In part one of “A Dawg’s Eye” I talked about some of the things I would be looking for at training camp when I watched the offense, and in part two we’ll be taking a look at the defense. Anyone who watched the 2011 Browns season would already know that the defense under HC Pat Shurmur and DC Dick Jauron far outperformed the offense, and the story of the defense during training camp will probably be about taking the next step as a unit.

One way the Browns ‘D’ could get better is by creating turnovers. The defense ranked 10th in the league when you look at total yards given up a game, and for a team that had an offense which ranked 29th in total yards a game, 28th in rushing yards a game, and 30th in points I think they had an outstanding season, but there is still room to get better. Taking the ball away and giving the Browns young offense more chances to put points on the board would be a great step forward for this defense.

Training camp will give the defense an opportunity to grow even more as a unit as well as give the coaching staff the chance to increase and expand some defensive packages. Last year with no offseason and switching base defenses from a 3-4 to a 4-3 time didn’t allow for a high volume of creative packages. Although the general theme of coordinator Dick Jauron’s defenses doesn’t call for a ton of complicated and exotic looks, you could tell that last year the coaching staff concentrated even more on using simpler schemes. This was really evident in sub defenses where you really didn’t see specialized personnel packages until the end of the season.

When I go to training camp and examine the defense I will be concentrating more on watching specific players rather than paying close attention to schemes or alignments. I will have that mindset for two reasons. The first and probably most important reason is that typically training camp is very vanilla when it comes to defensive schemes. You really don't see unusual blitz packages until the regular season starts. There is a possibility that the defense could blitz a bit more than usual in 7 on 7 drills if the head coach wants rookie QB Brandon Weeded to get more reps against pressure, but as a whole you probably won't see many unusual defenses.

The Browns do utilize a lot of combination coverages (man/zone) so there is a good chance you see that in 7 on 7 drills. The second reason you won't see too much exotic defenses is Dick Jauron doesn't have a history of using pressure fronts with multiple looks. He prefers to change the coverages on the backend of the defense as opposed to giving obscure looks up front.

When you watch the defensive players do drill work in camp you will get to see which big guys are the best athletes and you will also see which DBs have the smoothest hips. You can also tell which LBs have better hands and movement skills and those who do will be the players who usually play in nickel and dime packages.

Let's get into some specific players and aspects I will be watching for certain players at this year's camp and if you didn't check out the schedule in part one here is a link so you can plan your trip.

LBs- For me training camp isn't the place to fully evaluate LBs because they really don't do what you ask them to do in games at full speed in practice. Sure you can see a LB's coverage skills in 7 on 7 drills and you can tell how athletic he is, and you can even see if they have good instincts when they do team drills, but you really need to see film of LBs playing 100% full speed so you can evaluate things like tackling and playing through trash.

For me there is one drill for sure I will have my eye out for and that is the drill where there is one RB, one LB, and one blocker. Coaches put out two barriers that the players must stay inside and the LB must get to the runner. Depending on the day of practice and the coach they may not take the runner to the ground, but you get to see how a LB takes on a block, sheds the block, and you also get to see if the LB has a naturally heavy arrival.

If you are wondering what I am mean by that, I mean the same thing as saying someone is heavy handed. Does it sound a bit louder when he arrives and do RBs and blockers look jolted when they contact the LB.

Some players have a really good natural base and therefore usually have leverage which creates their natural force, but their “pop” also has to do with a players core strength and leg drive. I love watching that drill and I definitely hope to see it when I go to camp. Here are some players at the position I will have my eye on.

James Michael-Johnson is a player I will watch for a few reasons. The first thing I wonder about Johnson is how high is his comfort level with what he is doing? I will be looking to see if he is comfortable enough to call the signals for the second group and I will also be looking to see what position they sub him in for with the first team , should he get any first team snaps. In drills I will be watching how physical he appears and I especially would love to see some snaps where he either is doing goal line drills or that drill I explained earlier because watching him in college I question his physicality a bit.

Emmanuel Acho is another rookie LB I want to see in some of the physical drills in camp. He seems like he chased down plays real well and was decent in space but I also thought he had some issues playing in a phone booth. I will also be looking for him in one on one coverage drills. In the tapes I saw of him I thought he struggled in coverage.

Quinton Spears is a second year LB who has great athleticism and can really get after the passer. He played DE in college and is making the transition to LB in the NFL but I really thought his skill set coming out of college was better suited for a 3-4 rather than a 4-3 so I am anxious to see if he looks comfortable out there playing in space. He also seems to get injured often so I want to see if he makes it through camp. Spears is a player I think can be an impact player in the NFL, especially on 3rd downs, so I look for him to have a good camp.

DL- The best part of watching the defensive lineman in camp is usually when they go against the offensive lineman in one on one drills or half line running drills. For the DTs the half line drills get to show you how they can handle double teams and it also shows their ability to shed blocks. Other than pure quickness the ability for DTs to shed 300 pound offensive lineman and make tackles is usually the difference between the good and great ones, so this is something I always look out for.

For the DEs I try focusing on the one on one pass rush drills. Specifically I look for the DEs to be working on a variety of moves. Using pass rush moves real time against blockers is a must if a player wants to develop the move so I like seeing DEs using multiple moves in general but more importantly I like seeing if they can use a counter move if their initial move fails. Sure it is important to watch the DEs battle run blocking, but Cleveland needs a pass rusher opposite LDE Jabaal Sheard, so I will be watching closely. Here are some specific players I will be watching from these two groups.

