After being caught in a black hole for a few weeks, Kibble and Bits is back this week. I know sometimes I can cram too many thoughts into these articles so I won't get into great detail on all the games I have notes for, but I will give the cliff notes version so I can at least acknowledge them. I will also discuss this past Sunday's win against the Jacksonville Jaguars using my normal format and share my thoughts on a few other topics that interest me around the league.

Let's jump right in.

Houston Texans Game

The Browns were in for a tough time facing Houston and the early fumble by Chris Ogbonnaya crushed any hopes of keeping the game close.

The young Browns team was simply outclassed in that game and the Texans coaches drew up a brilliant game plan. For example, to start the game the Texans ran 4 straight passing plays when everyone was expecting them to run the ball down Cleveland's poorly ranked run defense's throat. Once the Texans racked up 38 yards and got the young defense a bit confused and hesitant, they finished the drive with 6 straight runs and scored the game's first TD.

The Texans then got the ball back on the Browns first offensive snap after a fumble and once again scored, allowing the Texans to play downhill the rest of the game and with their running game the Browns became easy targets.

One game note that really jumped off of my notepad was a comment I wrote on how the Texans attacked the Browns in the passing game. Specifically, one of the best parts of the Texans game plan was how they attacked the Brown's LBs on passing attempts.

With star WR Andre Johnson out and the Browns CBs having an advantage on the outside, Houston threw passes designed to attack the zone in front of and behind the Brown's LBs. They layered routes so there was a pass catcher in the short zone in front of the LBs and some in the intermediate zone just behind the LB. If the LB was quick in their drops they hit the short player, if the Browns were late or jumped the underneath route they hit the intermediate zone behind them.

It is amazing how a good running game can make passing so much easier.

St. Louis Rams Game

This Rams game was about as frustrating as it can get. If you read my 'Shame on Shurmur' article you already know how I feel about the ending of that game so I won't beat a dead horse.

In general the Browns lost that game because they were 0-4 in the redzone (besides the coaching snafu). They scored 4 FGs instead of getting TDs and it caught up to them in the end. The defense started off slow and allowed too many rushing yards but holding their opponents to 13 points and under 300 combined yards should have been enough for a win.

Schematically this is the first game where you begin to see some of the attributes I saw on film that impressed me with Pat Shurmur's offense in St. Louis. He did a much better job at attacking the defense's weaknesses and he also had some good plays designed to beat their coverage schemes. Coach Shurmur obviously had a high comfort level in his ability to game plan against a familiar opponent and it showed.

The Browns used wild cat, a double reverse throwback, and two end-around running plays to WRs. We also saw the most exciting play of the year which was a designed deep pass to Greg Little that actually resulted in a 52 yard throw and catch with most of the yards being gained on

the throw itself.

The game also showcased a better understanding of the type of running plays this offensive line executes well. There were clearly better running lanes and with a better guy running the ball the rushing totals could have been much more.

Jacksonville Jaguars Game….Why the Browns Won

I will stay true to the format I have been using and talk about the positives because Cleveland won the game.

The Browns won the Jacksonville game because they found a way to score TDs in the redzone and they held the Jaguars scoreless for two of the four quarters of the game.

By scoring that 2nd quarter TD to match the Jaguars 2nd quarter TD it allowed the Browns to play at least on the same plane as their opponent which enabled the offense to maintain balance. The ability to use the running game in the second half is something that you should never underestimate. As the defense tires you usually begin to see holes open up just like you did against the Seahawks at home and again on Sunday against the Jaguars.

Once the lanes begin to open up most RBs in the NFL can get yards in chunks and really good ones will put points on the board. Chris Ogbonnaya had his longest run (40 yards) in the 4th quarter and ended up with 115 yards for the game. Those yards can really make a running game look productive on the stat sheet as well as create scoring opportunities that can gain or extend leads. On Sunday that run helped to pad the rushing stats and instantly put the Browns in FG range.

I understand that old faithful, Phil Dawson, missed the kick but the run was the reason why we were in the position to attempt a lead extending FG in the first place.

The defense did a good job of denying the explosive Jaguars RB Maurice Jones-Drew big plays and not allowing the pro bowl RB many chunk plays. The longest play he had on Sunday was 14 yards and that is difficult to do with a player as explosive as Jones-Drew, especially when he touches the ball 25 times like he did against the Browns.

