I once read a story about a little girl whose father went off to war. When it was reported that he had been killed, her mother died of heartbreak.
The girl was put in an orphanage, where she was beaten.
She ran away to live on the streets, only to be kidnapped by thugs and forced to work in a dark basement sweatshop.

However, it turned out the father wasn't dead after all. He returned from the front and sought his daughter at the orphanage, but to no avail.
So he decided to drive around the city, looking for her on the streets.

The girl somehow managed to escape her prison and ran outside, where she was blinded by the bright light and stopped in the middle of the street. Her father didn't see her until the last second and plowed her down with his car.
She was so changed by her ordeal that he didn't even recognize the little girl he'd just crushed.

This story was more fun than watching the Browns game Sunday.

I will wisely avoid all Browns message boards and local sports talk radio for the next couple weeks as they will be awash with unchecked criticism. Some of it is deserved, some of it is not.

Everything is gray - black and white do not exist (a fact that far too many fans ignore).
This team - the players, the coaches, the front office - all must endure some amount of disparagement when the team fails.
But there's just so many that live to revel in certain players/coaches/front office types shortcomings, and more that jump in the sea - screaming - every time the boat springs a leak.

The team is 2-2. They are (technically) still in this thing, no matter how bad they looked against Tennessee. Maybe the Titans are just that good. Regardless, most of us felt the Browns were a 6 or 7 win team, that the youth and new systems and lack of offseason would hurt them. And that's exactly what they look like.
We knew they weren't playoff-bound.
This is what we expected.
They are who we thought they were.
WHY FREAK OUT?

Listen, I'm just as disturbed as you are about what and how it went down on Sunday. My first instinct is to start shouting and throwing shit, but then I hear how ridiculous you all sound and I force myself to try and find some perspective.
We can't expect this chicken to hatch from its egg fully grown.
There's gonna be some inconsistency and some disappointment on the way to where we hope they're going.

The Titans obviously have a good Defense, and that's not a good match-up for Cleveland's unsure Offense. Matt Hasselbeck is fairly ordinary, but he's the best QB the Browns have faced, and he made just enough plays to score. He showed what happens when a QB takes the plays that are given to him and doesn't make mistakes.

At least the Browns' Run D wasn't to blame. Chris Johnson got his 100, but other than one long run, he was largely ineffective while the game was in question.
But when you stack the box to stop the run, your DB's have to play well and make sure tackles, and they did exactly the opposite of that.
With some even competent tackling, this game is probably a lot closer.

In fact, I don't see the Titans as being overwhelmingly more talented than the Browns at all - they just simply didn't make the self-inflicted errors that Cleveland did.

Those at fault need to get this thing ship-shape. Losing because of talent deficit is one thing, but losing because of incompetence is another. This sloppiness is to be expected for a while, but progress must be made as the season goes on if we are to have a reasonable confidence in the future, which we as self-loathing Browns fans are already predisposed to doubt.

_____

Stats

Time of Possession: CLE – 27:49, TEN – 17:11

Total Yards: TEN - 296, CLE – 290

Yards Passing: TEN – 220, CLE - 216

Yards Rushing: TEN – 76, CLE - 74

First Downs: CLE - 18, TEN – 11

Turnovers Forced: TEN - 1, CLE – 0

Sacks: TEN – 3, CLE - 0

Final Score: Tennessee 31, Cleveland 6

These stats come from the end of the 3rd Quarter, where the game was effectively over. A lot of stats were rolled up on both sides on the 4th, but they are meaningless in my opinion when it comes to painting the story.

Obviously, Tennessee was all about the quick-strike. Cleveland's vast ToP advantage showed that all the damage that the Titans were doing was being done in a damn hurry, such as that horrific 80 yard TD pass where Scott Fujita lost his man and Usama Young forgot that the game wasn't two-hand tap. Outside of a few big plays, TEN didn't really do all that much.
But with the Browns' Offense unable to really mount scoring threats, it was enough.

