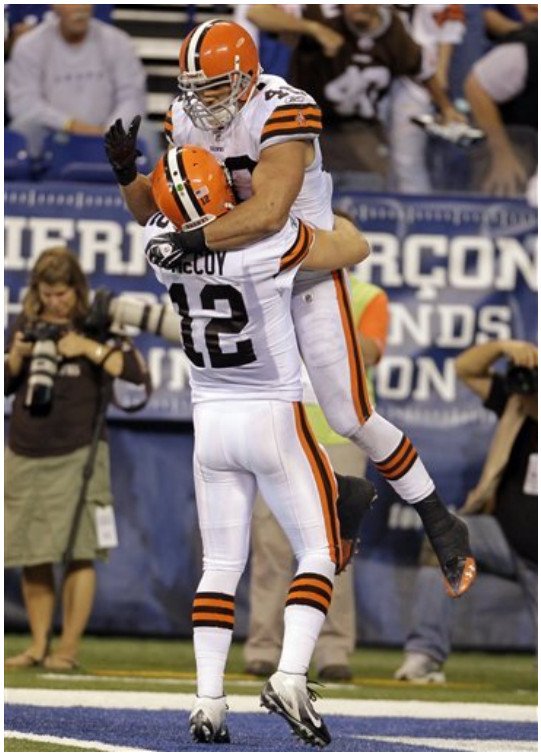

Don't dismiss the fact that the Browns went on the road and beat a wounded Indianapolis team for their first win of the season. When you're the average-looking skinny kid at the dance, you dance with whoever asks and you enjoy it.

After all, it was almost a week ago to the hour that we were complaining about a home loss to a team that appeared to be in worse shape than the Browns. You can't complain about a home loss and also complain about a road win regardless of how choppy or sloppy it may have been. NFL wins are to be enjoyed. Especially when it evens the season record and puts you into a tie for the division lead. Especially when you're still watching a young team work through major philosophical changes on both sides of the ball and especially when it makes next week's game at the stadium relevant as opposed to desperate.

There's clearly plenty of room for improvement everywhere but the Browns did some things that they can build on Sunday in Indianapolis. The first thing they did was play disciplined football for the better part of the afternoon. The Browns cut their penalties from 11 last week to just 3 on Sunday. Just that alone allowed them to develop a bit more rhythm and flow offensively, though they're still far from a well-oiled machine.

They also stopped Joseph Addai and Delone Carter often enough to force Kerry Collins to have

to beat them and the old man simply couldn't get it done, instead settling for four field goals on trips into Browns territory before getting a meaningless TD as the fourth quarter came to a close. Collins got pressure all day from the Browns defensive front four and you could see Ahtyba Rubin, Phil Taylor and Jabaal Sheard getting more comfortable in the 4-3 and getting more pressure on the opposing QB. The Browns sacked Collins twice and also caused two turnovers that set up scores.

Offensively the Browns were uneven at best. The final stats show Peyton Hillis with nearly 100 yards rushing and two TDs but he was held in check until late in the game as well. I don't get too concerned about Hillis's yards coming late because he wears down defenses with his punishing style, but I do get concerned when he and his backfield brethren of Colt McCoy, Owen Marecic and Montario Hardesty put the ball on the ground four times (losing just one).

McCoy was decent, nothing more and nothing less. He likely would be far better if 60% of his offensive line wasn't out or rotating and if he wasn't running for his life as often. To his credit, McCoy throws the ball well on the run and his TD pass to Evan Moore and a long throw to Mo Massaquoi each came off roll outs/sprints or just plain running away from defenders. McCoy avoided any turnovers and threw the short to intermediate balls really well. McCoy finished the day completing 22/32 for 211 yards and the TD to Moore. He piled up a 97.2 rating Sunday as well.

We still need to see McCoy and the Browns stretch the field more often. The deep ball was nearly non-existent against the Colts. McCoy did spread those 22 completions across 8 different backs and receivers.

You know what we don't need to see any more? We don't need to see 3rd and 2 carries go to Owen Marecic when Peyton Hillis is in the backfield and when you have three very capable tight ends and what's supposed to be a clinical short passing game. It sure seemed like a case of coach calling a play with the purpose of outsmarting or fooling someone when he decides to go to the third or fourth best option.

