With the offseason here I have spent most of my time focusing on the business of that offseason…evaluating the roster, taking a sneak peek at free agency that begins on March 13th, and of course doing player research for the draft. But I also wanted to take a minute to get a K & B out because I have some random Browns thoughts as well as some topics from around the league I wanted to discuss.

Brad Childress

If you read my Top Dawg Awards article you already know how I feel about the coaching performance of Pat Shurmur this past season so I don't need to get into all that… I want to talk about some of the positive aspects that newly hired offensive coordinator Brad Childress can bring to the table.

The very first thing I want to talk about is his head coaching experience. With the addition of Childress, the Browns now have 3 other coaches besides Shurmur that have NFL head coaching experience, and personally I think Shurmur and the organization should be commended for surrounding the young head coach with that type of experience.

All of the coaches with HC experience provide a great resource for the young coach to continue his growing process. The ability for him to ask questions to these guys about things they did that failed, combined with the ability for the coach to ask the team President about some things he did that worked should provide coach Shurmur with enough information to get it right here in Cleveland.

From a front office perspective if he can't figure out how to get the job done with all of the

resources he has around him there is absolutely no excuse and none should be accepted.

From purely a coaching standpoint, Childress was in a senior position when Shurmur worked with the Eagles so I imagine Childress was actually doing a lot of mentoring of coach Shurmur. And from a trust and relationship standpoint that history should make their relationship here in Cleveland a cohesive one.

As a head coach who is an offensive mind you have to trust whomever is creating the game plan if it is not you who is preparing it, because if that trust is not there on game day then you won't listen to the feedback coming from your headset. That's a valuable resource wasted.

Brad Childress understands exactly what Pat Shurmur is looking for when he is studying an opposing team, and when it comes to recommendations you need to be able to believe in and buy into what the guy upstairs is telling you.

If Pat Shurmur is going to call the plays on game day and Childress is going to be the one predominately creating the game plan, it has to flow together. Childress performed the exact same role for Andy Reid in Philadelphia so he knows exactly how to function in that capacity.

As far as the effect of Childress on the field, you can expect the offense to be disciplined and precise, two elements that were missing last season. Childress is a stickler for detail and even though Shurmur is detail oriented he has to be head coach before he is anything else. Sometimes that means his attention needs to be in other places besides the offensive meeting room.

You can also expect to see more down field passing. Brad Childress doesn't have a problem taking shots down the field and if he has some influence in the calls on game day he will be giving recommendations that involve getting the ball downfield.

Having an offensive coordinator he trusts will also allow Shurmur to focus a bit more on what initially got him his respect in the NFL and that is handling QBs. Coach Shurmur will have more time to mentor and develop a young QB. I am not sure what name will be on the back of the

jersey but unless the Browns pull off a veteran acquisition, the QB will be young and in need of some serious mentoring.

Scheme

One of the common things I hear about the Browns defense this year is how the passing defense was only ranked high because the rushing defense was so poor and teams never passed the ball against us.

That simply isn't true.

There are other reasons besides the amount of rushing attempts against the Browns or passing attempts against them that gave the Browns their lofty ranking (2nd) in yards given up per game.

The first is scheme. The Browns used a scheme that heavily relied on a front four pass rush. Simply put if you are only sending 4 then that means there are 7 in coverage. More people in coverage….more difficult to complete passes.

Joe Haden being a really good cover CB is the second reason and helped significantly in teams having more struggles trying to throw against the Cleveland defense. Because he was so good, he often held opposing teams best WR to modest games and allowed combination coverage of their next best options.

The stats also back up the fact that the Browns were really good against the pass. They were 5th in yards allowed per completion…6th in net yards per pass attempt..10th in QB rating against…6th best in QB completion percentage against them, etc. As you can see, the Browns didn't fare

well against the pass simple because teams didn't do it a ton against them, they were also good when teams actually did attempt to pass.

One thing to point out also is the offense's inability to score points and how that contributed to the defenses low ranking in yards given up per game. The Browns actually were in the middle of the pack in the NFL when it came to how many yards the defense gave up per rushing attempt as they gave up 4.4 yards per attempt (ypa) which is tied for 14th. Teams accumulated so many yards in the running game because of the number of attempts against them….Cleveland was second in the league when it came to opposing team's rushing attempts.

The last stats I want to bring up is really the measure of the defense as a whole and shouldn't be forgotten. Even though the Browns ranked 30th in the league against the rush, they actually ranked 10th best in total yards and, more importantly, they ranked 5th in points scored against which is probably the most important stat of all.

The Browns had an awesome year on defense. Don't let the myth about the rushing yards allowed take away from the really good performance they put forth and most certainly don't throw out the great ranking of the pass defense because the Browns gave up a lot of rushing yards. The stats back up the fact that Cleveland was good against the pass…period.