This was also the first time the Browns had been held sackless or lost the sack battle. Their inability to get to the QB was somewhat to blame for the big plays, although in the Pass Rushers' defense, Hasselbeck got that ball out of there in a damn hurry (those veteran QB's just seem to know how to do that).
Pressure on the QB was key to both Cleveland's wins so far.

In the end, this game was won by the aforementioned big plays. The Titans had 4 (Johnson's long run, the 80 yard TD pass, the 57 yard looked-illegal pick play to Nate Washington, and the pick-6), the Browns had 0. Nil.
Nada.
Bupkiss.

Game Balls

Joe Haden – Even when the rest of the secondary was coming apart, he played well. Defending passes, chasing down guys that the Safeties couldn't tackle, even with a hurt knee.
Please Lord, Allah, Jewish God, Oprah Winfrey... don't let him miss games.

_____

Honorable Mention

Phil Dawson – Provided the only scoring that mattered for the Browns, FG's of 48 and 51 in a nasty wind to keep the Browns from sinking... until around Halftime.

Alex Mack - For playing with appendicitis.

_____

Wall of Shame

Cleveland Browns Fans – A group that always prides themselves on being amongst the "Best in the League" have become the whiniest bunch of crybabies this side of Boston.
The sheer volume of self-pity and reason-free overreaction makes me feel that we fans as a whole have succumbed to the despair of sporting hardship.
Please, if you are so put-upon that you can't take it anymore, feel free to switch over to the yella and black and stop besmirching our good name with your attention-seeking tears.

NFL Fans – As whiny as Browns fans are, they are just a representation of NFL fans in general.
You think it's bad in Cleveland?
Think about the noise in Dallas right now.
Think about the noise in Philly.
And those fans have known success in their lifetimes.

Sheldon Brown – It's bench-time for Sheldon. He's just too easy to pick on these days. Start Dimitri Patterson, move Brown to the nickel.

Chris Gocong – How do you repay Heckert's extension generosity? By completely misplaying an early Chris Johnson run and allowing him to get to the outside and 25 yards, leading to an eventual TD.

The Safeties – I was going to list them all individually (TJ Ward, Usama Young, Mike Adams), but I figured I'd save an e-Tree and group them together since they all sucked taint and all missed tackles that led to big plays. Too many bad plays from this group to list without buying some extra server space.

Paddy O'Shurmur – That was a poorly called game and this was a poorly handled week. They just didn't look ready to play.
One could argue that it's good for him to take some lumps early, that what doesn't kill him makes him stronger.
I counter that argument with two words:
Muscular dystrophy.

Colt McCoy – Listening to the radio the other day, I heard Mike Ditka gushing about Aaron Rodgers, how what impresses him most about Rodgers is "his calmness in the pocket".
I daresay he doesn't feel the same about Mr. McCoy.

Shaun Lauvao – Completely freakin' whiffed on a block near the end of the 1st Half, the guy he whiffed on sacked McCoy, drive over.

Montario Hardesty – What exactly was it he did to warrant all that extra playing time, especially in the 2nd Half?

_____

Regarding the Odious Offense

This game underlined many of the Browns' issues, but there is no issue as overwhelmingly blatant as the Offensive shitfest. Between the Buckeyes and the Browns, they set offensive football back 100 years this weekend. That Cleveland squad often looks like they've been drugged and dropped down a well.
Whose fault is that?

Colt McCoy? He's been awful lately. His strengths are advertised as his accuracy, his leadership, his intelligence, and his mobility. Well, his accuracy has been poor for most of this season.
His leadership is fine, but I'm not sure he sets a good example when he drops back and has happy feet and is slow to make decisions and basically looks incredibly uncomfortable.
The calls for "someone else" will be coming really soon if this keeps up.

Reality: He's a first year starter making his 4th start in a completely new Offense (which he had no offseason to learn). Everyone's learning along with him. It is sheer foolishness to expect this Offense to be good in Game 4.
He has looked bad and made some poor choices, and I have serious doubts about him, but he's clearly the best option at QB for the time being, there are 12 games left, let's just wait and see how he develops before we freak out like Liza Minelli on acid.