* Josh Cribbs was a beast in the return game and also in the bubble screen and short passing game. Cribbs again gave the Browns a huge burst with a big kick return and a big punt return.

* Good to see Greg Little getting more involved in the passing game. With each reception he's going to gain more of McCoy's confidence and he's also a handful to bring down.

* Terrific adjustment from Massaquoi on the long sideline route at the end of the first half. McCoy did a nice job finding the one-on-one matchup and MoMass did an even better job positioning himself between the defender and the football.

* Marecic did a terrific job getting a crushing block on Hillis's first rushing touchdown. He blew up his assignment and Hillis walked in from the one yard line nearly untouched.

* Impressive day for Sheard. The rookie 2nd rounder got pressure throughout the day and also stripped Collins after sacking him and recovered the fumble. Still a lot of work to do in the rushing game for Sheard but he did get penetration and contain a couple times when Addai tried going wide. Oh, and no more hero laterals or whatever the hell that was on the fumble return. Know the situation and hit the turf.

* Joe Haden had five tackles (one for a loss) and played another solid game whether he was supporting the run or defending the pass.

* Brad Maynard punted five times for a 40 yard average. He also dropped three of those punts inside the 20-yard line and hit a 48-yard punt as well. Much better than watching the stock broker with the balky back from last week.

All We Needed to Know

I wonder if Ohio State Head Coach Luke Fickell updated his resume at the Miami airport before heading back to Columbus Saturday night, or if he was still too frozen with as much fear and panic as his sideline demeanor would have indicated, and he waited until Sunday morning to get cracking on that project.

What a bloody nightmare. What a bloody embarrassment. What a bloody, long season this could turn out to be for the Buckeyes. I don't want to hear about it being Fickell's first year or how he was tossed into a bad situation with everything that's gone on since last December.

So what.

That's got nothing to do with Fickell's apparent paralysis on the sideline Saturday night against a mediocre Miami Hurricanes team led by a guy in QB Jacory Harris who tried his damndest to keep the Buckeyes in the game. But Fickell apparently wanted no part of Miami's gifts. He was content to sit back and watch his step-too-slow linebackers chase down Miami running backs and he was content to stay with Joe Bauserman for most of the night as his quarterback.

Bauserman is horrible. Freshman Braxton Miller isn't much, if any, better right now. The two QBs combined for a dreadful 4/18 performance throwing the football that piled up just over 30 yards, and two of those completions and 20 of those yards came in the last 30 seconds of the game in garbage time. But part of a coach's job is to understand what's best for his team now and in the near future and Luke Fickell is failing miserably if he thinks Bauserman's presence under center is beneficial at all. That means today and tomorrow.

Saturday night showed anyone watching that these moments are too big for Bauserman. It also showed the moment and the challenge appears to be too big for Fickell. It was horrifying to see Fickell on the sideline watching Miami's final TD drive. Sweat pouring down his face, Fickell stood there seemingly incapable of making a call for a timeout as the 'Canes ran nine minutes off the clock in a game that still hung in the balance. And whether or not Fickell was paralyzed with indecision or whether he simply conceded defeat, well, neither is acceptable at Ohio State.

Miller's development needs to be priority one for the Buckeyes this season and right now that kid wears the same lost expression on his face that his head coach displays all too frequently. He looks fearful and dazed on the sidelines and in the pocket and, while this season will likely be wasted with an 8-4 record or so, Miller needs to be brought up to speed for 2012 and beyond.

The Buckeye faithful will likely be placated by six or seven more wins this season and the most apologetic of them will try and read some growth into Fickell as the season progresses. That's

how it goes in Columbus. And Fickell might well learn and grow some in the job. He did get a coveted job under the worst of circumstances and he has demonstrated excellence in recruiting and in coaching a parade of outstanding OSU linebackers.

But you can't look at the Buckeyes right now and not see that Fickell is overmatched and overwhelmed by the challenges he faces and a legacy program like Ohio State can't be where learning on the job is acceptable.