DTs John Hughes and Billy Winn are two rookies I will be watching closely because one of them, and maybe even both, will need to step up while Phil Taylor heals from his pectoral tear. One or both could play valuable minutes early in the season. From Hughes I will be watching to see how much quickness he shows as well as his motor. Until his senior year in college he had motor questions and now that he has gotten 3rd round money I will be interested to see if he goes back to his bad habits. I also want to see his pass rush skills. In college he was considered a player with limited pass rush ability and I want to see him in person.

For Winn I will mostly be interested in how strong he plays and whether he can handle playing in the middle of the defense for a sustained amount of time. He will impress against guards in pass rush drills because he has superior quickness and burst for an inside player but because of the possibility of newly acquired DE Frostee Rucker sliding down and playing DT on passing downs, Winn will need to be more than a pass rush specialist to get on the field.

DT Scott Paxson is a player who could limit the playing time of both the rookie DTs if he improves even a little this year because he played well in limited rotation duty last year. Paxson isn't a difference maker but he is stout, a hard worker, and he has much better pass rush skills than most give him credit for. I think the DT depth acquired may be too much for DT Brian Schaefering to overcome but I think Paxson could earn a lot of early season minutes this year.

DEs Juqua Parker and Marcus Benard are players my eyes will be glued to during pass rush drills. Parker is a veteran free agent the Browns signed this offseason to boost the pass rush from the right side as well as mentor the young DEs on the roster. I want to see if he still looks explosive at age 34 because if so he should help out tremendously on the field and the locker room.

Benard is a player I have been high on since day one, but he reported to camp 25 pounds heavier than expected last year which caused him to injure himself on the field, and then he was lost early for the season after he crashed a motorcycle. He is said to be in shape and motivated to right his wrong and I am interested to see if that is true. He jumps out on film as a player who is constantly in the backfield so he has great upside and I am hoping to see him have a good camp.

Jabaal Sheard is a player I will have my eye on to see if he shows the same hunger he did his rookie year, and I also want to see if he has added to his pass rush arsenal. He had an outstanding rookie campaign and I hope he will try and improve on that effort by providing even more this year.

Emmanuel Stephens is also a player who could surprise this camp. He was a player who started a few games last year and played well before being hurt and lost for the remainder of the season, so I will be watching him in general to see what he is bringing to the table and how he looks compared to Marcus Benard.

DBs- Like the WRs, you can learn a lot about the DBs in camp. They get plenty of opportunity to display their skills in one on one drills and 7 on 7 drills. Specific traits I look for in drill work are smooth hips, smooth backpedal, and how quickly they break on the ball. For safeties I also look at how they play the ball in the air and how comfortable they look catching the ball. Here are some players I will be watching closely.

CBs James Dockery and Sheldon Brown are two players I will be watching for the opposite reasons. For Brown I will be looking for his flexibility and quickness because last year he really slowed down a step and he looked really stiff. I wonder how much the veteran has left in the tank and I want to see him running and moving compared to some of the younger players.

James Dockery is a player I personally think is future starting CB in the NFL and I want to see if he looks stronger, which in my opinion is his weakest attribute. Dockery proved to be a ball hawk last year during camp and his aggressive play earned him a roster spot. Dockery has the size and hips to be a really good cover CB in the league and I expect him to take the next step in growth this year. I can’t wait to see him battle in one on ones against Greg Little and Josh Gordon.

CBs Buster Skrine and Antwuan Reed are two players I will be watching because I think they offer the same type of potential as slot players with Skrine being the better athlete and Reed being the better technical CB. If Sheldon Brown is done there should be room for one of these young players to play during sub defenses. Reed is a rookie undrafted free agent who will be better than most think but Skrine has elite athleticism who played at a small school so he needed a year to adjust. I think this will be a good comparison to watch.

Safeties Eric Hagg and Johnson Bademosi are two young players I will have an eye but they will be fighting for different things. Hagg is going into camp with his eye on the starting free safety position after having a good rookie showing last year and an outstanding offseason this year. Hagg has all the skills to be a good free safety in this league. I will be watching his comfort level with the defense. I want to see how much he sees, understands, and communicates out there because this secondary needs a free safety who can get people in the correct spots. It is critical he both understands and communicates well.

Bademosi is an undrafted free agent from Stanford with tremendous athleticism. He has experience at CB and S and could be a demon on special teams. I like the size, intelligence, and speed he brings to the table. Based on his special team ability Bademosi could stick around and he has nice upside as a DB. I will be looking to see how he competes and if he can play well in space covering half the field.

As you can see, most of the players I will have my eye on are young players from whom I am looking for growth, but there will more than likely be more than a couple players who impress me that I haven’t named in these articles.

When it comes to attending training camp you can’t watch every play or drill for all the position groups but you can definitely pick and prioritize what to watch based on drills you think will give you the most information.

As a general theme camp practices should run smoother with a second year head coach, the tempo should be little bit quicker, and the execution level should be much higher than last year because players should have a better idea of what to expect…… and schematically they should all be much more comfortable after having an a more conventional offseason to prepare for camp.

If you are heading out to camp have a blast, remember to hydrate, and maybe I will see some of you there…….It is GREAT to have football back and Go Browns!