By CHUCK MURR

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BEREA — Cleveland Browns coach Pat Shurmur still loves rookies Trent Richardson and Brandon Weeden — even in defeat.

Shurmur would prefer Richardson, his starting running back, to focus on regrouping rather than being critical, however. And the embattled coach also would like Weeden to be more consistent at quarterback.

All told, though, he will gladly take both of them as the Browns move past a disappointing 38-21 loss to Washington on Sunday, an effort that snapped a three-game winning streak.

“I’m not saying you never go to the backup quarterback,” Shurmur said. “But I didn’t consider it (Sunday).”

Shurmur has directed a young team through a rollercoaster season that included a change in ownership. With a chance to finish strong, the Browns’ flop Sunday ended their slim playoff hopes, raised more questions about Weeden and had Richardson contemplating his coach’s decisions.

Richardson had two touchdown runs, but gained only 28 yards on 11 carries and said after that he thought Shurmur abandoned the game plan. Shurmur wasn’t pleased by the comments, but

said Monday, he is not angry.

“I’m not upset with him,” Shurmur said. “I did talk to him. I asked what he meant by what he said. I explained to him that when we’re all in a state of disappointment because we lost, it is important to keep our focus and, No. 1, regroup and get ready to play the next game.”

Shurmur has two more chances to make a positive imprint, as new owner Jimmy Haslam III ponders offseason moves. Haslam bought the team over the summer, and together with new CEO Joe Banner, will evaluate all aspects of the organization after another largely disappointing season.

Cleveland began the season 0-5, and even though Shurmur’s Browns have persevered through the troubles, they are still just 5-9 with two difficult games approaching — Denver (11-3) and Pittsburgh (7-7).

Shurmur expects better play from Weeden regardless of the opponent, saying the 29-year-old is not too old to develop.

“I’ve never thought about his age,” Shurmur said. “I think of him as a rookie and he’ll be better his second year. I’m looking forward to him having a much better game this week against Denver.”

Weeden was 21 for 35 for 244 yards, one touchdown, and two costly interceptions against the Redskins.

“We had two turnovers turned into 14 points and you can’t do that,” Shurmur said. “On the second (pick), he tried to put it over the linebacker and the ball didn’t go where he wanted.”

Shurmur said he evaluates every throw by Weeden, but would not reveal his grading scale. Weeden, a first-round pick, was clearly outplayed by fourth-round choice Kirk Cousins on

Sunday. Cousins, making his first start in place of injured Robert Griffin III, threw for 329 yards and two scores.

The Redskins picked up big chunks of yardage when Cousins rolled out and found open receivers. It appeared that the Browns simply did not adjust. Shurmur said that was not the case at all.

“We were prepared for their style of offense, but they did a very good job,” Shurmur said. “It was not the same play every time.”

Shurmur believes the Browns will benefit by Richardson refining his game, too. Picked No. 3 overall last spring, the former Alabama star leads the team with 897 yards on the ground. And with 11 rushing touchdowns, he has already surpassed Hall of Fame standout Jim Brown’s 55-year-old team rookie record.

“He’s getting the ball in the end zone,” Shurmur said. “His yards per rush could be better.”

Richardson is averaging 3.5 yards a carry, but Shurmur noted that has been accomplished while playing injured. Richardson has played with injured ribs since mid-October and missed the preseason after having minor surgery on his left knee.

“I don’t think his style has been defined yet,” Shurmur said. “He’s still learning to play in the NFL.”

NOTES: The Browns waived DB Dimitri Patterson, who joined the club as an unrestricted free agent in 2011. Patterson appeared in seven contests this season with four starts. He finished with 28 tackles. ... Shurmur did not have injury updates on DB T.J. Ward (knee) and DL Frostee Rucker (groin). ... Cleveland finished 0-4 vs. the NFC East.

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