

What's going on with these Browns? This is not how we do things in Cleveland. Our teams do not get better as the season progresses. No one "improves". The Modus Operandi here in NE Ohio is "letdown". We won't have you showing up our rich tradition of mailing it in. And the irony? The coach may still be fired on Monday. With the Dawn of the Walrus now official, and the Browns one game away from heading into what is a highly anticipated off-season, there are all kinds of things to talk about in the world of Cleveland Browns football. Chris Hutchison runs the gamut in this week's Browns Outsider.



A View From The Cheap Seats

OK, Browns, I'm pretty sure no one's talked to you about this yet, so I'll just tell you myself. This is not how we do things in Cleveland. Our teams do not get better as the season progresses. No one "improves". The Modus Operandi here in NE Ohio is "letdown". We won't have you showing up our rich tradition of mailing it in.

Last year was a perfect example of the way things are supposed to go around here: Start off OK, then lose a whole bunch in a row to close out the season. Try and follow that

pattern.

Even if you manage to get off to a really good start, it's considered good form to choke in the playoffs, or - better yet - choke ahead of time so you don't even have to go there. Why go through the effort of getting everyone's hopes up just to lose in humiliating fashion? Look at the Cavs last year, or the 2007 Indians, or the Browns of the late 80's. They had all that extra practice time, all that extra stress, all that extra pain, and they still ended up where the terrible teams were - home, watching the Championship.

Like I said, I don't know if anyone has talked to you about this yet, but now that you know, go ahead out there Sunday and lay a big fat egg. All you're doing now is making it harder on yourselves.

No way do you want people coming to Training Camp next year with "expectations". God forbid.

Game Recap

The game got off to a boffo start as prodigal son Charlie Frye threw a pass right to David Bowens on the 2nd Offensive play, and it took Jerome Harrison only 2 tries to break for a 17 yard TD. *Browns 7, Raiders 0.*

An Oakland 3 and Out and some more nice runs by Harrison netted Cleveland a FG to go up 10-0, but Frye finally got his act together and drove the Raiders for a FG of their own. The Offensive fireworks were a-poppin'. *Browns 10, Raiders 3.*

An awful barrage of short and ugly drives followed. The Raiders tacked on a FG from a drive that started at the CLE 30. The Browns pinned Oakland at their 1 on gorgeous punt coverage by Josh Cribbs and Brandon McDonald, but they quickly let the Raiders out of it. The only good thing that could be said to come out of this section of the game was that Reggie Hodges pathetic incomplete pass attempt on 4th and 12 was wiped out by penalty, allowing the Browns to punt it away.

With 1:46 left in the Half and on their own 7 yard line, the Browns tried to run the clock out. Oakland would have none of it, allowing Harrison to break loose for 17 yards, then racking up 3 Personal Foul penalties (and an ejection!). With the gifts raining down like yellow flags from heaven, Derek Anderson hit Mo Massaquoi on a beautiful 19 yard pass to the right corner of the End Zone. *Browns 17, Raiders 6.*

Some stupid coach's book somewhere says it's oh-so-much smarter to pooch kick at the end of each Half then risk a long kickoff return, so said pooch kick gives them the ball at midfield. Which is brilliant. Oakland moved far enough for the Porky Pollock, Sebastian Janikowski, to nail a 61 yarder. At Halftime, *Browns 17, Raiders 9.*

Trying to avoid Josh Cribbs, the Raiders made a pooch kick of their own to open the 2nd Half. So what happens if you short kick to avoid Cribbs is you get Harrison taking it instead. You be screwed either way. Harrison brought the ball all the way to the OAK 43, and he and Cribbs combined for multiple runs with netted yet another FG. *Browns 20, Raiders 9.*

The Browns got the ball right back again and went on a long march. But a 14 yard Harrison TD was wiped out by a (unneeded) block in the back, and then he fumbled a few plays later at the 4. So they were unable to put the Raiders out of their considerable misery.

