Just win, right baby?

Pro sports is a bottom line business and there's no better bottom line then a win of any stripe. And that's what the Cleveland Browns got on Sunday, beating the Seattle Seahawks 6-3 a week after laying a collosal egg against the Oakland Raiders. What the game lacked in excitement, it more then made up for in lack of intrigue. As soon as Phil Dawson kicked his second 50+ field goal of the day there was little doubt of the outcome. That was due to a combination of a good Browns' defense and a bad Seahawks' offense, feel free to fiddle with the percentages how you want.

To say the game was a snoozer is to do a disservice to Ambien. There hasn't been a game this boring won by a Cleveland Browns team since the Browns beat the Buffalo Bills by the same score two years ago. You remember that game, don't you? It's the one where former general manager accelerated his ascension out of town by sending a profane email to a fan after the game.

If you did manage to stay awake for every play of this game, you're probably breaking out the Visine about now. There were plenty of eye rubbing moments.

For instance, it's really kind of hard to explain how a team that had the ball for over 42 minutes on offense and ran an astounding 84 plays, like the Browns did, managed only 6 points. It's even harder to explain how in all of those minutes and plays the only ones hey ran in the red zone were late in the fourth quarter.

It's also kind of hard to explain how Dawson, who had the first game of his career with two field goals in excess of 50 yards, still managed to have two others blocked. And for added measure when we're talking about special teams breakdowns, again, is the fact that but for a fortunate call on a phantom block in the back penalty on Seattle's Kennard Cox against James Dockery, the Seahawks would have won the game instead. It nullified a punt return by Leon Washington that had gone for a touchdown.

Ok, I lied. It's not that hard to explain. Let's start with the offense.

For reasons that I'm sure head coach Pat Shurmur will adequately explain once he thinks about it, the Browns seemed hellbent on focusing more on possession then effectiveness. There were few pass plays, for example, that were of the vertical variety. It wasn't clear whether Shurmur just feared Colt McCoy passing down field like Luke Fickell fears Braxton Miller throwing down field or Shurmur had game planned as if the weather would be 35 degrees, windy and rainy, and just didn't feel like scrapping it when the weather turned out otherwise.

Whichever the case, it was painfully clear that the Browns were not so much concerned with putting together drives as they were maintaining a few slogs through a difficult yet bendable Seahawks defense. Thus were an endless series of short out passes, several swing passes, a few over the middle passes, and plenty of runs in the middle of a stout defensive line. It all added up to 20 first downs and kept the ball out of the hands of a Seahawks offense that hardly knew what to do with it anyway.

But let's at least give some credit where it's due and in not so snarky fashion. One of Shurmur's shortcomings as a head coach is his inability to reign in the throwing tendencies of his offensive coordinator, who happens to be the same person. With Peyton Hillis on the sidelines nursing a sore hamstring (or was he?) it seemed like a situation tailor-made for Shurmur's instincts.

Instead he stubbornly committed to running the ball with Montario Hardesty and recently signed Chris Ogbonnaya. Between them, they had 36 carries, which is surely worth an exclamation point! Hardesty more or less responded with 95 yards on 33 of those carries, but that was more than enough to keep the clock moving. McCoy, too, had 8 carries for 31 yards, but those were all the result of broken down pass protection running head long into receivers who couldn't get open. The guess here is that those were the times that a more vertical pass play was called, but that's just a guess since there were plenty of times when the protection broke down before McCoy had a chance to grip the strings on the ball.

The reason all this is important is that it ended up having the intended effect near the end of the game as the Seahawks defense tired and gave up some key runs that, but for the second of the two blocked field goals, would have technically sealed the game earlier.

So in that sense it was a positive to see Shurmur take some of the pressure off of McCoy and put it on the running game. The negative, though, is that while Hardesty can bang out some tough yards, he seems to lack that extra gear to get around end or crack back into a slight opening that the really great running backs possess. It would have been interesting if Hillis had been able to play (or was he able to play?) to see how stout that Seahawks defensive line really was.

Still there should be a few statistical highlights when you run the number of plays the Browns did. In addition to the 162 yards rushing (from which we subtract the 21 yards lost in sacks), McCoy was 20-25 for 178 yards and 1 interception. He did throw one interception, which occurred when the Browns were actually moving the ball forward in what could be called chunks. Maybe that's really what spooked Shurmur.

Now let's talk about the special teams. There was no secret to the two blocked field goals. Red Bryant was just too much for the middle of the line to block. He was able to push his way through far enough each time to spoil any trajectory that Dawson might have been able to put on the ball. As for the breakdown on the punt coverage, it was simply a matter of missed tackles. Washington avoided several tackles at the initial point of contact and from there the seam opened. The penalty call on Cox was a mistake but an understandable one. Cox did extend his arms at Dockery's back and Dockery, the last person who could have gotten Washington, fell. But if there was contact, it was less then a high school freshman gets on his first date.

The defense was a bright spot for the Browns but it was aided greatly by two overarching facts. First, Tavaris Jackson, the Seahawks starting quarterback, was out. That left Charlie Whitehurst to make just his third start in 6 seasons. He played exactly like a guy making his third start in 6 seasons. He was jittery, tentative and lacked any touch on the ball. It didn't help, either, that on three or four occasions when he was on target his receivers dropped the ball. Ultimately he was 12-30 for just 97 yards and one interception, which came, not unsurprisingly, immediately after the called back punt return.

If the lack of personnel wasn't a difficult enough obstacle for the Seahawks to overcome, another was created when starting running back Marshawn Lynch was scratched right with a bad back right before the game started. Without a credible running attack, Whitehurst was pretty much stuck playing Charlie in the Box on the Island of Misfit Toys.

Indeed it seemed rather unlikely that the Seahawks would even find a way to score a single point. It's telling actually how their points did come about. On the one defensive play where the Browns' coverage did break down, Whitehurst found a wide open Sidney Rice all alone at about the Browns' 10-yard line. While the pass was completed, it was Rice's wrong shoulder and forced Rice to lose balance and step out at the 9-yard line. A running play went for no gain but on second down Ahtyba Rubin was called for a face mask penalty, giving the Seahawks the ball at the Cleveland 2 yard line. Another run for no gain followed by two incomplete passes forced the Seahawks to kick the 20-yard field goal. In that short series of plays did the Seahawks aptly sum up the true awfulness of their performance.

So again, do the math how you want but the Browns did come out with the win and stand at 3-3 which, if only psychologically, is miles ahead of 2-4. It puts 5 or 6 victories this year well within reach and a chance for everyone to come away with the only victory this town needs at the moment, the one spelled p-r-o-g-r-e-s-s.