Pat Shurmur? The team often looks sloppy, disorganized, confused... not quite NFL-ready. Is Shurmur in over his head?
Has he bitten off more than he can chew by also calling plays?
Should he be cracking the whip more?

Reality: He's a rookie coach in his 4th game. He didn't get an offseason to establish his system or his ways. The Browns were easily one of the teams most hurt by the lockout, and some of this messiness can easily be explained by that.
But it won't be long before Shurmur can't hide behind that.
This team will have to progress both offensively and in orderliness for us not to feel uneasy with this coach for the long run.
However, whining for a return of past failures (like Mangini) is not only useless and misguided but petty.

The Offensive Line? The Wide Receivers? The lack of playmakers? I've heard all of them, and how we must fire Tom Heckert because he didn't get this or he didn't address that.
Poor Colt McCoy has no shot at success because he's surrounded by nothing but incompetents and he'd surely be Drew Brees if the Browns just had 10 First Round picks.

Reality: The O Line has been hampered by injury. We don't know how good (or bad) these WR's are since they've never experienced anything but inconsistent QB play.
Do the WR's look bad because the QB play sucks, or vice versa?
Or do they all look bad because of the play calling?
It's hard to tell.
Maybe the whole lot of 'em suck.
Maybe they all just need time to jell.
The fact is that those positions aren't going to change drastically this season, so let's hope it's that jell-thing.

Conclusion: There are no easy answers, no one person to blame.

_____

Regarding Dink and Dunk

No, they're not mutant twins with pierced nipples from Portugal that moved down the street and have been widely suspected of Sparky's disappearance.

Dink and Dunk is an Offensive "attack", one that Colt McCoy has made a Way of Life.

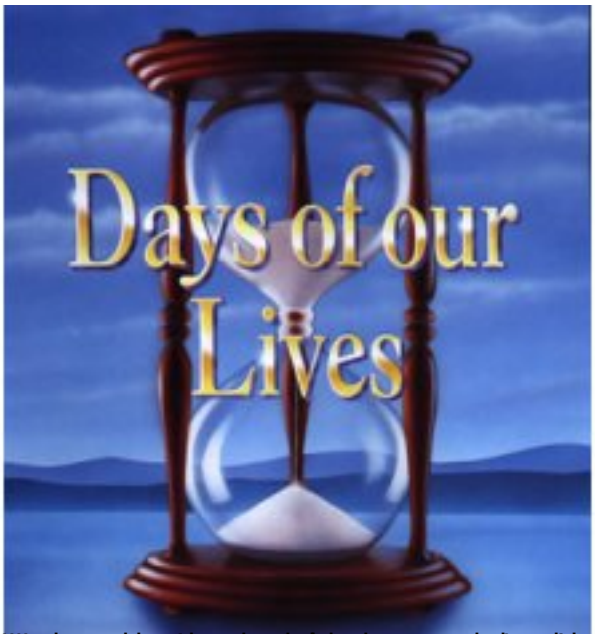
Witness - End of 3rd Quarter, Colt is driving the team down the field, but throws a highly ill-advised INT that somehow gets returned (all too easily) 99.9 yards for a score to put TEN up 31-6 and effectively end the game.

The only way the Browns can make it remotely interesting is if they strike quickly and often. I understand that the Titans are giving you the short stuff, but the game's over, why the hell not take some shots downfield and get some real-live practice on that?

Nope. For the last 17 minutes of the game, McCoy goes 21 for 32 (66%) for 156 yards, a whopping 7.43 yards per completion. Talk about gunning it down the field, forcing the action!

Regarding Peyton Hillis

It wouldn't be a Cleveland Browns football season without some garbage melodrama, and we've already got ours. *As The World Turns* mailed in the script to our boys in Berea, and they're acting it out.


Days of our
Lives