A bunch of mind-numbing drivel ensued for most of the 2nd Half (although the Browns did manage to kick another FG) until Oakland finally got it's act together and went on a 92 yard drive to the CLE 2, aided in no small part by a Pass Interference on Hank Poteat (go figure). The Raiders then inexplicably declined to run the ball on 4 straight plays, and, naturally, all 4 of Frye's

passes went incomplete.

That was basically the ball game, sports fans.

Cleveland went into full Prevent Offense at that point, giving Oakland nothing but a dose of Harrison up the middle for the rest of the game. The Raiders did get down to the CLE 8 on their next series, but Frye was nice enough to toss his 3rd pick, and it was all over but the celebrating.

Final: Browns 23, Raiders 9.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Cleveland - 30:22, Oakland - 29:38

Total Yards: Oakland - 389, Cleveland - 282

First Downs: Oakland - 19, Cleveland - 16

These stats are a little misleading since the Browns went into Offensive hibernation at this point, lots of time consuming 3 runs and out. Still, allowing 389 yards to the Charlie Frye-led Raiders isn't very fancy. Cleveland seems to have a bend-but-don't-break policy on Defense, even in the games where they play well (and who knows when those are coming). Their D is ranked dead last in the NFL in Yards Allowed, but 23rd in Scoring, which shows their penchant - especially recently - of making the play when it counts.

This was also the 3rd time this season (2nd in the last 3 games) where they did not allow a TD. As you can imagine, those 3 games were all wins, accounting for 75% of their win total.

Interesting how holding opponents out of the End Zone helps a team win. Huh. Who woulda thunk it?

Gameballs

Josh Cribbs - In a season of jaw-dropping efforts, the act of jumping into the end zone and batting the punt back out to be downed at the 1 may have been his finest play.

Jerome Harrison - 434 yards rushing in 2 games. It would take him only 5 games to get to 1000 yards at that rate. Like Harrison Ford being a quarter Jewish - not too shabby.

Alex Mack - Go on, Alex, it's OK to beat Gerard Warren's ass. Normally, that kind of thuggery is frowned upon, but not if it's Small Change.

The Offensive Line - Big holes, controlled the line of scrimmage.

David Bowens - Defensive MVP. Since he moved there out of necessity, he's played the ILB position better than either Barton or Jackson ever did. Oh, and he won the Dino Lucarelli Good Guy of the Year Award.

Matt Roth - How is it that Miami waived this guy?

Randy Lerner - For the second week in a row? Is it possible? You, sir, get this award for Mike Holmgren's following words:

"The reason that I am in Cleveland now, and proud to be in Cleveland now, is Randy Lerner. I've had the privilege of serving on a lot of committees in the league, know a lot of owners, I call some my friends.

"I had never really met Randy or spent any time with him. I will tell you this, it was very, very refreshing. Clearly, he wants his football team to do well. When he presented the job to me and what it would entail and the type of access I would have to him and his vision for the team and the fans and the city of Cleveland and all that stuff, as far as I was concerned he hit a home run. Obviously the job's a great job, but I really took this job because of the owner. I think he cares that much and I really don't want to let him down."

Whoa. And just when we thought the guy was hopeless...

Honorable Mention

Mo Massaquoi - Had a nice TD catch, but gets this award mainly because he had to catch DA passes.

Eric Mangini - The discipline you've tried to instill in the team was evident in that last drive of the 1st Half.

Raiders Penalties - Hey, at least the Raiders are consistent in one area: Stupidity.

Charlie Frye - Even though he looked eerily competent at several points, those 3 picks were a nice Xmas present (especially that first one).

Wall of Shame

Derek Anderson - Gotta put somebody here.

Mike Adams - The Browns started him at CB in place of Brandon McDonald, and the Raiders picked on him quite a bit.

Tackling - Way too many missed tackles.

Whoever called the fake punt play - On 4th and 12? Really? Thank the heavens for Oakland being Offsides.

