

Post-James Cleveland turns eyes to Mayfield

BY JERRY BREWER

BEREA, OHIO — Baker Mayfield struts around post-LeBron Cleveland, confident he's next. There is something about his walk. When stationary, Mayfield looks like an average dude, short for a quarterback at 6-foot-1 and a little thick. In motion, however, he commands attention with his upright posture and a gait worthy of theme music.

He possesses a pliable charisma with his Everyman physical features belying his No. 1 draft pick talent and swagger. What do you need him to be: underdog or prodigy? He's both. In this Rust Belt city, Mayfield is a former walk-on turned Heisman Trophy winner who now dares to achieve two impossible feats: (1) make the Cleveland Browns matter again and (2) fill the superstar void left by LeBron James, the home-grown icon who left for Los Angeles this summer.

Other than that, he can just have a chill career.

"It comes with the territory," Mayfield said. "That is what I signed up for. I am living my dream, and I would not have it any other way. Without pressure, I do not think this would be very much fun, without all the people watching and finding joy in this game. I love this game. Without the competitive nature, I would not enjoy it."

On Sunday, the rookie quarterback will make his first NFL start, MAYFIELD CONTINUED ON D13

A must-win game goes United's way with a romp

D.C. UNITED 5, IMPACT 0

BY STEVEN GOFF

D.C. United needed to win Saturday at Audi Field. Not draw and certainly not lose but win. The manner and margin did not matter. Just win.

Although the result was very much in the balance at halftime, United exceeded even the nuttiest expectations with a 5-0 romp over the team immediately ahead of it, the Montreal Impact, in the race for the last playoff spot in MLS's Eastern Conference.

"It was incredible," midfielder Luciano Acosta said. "We were playing beautiful soccer. It was a beautiful game."

Acosta gave the most beautiful performance of all, scoring early and posting three assists in the second half as United (10-11-8) extended its unbeaten streak to five and pulled within two points of the Impact (12-15-4). Having played two fewer matches than Montreal, D.C. controls its destiny with its next four games at home before finishing at Chicago in late October.

Acosta wasn't the only one who UNITED CONTINUED ON D10

Fire at D.C. United
Sunday, Oct. 7, 1 p.m., ESPN

A visit to Nicklas Backstrom's hometown in Sweden shows a very different side of the Capitals star



TONI L. SANDYS/THE WASHINGTON POST

BACKSTORY

BY ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN IN GÄVLE, SWEDEN

The taxi ride to Gavlerinken Arena winds through Gävle's tree-lined downtown and features a pronunciation lesson. While the city is pronounced YAHV-leh, the hockey rink uses a hard "G," like the Gevalia coffee roaster that has its factory here. Perhaps unintentionally, the arena name incorporated the two things residents are most passionate about: the Brynäs hockey team and coffee too strong for most tourists to drink black. ¶ The driver doesn't ask why an American from Washington, D.C., is headed there in early August. He already knows. ¶ "So, you're going to see Nicklas Backstrom," he says.

BACKSTROM CONTINUED ON D11

Nicklas Backstrom reminisces in front of his childhood home in Valbo, Sweden. His father, Anders, used to flood a nearby field for his sons and the neighborhood kids to skate on.

RYDER CUP
The U.S. team will need a comeback to keep the trophy. D6

BASEBALL
In his final outing, Stephen Strasburg ends up a winner. D7

THOMAS BOSWELL
As another season ends, an ode to what baseball means. D7

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
Homeless standout Jamal Speaks gets back in the game. D14

It's deja vu as Buckeyes come back to stun Lions

OHIO STATE 27, PENN STATE 26

BY CHUCK CULPEPPER

STATE COLLEGE, PA. — As No. 4 Ohio State and No. 9 Penn State continued to collaborate on some of the most dramatic annual football theater extant, they somehow also staged a rerun Saturday night, even in a different setting with some different lead actors.

Just as in the impossible delirium of 2017 in Columbus, Penn State approached victory, saw



JAMES LANG/USA TODAY SPORTS

Ohio State wide receiver K.J. Hill scores the go-ahead touchdown.

victory just up ahead, maybe even touched victory and then did not end up with victory as the Buckeyes absconded with it, 27-26.

Just as an Ohio State deficit seemed glum in 2017 at 38-27 with 4:52 remaining, so did its 26-14 inconvenience with eight minutes left this time. Just as Ohio State wound up huffing and puffing and winning, 39-38, last time, it wound up wheezing and winning by one point this time.

Except that as quarterback J.T. Barrett assembled a virtuoso fourth quarter in Columbus in his final Buckeyes season, the OHIO STATE CONTINUED ON D5

La. Lafayette 14	Tennessee 12	Syracuse 23	4 Ohio State 27	Mississippi Late 33	Baylor 33	7 Stanford 17	So. Miss 13	20 BYU 7	12 W. Virginia 42	Va. Tech 31	Virginia 21
1 Alabama 56	2 Georgia 38	3 Clemson 27	9 Penn State 26	5 LSU 33	6 Oklahoma 66	8 Notre Dame 38	10 Auburn 24	11 Washington 35	25 Texas Tech 34	22 Duke 14	N.C. State 35

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