The loss to the 49ers this Sunday was an unemotional event. If you read my game preview then you already know I was anticipating the outcome to be exactly what it was, so I didn't get too grumpy after the loss.

Divisional games are against teams I naturally can't stand so I always get bent out of shape when the Browns lose one of those, but I don't have that natural chip on my shoulder about the 49ers, and I also knew San Francisco was playing good football and coming off of a bye.

Don't get me wrong, the goal is always to win, but as a fan I didn't get upset when they lost this past weekend. I actually took a step back and focused on the big picture and came to the conclusion that this type of game will go a long way in showing this young the type effort needed against the better teams in the NFL, and it might possibly speed up the learning curve.

This was by far the best overall team the Browns have faced and the level of competition will only go up as the year goes on. The Browns were clearly stunned with the aggression and tempo that San Francisco set during the early stages of that game, but once they realized and adjusted themselves it was a much different affair.

The defense in particular got overwhelmed by both scheme and skill early in the game, but the young players did an excellent job of realizing that this was a different level of competition and adjusted accordingly. The offense has started slowly all year so it was kind of status quo for

them, but you can pull some positives from the way that they finished the game.

Let's look at the game and look around the league:

Why We Lost the Game

Offense- For anyone who actually watched the game it was easy to see the offense was plagued by the same two things it has struggled with all year; consistency and crucial mistakes.

You can't even blame the climbing up hill on the defense because, although the defense started off slowly and it took them a few series to adjust and figure out the 49ers running game, the offense turned the ball over on the second play of the game giving the 49ers the ball at the Cleveland 20 (already in FG range without running any plays). The 'O' clearly created their own hill.

The consistency needed to sustain drives is a bit frustrating but some of it is unavoidable when players are learning on the fly like the 2011 Browns. There is not a total meltdown in any one area of the offense, but rather a merry-go round of errors that feature different players.

All facets of the offense should be taking a hit, not just one aspect or one person. Pat Shurmur gets his part of the blame for things like relying on 3 yard outs and motioning Greg Little into the backfield and then throwing him a swing pass.

Colt McCoy deserves his part for throwing over the WRs head on third down or throwing into double coverage on the interception. Tony Pashos deserves his for looking like an overmatched, too old, too slow, too injured, has been…. Shawn Lauvao for failing to pick up a simple twist stunt and getting rag dolled by Justin Smith a few times and Little for imitating every other slouch WR the Browns have had and not catching catchable balls or winning one-on-one matchups.

Every level of offense is breaking down at different points. You kind of hope they would all just have bad plays together instead of taking turns wearing the dunce cap, but it isn't working out for them that way and it is getting frustrating to watch them constantly shooting themselves in the feet.

Defense- The defense really grew up on Sunday. They faced a team who was out to mash their faces in the dirt for 60 minutes and they recovered from the first couple of dirt pies to end up holding their own. NO WAIT…. they more than held their own in the second half…they actually dominated. The only thing I would have liked more than the way they stood up to the 49ers running game in the second half is the 'D' creating some turnovers, but I will take the type of effort they gave anytime.

The goal line stand they had in the 2nd quarter is stuff champions are made of….that was special any way you want to look at it. Yes, I would have liked them to figure out the running game earlier but how many young teams on the road would have figured it out at all, and how many of those teams would have the players to man up and stop it?

The Browns defense had only one drive that was brutal and that was San Francisco's 2nd drive that went 11 plays and 93 yards. In the end of that drive they only gave up a FG so it wasn't the worst case scenario but you can't let drives last that long on a regular basis and have success as a defense over the long haul, so I have to point it out.

When I reviewed the game I realized that maybe the two biggest let downs the defense had were on two penalties. Think about how different that game would have been if the Browns were not called for pass interference (Joe Haden) on the 49ers first scoring drive and if D'Qwell Jackson had not gotten called for a facemask penalty on the 49ers last scoring drive.

Those two penalties extended two drives and both drives resulted in points. The Joe Haden penalty (which I thought was bogus) allowed the 49ers to get a TD instead of settling for 3 points. The facemask really hurt as instead of forcing a three and out and getting the ball back with 4 minutes and down by 7, the Browns ended up giving up a FG that changed the game into a 2 score affair and received the ball back with only 1:51 left to go in the game.