New Czar Mike Holmgren (I don't care if his preferred nickname is "Big Show", I like "The Czar") had his first press conference as a member of the Cleveland Browns on Monday, and here are some tidbits. You might want to read the [whole transcript](#), because it's pretty interesting.

"My coaching, as far as coaching on the field, in the near future I'm not going to do that. Things can change, I suppose, down the road, but this year I accepted this new challenge in my career and I'm really excited about it. It's different, because I won't be on the field, but I'll be doing everything in my power to help make the head coach successful. That's how I'm looking at my current position."

So he's not going to try to be a Head Coach/GM (not now, at least), which is a relief to many, myself included.

"I'm going to hire a general manager, yes."

So, yes, he's going to hire a GM. Which is good since someone with more in-depth player evaluation history should be doing the majority of the heavy lifting.

"Derek Anderson had a great game against us when we played them a couple years ago on Monday night or Sunday night, I remember that.[] Brady, I remember him really more coming out of college.[] I have some film I've been looking at and I'm going to continue to look at it.[] That question has to be answered down the road, not just by one person, but by a group.[] I know this, that it's very, very important to have your quarterback play well to be successful.[] I think if you looked around the league everyone knows that.[] In fairness to Brady and to Derek and to any quarterbacks with the Browns, it's too early for me to comment on that.[] I'm not going to be the coach, but I am going to work very, very closely with the coach on personnel.[] Eric shares my views on how important the quarterback position is for any team.[] That's what we have to do.[] We have to be tough in some ways.[] We have to be honest about it.[] If we think we have the quarterback there that can take us where we want to go, fine.[] If we don't, then we

have to do something about it. We have not made that decision yet."

Translation - uh, yeah, from what I've seen, these guys pretty much blow.

"Let's see, it's a five year contract."

It appears that he's been hired to a five-year contract, which is longer than a four-year contract, but yet not as long as a six-year contract. And they say I don't provide in-depth analysis.

"If you keep blowing up the team it takes longer to fix it. I believe, and I believe that Eric believes, that there are parts of this football team that are young, talented and play hard and are just what he wants. Then we have to look at the things that we think we're a little deficient in. Like I said, my job is to make the team and the coach on the field as successful as he can be.

With that comes hard decisions. Without going into great detail, it seems as though, I think, the current staff has tried very, very hard to start that process. To restart it all over again, I don't think we have to do that, I really don't. I hope it doesn't appear that way when we roll up our sleeves and dive

in there. I think they've started that. Now we just have to really identify areas where we need to get better and then figure out what the best way to handle that is. We have a number of draft choices. We can go into the free agent market. We want to build it for the long term and things like that. This will be sitting down and having a lot of discussions on how to make this team better. To answer your question, no, I don't think we have to go in there and blow it up again."

I must say that, as far as personnel is concerned, I agree - Mangini has done a great job of "blowing it up" in advance. The climb back up from Hell can commence immediately.

And lastly...

"I have not made a decision on Eric. I met with Eric when I was back there for my brief stay and have talked to him on the phone a couple of times about football issues. There are a couple reasons [I have not made a decision], one, I think it would be really unfair. He's at the end of finishing his first season there and the team is doing well and clearly responding to him. That type of decision will be made once I get back there. I'm arriving back there on Monday. Eric and I will meet next week and then we'll come to some sort of a decision. I didn't think it was right. He's working like crazy to finish the

season on an upbeat note.□ We'll have those discussions next week."

Translation - I may have made up my mind already, and I may not. But I sure as hell ain't tellin' you.

Due to the new situation, the three game win streak, and the legion of Mangini supporters (some new, some stalwart), most of the discussion this week has centered around whether or not Mangini will stay. I still have my doubts, but I must admit that the Browns' late push has made retaining him somewhat more of a possibility. Here is the absolute minimum that Mangini must do to keep his job:

1. Accept a new Offensive Coordinator. Mangini is a Defensive guy, and it's on that side of the ball that his experience lies. Holmgren has always sort of "outsourced" the coaching of the Defense to his Coordinators, and, despite the fact that Holmgren has always run the 4-3, it is possible that Mangini can convince The Czar that the 3-4 can still work. Per

[Terry Pluto](#)

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As for Mangini's 3-4 defense, it seems Holmgren (who prefers a 4-3) may be open to that if Mangini can show results.

