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Tuesday, December 25 2007 8:00 PM -

The 2007 Browns season might have turned upward in September when Derek Anderson became the starting quarterback, but the fortunes of the franchise began to climb in late April with what might turn out to be one of the best drafts in team history. Coming off a 4-12 season, Phil Savage drafted Joe Thomas #4 overall, dealt back into the first round to select Brady Quinn, and then moved back into the second round and grabbed Eric Wright. Erik's countdown winds down ...

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3. NFL Draft: Thomas, Quinn and a whole new outlook

April 28

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Coming off a 4-12 season characterized by bad quarterback play and no running game, GM Phil Savage decided that if a franchise left tackle was there, he had to take him before anyone else. So he passed on sexier picks like running back Adrian Peterson and QB Brady Quinn, and selected Wisconsin's Joe Thomas third overall. Thomas would be paired with guard Eric Steinbach on a rebuilt left side of the offensive line.

If that was the end of the story for the Browns '07 draft, it still might have been graded a success. But Savage was only getting started. The next chapter began when the Dolphins passed on Quinn with the ninth pick, opting instead for Ohio State speedster Ted Ginn Jr. When Quinn failed to go at nine, it began one of the great freefalls in NFL Draft history.

Quinn was a four-year starter at Notre Dame who was ranked, at worst, a razor-close second to top overall pick JaMarcus Russell among QB prospects. Understandably, he looked increasingly sour as he fell past 15 and continued to drop. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell asked Quinn to go to a private room, away from prying cameras that were turning his personal humiliation into a national soap opera.

Savage saw his chance.

He quickly began bartering with Dallas owner Jerry Jones to secure the Cowboys' first-rounder at 22. When Savage offered the Browns' 2008 first-rounder and '07 second-rounder (36th overall), Jones had an offer he couldn't refuse. The Browns stepped back into the fray and selected

Quinn 19 picks after Thomas.

If that were the whole story of the Browns '07 draft, it would have been a franchise-altering day. But Savage still wasn't finished, as he traded back into the second round to select UNLV (by way of USC) cornerback Eric Wright. Once again, Savage dealt with Jones, sending the Cowboys Cleveland's third- and fourth-rounders (Nos. 67 and 103) to move up to the 53rd pick and take Wright. The teams also swapped sixth-round picks in the deal.

Of course, drafts can only be graded on the field, and to that end, Thomas was named a Pro Bowl alternate as a rookie, Wright has fought through injuries to cement himself as a starting cornerback and Quinn impressed in the preseason, prior to the emergence of Anderson. To boot, cornerback Brandon McDonald, a fifth-round pick, has also made his presence felt with a few big plays.

Not coincidentally, the Browns are one of the NFL rags-to-riches stories of 2007.