All in all, the defense played well after they fought off the home team's initial adrenaline. This

was good for the young players to feel and understand what it is like to face a power team in their own building that is feeding off of the crowd. It is a force that often leads a young team down an ugly patch that can end in a blowout, but the Browns responded and avoided getting steam rolled and that is something to build around.

Game/Player Notes

**Colt McCoy is getting a lot of support from the media right now, not only the local guys but some national ones as well. They are saying that he shouldn't have to take all the blame for the offensive woes and they are right.

There are three distinct problems that McCoy is going to have to deal with this season. One is the fact that we haven't had good QB play in a while in Cleveland so people are really quick to go with what they know. The QB position has so often been the culprit that it is just a natural thought.

There's also the fact that McCoy hasn't had great success in the NFL yet so it is hard for a fan to give him a break on a bad throw. If poor throws are what you've seen thus far, as a fan you can't help but to think the mistakes are the rule and not the exception.

The third thing he can't shake is the human factor of remembering the "oh sh**s" easier than remembering the "that-a-boys". Bad plays stick out in our minds, especially in a loss. If the team was winning you would be much more inclined to look past the growing pains instead of harping on every failure (unless the score is 6-3). That's just human nature and something McCoy is going to have to overcome.

As far as his play, McCoy needs to do his job and he needs to do it well, but try and remember the whole of the offensive issues and don't take the simple approach of, "if we had a better QB…"

The point I am making is not about giving McCoy a pass, it is simply an urging for people to hold him accountable for the mistakes he is responsible for and not everyone's errors. During the

game I was disgusted with what I thought was another bad overall performance by Colt, but after I watched it again I realized that he actually had a much better game than I initially thought.

I normally keep track of the bad throws he makes over the course of a game and when I did that for the 49ers game I realized that he really only made what I considered 4 bad throws. And actually the WRs and RBs should have caught 5 other incompletions which gave them a worse grade than McCoy.

Before I reviewed the game, I guess I hadn't even noticed how many drives he kept alive with his legs and without a doubt that throw to Josh Cribbs on the left sideline with 5 seconds to go in the first half was an incredible throw. The trajectory on that was brilliant, and if you add the game scenario to the difficulty level, the play was even more impressive. He did do some good things in the game and he doesn't deserve the entire "bad" weight on his shoulders.

The offense continues to struggle as a group but when you are considering the results don't just pile on the 'Colt McCoy is terrible' agenda. Hold him accountable for his part without a doubt but just try and take a step back while looking at the big picture…. It just might stop you from throwing your shoe through the TV.

Keep it all in perspective and judge the guy for what he is, and not what he is dealing with from a surrounding talent perspective or the fact that his offensive line is average on a good day…..and certainly don't forget that the ENTIRE offense is on his shoulders because the running game is DEAD.

**WRs- Jordan Norwood had a good game and I think he will develop great chemistry with McCoy. He has the type of quickness that the other WRs on our roster don't, so he is the kind of guy you can anticipate being open on cuts because he will always get initial separation. He just doesn't have great speed to keep the cushion. The key to a WR like him is getting off of the line of scrimmage. If he can do that on a regular basis then he will be open a lot.

Greg Little was extremely frustrating to watch on Sunday. I believe in his talent but he needs to take off the bib and catch the balls that hit his hands. He also needs to attack the ball on those slants and extend his hands to make the catch. This is not UNC, You can't let the ball get into your chest on those slant patterns. In the NFL defensive backs won't let it get to your body, they

will knock it down first. The other play with him that bothered me is the interception in the end zone. You cannot let that ball get picked. If it isn't you catching the football it can't be anyone. He has to play that ball better and not allow that to happen or Colt will stop the few throws he attempts down field.

The last play that jumped out at me was the tipped ball that Cribbs almost caught. On that play Little had his hands the wrong way. He had them pointing down instead of forming a diamond.

Some days Little looks greener than others and on Sunday he looked like a WR who has only played the position for one full year of college and was out of football last year…. But like I said earlier, I do believe in his talent and I will be patient even as I complain.

The last thing about Little that has nothing to do with ability or production and is about behavior and mannerisms. I really don't like the frustration I am seeing displayed when something doesn't go his way. He visibly showed his frustration on a couple of bad throws from McCoy over the last two games.

