



The Cleveland Browns are currently in the market for their fourth head coach since the Romeo Crennel era ended after the 2008 season and there is no shortage of interesting candidates.

The team reportedly has received permission to interview New England offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels, as well as Seattle defensive coordinator Dan Quinn. They have also been linked to Arizona defensive coordinator Todd Bowles.

In what could turn into a pleasant surprise, [Jason La Canfora from CBS Sports](#) claims that the Browns will also look to interview Auburn coach Gus Malzahn (once he is done celebrating another national title for the SEC, of course) and Vanderbilt's James Franklin.

Malzahn is interesting because of his offensive system, one he calls a "hurry-up no-huddle" system that put up almost 400 yards of offense against Alabama – including 296 yards on the ground – and then totaled almost 700 yards – including 545 on the ground – against Missouri. (Of course, these are the Browns so we're not sure why we are even talking about running the ball.)

Franklin seems to have come out of nowhere, but he does have NFL experience (something Malzahn lacks) after working as a position coach with Green Bay. He is also [linked to the Penn State job](#), which opened up after Bill O'Brien left to take over the Houston Texans.

The thing that stands out the most about Franklin is he took a Vanderbilt program that has been the punching bag of the SEC (sound like anyone you know in the AFC North, Browns fans?) and turned it into a team that has gone to three consecutive bowls (not a hard feat in college football, but still), won nine consecutive games in the month of November and swept Florida, Georgia and Tennessee (certainly getting Jimmy Haslam's attention in the process) this season.

The thing that worries us about Malzahn and Franklin is that they are college coaches. And while opinion seems to be shifting that college coaches are not the failures in the NFL that they once were, we're not sure that assessment is entirely accurate.

The biggest examples that fans who favor hiring a college coach use to support their cause are Pete Carroll in Seattle, Jim Harbaugh in San Francisco and Chip Kelly in Philadelphia.

But Carroll and Harbaugh were not college coaches in the truest sense, and while Kelly has the Eagles in the playoffs in his first year, it took a game-saving interception off of Kyle Orton to get the Eagles into the playoffs.

So while it is nice that the Browns appear willing to look past the usual suspects, Malzahn and Franklin still fill us with a bit of doubt.

During Monday's press conference announcing Rob Chudzinski's firing, Haslam and Browns CEO Joe Banner promised to be as thorough in their search for a new coach as they were when they hired Chudzinski. (That probably means they will have hired someone by the time you finish reading this.)

"Nobody cares about winning or is going to work any harder to get us there than the people you're looking at right now," Haslam said in reference to himself and Banner. "I have no idea if we'll interview three people or 10 people, okay? And they are intense sessions with these individuals. I feel confident that we're going to be able to convince people that this is not a good, but a great place to coach, where they'll have great support and everything they need to be successful."

Since the Browns are one of the lead authors on the book *How Not to Hire a Successful NFL Coach*, we've put together a few pros and cons on some of the other available candidates. You know, just to help ease the burden of all the hard work they are doing over there in Berea.

Normally, after a team fires a coach, they go out and mistakenly hire someone who is the exact opposite (think Butch Davis to Romeo to Eric Mangini), which would lead us to think the Browns will bring in a defensive-minded coach (since Chud's specialty is offense). There is also the fact that the Browns spent heavily in free agency and in the draft last year on the defense.

That's why it is plausible that the team would be looking to interview Quinn, Bowles, and Jim Schwartz, recently fired by the Detroit Lions.

Dan Quinn pros: A first-year defensive coordinator with the Seahawks, Quinn coached a squad that allowed the fewest yards and fewest points in the NFL this season. He also once worked with San Francisco, which will ping general manager Mike Lombardi's radar because that will give him the opportunity to talk about how he once worked with Bill Walsh.

Dan Quinn cons: Has only been a coordinator for one year, and while he didn't mess up the Seahawks defense, they were pretty good before he took over. Only has a casual link to Bill Belichick as Quinn was defensive line coach for Eric Mangini in 2007-08 when Mangini coached the Jets. May not be enough to for Lombardi to get Belichick to give his blessing to Quinn.

Todd Bowles' pros: Experience as a head coach, going 2-1 with Miami in 2011 as an interim. Bowles runs a 3-4 defense, so all the money and time the Browns put into the defense this past year won't go to waste. Under Bowles this season, the Cardinals had the No. 1 run defense, were sixth overall on defense, and gave up almost 100 fewer points than the Browns. Was a defensive coach with the Browns from 2001-04.

Todd Bowles' cons: The Browns hired Bowles' predecessor, Ray Horton, as defensive coordinator, and now Horton has been given permission to pursue "other opportunities." Not sure they want to import someone from the desert again so soon. No verifiable links to Belichick, which means Bowles will probably receive only casual consideration from the Browns.

Jim Schwartz pros: NFL head coaching experience after spending the past five seasons as head coach of the Detroit Lions. A former “slappy” who worked with Belichick in Cleveland in the early 1990s, for what that is worth.

Jim Schwartz cons: Schwartz was 29-51 in those five years with the Lions while running one of the most undisciplined teams in the NFL. He changed the parking spaces around for the players because he is the type of coach who thinks those kind of things are important. Lost his final eight games of the 2012 season and six of his final eight this season. (Talk about not showing improvement as the season went along!) The Lions defense was also ranked just 16th and 20th the past two years.

Rather than head coach, Schwartz has been linked to the Browns as defensive coordinator. Which makes perfect sense since he runs a 4-3 defense and the Browns spent all of last season building a 3-4 defense because, according to Banner, that is what successful NFL teams use. But there is hope that [Schwartz may be open to change](#) .

The Browns could always throw a curveball at everyone and hire a “gritty, veteran coach” to get this thing turned around. If so, Mike Shanahan currently finds himself without a team after being fired by Washington.

Mike Shanahan pros: Veteran coach with two Super Bowl rings.

Mike Shanahan cons: Shanahan won those two Super Bowls 14 years ago. Since then, he has won just one playoff game, just finished a four-year stretch with the Redskins where he was 24-40, and almost single-handedly killed the NFL career of Robert Griffin III.

If the Browns really do hire Schwartz to run the defense and pass over (or are rejected by Malzahn and Franklin), they may decide to buck the trend and hire another offensive-minded head coach, which brings us to the inevitable hiring of McDaniels.

Josh McDaniels' pros: NFL head coaching experience with the Denver Broncos in 2009-10. Comes with the biggest stamp of approval from Belichick since Romeo, Charlie Weiss and Schwartz.

Josh McDaniels' cons: Fired midway through his second season in Denver after losing 17 of his last 22 games as coach – the worst winning percentage for a Denver coach since Lou Saban in 1967-71. In his first season, Broncos became just the third team since 1970 to miss the playoffs after starting out 6-0. Clashed with star quarterback Jay Cutler, eventually trading him to Chicago for quarterback Kyle Orton. Traded away wide receiver Brandon Marshall. Once traded for Brady Quinn. At the time of his firing, the Broncos ranked 29th in rushing offense (maybe he would fit in with the Browns after all) and were 31st in rushing defense. Traded into the first round of the NFL Draft to select Tim Tebow.

Want more, Browns fans? [Check out this highlight list of McDaniels' work in Denver](#) .

The Browns have lots of potential options when it comes to their coaching search and getting it right this time is only the most important thing the Browns have to this off-season.

No pressure or anything.

(Photo courtesy of The Associated Press)