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By Cameron Zargar

Against Baltimore, BenJarvus Green-Ellis ran with authority and grit, demonstrating he is a clear upgrade over Cedric Benson.

Andrew Hawkins provided a spark with nifty moves and jaw-dropping quickness proving the 5'7" receiver will be a factor this year.

Also, Cincinnati sustained no major injuries.

Bengals fans might want to stop reading now.

Not a lot more could have gone wrong in their Monday night opener in Baltimore, a 44-13 thrashing at the hands of their AFC North rival.

The defense looked confused from the start, getting burned by wide receiver Torrey Smith for 52 yards on the first play of the game. Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco continued attacking the Bengals' shaky secondary, but it wasn't just the deep-passing game that the Bengals couldn't stop. Running back Ray Rice averaged 6.8 yards a carry and previously unknown Dennis Pitta (73 yards receiving, 1 touchdown) looked like an All-Pro tight end.

Meanwhile, on offense, quarterback Andy Dalton and his crew couldn't get rolling. Superstar receiver A.J. Green couldn't break free and athletic tight end Jermaine Gresham was hounded and double-teamed in the end zone. Feeling the pressure of Baltimore's pass rush, Dalton did his best Michael Vick impersonation, taking to his legs, mostly to no avail (3 carries, 11 yards, 2 failed quarterback sneaks). It was clear the Bengals needed another big-play receiver to divert attention away from Green and Gresham. Perhaps Cincinnati, normally more lenient and compassionate towards their players than any other franchise, gave up a little too early on the troubled, but insanely-athletic, Jerome Simpson.

The good news is that the Bengals may have found a running game. Also, they won't have to face the Ravens every week.

Green-Ellis, previously regarded as no more than an average runner who protects the football like no other, might just be a great fit. Formerly of the pass-happy Patriots, Green-Ellis played with passion, as if to prove that he can be a workhorse back, if only given the chance. Should that be the case, he would fit perfectly with the type of football the Bengals are trying to play.

Many predicted Cincinnati's defense to be among the league's best (though last night may have changed that). If Green-Ellis can continue to pick up short-yardage and help in the end zone, that will allow the Bengals to win the kind of low-scoring affairs their defense likes to play. The passing game simply needs to be efficient in regards to turnovers and provide the occasional big play to keep the defense honest. And with three young Pro-Bowlers in Dalton, Green and Gresham, it seems likely they will be up to the task.

Don't read too much into Monday's game. A young Cincinnati squad is sure to settle down without the pressure of playing in front of a national audience against a Super Bowl contender.

The Ravens may have just had their breakout game. One of the league's fiercest defenses since their inception in 1996, Baltimore looks like the offensive juggernaut insiders predicted them to be during the preseason. That sort of dominance on both sides of the ball makes for about as challenging of an opponent as the Bengals will face all year.

And just one more bit of good news:

The Browns are coming up.