He can't drop balls and cop attitudes. Actually, I take that back. Dropping balls has nothing to do with it. You just can't generate negative waves and give the impression you are somehow pouting. The QB and WR relationship is a two-way street; sometimes WRs pick up the QBs' slack by catching bad balls and in turn the QB keeps it moving and says nothing when you let the ball hit the ground. That is how it works and the negative attitude can only lead to more bad things.

One of two things usually happens; either that negative energy stays with the WR and he later drops balls he would normally catch, or it leads to the QB eventually looking for other places to throw the ball. Neither one is good. Just keep it positive and you will keep things moving in the right direction because if that type of behavior isn't nipped in the bud…. it can grow into an ugly beast and you may end up with some labels you don't want and can't shake.

**Is it me or does Josh Cribbs look a bit bulky and stiff? He doesn't move as well as he used to and to me it is most visible on the returns. He is a step slow. He can still find the creases but he is just struggling to get through them. In reality a drop off is a drop off and it is hard to settle for good when you used to have greatness.

**That play where Little got lit up is both his and McCoy's fault. It was initially Little's for not "settling" in the empty spot in the zone. If you watch the play, you can clearly see he ran right through a soft spot instead of floating in it, but from Colt's perspective he had plenty of time so he needs to let Little clear that area past the LB and safety before he throws it. That is almost the same thing that happened to Massaquoi against the Steelers when Harrison got fined.

The veteran WRs like Hines Ward would have settled in the soft spot and caught the ball in the crease, not allowing the QB to hang him out to dry, and a veteran QB would have let him clear if the WR never settled.

**Look, I know that the defense only had 1 sack and 1 QB hit but it is really hard to play a team that pounds the ball like the 49ers do and then get a really good pass rush when they actually do throw the ball. Unless you play one of the styles of defense that plays the run on the way to the QB it is really difficult to do both. I was satisfied that the defense anchored against the run more than I was upset we didn't get a great rush when Smith threw it.

**DL- Ahtyba Rubin is getting better every week. I have been watching him give the opposing LG fits for weeks now. He is playing at a pro bowl level and I would have that argument with anybody, just watch the tape it doesn't lie.

Phil Taylor had a much better game this week but he needs to tackle better. Big Phil, just because you are 330lbs doesn't mean guys in the NFL are going down because you put the wood to them. Start wrapping up and stop trying to strike a runner down.

Jabaal Sheard is really active and I can't wait until this guy gets a year under his belt. His ceiling is really high because right now he is just relying on instincts. Once he actually knows what to expect he has a chance to be special.

** There were three plays that had a big effect on the outcome Sunday: the phantom pass interference call on Haden, the facemask on D'Qwell Jackson, and the interception by McCoy. The interception came on a 6 play 52 yard drive. The ball was on the 49ers 34 for that snap which means they were in Phil Dawson's range. You can't have turnovers instead of points as it

will usually come back to haunt you.

** I have a few issues on some play designs. I really didn't understand the play where Shurmur motioned WR Greg Little into the backfield then threw a pass to him. I saw the RB go inside of McCoy for what looked like a potential shovel pass play, but everyone is expecting Little to get the ball after motioning into a tailback position, so you have to use him as a decoy first and throw the inside shovel. Once they think you are using the motion and Little as a decoy then maybe you can surprise them with the quick toss outside, but you can't do it the first time because everyone's eyes are on him.

I think I would have used the throw to Little as a pump fake and set a screen on the other side. Another thing that was odd to me is the fact they used that play on the short side of the field.

Another thing I noticed on tape that I didn't like is a 3 yard out on first down. I don't understand how a 3 yard out on first down is an effective play. If it is because they are in off-coverage then why wouldn't you throw a hitch right at the line of scrimmage? I just don't understand that pattern at all.

Peyton Hillis

You know I have been silent on the Peyton Hillis story because to be honest with you I thought it was much ado about nothing. Usually a guy who has been in the league 4 years would have already shown cracks in his foundation if he were the selfish type and Hillis has not up until this point.

I think his agent and management people are probably in his ear giving recommendations on how to handle the issue, and they are hoping he doesn't get a major injury, but I don't think they would be urging him to fake injury. I can, however, see them advising him to make sure he is healthy before playing so he doesn't play bad or get a more serious injury, but isn't that natural?

It is his management's job to look out for the best interest of the person paying them and Hillis's style of running can make anyone worry. His physical, punishing style puts him at a higher risk

than normal.

The way the business of the NFL works, it is time for him to get paid this year but his agent and the team can't agree so that puts us all in the middle.