Holmgren's emphasis has always been offense and developing quarterbacks, something desperately needed here.

I think that Holmgren may be satisfied to let Mangini retain his Defensive philosophy so long as the Coach is copasetic with an Offensive overhaul. To [quote Holmgren](#) :

(On if he will come in thinking he wants a West Coast Offense team)- "I think that's a decision I make after I talk to the head coach. If he doesn't like what I like then he has to convince me that what he's doing is better than what I would like to see. That's the type of discussion that we have. Then after that, like I said, you come to a consensus, you come to an agreement. We both want the same thing for the Cleveland Browns and then once we decide on that, now you try and get the right personnel to fit the system. That's the way I've always done it and I anticipate that's the way we'll do it again."

Mr. Mangini, good luck convincing Holmgren that Brian Daboll's Offense is superior to what he would want to run.

My guess is that Holmgren will hand-pick an Offensive Coordinator - with Mangini's "blessing", of course - to run a version of the West Coast, and if Mangini is OK with losing a significant amount of control on that side of the ball, he'll certainly help his cause. It sounds like Mangini might be [willing to do that](#)

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(On if the West Coast Offense can operate in snowy conditions)- "Yes, definitely, Green Bay. Green Bay ran it for years. They had been pretty effective with it."

Another thing Mangini might be asked to do is allowing Holmgren considerable access to the QB, since The Czar is famous for his success at mentoring that position. For the love of Poseidon, I hope Mangini doesn't resist that. The QB position on the team needs all the help it can get.

2. Willingly sacrifice any real personnel power. Despite his repeated protests that he is fine with a President and a GM taking over those duties, I suspect the Mangini might not be cool with relinquishing considerable power in this area.

Consider this

[quote from Mangini](#)

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(On his vision for what next year can be like)- "I'd like to see a continuation of the things that we've been doing, a commitment to a very specific type of player. That's guys that follow the core characteristics. Continue to play smart disinclined football, build on the lessons that we've learned this year in terms of eliminating distractions. We've had a lot of work on that. Adversity, dealing with adversity. I'd like to be able to teach the lesson of dealing with success. That's a great lesson to have to keep teaching. That's what I'm looking for."

Mangini is a guy willing to sacrifice some talent for "his kind of guy", a team guy, a smart player, a tough player. And while there is some merit to this, there is also the reality that the Browns will not be able to compete at a championship level without a significant infusion of talent.

Looking at Holmgren's picks, he doesn't always shy away from taking talented players with checkered pasts. And if he's picking these guys, he's likely not gonna be overly receptive of them sitting on the bench week after week to "teach them a lesson". And I really doubt that Mangini will kowtow to Holmgren (or anyone) on how he should run "his team".

If a pissing contest begins about talent playing time, it won't go down like with Savage and Crennel. It will go down with a

guillotine on Mangini's neck. In this situation, there is a clear chain of command.

Mangini's greatest hope in this area is that he has converted the locker room enough to "his way" that any incoming rookies, no matter how prima donna, will be peer-pressured by the veterans into buying in or standing alone in a closet for hours.

Mangini's first GM - Mike Tannenbaum - was his friend, and I'm sure he had huge input on the draft selections. George Kokinis... well, there's really no need to go into the nature of that relationship. Let's just say Mangini had his way.

So Mangini has never been in a situation where he had as little say-so with the personnel and the 53 as he will under a Holmgren regime. Can he deal with that? Time will tell.

3. It sure wouldn't hurt to beat the Jaguars on Sunday. I don't know if it's absolutely necessary, but if the Browns come out and get bent over a log against JAX, it's like ending a Presidential debate by vomiting on the podium. Yes, it's nice that the Browns have won 3 in a row, but 2 of those wins were against teams of equal putrocity - Oakland and Kansas City.