Schematically you saw the defense bring a few more pressures than normal to test the rookie QB Blaine Gabbert. I saw a few zone blitzes as well as LB pressures. The secondary was its usual self, which means they got their hands on balls and created 5 defended passes.

Offensively you saw once again that Pat Shurmur does not have a problem with sticking to the running game if the score dictates he can. The Browns ran the ball 16 times in the 2nd half while passing the ball 11 times, and that is after the running game netted only 21 yards on 12 attempts in the first half. Some may say it is because he doesn't trust QB Colt McCoy and the passing game but I honestly think he just understands that passing is so much easier when the defense is off balance and splitting time between having heavy feet on running plays and fast feet on passing plays.

Game/Player Notes

*RB Chris Ogbonnaya really struggles in pass protection. He was totally lost in the Houston game and routinely was the cause of QB Colt McCoy being under duress. He is a good going out for routes but he is totally lost finding the right guy to block. If you noticed in the recent games he was going out in routes more and TEs were used as extra protection. You also saw the Browns using some empty formations in the Jacksonville game to spread the defense which created situations where at least if Colt could identify the unblocked player he could use the appropriate hot read.

The biggest problem with a RB missing a blocking assignment on passing play is that the QB mentally accounts for the defensive player being blocked and doesn't think the hot read is needed so it looks like he is holding the ball too long, but actually he is just letting the play develop like it was designed.

As a runner Ogbonnaya is getting more comfortable with the offense so you see his tempo picking up and he is starting to use instincts instead of thoughts. No matter how comfortable he

is though he is still really slow. Although he is quick footed and gets to his top end speed quickly, that top end is slow and he can't run away from defenders. I think that was on display with his 40 yard run in the 4th quarter against Jacksonville….that play is a TD for most starting RBs in the NFL, but he actually ended up running out of bounds because he was caught.

*QB Colt McCoy is getting more comfortable in the offense. It is pretty evident when you watch his accuracy. He is not grossly overthrowing many WRs anymore. His placement on throws still needs a lot of work but at least he is making more balls catchable.

When it comes to accuracy you can look at QBs in the same light you would a pitcher in baseball. When they are thinking a ton and aiming instead of throwing, balls will more times than not miss the target.

McCoy still isn't making great throws on a regular basis but the absolute stinkers are being minimized. I have to admit I was really impressed with his accuracy on the deep ball to WR Greg Little in the Jacksonville game. He put that ball on the money and I think a large part of that was because he had time to set his feet and deliver.

I was looking at numbers and it is hard to believe that Colt McCoy is on pace for a season that will put him in the top 10 best seasons for a Browns QB. Not bad for a first year starter, but will it earn him another season? Only time will tell but I wouldn't take bets just yet.

*OL- I have a couple of notes involving the offensive line. The young guards Jason Pinkston and Shawn Lauvao have taken turns struggling. First Lauvao was stinking up the joint then Pinkston started to struggle but now they are both playing pretty well. The stunts that defensive fronts have been killing us with are now getting picked up and McCoy is getting more time to throw.

They have also benefited from play caller Pat Shurmur having a better understanding of the type of running plays they execute best and calling those plays. I have seen running lanes all year that RBs were missing but now there is clearly more lanes to find.

Joe Thomas is having a good/not great season. I have seen more mental breakdowns then I have ever seen from the all pro LT. He also is just getting outright beat more than I have seen in previous years. No player is, or can be, perfect but he has always been Cleveland's most consistent performer and this year he has struggled at times.

Center Alex Mack has been pretty steady and he is getting better at choosing which guard needs help. If you guys have been reading my articles you already know what I think of Tony Pashos, the Browns RT…..it seems like every play he is blink away from disaster and he is not getting the push that he earned his reputation on in the running game. I think the injuries have wiped out a big chunk of his power and it shows watching the games.

As a group the o-line has played well over the last two games and they seem to finally be a cohesive unit.

*The WR play has gotten better because the rookie Greg Little is getting better every week. His routes are better and you actually see him getting some separation. Against the Jaguars you really saw his improvement on the deeper out patterns where he was able to make his cuts and actually accelerated out of the break. His hands are still inconsistent but they are getting better and everyone should keep in mind his limited reps at the position when evaluating his hands.