I don't know the specifics of what he wants compared to what they think he is worth so it is hard for me to say who is right or wrong. I think he should without a doubt get a raise, but I also think that he is not worth the same amount of money the more explosive players make. Hillis can make long runs because he can break a ton of tackles, but the thing that make guys like Adrian Peterson and Darren McFadden special is their ability to score from anywhere on the field anytime they touch the ball and that is not what Hillis is about. That isn't the type of fear that he puts in teams.

So until I know some specifics I won't comment on who is right or who is wrong but I do want to point out the negative atmosphere that a disgruntled employee can create without even realizing he is doing so.

It is only human nature to turn yourself into a maximum of the minimum performer at work when you are unhappy with your job. It doesn't matter if your boss is directly responsible or not, you have all probably had a time at work where you get put into disgruntled mode by something.

It is hard to continue to care as much when you don't think you are valued as much as you should be. It doesn't stop you from going to work or doing your job but I guarantee it will make you think twice about going above and beyond.

I imagine there is a little bit of this going on, and no I don't think he is a scum bag for feeling that way. A big part of going out there on the football field is mental at this level of football. Yes, a certain level of ability is needed, but the special ones are the ones who's will and mind are a little stronger and sharper.

No matter what someone may say, it is without a doubt harder to give everything you got to a person or place that you don't feel respects you. You will still go and perform, but going above

expectations usually doesn't happen, especially if you find out a co-worker who you are running circles around is making more than you.

The elephant will be in the room until the season is over or he gets a deal, so just accept it. If management wanted it to go away it would be gone by now…. they clearly don't care or we wouldn't still be talking about it… and if fans made an uproar like they did when a career special teams player wanted more money it also may have been done by now.

Just face the facts and understand that this is the way things get resolved in a business where the owners can lock the doors on players just for a bargaining chip to get more money.

I want Hillis out there playing and giving 110% too but unfortunately, just like the lockout, we have no choice but to be caught in the middle.

Around the League

*Enough with this defenseless receiver nonsense. How in the world do you ever catch a ball and have the ability to defend yourself? The answer is you don't because you can't and therefore they need to either get rid of it and stick to the no hitting in the head or they need to change the terminology of the rule and simply say "you are not allowed to hit a guy catching the ball".

If you watched MNF you understand the play I am talking about and you also heard Mike Tirico read the rule. This silliness is getting ridiculous. Football is a combative, violent sport plain and simple. You cannot save everyone from injury and this rule is only screwing up the game… fix it!

*O.k. the minute I give Rob Ryan some credit he goes and gets posterized by Mike Vick…C'mon Man!

*Only on Halloween weekend do Tom Brady, Drew Brees, and Philip Rivers all lay eggs the

same week. The Saints looked invincible last week and then turn right around and lose to a winless team….talk about a letdown.

*I never thought I would be saying this but I am extremely interested in watching the Jets vs. Bills this week. I am still only one foot in on the Bills….but if they beat the Jets I will be all in.

The other game I can't wait to see involves two AFC North teams….Ravens vs. Steelers in Pittsburgh. The Ravens aren't playing so hot right now and I know the Steelers will be out to get their dignity back after a week 1 beat down by the Ravens.

*I was thinking about the whole "Suck for Luck" conversations and I honestly don't see how the Colts can justify actually picking Luck and just keeping him while they wait for Peyton Manning to retire.

In my mind the only thing they can do is trade the pick or trade the player. I just don't see how taking a guy who will be holding a clipboard for the next four years helps them win championships now, and as long as Peyton Manning is your QB that should be your focus.

Not to mention, Manning is so competitive that drafting Luck would only fuel him to play better and drive him to play longer. If he does play better or just as well as he has in the past, how can you justify getting rid of him? Brett Favre's play had declined and if Manning's does I could understand, but I don't think he will play worse at all. All indications up to this point say that if his neck heals, he will be motivated to play better than ever.

That's all for this week Browns fans, but before I get out of here I want to say that I was obviously wrong with what I thought Brian Robiske could bring to the Browns this year. I wish the Buckeye good luck and I hope he finds his way in this league. I also hope the Browns find some WRs to make plays and strike some fear into opponents as we have been starving a long time for somebody on the outside who can make plays …..and clearly Robiske and Massaquoi were/are not the answers……Go Browns!

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