And the other win was against a bad Steelers team. I don't care that they miracle-d their way into horseshit wins against Green Bay and Baltimore, Fixbugh sucks.

Now, in all honesty, Jacksonville isn't much better, and Cleveland can certainly take them down. Bu they're a .500-ish team that's fighting for their Playoff lives, and ending the season with 4 wins in a row is a real solid place to start when trying to sell your "process".

In the end, all that might not matter. If I were Mangini, I'd be nervous about one thing above all else: Holmgren still isn't in town.

Why does that matter? Well, if Mangini is going to sell his "product", it would be beneficial for Holmgren to be around during the season, observing practice, sitting in on Coach's meetings, getting to know the staff and their methods. The fact that he won't be in Cleveland until after the season is over... well, it makes it all the harder for Mangini to convince the Czar of his ways.

And it kind of looks like the Czar already knows what he's gonna do.

The running game has flourished the last several weeks, and there are 4 reasons why that is so.

1. **They've played bad Run Defenses.** Well, except PIT, but most of the rushing damage in that game was done by Cribbs out of the Wildcat, not by the Halfbacks.

2. **They haven't been in a big hole.** Early in the season, the Offense would turn the ball over, the other team would score, and they'd be down by 40 or 50 by Halftime, which, oddly enough, is not a spot conducive to establishing a strong running game.

3. **Floyd Womack has been starting at RT.** Due to injuries to St. Clair, Porkchop has moved over to the Right Tackle position and has added a more physical run blocking presence to that position. One might argue that Womack isn't as good at pass blocking, but it's not like St. Clair was an Immortal at that,

either.

One wonders why it took injury to make the move when St. Clair was clearly struggling throughout the year.

4. Jerome Harrison has been starting at RB. Despite the fact that Jamal Lewis has been done for years and was struggling to produce a consistent run attack, Harrison continued to see limited carries. He was even inactive for a game.

One wonders why it took injury to make the move when Lewis was clearly done for his career.

It has been cited that Harrison wasn't "practicing properly", that he was a "pass blocking liability", that his benching was "disciplinary". I can't really speak to that, since I wasn't there, but Harrison has never struck me as a problem child. His indiscretions would've had to have been pretty bad for Mangini to bench a guy that clearly helps the team, not only at RB but also as a Special

Teams player.

I have been watching Harrison closely for a couple years now - specifically watching his pass blocking because I was curious to see if he could take over the feature back role - and his pass blocking is fine. Not stellar, but certainly adequate. He was labeled as a poor pass blocker his rookie season, but he worked hard to improve that, and his pass blocking wasn't so noticeably different than Jamal Lewis' pass blocking that it should keep him off the field.

To me, it seems that Mangini (like Romeo before him) was loath to upset a veteran team leader like Lewis - to the detriment of the team. Which drives me nuts, because you easily could've eased Harrison into a more prominent role as the season went on, and the team would follow if Harrison showed superior production to Lewis. Hell, even Lewis wouldn't have had an argumentative leg to stand on.

Regardless, it is clear that Harrison runs quicker and more decisively than Lewis did. He can make all the runs, which Lewis has been incapable of doing for years. He can bounce it outside, he's great on screens, you can line him up in the slot, his cutback moves consistently get him an extra 3 or 4 yards (if not more), and he is pretty solid on inside runs despite his size (which gets overplayed, since a 5'9 guy that weighs 210 is

pretty frickin' solid).

It's my opinion that Mangini lucked into this one. Had Lewis stayed healthy, he'd still be tip-toeing his way for 2 yards. But he got hurt, and Mangini was forced to play his Doghouse Boy, and - lo and behold! - the guy can actually ball. Shocking.

Questionable judgment on this one by the coaching staff.

