The Houston Texans are pretty good football team, but no one is confusing them with the Green Bay Packers at the moment. Nonetheless, treating the Cleveland Browns like they were trying to purposely violate some anti-bullying law, the Texans punched the Browns early, often, stole their lunch money and a good amount of their self-respect and pride along with it in a 30-12 dismembering that ultimately was still so much of the same old same old.

There were too many small moments in the game indicative of the bigger picture to truly single out any one as the most representative of the ass-whipping the Browns endured, so I'll just go with my favorite. The Browns, opening the second half of the game with the ball, ran a pitch to running back Chris Ogbonnaya and he lost three yards. And that was a major improvement in how they started the first half of the game, with Ogbonnaya running up the middle and then immediately fumbling the ball to the Texans just seconds after the Texans opened the game with an 82-yard drive for a touchdown.

It was the second straight week that the Browns lost a fumble on their first play of the game and while both lost fumbles effectively ended any chance for the Browns in either game, I nominate this week's fumble as worse if only because the Texans had already scored. At least they were only down 7-0 a week ago.

But back to the bullying for the moment. The Texans are tied with the most scoring points in first quarters this season. That means they're a fast starter. The Browns are at the bottom of that stat. The Texans lived up to their billing, so did the Browns.

Starting their opening drive at their 18-yard line, quarterback Matt Schaub opened the game with four laser-like pass completions. All that did was loosen up a defense that was geared toward trying to stop the best two-back running combination in the league since Kevin Mack and Earnest Byner shared a Browns' backfield a generation or so ago The Texans combo of Ben Tate and Arian Foster came into the game with over 500 yards each and finished Sunday's game both with over 600 yards each, well on their way to each having well in excess of 1,000 yard seasons.

After Schaub completed the four passes, Foster started first, running for a mere 11 yards on his first three carries. Then Tate cleaned up with a 6 yard run and then a 27 yarder for the touchdown. If the Browns defense fashioned themselves as an elite unit, it's top 5 ranking feeding that ego, they shouldn't any longer. Tate's two runs were so easy it was as if the defensive line had failed to report in for the series.

After the Ogbonnaya fumble, which gave the Texans the ball right back on the Cleveland 28 yard line, Foster gashed his way to even more yards before setting up a way-too-easy quarterback draw by Schaub that immediately put the Texans up 14-0.

The Browns, as usual, were resigned to more of the same sort of offense. No red zone penetration until the game long since over, the Texans protecting their side of the field as if contained the best playground equipment, the Browns were reduced to their usual mode of scoring, Phil Dawson 50+ yard field goals, of which he had two, until the late meaningless touchdown.

The Texans next touchdown was a model of everything the Browns' offense wants to be when it grows up, assuming they want to build a credible running game. Tate had runs of 24 and 9 yards on the drive and Foster finished it off with a 19 yard run directly up the middle and he wasn't even touched. Consider how improbably that should be. He went through Ahtyba Rubin, Jabaal Sheard, Phil Taylor, D'Qwell Jackson and Scott Fujita and then Mike Adams. None of them were even close to laying so much as a glove on Foster.

Now before going any further with dissecting this mess, let's say a word or two about Lawrence Vickers and his impact on the game. It was huge. Vickers was either extracting revenge against a Browns regime he barely knew or just continuing to re-assert himself as the league's best blocking back, which he surely is. I predict many will suggest it's the former when in truth it really was the latter.

It really should give fans pause to consider exactly why general manager Tom Heckert let Vickers get away so easily. Sure, rookie Owen Marecic came into the league with a good reputation, a young man's Vickers if you will. So that means the decision the Browns' management made was financial, banking on the theory that Marecic was simply a cheaper version of Vickers.

Well, he is a cheaper version of Vickers, no denying that. He's also an inferior version of Vickers. Marecic has done little to help spring a moribund Browns' running attack. Vickers was blowing holes through the Browns like he was wielding machetes. It's very fair to suggest that the Browns' running game would be much better with Vickers than Marecic. Not great, certainly, but far better. Which means that the Browns offense would be much better with Vickers than Marecic. Again, not great, but far better.

Sorry, back to the game. The Texans looked as if they might completely blow the game open when Jacoby Jones returned a punt 50 yards to the Cleveland 40 late in the first half. But Schaub was picked off by Jackson on the next play. Then it got interesting.

With the ball sitting on their own 42-yard line, Colt McCoy and the Browns offense put together one of those great drives we've all come to love. No gain. Incomplete. False start. Decent run. No gain. Another false start. Sack. McCoy running for his life, throwing the ball up for grabs and having it intercepted. This one was by Quintin Demps who looked like he would return it for a touchdown. But with only the kind of luck the Browns have these days, McCoy was able to force Demps out of bounds with two seconds remaining, just enough time for Neil Rackers to kick a field goal to give the Texans a 24-3 lead.

The second half was mostly an exercise in playing out the string with the Browns again reduced to putting together a drive in the fourth quarter that gave the score a measure of respectability their play didn't otherwise merit. Taking over at their own 36 yard line, McCoy was able to effectively move the team down field and in position where he was able to find Josh Cribbs on a 2-yard pass for a touchdown. But let's be fair to the Texans. Defensive coordinator Wade Phillips had stopped blitzing perhaps out of a measure of respect for the fact that McCoy's family was in attendance and to that point McCoy had been beaten like a bass drum in a Memorial Day parade.

For those interested at all in the statistical battle, all you really need to know that it was as lopsided as you would expect. McCoy threw for 146 yards, most of which came near the end of the game, as usual. He was also sacked 4 times and generally knocked around like a bowling pin, also as usual. Ogbonnaya and his practice squad buddy Thomas Clayton averaged all of two yards per carry. In total, the Browns had under 200 yards total offense.

The Texans had nearly 400 yards. Foster and Tate were responsible for most of it as each ran for well in excess of 100 yards and that was pretty much the story of the game.

Still, as bad as it was, and brother it was bad, there still was a nice little play made by defensive lineman Phil Taylor on a play that wasn't. With just over two minutes remaining, it appeared initially as if linebacker Chris Gocong had successfully stripped the ball from third string running back Derrick Ward. The ball was picked up by Taylor who wasn't so much running as looking to deliver a forearm shiv to anyone who wanted to get in his way, which he did. Of course he lost the ball in the process and while the Browns recovered it didn't matter because the call was reversed anyway.

Besides the Taylor play, the other redeeming feature of the game is that it did manage to answer some lingering questions. As we established at the outset, not all fumbles on your first offensive play of the game are created equal, though they all have the same effect when they're committed by the Browns. We also have established what a mistake it was not to sign Vickers. We now firmly know that it really doesn't matter who the Browns play. Their offense will invariably look the same. Finally, we're starting to realize that for the third straight season 4 wins could very well be this team's high water mark, which means another high draft pick just not high enough to garner Andrew Luck.

The Browns do have a chance, a real honest to gosh legitimate chance, to find that high water mark when they take on head coach Pat Shurmur's old team, the St. Louis Rams, next Sunday at home. They then have Jacksonville at home the following week, so that's another chance as well. And they better take advantage of one of those two teams, and preferably both, because the second half of the schedule has all the makings of a disaster with two games each against Pittsburgh and Baltimore still to come. If you cringe at what you witnessed against the 49ers and Texans, you may want to just avert your eyes all together when the remaining games are played starting later this month.