Three plays stick out at me over the last 3 games. The pass down the left sideline in the Houston game where he jumped, hung in the air, and snatched the ball over the top of the DB was a great example of his talent. The next play was, of course, the deep ball against St. Louis. He relaxed and caught that pass with ease instead of getting excited and double catching the ball like he does sometimes when he is trying to make a big play. The last play was the 'almost' TD in Sunday's game against Jacksonville. That was almost a great catch and if he would have rolled with his momentum instead of against it I think he would have caught it clean. He is coming along and seems to be getting better which is all you can ask for a player with the limited experience that he has.

Jordan Norwood should get more looks as he showed off what he can do with the ball in his hands on Sunday when he juked his way to a 50 yard gain. But what happened to him at the end of that play……he kind of just tripped over his own feet and ended up on the ground, it was a good play but could easily been a great play.

I think Josh Cribbs is turning the corner on becoming a better offensive weapon than he is a return guy. He can do so many things on offense and he makes really good plays in traffic. I think I really do consider him a solid play-making WR. He hasn't returned a ball for a TD since 2009 and it looks like his vision is still there but some of his explosion is gone which makes him a good but not great returner. Power and vision have always been his best attributes, but before he had enough speed to combine with those qualities to make him elite, and now I am not sure.

He is still an insanely determined and an extremely effective hunter on the kickoff team and, as a matter of fact if you haven't already followed him on any kickoffs, focus on him during some kicks and watch how physical and relentless he is…..like I have said before, as a coach you want 53 guys who attack the game like he does.

*LB play continues to be dominated by MLB D'Qwell Jackson. He continues to show all the same instincts and movement skills that earned him defensive player of the month early in the season. OLB Scott Fujita shows up every once in a while but he is past his prime and doesn't make many impact plays. OLB Chris Gocong makes some impact plays every couple of games but he disappears for way too long and in general is not an impact LB.

He struggles sifting through traffic when plays are opposite side, and when runs come to his side most of the time he does a good job of reading and acknowledging the run… he just doesn't get through blocks to make plays. Sometimes it looks like his sole goal is to blow the guard up instead of actually making the tackle. The good weakside LBs manage to maintain their responsibilities while making tackles and that is something Gocong struggles to do.

As a position group I am really disappointed in the LB play. I was spoiled watching Browns football growing up, we always had impact players at the position, and that is a position that the Browns haven't put enough into since their return to football.

Remember that D'Qwell Jackson is a free agent this year, the Browns need to bring him back and spend some money or draft picks upgrading the LBs this offseason.

*Usama Young has done a good job filling in for T.J. Ward….in the Jacksonville game he had 10 tackles….ask yourself if we have missed a beat since Ward has been out and the answer will be no. T.J. is a good player but nowhere near the level of Joe Haden.

Speaking of the secondary, what is the deal with the secondary not catching the ball? We get our hands on a ton of balls and only have 6 picks all year… teams don't throw a ton against us but you have to get turnovers when they are there to take.

Joe Haden in particular has been great in coverage but has struggled in his second year to squeeze the ball when he gets his hands on it. I know he has superior ball skills so it is probably just a phase, but it would be nice to see him get some interceptions because he is actually one of the best threats to score on our team.

*The defensive line is playing solid but is struggling to make impact plays as of late. It has been nice to see Phil Taylor fight through the wall he was behind and making plays again. He is eating up the one on one situations he is getting and making tackles again. In fact, in the Rams game he was making such an impact they actually switched the blocking scheme and started double teaming him instead of Ahytba Rubin.

Speaking of Rubin, he is going through a rough time right now. Just like facing all those double teams caught up with him last year, he is starting to slow after facing constant double teams this year. The coaches should have learned from him tiring in the second half last year that he would need a rotation to play at a high level the entire season. He and Taylor were both overworked early in the season and I think it caught up to both of them. I am just glad it didn't happen at the same time.

Backup DT Scott Paxson flourished in week 11 with extended playing time and if he continues to play well it will do wonders in this latter part of the season to keep Rubin and Taylor fresh.

Rookie Jabaal Sheard has slowed also, his get-off is much slower as of late and the thigh issue he has been dealing with seems to have zapped some of his explosiveness. Look for him to start wreaking havoc again once he is closer to full speed.

