This is one installment in a team effort by The Cleveland Fan, highlighting the top local sports figures by jersey number. Please weigh in with your thoughts on the Boards. And as David Letterman would say, "For entertainment purposes only; please, no wagering."

The tattered history of the "new" Cleveland Browns has seen few players that have reminded fans of the old days,

when the franchise was respected around the league and the orange-and-brown uniform meant something other than two automatic wins a year for the Steelers and the usurpers from Baltimore. Most of the post-1999 Browns have been fly-by-night types, guys just passing through town on the way to bigger and better things (or smaller and worse things, as in the case of most of them.)

Josh Cribbs is an exception. The special-teams maven is one of a very few new Browns that would have looked right at home emerging from the dugout to the roars of 80,000-plus at old Municipal Stadium. In some of the bleakest seasons in the history of the franchise Cribbs was the one man opponents had to account for, the one Cleveland Brown who really distinguished himself as a playmaker.

Cribbs made his career and his reputation the way E.F. Hutton made money (at least according to John Houseman): he earned it. Although he led Washington's powerful Dunbar High to three consecutive D.C. Interscholastic Athletic Association championships
- the first school to pull off that feat in three decades- only one school offered him both a

scholarship and a chance to play immediately at quarterback. That school was Kent State which, coming off a twelve-year stretch in which it went 16-115-1, could afford to take a chance on a raw athlete.

Cribbs rewarded Kent's faith with an extraordinary four-year career. In 2001 he became the first true freshman in NCAA Division I history to pass and rush for 1,000 yards in the same season and led the Golden Flashes to a 6-5 record, their first winning mark in fourteen years. As of the beginning of the 2012 season Cribbs was one of only seven players in FBS history to rush for 3,000 yards and pass for 5,000 yards
in a career. The MAC was rife with outstanding quarterbacks in the early 2000's- most notably Ben Roethlisberger, Byron Leftwich and Charlie Frye- yet Josh Cribbs may have been the most dynamic of the lot. In 2010 Cribbs had his jersey number 9 retired by KSU, joining Jim Corrigal, Jack Lambert and Eric Wilkerson in that exclusive club.

Yet all of those gaudy numbers weren't enough to get Cribbs's name called in the 2005 NFL Draft. Although his hometown Redskins made him an offer to come to their camp and try out as a quarterback , Cribbs agreed to go to stay in Northeast Ohio and try his hand as a kickoff return man. Needless to say, he made the final roster. In the sixth game of his career against Detroit at CBS, Cribbs notched his first career kickoff return for a touchdown. The rest, as they say, is history.