And they're still mismanaging that position. I'm really rather surprised by it, because Mangini balanced the Jets run attack fairly well between Thomas Jones and Leon Washington. But that hasn't happened here. Even when Lewis was the unquestioned starter, it should've been 60-40 or 65-35 between Lewis and Harrison, with a couple runs from Jennings thrown in there for good measure. No way can Lewis carry a full load anymore.

Harrison had 39 carries on Sunday, a Cleveland Browns record. While his single-game rushing mark last week was impressive, the carries record is more dubious because it shows that he's

running the ball *too much*. His backup, Chris Jennings, had all of 2 carries. 2... frickin'... carries. Am I totally off base to think that Harrison might've been even more effective than he was in the 2nd Half had he got a breather here or there? No way is he used to 76 carries in 2 games.

Then go back to the Steelers game. Harrison started and got a few carries, but then Jennings came in and had a couple nice runs, including the TD. Based on that, we hardly saw Harrison again the rest of the game. He didn't get a single carry in the last 2 1/2 Quarters. Not one. Sure, Jennings was running fairly well, but I'm sure he could've used a breather too.

Neither of these guys is used to an Adrian Peterson-esque workload, and even AP gets to rest a few plays now and again while Chester Taylor runs the ball.

Simply put, the Running Backs should be getting a more evenly distributed number of carries to keep them fresh and to take better advantage of their individual abilities, even if it's 30 carries to 11 instead of 39 to 2.

And at the risk of sounding totally anti-Mangini... what the hell took them so long to implement the no huddle this season? They didn't really employ it until Quinn got his starting job back. Why? They practiced it in Training Camp. They used it a little in the Preseason. After 2 or 3 weeks of Offensive misery, why didn't they throw the no huddle option out there more often to see if it might help? Why wait until it was too late?

In an effort to be fair, I will now do penance and extol the virtues of Eric Mangini.

1. Seems like a good guy. His bad rap around the NFL is undeserved.
2. Disciplinarian that mostly uses an even hand in his punishment.
3. Despite a terrible situation, kept the team together and playing hard, and has emerged with many new fans amongst the guys on the roster.

4. Is more willing than his predecessors to play the best players despite their names and experience.

5. A hard worker that leads by example.

6. The way he has handled the whole GM-Search-Holmgren-Hired-Job-In-Jeopardy situation has been impressive.

7. Wears a lot of Browns gear.

In any case, by this time next week, it is likely that we'll know Eric Mangini's 2010 fate. Let me reiterate that I am not a "hater". I supported Mangini's hire initially, and most of my issues with him are personnel related. He has coaching flaws, sure. He royally screwed the pooch on how he handled the QB situation, but I'm sure that he was as disappointed by how that turned out as anyone. I listed a few other flaws above, but every coach pulls a boner or two here and there (uh... you know what I mean).

If The Czar says Mangini can stay, then huzzah for Mangini. If The Czar says Mangini has to go, then boo hoo for Mangini. I'll not blink either way. Holmgren will do what he feels he has to do in order to get this franchise where we all want it to go, and as far as I'm concerned, this is a very simple equation:

MH > EM.

Who can resist a bit of Braylon-bashing? Not I, and apparently [not Terry Pluto](#) :

Braylon Edwards had no interest in Mangini's approach, and other than 2007, Edwards has been an underachiever. In four games with the Browns this season, he had 10 catches -- 2.5 per game. For the Jets, it's 33 catches in 11 games -- 3.0. He has four touchdown catches, eight drops and he's simply another receiver.

I keep hearing from some fans and media members that Edwards is "an impact player." That was true in only

2007. In 2006, 2008 and 2009 -- his other three full, non-injury seasons -- he's averaged 54 catches and four TDs. It was his 2007 Pro Bowl season that was a fluke, not how he's played for most of his career.

You go, Terry! Tear that prima donna a new solid waste chute!
And then this revelation:

If I hear one more time about the \$1,700 fine for not paying for a bottle of water -- I swear, I'll scream. The guilty party was Edwards. The massive fine came after he ignored several warnings from coaches and broke numerous team rules. Finally, the coaches decided to send a message to Edwards and the rest of the team -- and suddenly, players discovered they could pay for their incidentals when they check out of hotels and also parked in their assigned spots in the training complex lot.

