If the Cleveland Browns did any work during their bye week it wasn't particularly apparent in the Oakland Coliseum on Sunday. Looking mostly like they were still hung over from the game two weeks ago, the Browns fell hard to the Oakland Raiders by a somewhat deceiving score of 24-17.

It's only somewhat deceiving because it never really felt like the Browns were in the game despite the objective proof that they had a chance to tie the game with under a minute remaining thanks to a late touchdown pass by Colt McCoy to Mohamed Massaquoi with just over a minute and then a successful onside kick brilliantly executed by kicker Phil Dawson and recovered by defensive back James Dockery.

But McCoy couldn't capitalize on the opportunity for mostly the same reasons the Browns were in the position they were in at that moment. He was off target on his throws when it mattered most and the Raiders went away with the victory on the day that they honored the recently deceased Al Davis.

The hubbub near the end of the game notwithstanding, the Browns' offense had another miserable day against another team that was ripe for the taking.

And lest anyone think that the Browns inability to again generate any consistent offense had more to do with the emotion of the day exhibited by the Raiders for Davis, it was not. The Raiders were without their starting quarterback for most of the game and while that stymied their offense from that point forward, it didn't matter. Almost from the outset it looked like an early Raiders 14-7 lead was really more then enough anyway against a Browns' offense that seems to regress each week.

The funny thing is, this Raiders team, particularly with Kyle Boller in and Jason Campbell out, isn't very good. They're the usual undisciplined mess they've been for years. There's some talent on defense and a few good skill players on offense, but they aren't a first tier ball club.

Let's consider the evidence. Before getting injured, Campbell was 6-9 for just 52 yards and no touchdowns. Boller was, well, Boller. He was 8-14 for 100 yards and no touchdowns. The Raiders didn't have a running back gain more than 100 yards, though Darren McFadden was close with 91 yards on 20 carries. In many ways, the Raiders' offense resembled the Browns' offense. It generated one early touchdown, a Darren McFadden 4-yard run on the Raiders' first possession of the game and a Sebastian Janikowski 48-yard field goal in the third quarter. And that was it.

So why did the Browns lose? Well, a decent amount of the blame can be put on the special teams, which yielded two touchdowns. The first was a 101-yard kickoff return by Jacoby Ford and then, for good measure, another when they bit hard on a fake field goal as punter Shane Lechler found a wide open Kevin Boss for a 35-yard touchdown. The Ford return was particularly damaging because it completely sapped the Browns' only real offensive momentum of the day. On the previous play quarterback Colt McCoy hit tight end Alex Smith on a 1-yard touchdown pass that helped knot the game at 7-7.

So, yea, throw out the mistakes by the special teams and theoretically the Browns win the game. But the problem with that kind of thinking is that it ignores two overarching points. First, the Browns got as close as they did because Raiders' head coach Hue Jackson channeled Ron Zook at just the right or wrong time, depending on your perspective. Second, the Browns have

fundamental problems on offense. The Raiders have theirs and that's for them to figure out. But the Browns have to answer some serious questions around why their offense gets worse when it should be getting better.

Let's go back to Jackson. Had the Browns been able to tie the game, he would have had some 'splainin' to do. Seemingly taking pity on a Browns' team his Raiders' were dominating to that point, Jackson eschewed a late field goal on 4th and 1 from inside the Browns' 10-yard line with just under 5 minutes remaining that would have given the Raiders a 17-point lead. With Janikowski kicking off, the Browns would likely have had to march 80 yards quickly and recovered two onside kicks in order to actually get back into the game. But the 4th and 1 failed and probably caused more then a few butts to pucker when the Browns recovered the onside kick. Good think for Jackson that Davis died. Otherwise he might have fired him on the spot. He still might from whatever middle earth lair he's occupying at the moment.

But the Raiders' escaped and the Browns are left to wonder why a team with two weeks to prepare looked like they hadn't practiced in a month, particularly on offense.

McCoy, looking more confused and uncertain then at any time since freshman football, couldn't discern coverages, couldn't detect pressure, and missed receivers all day in the most spectacular of fashion. Balls sailed high. Balls fell short. Balls missed their targets by 5 yards. It was a miracle, really, that he wasn't picked off.

The late rally juiced his stats but he still was only 21-45 for 215 yards, though he had the two touchdown passes.

The running game was again non-existent. It's becoming increasingly clear exactly why the Browns haven't extended the contract of running back Peyton Hillis. He's just not in their long range plans. After starting the game, Hillis was mostly absent from there on out, making a brief appearance in the fourth quarter. Marv Albert, announcing another Browns' game as if it's a permanent assignment, said that Hillis supposedly tweaked his hamstring. Perhaps, but he did re-enter the game, so that explanation falls by the wayside.

So, too, will the explanation that Shurmur used for not deploying Hillis against the Titans two weeks ago, that the situation didn't dictate his use. It's not clear why those same situations

dictate using Montario Hardesty instead of Hillis, especially since Hardesty can't catch. It must be that Shurmur sees something in Hardesty that isn't quite apparent to the untrained eyes of every other observer. Hardesty rushed 11 times for 35 yards and Hillis had 6 carries for 14 yards.

Whoever is running the ball at the moment isn't really the issue anyway. Teams are stacking the box against the Browns because they simply don't fear any part of the Browns' passing attack. They're willing to concede short and even mid-range routes because they don't sense that anyone receiver on the Browns has big play capability. And they're right until they're proven wrong.

That means that McCoy needs to get better and quickly. His decision making isn't crisp. He's not handling pressure well. His fundamentals are awful. His lack of accuracy has everything to do with an inability to set his feet and throw, even when he does have time. It is up to him and the receivers to stretch the defense and give the running game some breathing room and they're failing miserably.

So while the loss can be pinned on the offense and the special teams, at least the defense was mostly respectable, despite the absence of cornerback Joe Haden. You had to feel some compassion for his replacement, Dmitri Patterson. The Raiders threw in his direction on nearly every pass play. The Raiders had only 14 completed passes and it seemed like every one was in front of Patterson who kept coverage soft to avoid the big plays.

It would be nice to think that what fans are seeing from this Browns team at the moment are the necessary growing pains of a team in transition. And hopefully that's all this malaise really is because anything more is too difficult to ponder at the moment. So standing at 2-3 and not even at the half way point of the season, it's not time to write the season off completely and start planning next year's draft. But that's not to excuse what's taken place to date. There has to be progress soon or all of this just ends up being another wasted season for a franchise that, unfortunately, has that act down pat.