jackson with the Packers (he always seems to be a mid-season fantasy pickup of mine), and although there's no way he can be a starting RB, he's certainly got the skills and experience to be a solid change of pace guy in the WCO. Dimitri Patterson should be just fine playing the Nickel, and Usama Young could be a guy coming into his own, hopefully an upgrade at the Free Safety position. Greco should be a nice backup on the O Line.

But that's just 4 guys. There were tons of guys out there - TONS - and that's all we got. I wasn't even looking for the Browns to target the top Free Agents. I know the Front Office wants to build through the draft, to get younger. But there were plenty of good, fairly youthful FA's that would've helped to - at the very least - boost the roster depth. Instead, Heckgren chose to fill the roster out with Undrafted Free Agents and Practice Squad riff-raff.

For a team so far under the salary cap, the inactivity is puzzling.

You almost get the feeling that the Browns realize that they suck, that they can't field a team that will realistically contend for the playoffs, so they're gonna try to extend contracts for some key cogs and get a bunch of young guys some playing time and perhaps **accidentally** slip into that Number One Overall slot.

(Oops).

Far be it for me to attempt to quench the fires of your preseason hopes, but this team is young, inexperienced, only moderately talented, and will have only a few weeks to implement entirely new Offensive and Defensive schemes. Yes, I acknowledge that teams have come out of nowhere to shock the world, but many many more live down to their advance billing of cellar dwellers.

The Browns will be very bad this year.

Truly, recognizing that now will help us all. We can accept the inevitable and turn our attentions towards watching individual players and the team as a whole evolve and develop. Because I definitely do feel that this organization is finally on the right track, and although it's hard to advocate patience when that's what we've been trying to maintain for the whole last decade, patience is what we'll need in 2011. 2012 and beyond is when the moves of the last 2 years will start to take root.

Until then, let's all hope we field competitive fantasy teams.

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Regarding Keepers

These are the players that I (think I) know will be here and will contribute in some way.

Quarterback: *Colt McCoy, Seneca Wallace*

Running Back: *Peyton Hillis, Montario Hardesty, Brandon Jackson, Owen Marecic*

Wide Receiver: *Greg Little, Mo Massaquoi, Brian Robiskie, Carlton Mitchell, Josh Cribbs*

Tight End: *Ben Watson, Alex Smith, Evan Moore, Jordan Cameron*

Offensive Line: *Joe Thomas, Eric Steinbach, Alex Mack, Shaun Lauvao, Tony Pashos, Billy Yates, Branndon Braxton, John Greco*

Special Teams: *Phil Dawson, Richmond McGee, Ryan Pontbriand*

Defensive Line: *Phil Taylor, Ahtyba Rubin, Jabaal Sheard, Jayme Mitchell, Travis Ivey, Derreck Robinson, Brian Schaefering, Marcus Benard*

Linebacker: *Scott Fujita, Chris Gocong, D'Qwell Jackson, Titus Brown, Kaluka Maiava*

Cornerback: *Joe Haden, Sheldon Brown, Dimitri Patterson, Buster Skrine, Mike Adams*

Safety: *TJ Ward, Usama Young, Ray Ventrone, Eric Hagg*

Some of those areas look pretty good. Some look... sigh. I mean... sigh... look at the Linebacking corps. Fujita is good, but aging. Gocong was underwhelming in a 4-3 in Philly. D'Qwell's been hurt for the last forever. And the backups? There are gonna be a couple of guys you never heard of making this team and playing snaps at LB.

How about Defensive End? You've got a Rookie, a guy that couldn't buy his way onto the field last year, and a guy that has never played DE in the NFL before.

Phil Taylor and Ahtyba Rubin had better be all they're advertised and more, because the rest of that Front 7 is freakin' scary.

And Wide Receiver? Yeah, there's some potential there, and they could be more effective now that they're no longer carrying the anchor that is a Brian Daboll offense, but there's no PROVEN playmakers there. There's hope, but banking on hope has never made me a millionaire.

I just look at that list, shake my head, and say "What the hell?"

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Regarding Reggie Hodges

Not to mention that the team lost 2010 Team MVP Reggie Hodges to some weird Punter injury. I don't know much about this Richie McGee dude, but I know he was jobless, and bad punting can Smurf you in this league faster than you can say Prison Rape.

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Regarding Montario Hardesty

Hardesty practiced the first 2 days, then has sat out the last 73 in a row. Pat Shurmur says it's a "planned thing". Tom Heckert says it's a "planned thing". Even Montario himself says it's a "planned thing".

I ain't buyin' it.