AHA! So Braylon Edwards was the Finee! I never had a problem with the fine in the first place, but now I REALLY don't have a problem with it. From the sounds of it, they gave Braylon several chances to do the right thing, but someone thinks his shit don't stank.

And it also sounds like Braylon was parking wherever he damn well pleased, because, well, he's Braylon freakin' Edwards, and his Bentley can't be parked in just any old spot.

You know, I've spent time opining that sometimes - for the best of the team - Coaches have to deal with Princesses if said Princesses have superior talent.

The problem with Braylon is that he only had the Princess part down.

The Browns Outsider

Written by {ga=hiko}

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He feels pretty. Oh so pretty.

QB Watch

How bad has it been at QB in Cleveland? Consider that the Browns Run Offense is #10 overall... and their Overall Offense is still ranked dead last. How bad does the Pass Offense have to be to drag the Run O all the way down to the bottom?

Pretty freakin' bad.

Condom-breaks-girlfriend-pregnant-and-you're-both-16 bad.

The Browns aren't just dead last in Pass O, they're more than 300 yards behind the nearest team. They're the only team under 50% completion percentage for the year. They have combined to throw for 1990 in 15 games. Let me make that clear - there is one game left in the season, and they still haven't thrown for 2000 yards AS A TEAM.

Whoa nelly.

There were 4 or 5 times in the OAK game that I laughed out loud at a Derek Anderson pass. "Who ya throwin' that to, Ace?" I asked the TV. Because it was hard to tell. Although, I have to admit that DA did throw one really nice pass on Sunday - the TD to Mo Mass - and that's one more nice pass than Quinn generally throws.

There are excuses, of course. The Receivers are not very good. There is miscommunication between the QB and Receivers. Brian Daboll is a nincompoop.

But mostly the QB's just suck.

I mean, what will Mo Mass do if a QB actually throws the ball out in front of him on those slant passes? Will he know how to catch a ball that he doesn't have to perform a pirouette to touch?

Once again, if The Czar is able to come in here and salvage either one of these guys, then more power to him. It would be

friggin' GREAT if we didn't have to draft a QB (or trade for one). But I just don't see it. I don't know how you fix inaccurate, and that's the big fault of both BQ and DA. Neither one of those guys will be winning their girlfriends stuffed elephants from the ball toss booth at the fair.

To quote Crash Davis: *"I wouldn't dig in there if I were you." I don't know where it's goin'.* Honest.
"

So let's assume that The Czar sees it the way I do, that he finds their cases hopeless and decides to move in another direction, which I think he might well do because he considers the QB position vital. Holmgren broke into this league as a QB Coach, and the guys he's had are Joe Montana, Steve Young, Brett Favre, and Matt Hasselbeck. He's never been saddled with a below-average QB, and I doubt that he wants to start now.

Thus, if you're petitioning that The Czar "fix everything else first", you might be wasting your time.

Holmgren did not draft a QB high in either Green Bay. In fact, Young, Favre, and Hasselbeck all shared one thing in common - the they were young veterans/backups in which the team saw potential, and the team traded for them.

Maybe Holmgren feels it's a lot easier to evaluate how QB's will perform at the NFL level if they've actually played in the NFL a little while. Maybe it's easier to determine their talents after they've gotten away from the gimmicky college systems. Maybe he just doesn't like to gamble high picks on that position. Hard to say.

But if we look at the track record, he traded for a QB immediately upon arriving in both Green Bay and Seattle. 2 opportunities is certainly a small data set, but it's all the data we have to go by, and it's a 100% result.

In other words, it's not unlikely that Holmgren will try it again this offseason.

NFL Bottom 10

Should all bad teams be forgot, and never brought to mind?
No, all bad teams not be forgot, they were good auld lang syne.

