All right Browns fans, the emotion of the draft has died and the Browns are coming off of their three day rookie minicamp, they have started their offseason workout program and OTA sessions, and they are nearing their 3 day full team minicamp. What better time for me to shake off my NFL draft hangover and get back on the keyboard?

The first thing on my mind is OTA and minicamp fluff. We all miss the game during this time of the year but please don't get too infatuated with stories of success or failure during these practices and camps.

As far as the rookies go, remember that all these players represent the best football players of their generation, so having good practices against air is expected and looking like a good football player isn't a mirage because they really are good players.

It's nice to see the draft picks in action and it's a great opportunity to see some players in orange and brown again but don't get carried away with stories that claim every rookie looks like

a star because, in all reality, other than DB s and WRs going against each other and QBs getting on the same page as their WRs you won't get to see how players are really doing until training camp when the pads go on. Football will always be about a player's performance in pads against other players. Not practices against air when everyone is wearing shorts and helmets.

I am not saying don't get excited about adding talented, young players. I am just saying don't get carried away.

With that being said, there are some definite things to watch out for from the small clips you see and the bits of information that can flow after these practices in shorts that you should pay attention to. For example, the biggest things you can look for, in my opinion, are body changes, health statuses, and what I call "player cred".

"Player cred" is when players talk positively about other players without being led to that player by a question or comment. Typically if a player is doing impressive things during these practices or camps other players will notice and talk about it. When it comes to playing time it is up to the coaches, but players can leave huge hints on who is putting in the work and also making an impact plays during practice.

Players giving other players credit without being led is generally a great way to gauge which guys are bringing it on the practice field, so pay close attention to the questions and answers the players give about the training going on.

When it comes to body type and attendance you will begin to have solid evidence of the type of player and teammate a guy wants to be when these reports start circulating. For example, the reports of Greg Little leaning out is a clear indication of the type of player he wants to become.

Please notice I said 'wants to become' and I didn't say 'will become' because, although the first step of young NFL players trying to improve is gaining an understanding of what it will take from a dedication standpoint, there still are no guarantees of greatness just because you are willing.

As a Browns fan, it is great to hear that Little seems to understand what it is going to take nutritionally and he is willing to make changes to his body in order to become a better NFL WR.

On the field, becoming leaner should help Little get in and out of his breaks better, become more explosive, and it should also help increase his stamina. So it is a great sign that Little seems to be on the correct path to success, because based on off season activity (or lack of) at the position it is clear management is expecting him to be a #1 WR in the NFL.

Attendance in the off season program really shows dedication to your teammates more than anything. Most players who don't go through the offseason program and work out on their own are in good shape from working out in whatever environment they have chosen over the team facility, so getting in shape isn't the biggest asset of the off season program.

The brotherhood and relationships established by going through those workouts with the players on your team, combined with the extra time with the coaching staff, is the big benefit of the program.

Sometimes athletes can confuse simply working out and staying in shape with dedication to your team and teammates when in fact they are two totally different things. You can be in the best shape of your life but that has nothing to do with forming good bonds with your team and, although I understand that sometimes the business side of football can get in the way with establishing that bond, players should be there with their teammates whenever possible, because once you have missed the opportunity you can't get the time back.

Let's move on to other things on my mind.

Post Draft Thoughts

**When it comes to the draft, you shouldn't be too surprised when top rated players end up failing to make it big in the NFL. I think sometimes as fans we lose sight of the fact that success in the league is more than just talent and from the outside looking in we can't see all of the information and variables that can figure in a player's failure or success.

I also think we forget that the same process occurs when players go to college on full rides to division one schools. Those players come out of high school as the best in the country at their positions, but for various reasons a lot of them fail to make a mark once they get to college.

There are well over 10,000 kids on scholarship for football throughout the country in division one schools alone and less than 10% of those kids will get a true NFL shot. And of those, only a small percentage of those who make it initially will get to their second contracts. The equation to being a great player in the league will have multiple variables for success, so just because a player has talent doesn't guarantee he will be a star in the league and that is a big reason why the draft process is so extensive and goes well beyond popping in a tape for film study.

**Effect of Trent Richardson- If you match the ability Richardson showed at Alabama with his desire and work ethic I think it is fair to say, barring injury, he will have a good statistical year in 2012 but I caution people who think he alone is the "answer" to the offenses problems.

Richardson could very well be like Maurice Jones-Drew from last year, Steven Jackson from years past, and every other great RB in the game who has put up good/great statistics for bad teams.

Yards and points don't necessarily go hand in hand, nor do good RBs and good offenses, so although I agree with management when it comes to Richardson's potential to produce at a high level in the NFL, I disagree with those that say the offense will be good because he is good.

**Filling in for Taylor- When people get to see 3rd round pick John Hughes and begin to compare him with Phil Taylor it will give them a much better appreciation for the year Taylor had last year and the type of player he is.