Fickell will be fine somewhere else where he can grow as a head coach. Bauserman will be fine when his social security checks start arriving in two or three years. Miller will be fine when a coach that knows what needs to be done at this level of college football takes over. But for this season the Buckeyes are in trouble.

Big trouble.

Really?

Lost in the fervor of ex-Patriots jumping all over Chad Ochocinco like he had hit on their teenage daughters was the ridiculous reaction of the Patriots PR Department to Tom Brady's quotes during his weekly 'locker side' chat with various media personnel.

From Boston.com:

With the home opener approaching, the Patriots quarterback was asked if he had any message for the fans heading to Foxborough to see the Patriots-Chargers game.

"Yeah, start drinking early," Brady said with a snicker. "Get nice and rowdy. It's a 4:15 game, a lot of time to get lubed up. Come out here, and cheer for the home team."

The Patriots later clarified the "drinking early" remark on behalf of Brady, telling the assembled media, "He meant 'stay hydrated, drink a lot of water. Be loud, drink responsibly.'"

“He meant, ‘stay hydrated, drink a lot of water’?

Bull shit. No he didn’t.

He meant for the Patriots fans to get to their tailgates early and lift the lids on their coolers full of beers as soon as they could. He meant for them to get good and buzzed and to let that buzz be expressed in crowd noise when the Chargers came out of the tunnel.

He meant what he said. He wanted them to drink, get borderline obnoxious and do what fans all across the NFL do on Sundays to enjoy their day and support their team. Brady didn’t care about hydration or electrolytes or drinking responsibly.

But the Patriots PR staff immediately went into panic mode and tried to spin what Brady said into that bag of bullshit and obvious lies.

Why?

Why is the team pandering to the one or two percent of people who would have been offended by what Brady said? The same one or two percent who are always looking to be offended so that they can bitch about something to someone. Why does the organization care enough about what these serially offended parties have to say to the point where they make themselves look blatantly and egregiously untruthful and, in all reality, stupid and incompetent?

Brady didn't tell people to get drunk, keep drinking and then drive home. Anyone who listened to what he said inferred that the context in which he said it was both playful and tongue in cheek. Anyone who has ever been to an NFL game and/or tailgated before one knows exactly what the deal is and what Brady was talking about. That was not a plea for people to act irresponsibly. It was a wink and a nod to the reality of an NFL Sunday and the Pats PR people overreacted and over reached with their ridiculous response.

Are they concerned that much about alcohol and the potential liability it puts on the team? Then why don't they stop selling $10 beers at the stadium? Are they concerned with the image that Brady created? Then how about they remove all the beer signage in the stadium and return that blood money to the advertisers they happily took it from previously?

No? They don't feel the need to go that far but they'll piss on your shoes and tell you it's raining with a lie so transparent that it's insulting to anyone who read it.

Do they think they're protecting some intimate secret about the drinking that goes on and the behavior that results from it every weekend? There's no man behind the curtain and there's no cat scrambling out of a bag.

NFL Sundays are Caligula-lite.

People drink too much, get loud and blow off steam after a long work week and before the next one starts. And sometimes they get too stupid and too overbearing which leads to the situation having to be corrected by either self-policing fans who pound some sense into the offending drunkard or by the police who usually take a slightly more measured approach.

But the Pats PR department doesn't need to treat us like we're a 10-year old and attending our first wake. Everybody has seen the bodies, everyone gets it. Stop trying to shield people from the realities that put billions of dollars in your pockets while you unconvincingly preach about the dangers of those moneymakers and unconvincingly wag your finger at the people purchasing products you promote on television and in your stadiums.

"He meant 'stays hydrated, drink a lot of water. Be loud, drink responsibly." Good God. That was the worst idea to come out of public relations department since Abercrombie & Fitch told us that the thong underwear they designed for 10-14 year old girls was designed to be "lighthearted and cute".

Go to work spinning the Ochocinco story. Tell us how the old guard Pats players are trying to assist Ochocinco in becoming the best Patriot he can be as opposed to just waiting for the dude to tweet once before their dislike for the guy came spilling out in a frightening and unwarranted display of hate.

Your job is partly to help put out fires. That's true. It's just that you're not supposed to be the ones building them by dousing Brady's little match with gallons of your own gasoline and a blow torch.

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