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Jake Delhomme Starts For The Cleveland Browns While McCoy Is Hurt

Jake Delhomme has spent most of his first season with the Browns in a mentor's role, dispensing sound advice to rookie qb Colt McCoy.

This week, he passed down his walking boot. The dreaded high ankle sprain has grown to be as infectious as a common cold in Cleveland.

Pro Bowl left tackle Joe Thomas sarcastically said it's like a disease, and he does not want to catch it. With McCoy sidelined this week and possibly for several more with a sprained left ankle, Delhomme, who has performed in just 2 games this season because of a similar ankle affliction, will start Sunday as the Browns (3-7) play host to his former team, the Panthers (1-9) in [sports betting](#).

In a year of redemptive contests for Cleveland, it's Delhomme's turn to face old friends.

Delhomme, 35, has not started since the Browns' Sept. 12 season opener, when he rolled his right ankle throughout the first half vs the Buccaneers. He has not played since Oct. 10, when he came off the bench to take the place of Seneca Wallace, whose high ankle sprain came against the Falcons.

Delhomme was inactive on eight other Sundays, pressured to remain on the sideline in a baseball cap to cheer and coach his teammates. Like everything else he does, Delhomme managed the down time with style. He grew near to McCoy, coaching the youngster in some ins and outs of the NFL's most challenging position. Delhomme never complained, never stopped working, never put himself above the squad.

But he missed competing -- horribly. It's no surprise he nearly raced across the locker room to talk with reporters prior to practice.

Cleveland browns coach Eric Mangini didn't formally pronounce Delhomme his starter, but in a unusual admission for one of the league's most tightlipped coaches, Mangini did confirm that McCoy endured the same trauma that sidelined Delhomme and Wallace for more than one month.

Mangini is still hopeful that McCoy will not be out as long as his other 2 quarterbacks, though with the way this season has gone, there's no telling what may transpire. Delhomme believes McCoy will return sooner than he did.

Delhomme appreciates the irony of returning in time to play vs the Carolina Panthers, who released the qb in March following his worst year as a starter. The parting was amicable, but painful. Delhomme spent 7 years with the Carolina Panthers, taking them to their sole Super Bowl.

His recollections of his days in Carolina blue are affectionate, and it's just not in his makeup to hold a grudge. Revenge? Not this time around.

With McCoy gone, Mangini's other choice was to go back to Wallace, who made 4 sequential starts before he was injured and losing his position.

Mangini said he favored Delhomme due to the fact of the quarterback's knowledge of Carolina. Wallace was playing well when he went down. He has every right to be disappointed about Mangini's pick, but he is not campaigning or whining. Delhomme said he, Wallace and McCoy made a vow weeks ago that they would accept Mangini's word. It's been an upsetting year, and the trio didn't intend to make it any worse at the [sportsbook](#).

Delhomme is back in the starter's part, where he began the season and where he hopes to end it. He came into his thirteenth year as a professional revitalized and prepared to put distance between himself and a dreadful 2009 with the Carolina Panthers. He looked like a new man in training camp and preseason.

The injury was a drawback, though now that he's fully healed, Delhomme wants to demonstrate he can still win. It's one more chance. Thomas trusts every word.

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