

## Browns GM Mike Lombardi Needs To Be Working, Not Talking

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Wednesday, March 20 2013 2:43 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, March 20 2013 3:07 PM

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When the Cleveland Browns [hired Mike Lombardi in January as vice president of player personnel](#), it was a controversial move that raised several questions among Browns fans (although [not in the Jim Nantz household](#), of course).

After being out of the NFL since 2007 – and [having what could best be described as a dodgy track record](#) when he actually was employed with an NFL team – there's more than reasonable doubt that Lombardi, who has since been promoted to general manager, may not be fully qualified for the job he currently holds with the Browns.

But one thing that is not in doubt is this: it is far more important for Lombardi to actually work on scouting players and trying to make the Browns relevant, and [far less important for him to spend time talking with the media](#).

After complaining for the past three years that they had to talk to former general manager Tom Heckert rather than being granted open door access to team president Mike Holmgren, there are some media members now complaining that they have to talk to CEO Joe Banner rather than Lombardi.

Only in Cleveland.

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For his part, Banner admitted that keeping Lombardi away from the local media is a good thing, at least for now.

“Mike is a little bit of a lightning rod,” [Banner understated earlier this week at the NFL owners meeting](#). “Distraction won’t serve anybody’s interests. He’s got a tremendous amount of work to do right now, and whether that’s good, bad or fair or not it doesn’t really matter. It’s just the reality of the situation.

“It attracts a lot of attention and it gets a lot of strong reaction and I think it’s better for us right now and better for him to keep things calm, low key, focus on his work and then kind of more gradually let that situation take care of itself.”

Banner has set himself up as the go-to person on the Browns and, really, isn’t that the most important point here? He is in charge of setting the direction and tone of the team and he will speak for the team. There are no mixed messages, no more letting the coach try and answer for the actions of the general manager; there is one clear voice in Berea and that voice belongs to Banner.

What do we need to hear from Lombardi about? His evaluation of current players, like Brandon Weeden and Josh Gordon, which he made while working for the NFL Network? He covered all that in his introductory news conference.

Do we really need to hear that again? And, if so, to what purpose?

Browns fans, for the most part, are pretty smart. If the team acquires a player, either in the draft, free agency or via a trade, we can pretty much surmise that Banner, Lombardi, assistant general manager Ray Farmer and coach Rod Chudzinski were in on the decision. We don’t need all of them telling us about it.

Just look back at [what was said](#) when the Browns signed linebacker Paul Kruger in free

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agency:

Banner: "We've talked a lot about putting together an aggressive organization with high character people determined to win and be the best they can be and all of the things we have talked about here since the day we arrived. Paul is just a top notch reflection of that. We feel lucky and excited to have him here."

Chudzinski: "I am extremely excited about Paul and Paul being here. We talked early on when I first got the job about wanting an attacking style of defense and to find the personnel that embodies that. I think Paul is the perfect example of that type of player. He's a relentless guy, high motor, a very physical player and plays with a passion that you love to watch and see players play with."

Defensive coordinator [Ray Horton](#) : "Paul Kruger, coming off of a Super Bowl, one of the leaders of Baltimore's defense in kind of the same style we play here, tenacious. He had 13.5 sacks this year, is just a fantastic leader, character player. I'm excited about him."

This isn't to let Lombardi or the Browns off the hook, but do we really need Lombardi at the podium talking about how excited he is to bring in a player?

We do not.

We thought maybe it was just us, so we reached out to Browns fans on Twitter and asked them if it was important that Lombardi speak with the media. Here's a sampling of the responses we received:

"I can't think of any reason to care that isn't completely contrived. We're getting info from Banner, so who cares?" – [@MSkog](#)

"Browns are going to be good. The draft hasn't happened. We don't care." – [@StepanekButton](#)

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“I’d rather my GM stay in the background and do what he should be doing, not spitting (BS) to the media.” – [@Tommy Dee](#)

“I wonder if he is the only GM not talking, or if he wasn’t promoted would this even be an issue.” – [@dubbythe1](#)

So it looks like we are not the only one who thinks this is a non-issue.

Here’s an idea, and it may be radical so stick with us on this one. Rather than trying to get some meaningless sound bites out of Lombardi, or grilling him about decisions he made with Bill Belichick back in the 1990s, why not spend time trying to figure out what the Browns are working to do with the current rebuild?

Why was it more important to sign Kruger as a pass rusher rather than, for example, Dannell Ellerbe to help D’Qwell Jackson in the middle of Horton’s defense? Why Desmond Bryant over Cliff Avril? Will an improved pass rush mask Buster Skrine in the secondary? How will these pieces fit in Horton’s scheme and how are they going to react against the rapidly changing offenses of today’s NFL?

Once they grow tired of the defense, there is plenty to talk about with the offense. How much will Trent Richardson – not just Weeden – benefit from playing in Norv Turner’s offense? How do Greg Little and Gordon fit into the picture? What do the analytics guys say about all this?

Or how about the upcoming NFL Draft?

Rather than just mirroring mock drafts from the likes of Mel Kiper and Mike Mayock, work some sources and give us some real examples of players that the Browns may draft. The Pittsburgh Steelers have a very specific model of player that they look for and the Browns are starting to follow that same philosophy. What types of players fit Horton’s defensive scheme and Turner’s offensive philosophy?

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Who are the players outside the obvious choices that may be a bit of a puzzle on draft day but that will make sense once they get on the field? Trust us when we say that fans can't get enough of that kind of info.

There are so many story angles - and even more fans hungry to for information about what we are going to see on the field this fall – that complaining about not having an opportunity to grill Lombardi should be so far down on the list.

Because, really, what can he say that is so important?

*(Photo by ClevelandBrowns.com)*