Hughes and Wynn competing for playing time until Taylor gets back is the best thing that could have happened to two players that have a history of a motor than runs hot and cold. I really think if they would have come in knowing that they were relegated to the bench the majority of the game it could have ended up in two players content on going through the motions like backups sometimes do, but with each of these players now knowing that there is a starting

position up for grabs until Taylor returns…….that is great motivation for them both.

You can say what you want about competing for a roster spot but it doesn't even come close to competing for a starting spot. If one or both of these players can understand the type of effort it takes in the NFL for trench players to excel this injury could turn out to have been for the better in terms of long term DT play for the Browns.

And just to clarify, the reason I said watching the other two players will make us respect Taylor more is simply about ability. At 335lbs Taylor is a DT who is as stout as they come, but who also has good agility for someone his size. He has the ability to hold his ground and then shed offensive lineman which is a quality not many DTs have.

Hughes is stout at the point of attack but he is 30lbs lighter and doesn't shed blockers well, so although he will be a handful to move out of the way he doesn't have the skill set to be as productive as Taylor was. Wynn is going to be a great nickel player early because he has cat-like quickness for a DT but he doesn't have the best anchor so he will struggle against double teams.

The more I think about it I really think Hughes will get the bulk of playing time and instead of playing left and right tackle like Cleveland did last year I think we will see Rubin playing the under tackle when Hughes is in the lineup and when Wynn is in I think Rubin will play the NT.

One more thing to note in reference to rookie John Hughes: I have heard people say that he faced a lot of double teams in college but in reality that isn't as true as you think. He wasn't even the best DT on his team. His teammate Derek Wolfe was the 4th player selected in the second round of this year's draft and he is the one who was a dominating player, winning conference player of the year while posting 70 tackles, 21.5 of those for a loss, and 9.5 sacks. If you think teams were doubling Hughes and letting Wolfe dominate one on ones that just isn't true.

Thank God the injury happened to Taylor as early as it did because he is a valuable player on the defense and won't be replaced by any one player. It will have to be a combination of players, and more than likely an adjustment on the scheme, in order to compensate for his absence.

**Travis Benjamin- People who know me are already familiar with the fact I am not high on Travis Benjamin. I hope I am wrong about his NFL career but I will tell you why I have reservations.

I am confused as to which role he will be used. For a player with his speed and small stature I would expect him to be very quick, but the statistics and measurables say he is not. For example, I am on record as saying he isn't a dynamic return man which can be confirmed with his statistics that read over 120 returns and just 1 TD.

His quickness numbers from testing backs up my notion that he doesn't have great quickness or agility, he is just fast. He tested slower in the 3-Cone drill then Greg Little did and Little had 60lbs on him at the time. I also think people forget that the NFL is the best of the best and the third and fourth CBs on NFL rosters were the best on their teams in college, so it actually gets harder to produce and not easier. To think an offensive player is going to start putting up big stats in the NFL after not accomplishing that in college is a bit like expecting a DE who doesn't have much of a sack history to all of the sudden get sacks in the NFL.

Cleveland really needs a quick slot guy who can beat the defense horizontally for short first downs and I don't think Benjamin is the answer. If Benjamin can learn to get releases on the outside he has a chance to be a deep threat but I really feel like he has a huge hill to climb in order to be a really productive NFL player.

**The Senior Bowl is an event that some overlook in the draft process but NFL teams love because they have the ability to see players in live action competing against some of the other top players in their class. A player can really improve his standing with a great Senior Bowl and now that you can watch the practice sessions on the NFL Network fans can get a chance to see some of the action live and in real time without actually heading to Mobile, which is great.

Since Cleveland ended up drafting 6 players from the Senior Bowl I went back and looked at the notes I took when I watched practices from my DVR and I really only had notes for two of the players drafted. I already talked about noticing Mitchell Schwartz during the week in my OT preview article and the other notes were on Brandon Weeden. I was impressed with the way he powered the ball through air on the one day that it was really windy and I was disappointed he laid an egg in the actual game.

He was horrible on game day going 5-9 with a sack and two interceptions. I am not saying anything about it other than he had a bad day, but I hope it isn't an indication of his discomfort taking snaps from under center. On tape from his days at Oklahoma St. he can be seen at times really being affected when there are a lot of bodies around him, and when you play from under center you generally have more of a enclosed feeling. I hope it was simply a bad day.

Player Notes

** Of the young DBs on the roster I expect Eric Hagg and James Dockery to have the best off season program (specifically OTAs and minicamp). Hagg is a player who has all the physical ability to excel at free safety. He is tall (almost 6-2 barefoot), he has really long arms, and he has very good short area quickness and agility. I think his ability to cover TEs will earn him a chance to be a really good safety in this defense.