I scoffed at the people that bitched and moaned because Hardesty had some injury issues in college, but it's starting to look like this guy is as fragile as the leg lamp that the Dad in A Christmas Story won as a major award ("frah-jeel-ay").

Which would really suck, because this team simply CANNOT afford to lose him.

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Regarding London

This was my first time there, and it really is a great city. Lots to see, lots to do, a pub on every corner. My wife (dag, that sounds weird) and I also popped down to Paris for a few days. I'd been there before, but that was 17 years ago. Some observations from the trip:

***John Smith's Extra Smooth Draught Beer is damn good.

***Steak and Ale Pie is damn good. Steak and Kidney Pie is damn good. Boar Bangers are damn good. Escargot is damn good. Duck Liver Pate is damn good. French Gyros are not damn good.

***On average, the women in London are more endowed than their American counterparts. I know I was on my honeymoon, but it was hard not to notice (and even harder to keep my wife from noticing me noticing). No wonder the English men are so obsessed with breasts.

***Very few fat people in Europe, especially France. Must be all the walking and bike riding.

***The Europeans also seem to dress much nicer than the average American, although, to be fair, I was only in London and Paris, and New Yorkers dress much nicer than the average American as well.

***The Louvre is just ridiculously huge.

***Paris needs more pubs. Beautiful, beautiful city, but sometimes it feels like it's got a thumb stuck up its Smurf.

***Speaking of Smurfs, apparently the French word for Smurfs is Schtroumpfs. Now, one would think a made-up word like Smurf would be the same in every language, but some quick research revealed to me that the creator of Smurfs - Peyo - was Flemmish (French-speaking Belgian), and that he originally used Schtroumpf which was later translated into Smurf which was adopted by the rest of the world. So don't ask the Parisians about the Smurfs - they won't know what you're talking about and will probably pass you off as just another "stupid American" (as if you were supposed to know that).

***Parliament/Big Ben was probably the most impressive structure that I saw on the trip. Just a gorgeous building.

***I was a little disappointed in the museums. The Tate Modern, The National Gallery, The Louvre, The Musee d'Orsay... they were good, but none of them were really on par with the Metropolitan Museum or the MOMA in New York.

***Saw Caroline Wozniacki (#1 ranked women's tennis player) at LaGuardia on the way back. Just sitting by herself, with a bunch of luggage (including a huge-ass tennis bag). I assume she wasn't alone on the trek, but I've spent enough time backstage at pro tennis events to know that a player that goes anywhere in public without a protective entourage is rare. Good for her.

***Little humidity in London, and temps in the low 70's. And no freakin' bugs. Coming back to Ohio was a rude how-do-you-do.

***It is truly alarming how little the dollar is worth now. Anything I bought with Pounds or Euros, I did the conversion math and cringed. It was $12 beer night in Paris.

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Person I Like Aaron Goldhammer More Than

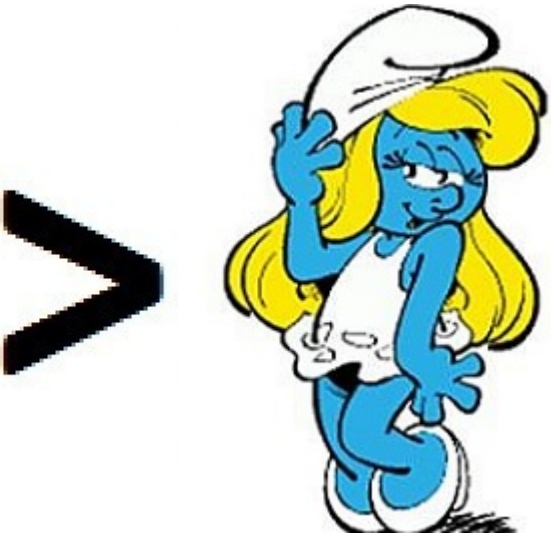
Smurfette

What does this little trollop bring to the show?

Watch the Smurfs again and ask yourself what purpose Smurfette serves? It's as if Peyo figured out that he needed a token female, so he created a character with all the worst "girl" stereotypes. All she does is spend all day choosing out dresses, smurfing with her hair, and flirting with random Smurfs. She's shallow, she's loud, and she always seems to be hanging around, doing nothing.

But when Gargamel attacks or some Smurf gets bitten by a bug that makes him turn insane, is Smurfette anywhere to be seen?

Hells no. Well, not unless she's fainting or yelling "Help Me!".

I know that later seasons of the Smurfs introduced other female characters, but I had already stopped watching by that point, so the only girl Smurf I've ever known is also unfortunately as useless as testicles on a toupee.

Try again, Peyo. At the very least, make Smurfette more like Miss Piggy.