Wiedmeier is recovering at home and Shurmur intends to present him with a game ball.

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Catching a short pass from coach Pat Shurmur, new Browns owner Jimmy Haslam tucked away the game ball, a reward for his first win.

Haslam beamed and everyone in Cleveland's locker room, including legendary running back Jim Brown, basked in the glow of victory.

On a gray, stormy Sunday, this was a bright new beginning. For a change, this was a step forward for the Browns.

Rookie Trent Richardson rushed for a season-high 122 yards and a touchdown, Cleveland's defense kept San Diego out of the end zone and the Browns benefited from a big drop in a 7-6 win, Haslam's first since buying the club for $1.05 billion.

"It feels good," Browns linebacker D'Qwell Jackson said of satisfying Haslam. "You always want to put a smile on his face."

Richardson did just that with a performance that even had the tough-to-please Brown swelling with pride. When the Browns drafted Richardson with the No. 3 overall pick in April's draft, Brown had labeled the former Alabama star as "ordinary."

But after seeing Richardson, who still hasn't fully recovered from a rib cartilage injury, overpower the Chargers, Brown had nothing but compliments for a player who wants to break all his records in Cleveland.

"That's my partner, man," Brown said. "He's done everything I thought he should do. He never took anything I said the wrong way. He's interested in his family. He's interested in this team. And he's willing to make sacrifices because really, he's hurt more than you think he is right now."

With winds gusting to 40 mph making every pass an adventure, the Browns (2-6) turned their offense over to Richardson, who gained just 8 yards on eight carries last week at Indianapolis before Shurmur benched him for being ineffective.

But against a San Diego defense that came in allowing just 71.2 yards per game - second-best in the NFL - Richardson rumbled. He broke several tackles on a 26-yard TD run that opened the scoring and gave the Browns all the points they'd need against the Chargers (3-4), who dropped their third straight game.

"Great running backs break tackles," Brown said. "You do that, you are in control. You keep the ball. The other team is disheartened. That's football."

And that's why the Browns chose Richardson.

Two plays after quarterback Brandon Weeden picked up a first down on a fourth-and-1 sneak to keep Cleveland's opening drive alive, Richardson took a handoff up the middle, broke two tackles and was kept upright by right guard Shawn Lauvao, who wrapped his hands around his teammate, and shoved him toward the goal line.

Richardson said once he was deep in San Diego's secondary there was no stopping him.

"They don't want no problems," said Richardson, who also picked up a critical first down in the fourth quarter with a 12-yard reception.

Weeden finished 11 of 27 for 129 yards, and afterward the former minor league pitcher joked that the score reminded him of some days on the mound.

"I haven't had a game like that since `06 when I played with the Royals," he cracked. "I've never been a part of a football game like that. But as long as I'm on the good end of it, that's all that matters."

San Diego's offense sputtered for most of the game, but the Chargers had a final chance in the final two minutes. However, quarterback Philip Rivers' pass was batted away by Browns cornerback Buster Skrine with 1:24 left. Rivers finished 18 of 34 for 154 yards, but had a potential touchdown pass dropped by Robert Meachem in the third quarter.

"It could have been a big play," Rivers said. "There were a lot of chances, not just that one."

With the Chargers trailing 7-3, Meachem dropped what would have been a 51-yard TD pass. On third-and-9, Meachem slipped behind Cleveland's defensive backs and was wide open at about the 25-yard line as he awaited Rivers' throw.

But when the ball arrived, Meachem let it slip through his hands.

"I took my eyes off of it," Meachem said. "I thought about scoring first before I caught the ball. Big play in the game. Big-time players make big-time plays, and that's a play you have to make in a game like this. It could have been the momentum changer. You never know."

Just a week ago, the Browns had a similar miscue when rookie Josh Gordon dropped a potential TD pass at the goal line. TV cameras caught Haslam's emotional reaction, swiping the air with his hand in frustration. There would be none of that on this day as the Browns capped a trying week off the field.

On Thursday, incoming CEO Joe Banner missed his first day with the Browns to be with his father, who died the following day in Boston. Also, Bryan Wiedmeier, the team's executive vice president of business affairs was rushed to the Cleveland Clinic on Thursday after feeling disoriented and had surgery to have a brain tumor removed.

Wiedmeier is recovering at home and Shurmur intends to present him with a game ball.

As Shurmur wrapped up his postgame remarks to the Browns, he was about to tell the players they would be off until Wednesday when he was interrupted.

"They all said, `Nope coach, we'll see you tomorrow,'" Shurmur said. "They want to work. That's an impressive thing for our team."

And just maybe the start of something new.