Dockery is a gifted cover man with a nice long, lean body that will help Cleveland matchup against the taller WRs in the league. Dockery has the right combination of size and ball skills that could make him a starting CB in the NFL. The biggest area of weakness for him is his strength, so if he dedicates himself to the weight room he could be the eventual replacement for Sheldon Brown.

**Another defensive player I think is primed to have a great off season is DE Marcus Benard. Those who know me will claim I have a man crush on the guy because I talk about him so much but the numbers and game tape don't lie. He has that uncanny natural ability to get pressure on the QB. The guy has 11 sacks in 25 games played with 2 starts. I think after his horrible 2011 in which he showed up to training camp (after a miscommunication with the coaching staff) at 280lbs and then suffered a season ending injury while goofing off, Benard will be in shape (255-260lbs) and focused.

**The Benard comments lead me to another point of enthusiasm I have and that is the off season signing of DE Juqua Parker. I have been crying out for some veteran influences in the DE room and Parker is exactly the veteran leadership that group needs. He and his 36 career sacks will be a great resource for young pass rushers like Benard and 2nd year DE Jabaal Sheard. I think having a veteran resource will be invaluable to that group and in order for the Browns defense to take another step forward this year the DEs will have to generate pass rush

from both sides not just one like last year.

**Offensive players I expect to show up big this summer are WRs Greg Little and my favorite big play tease Carlton Mitchell. Little is coming off of his second season ever playing the WR position and I think he will grow tremendously in his second NFL season after learning what it takes to be a top notch WR in the league.

Mitchell has tremendous talent but has lacked consistency early in his career and has also been in the training room more than the practice field which adds to the frustration he provides. Once again he is going into the season with the best combination of speed and size on the roster and, although I hope he gets it together, this year I won't hold my breath waiting because I have been excited the last two years about Mitchell and I have ended up with nothing but a hollow feeling about him once the seasons were over.

For the TE group I think Jordan Cameron will have a similar jump in confidence and execution as I expect from Greg Little. Cameron is an ultra talented TE who now understands what it takes for success at his position in the NFL and I think he will be a big factor in the passing game this year

I also went back and watched the last few games of the season (using NFL Game Rewind) because I wanted to see what kind of blocker he was at the end of the season when he started and I came away impressed. He isn't a mauler by any means but he was willing all the time and effective most of the time which is a solid base to grow on.

With Ben Watson being in his final year of his contract I think Cameron will be groomed for the starting TE position because we all know Evan Moore isn't close to the kind of blocker you need as a starting TE in the NFL.

The last player I expect to turn some heads is free agent signee RB Adonis Thomas from Toledo. Look, I fully expect Trent Richardson to look good this summer so it won't be a surprise when he does, but for a player who went undrafted like Thomas it will be a shock for most when they start to see him making people miss and creating mismatches against people in space.

Unlike the small, fast back before him that Cleveland flirted with (Armond Smith), Thomas is a small back with the natural ability to make people miss when in tight spaces. He is an incredibly elusive player and I think people will notice that ability right away.

Around the league

**Saints Scandal- When it comes to the Saints players violating NFL rules by paying out bounties, sure they violated the league rules that prohibit a player from being compensated outside of the terms of their contract, but it is hilarious to me when people say they cheated on the field.

The goal of every defense in the NFL is to force the opposing team's best players to the sidelines. It is really simple in that regard. If the Saints took cheap shots and things of that nature they should have been fined and punished in real time by the league.

Saying that they 'cheated' after the fact when you now know they had bounties on players is wrong and has nothing to do with the real time play the Saints actually displayed. It is pretty ridiculous to think that the Saints goal to punish the opposing team's QB is any different than the goal of any defense in the league, the only difference is that instead of just bragging rights and gaining in stature amongst their peers they also won a kitty…….. I understand they broke the rules but in my opinion what they did is far from cheating.

**I understand the owners had a secret agreement that set a salary cap but I have a simple comment for what is probably a complicated conversation…….I think the league is wrong for the penalties against the salary cap that they are imposing on the Cowboys and Redskins.

Personally I think they should have imposed a fine instead of a cap hit and kept their dirty business tactics to squeeze the players a closed door affair. They didn't need to let me in on the fact that they are even slimier than I thought……..and in case you forgot, the players didn't go on strike……it was a lockout based on the concept of greed, not starvation.

**I unconditionally love the HBO series Hard Knocks and I think the league should just draw up

documents on the footage which says they own the rights because the series is a great watch for football fans.

And for all the parents out there that have a problem with the language, I want to tell them to please stop complaining and step up. I am a parent who understands that the show is on HBO to begin with, so the content may not be appropriate for children. I also believe it is OK to have things in life that you either need to be an active parent about and talk to your kids about or simply choose not let them watch. So just to let you know in advance, if you are a friend of mine and you step on that soapbox you should probably not look for me to join you.

O.K. once again I have gone over my personal word limit so I will end it here and roll the rest of my thoughts into the next Kibble & Bits, so until next time…….Go Browns!