I'll go with some complete thoughts and some random flashes that cross my mind as I sit here after the Browns-Bengals game. It's a long day when you head down to CBS from eastern Lake County.

On days like this past Sunday it's actually a trip worth making.

The Browns:

- I told y'all weeks ago, before this season started, that Peyton Hillis was going to be a fan favorite. Browns fans love big, strong, productive football players. Especially running backs that fit that description. Guys like Ernest Byner, Kevin Mack and Mike Pruitt were huge crowd favorites. Not because they were flashy or especially fast, but because they were bruising, physical running backs who delivered more punishment and big hits than they took.

Hillis is another in that style of running back and he's shown Cleveland fans how he can be so valuable in the rugged AFC North games that make up nearly 40% of the schedule.

Hillis has rushed for over 250 yards in that last two weeks against AFC North rivals Baltimore and Cincinnati. He's also run over linebackers and defensive backs and dished out more than a couple bruises to the sternums of those attempting to stop him.

Hillis followed up about a 150-yard day last week in Baltimore with a really workman-like 27 carries for 102 yards and a TD in the Browns' 23-20 win over the Bengals on Sunday.

Fans down at the stadium have quickly caught on that Hillis embodies what they want the Browns to be. His runs are cheered as much for their brutality and toughness as for their production.

Hillis also takes the ball and quickly hits a hole. He doesn't dance, he doesn't probe and he doesn't tip-toe behind the line of scrimmage hoping for a hole to develop. Hillis creates holes or gets through them quickly. In Cleveland, on grass, against defense like those representing Cincinnati, Baltimore and Pittsburgh, you need that north-south running game.

There will be days when Jerome Harrison may be called upon to carry the rock. He can still be an effective 'change of pace' back. But it wasn't Sunday and it won't be as long as Hillis is chewing up yards, first downs and game clocks on a regular basis. Hillis is also simply a better back in terms of blocking and picking up the blitz than Harrison is.

Pretty simple really: Peyton Hillis is a better and more productive football player than Harrison and he's quickly becoming a fan favorite. That's not news. Not if you read this column anyway.

- Sundays at Cleveland Browns Stadium can be pretty damn enjoyable when the team puts forth a respectable effort and competes.

- You know, there are few sounds I have heard that are as distinctive as the sound of an automobile accident and the sound of a clean, violent hit on the football field. And for the first time since the Browns returned in 1999 they have a player capable of delivering those violent and impactful hits.

I have not seen a player hit like TJ Ward since the days Eric Turner patrolled the Browns defensive backfield. And I have not ***heard*** a player hit like TJ Ward since Don Rogers was lighting guys up in the mid-80's.

Make no mistake that teams and players are accounting for where Ward is on the football field after just a few NFL games. You can surely bet that Jordan Shipley will be seeing and hearing #43 while he's laying in a dark room for the next few days.

Ward is a heat-seeking missile whose sole mission is to blow shit up. And whether he's laying a shoulder to the chest of Shipley or knocking Terrelle Owens five yards out of bounds after a short sideline catch Ward is doing exactly that. TJ Ward is the first defensive player in maybe 20 years of Browns football who you cannot take your eyes off when he's on the field.

- The worst part of rooting for physical players who deliver blows like Ward and Hillis is that you know they're going to miss some football games. Guys like those two and Ed Reed, Bob Sanders, etc., they can't run like they run and hit like they hit without paying a severe physical price at some point. Ward came into the league with the reputation of a guy who gets banged up.

Anyone figure out why that may be? If not, you might want to ask Shipley. Wait a few days to make sure the telephone isn't confused with the bells already ringing in his head.

- It won't get the run it should but the play of the game in Sunday's win over the Bengals was Matt Roth's sack on a 3rd and long in the 4th quarter. The Bengals were driving and were nearing field goal range when Roth got loose and dumped Carson Palmer to force a punt.

- Nice day Scott Fujita. A sack, blocked FG, forced fumble and five tackles. That's leading by example and you officially surpassed the production the Browns received from Willie McGinest who was signed to fill that role a few years back. And you did it one afternoon.

- Tremendous throw from Seneca Wallace to Evan Moore for the Browns first touchdown. Moore ran a streak down the seam and Wallace found him between two defenders for the score. It's probably an indication of why Wallace has about 15 starts in his 8-year career but he

can look so good on throws like that to Moore and that so god-awful on the next attempt that lands 15 yards out of bounds that it doesn't seem like the same guy.

- Eric Wright didn't get beaten for three TDs Sunday but make no mistake about it: he was beaten all over the field again. Owens may have had his biggest play of the day over the top of Sheldon Brown but he stole plenty of EZ E's lunch money Sunday too. Wright needs to get his head straight and his technique back. If he doesn't do so quickly he's going to be switching roles with rookie Joe Haden soon.

The Buckeyes

- Don't undervalue the ability to survive and advance when you're not at the top of your game. Ohio State played really poorly against a mediocre Illinois team Saturday but escaped with a win in Champaign. That hasn't always been the case for the Buckeyes who suffered a memorable loss to the Illini in 2007 in Columbus.

- Okay. Can we all come to the agreement that Brandon Saine's greatest value to OSU may come in the spring on the track as opposed to on the gridiron in the fall? My goodness. I'm really growing tired of watching Saine stutter step and tiptoe into the line of scrimmage. More Jordan Hall and Boom Herron please. Saine can be a nice change of pace back but his days as the featured runner at a university that's turned out Archie Griffin, Eddie George and Robert Smith (to name a few) should be numbered.

- Trumpets please: two straight weeks without the Buckeyes giving up a special teams TD.

- OSU's BCS life may have passed before their eyes when Terrelle Pryor left Saturday's game for a couple series due to an injury to his right quadriceps. Pryor returned but never looked really comfortable (although he didn't before he was hurt either) after the injury. It looks like Pryor will be fine for next Saturday's game against Indiana in Columbus.

The Tribe

- What do you say about a bad team that had to play out of its mind over the last two weeks against veteran clubs that had already called it a season just to lose less than a 100 games?

Nothing really. I mean, I'll have another year or so to come up with something given this team could very well threaten the 100 loss mark again next season.

- It was a good run at .200 Lou Marson. Again, maybe next year.

- It will be nice to not have to purposely avoid Tribe games on television for the next few months. Maybe the winter and the snow will sufficiently wash away the stench of the 2010 season and give me some hope for 2011. But it's going to take a lot of snow and a lot of winter to get past this one.

- The only preference for the post season is that it passes without the Yankees or Phillies winning the final game of the year.

The Cavaliers

- Nope. Still not ready for this NBA season. Maybe next week I'll have some thoughts on the Cavs and their prospects but right now there's still no interest in anything NBA unless it involves a headline like: James Plans to Start Rehab Immediately After Recovery.

Sorry. It's still an open sore.

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