Players

I will give my opinions on the roster performance and positional needs in some upcoming articles for the Feeling a Draft series. But I think everyone who watched this year can pretty much see that, other than a dire need that the Browns had last year along the defensive line, they have just about the same needs for this offseason as they did for 2011 offseason.

QB will continue to be a debate in this town until after the draft and watching the Browns QB play this past season only added fuel to that fire. Unless the Browns make a play for veteran help expect the heated conversations and speculations to continue until the NFL Draft is over and more than likely until the first snap of the 2012 season.

QB is a huge issue but I also want Browns fans to remember the rest of the team when thinking about the offseason. Who QBs the team will of course be a huge factor in how the 2012 season and future seasons turn out, but don't get blinders and think having "X" QB will be the only factor to getting to the top of the mountain. The Giants won that Super Bowl because they had the most talented team top to bottom, not just a QB playing great football.

**Phil Taylor

The word on the street is that some fans are questioning the Phil Taylor pick. I have read some posts asking if he was really worth the pick and I have seen people question whether or not he is going to be a bust with minimal impact like Gerard Warren (Big Money) was…….?

Honestly my first reaction to that type of commentary is one of disgust. I really don't know what some fan's are using as a measuring stick because on every level you can measure a rookie DT …..Phil Taylor passed the test with flying colors.

Execution of the defense..check.

Production.. check.

Effort..check.

Health…check.

Taylor had a hell of a season period, let alone a rookie season. We don't run a "tampa 2" and the Browns aren't asking the guy to be Warren Sapp and just knife through defenders while getting up field to cause mayhem. The tackles have gap responsibilities that require the DTs to be more stout than mobile.

With that being said, do you realize that our rookie DT Phil Taylor, drafted with the 21st pick, was 8th in the entire league in tackles by defensive lineman (yes..DEs and DTs)…and there were only 2 DTs ahead of him in that category…. His teammate Ahtyba Rubin was in on 83 tackles, good for 2nd best, Bengals DT Domata Peko had 66 with 2.5 sacks, and Phil Taylor was the next DT with 59 tackles and 4 sacks.

The guy had a great year compared to any DT in the league production- wise and he is only a rookie. He hasn't 'earned' some diva nickname…he has not been a cancer in the locker room or on the field and he made impact plays and without a doubt pulled his end of the line.

Fans who are questioning the pick and his worth should slow down a bit and stop looking for high sack totals as a measuring stick. Actually, even those looking at sack totals should take a look at this year's stats. There wasn't one DT who even registered more than 7.5 sacks in the 2011 season.

Taylor had a good year and has shown no sign of being a slug. So why even question his future or the pick until you have reason? When you compare his numbers to other rookies that people may be talking more about you would see he more than held his own….more tackles than JJ Watt or Marcel Darius and only 1.5 sacks behind each of them. Phil Taylor is well on his way to being a quality DT in the league for years to come….please don't lump him into any categories expect the ones he earns.

Super Bowl

Since the Super Bowl is over and the 2011 season is officially in the books, I want to take a minute to discuss some random thoughts on the game.

As a Browns fan craving a true franchise QB be cautious that you don't just see Eli Manning as the reason the Giants won that game. There is no doubt Manning played well and made some great throws down the stretch but he is throwing to some pretty good WRs…. The Giants averaged 4.1 yards a carry on the ground…. and their defense held the Patriots to 17 points

while got 10 hits including 2 sacks on Tom Brady.

Their formula for winning had more than one variable in the equation so please don't forget that. I understand that the variables are not weighted evenly but look past the fact that it isn't a one man show.

The Giants formula of having a franchise QB combined with special weapons and solid offensive line play on offense mixed well with their elite defensive front and great coaching and won them the title after finishing 9-7 during the regular season, but don't look at the one position without acknowledging the rest of the variables…is just isn't fair in a team sport like football.

**As far as the game itself, as a fan that wasn't watching my favorite team playing in the game, that type of game is exactly what you want to see from a championship contest. That was one hell of a football game and the league needed to go out with a finish like that after starting the season with that ridiculous lockout.

The game really went a long way in showing the difference between winning and losing in the NFL is really about making mistakes and a team's ability to capitalize when the other team makes those mistakes. The Patriots made the most mistakes and failed to capitalize on the mistakes (fumbles) the Giants made.

The Giants forced a safety and then turned the great field position from the free kick associated with the safety into 7 more points. The Giants first 9 points can be attributed to a mistake by Tom Brady which enabled the Giants to begin the scoring.