(The loose translation of "*auld lang syne*" being
" a long time
ago ")

1. *St. Louis (1-14)* - "And the number one pick in the 2010 draft is... N... In... Dom... Indom... Domimum Suh!"

2. *Detroit (2-13)* - And we're back to "*At least we're not Detroit!* "

3. *Kansas City (3-12)* - I actually think this team will be pretty good in a couple years, but they suck chrome right now.

4. *Seattle (5-10)* - Proving daily that Holmgren made the right choice.

5. *Washington (4-11)* - Albert Haynesworth is becoming a very expensive migraine.

6. *Oakland (5-10)* - At least they still have their penchant for game-killing dirty plays

7. *Buffalo (5-10)* - Less interesting than a copy of *The Fountainhead* in Russian.

8. *Cleveland (4-11)* - It seems like just yesterday they were boasting the #1 overall pick; now they're all the way up at 6, with the potential to go higher. Keep going, boys. We don't want those expensive slots.

9. *Tampa Bay (3-12)* - If you beat New Orleans in New Orleans... in a game the Saints desperately wanted to win... down 17... that's just a helluva lot more impressive than beating the Raiders.

10. *Chicago (6-9)* - Just when you think they're toast, they pull out a great win against a really good team that really needed the win.

Reader E-mail

From Omar Doe, Peninsula, OH: *"Nothing has cracked me up this week like the Browns getting 2 guys in the Pro Bowl and the Bungals getting zilch. Like I've said all season - overrated"*

I would remiss if I failed to mention that Josh Cribbs and Joe Thomas got voted into the Pro Bowl again (that's 3 for Thomas and 2 for Cribbs).

This was about as shocking as hearing my 9 year old whine when I made her do homework over Xmas break.

Those two are no-brainers. I mean, Josh Cribbs... name a more famous or productive Special Teams player on the planet. Not even Devin Hester is in Cribbs' ballpark these days. Plus, he's such a great team guy. The man is phenomenal, and his contract better be one The Czar's first orders of business.

And Joe Thomas? I think we tend to forget how good he is just because no one's ever calling his name. But there he is, run blocking with the best of them, consistently shutting down the other team's best pass rushers. By far the best draft selection the Browns have made since The Return.

Kudos to these gentlemen, and a special shout out to Lawrence Vickers, who would certainly be going if he wasn't saddled with Jamal Lewis for a fat chunk of the year. It's hard to get the national media to notice how well you blow open the holes if they're shut again by the time your RB hits them.

Next Up

The Jacksonville Jaguars (7-8). Offense - 16th, Defense - 22nd.

(The Browns are 32nd in Offense and 32nd in Defense).

The Browns have won 3 in a row, yet somehow have yet again found themselves back at last in the league in both categories. Does that speak to the quality of the wins or the statistical hole they had dug themselves earlier in the season?

As the Browns become Buckeyes North (winning with Defense, a strong Running Game, and without any noticeable QB help at all), the key match-up has been the Browns Run O vs. the Opponent's Run D. JAX has the 16th ranked Run D, but the Browns are up to 10th in Run O.

That feels weird to type: **The Browns have a Top 10 Run Offense.**

They have a better Run Offense than the Patriots, the Giants, and the freakin' Vikings, for Pete's sake. Way better than former Rushing luminaries such as Denver, Atlanta, and Fixburgh.

JAX has a Top 10 Rush O too (9th), though, and the Browns are still 28th Defending it, so many yards could be churned up on the frozen tundra of Northeast Ohio.

Although they'll need a combination of a minimum 4 contending teams to lose, JAX will still technically have a shot at the playoffs come kickoff, so they'll be playing for their lives. But despite the fact that they haven't had anything to play for since...

September... the Browns have been playing for their lives too. I think this will be a good game, closely contested, lots of hard hitting.

In the end, I'll give the edge to the team with the better QB, and David Garrard is about 73 times better than Derek Anderson.

Jaguars 17, Browns 13.

Happy New Year, Ladies and Gents. See ya next decade.