Jayme Mitchell getting benched is for multiple reasons in my opinion. One is the fact that he looks like he is in slow motion right now. He is not consistent against the run or pass. The second reason is so the Browns can get an accurate opinion on Emmanuel Stephens. In my

opinion the Browns decided Mitchell was not going to be resigned the minute they moved Sheard to LDE. In today's NFL the RDE has to be a really good pass rusher and Jayme Mitchell isn't. I expect one of the top priorities this offseason will be the RDE position.

*In looking at the coaching staff you can really tell that the defensive staff is a quality group. That side of the ball boasts three guys on the staff who have been coordinators at the NFL level and two of those guys have been head coaches. Yes, I know that in general we give up too many rushing yards, but when was the last time a Browns defense was leading the league in any defensive category except most TDs scored against at this point in the season. Dick Jauron has a really good feel for his players and he seems to know what offenses like to do because he calls a great game.

It really says a lot when you have the number five ranked defense in total yards while ranking 29th against the run. This staff's experience allows them to create great game plans which make up for the lack of overall play makers on that side of the ball. As the talent upgrades on that side of the ball I expect the defense to be extremely dominate.

Offensively the last two games have started to show more of what I saw from Coach Pat Shurmur's St. Louis team. I am not sure if he is getting a better understanding of the running plays that his offensive line blocks best or what, but the line is opening up holes against solid run defenses and the passing game is featuring more plays that substitute as runs.

You also see some end-around and misdirection plays that are also helping the running game by keeping backside defenders at home. You have also been seeing the passing game extend itself. The 50 yard play deep pass against St. Louis was followed with 8 passing plays that gained double digit yards in the Jacksonville game and both are examples of taking steps in the right direction for this offense.

Going forward look for more passes designed to attack the seams in the zone defenses teams are playing behind their pressure packages. We have seen WR Greg Little in back to back weeks make some plays while attacking the inside seams of the defense. He has run enough short routes from his slot position that teams are starting to expect them which relaxes the deep and intermediate zones in the middle of the field.

Pat Shurmur wears two coaching hats and, although his offense is finally showing signs of life, the head coach portion of his job crashed and burned in week 10 against the Rams but I do give him credit for rallying his team for a victory in week 11. As I said earlier, you already know my thoughts on the subject and I hope he learns from the debacle and doesn't repeat it.

Around the league

**Ndamukong Suh is the classic type of player you hate playing against but absolutely want on your team. The guy is border line out of control on every play and that is part of what makes him a great defensive player.

The rabid dawg mindset that you need to have in order to be a dominate defensive player is something I am sure all the great ones struggle at times to control, but Suh needs to find his balance.

**I am glad I didn't start drinking the Buffalo Bills Kool-Aid. They are playing horrible football right now and I guarantee upper management is second guessing the contract they gave QB Ryan Fitzpatrick after his hot start.

**With the way the Texans run the ball and the way their defense is playing, I doubt they will miss a beat without Matt Schaub. Matt Leinart's skill set is perfect for the play action passing game the Texans were using and if WR Andre Johnson is anything above 80% the Texans will make the playoffs for the first time in franchise history.

You can say what you want about Wade Phillips and his head coaching ability, and I would probably agree with every word of it, but that guy is an outstanding defensive coordinator and anyone who says anything else doesn't have a clue.

**Personally I think the Oakland Raiders will end up being praised for their controversial trade that acquired QB Carson Palmer. He will do wonders for those talented young WRs and, together with RB Darren McFadden mixed in, the Raiders will have one of the most explosive offenses in the league during the next few years. The division they play in is crying out for a

team to take control and I think Palmer and the Raiders will be that team.

I also think the Bengals are one of the best young teams in the league and I think the extra draft picks will make them even better in the coming years. I can only image what the knife cutting atmosphere would be like if the Bengals traveled to Oakland to face Carson Palmer in a playoff game. Both organizations would want that game so bad the adrenaline would last all game.

**I am keeping an eye on Atlanta because we have their first round pick next year, I see that they are 6-4 with 6 to go but only two of their remaining 6 opponents have winning records right now. I was hoping they finished worse than 10-6 so I will be paying close attention to their games during the final stretch of the season.

**I must admit I was impressed that the Bengals were within a TD of both the Steelers and Ravens the last two weeks. The Browns better come to play this week or the results will be much worse than it was in week 1.

That's all for now Browns fans. Enjoy the game and as always……Go Browns!.....Oh I almost forgot…..Michigan I hope you suck on Saturday….Go Bucks!

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