The Giants later forced another Tom Brady mistake by intercepting a pass at the start of the 4th quarter. The turnover didn't lead to points but it did lead to NY being able to run off 5 minutes of time that ended up being a valuable commodity at the end of the game when the Patriots ran out of time while attempting to score.

The Patriots had a few opportunities in that game to capitalize on Giant fumbles but they either failed to fall on the ball or committed an infraction when they did fall on it (12 men on the field).

The Giants made game changing plays when they had an opportunity and the Patriots failed to do so when they had their shots.

It's nice when the biggest game of the year turns out to be the epic battle that you envision before the game…..sometimes the hype is worth it and that was definitely the case on Super Bowl Sunday.

**In my opinion one of the cooler stories in the game dealt with the two players (one on each side) who were at the game representing an NFL team as cancer survivors. As a football player there is nothing better than playing in the Super Bowl but imagine the feeling you would have being at that game representing a NFL team after waging a cancer fight. I honestly can't imagine that those two players (Mark Herzlich and Marcus Cannon) saw themselves in that position after their cancer diagnosis but it was great for cancer patients all over the world to see.

If a person can beat that type of sickness and get their body back into the condition it needs to be in order to compete at the NFL level….it should give cancer patients all over a jolt of hope that they can beat the disease and live a normal life again.

**Consider me floored at the cost of a Super Bowl ticket. I can't believe the average cost of a ticket being a couple thousand dollars. I guess I never really had a clue how much revenue that game generates.

Around the league

**From the standpoint of raising a family, the coaching profession in NFL seems pretty brutal. We have seen so many coaching changes this offseason it makes me think back to when I was I the military and having thoughts on raising a family.

The thought of the stress of constantly moving or not being around while trying to raise a family was really the only reason I got out, so I partly understand the stress some of these families face constantly moving around the country chasing jobs. Some families don't even move with

the coach and that is probably even more stressful on the family. In general NFL coaches get paid well but don't think it is all peaches and cream being an NFL coach….it does have some downside.

**Consider me a fan who doesn't understand how Drew Brees didn't win the league MVP award. I don't understand how you crush the passing yards record, lead the league in TDs while leading your team to a 13-3 record and finish second…. Consider me the minority if you want but his season was historic for Brees and he should have been MVP.

**The topic of TD celebrations came up in the playoffs when Vernon Davis was penalized for standing on a camera podium after scoring….but I never realized the "Lambeaux Leap" was grandfathered in as a celebration that didn't get penalized for using a prop during a celebration. Honestly, I think that is garbage. A rule like that should be a rule no matter what. I hate the celebration rules to begin with but a prop is a prop.

The subject also got me to thinking about something else…..Why isn't giving the ball to a fan after a TD a penalty? Isn't the fan a prop? I honestly hate the way the NFL handles TD celebrations and I really hate the fact that in a sport that prides itself on being a team game, you get a penalty if you celebrate too much with a teammate….you ever watch a soccer player celebrate and taunt after a score? That is the most followed sport in the world and the NFL should back off from their ridiculous stances and stop using kids as an excuse to be stiffs.

Let the boneheads be hated and the gentlemen be loved as the good guys…love and hate is part of sports and makes things a bit more interesting.

**I am a believer in Jeff Fisher as a head coach. I think he will do wonders in St. Louis and the Rams will be relevant no matter what city they end up in.

Speaking of other head coaches in the NFL, do you think Rex Ryan will finally let his team's play do the talking or what?.....Yeah, me neither.

**I was adamant for the last few months that if Peyton Manning was healthy enough to play the

Colts would not pick Andrew Luck with the first pick because he wouldn't help them win anytime soon….well it seems not only was I wrong but he may be healthy enough to play and might actually get released.

Luck better stay healthy and produce big or else the Colts will go from one of the most stable franchises in the last decade back to the undesirable place called no man's land that our beloved Browns have lived in for many years….getting this wrong is not an option.

**My last thought is about the San Diego Chargers. I honestly don't have a clue how GM A.J. Smith or HC Norv Turner have gotten a pass all of these years and continue to stay employed with the organization. It only adds to my confusion that this is the same organization that was willing to allow GM A.J. Smith to fire HC Marty Schottenheimer after a 14-2 season.

The Chargers have been chronic underachievers on the field and their front office hasn't brought in a coach or players who have been capable of turning it around. I never wish the unemployment line upon people but they shouldn't be with that team this year… that is simple and true.

Finally Browns fans, embrace the offseason and attempt to cleanse the dirt from the 2011 season. Welcome in any new players and wave good bye to some of the fat they will trim…do whatever you need to do in order to re-energize and be on the watch for future articles, especially the Feeling a Draft series as we prepare for free agency and the April NFL Draft…Go Browns!