



The firing of Rob Chudzinski after only one year at the helm of the Cleveland Browns was anything but fair. Chudzinski was saddled with Brandon Weeden as his starting quarterback to enter the season, likely at the behest of the front office to “see what the team had” in Weeden. His best quarterback option was injured for the season during his third start, at a time when the team was actually beginning to show some promise. Chudzinski was forced to play musical chairs at running back after the Trent Richardson trade, and the bottom of the roster was constantly being churned by the front office, making continuity especially difficult on defense and special teams. In short, the Cleveland Browns were not a team that was expected to be any good in 2013.

I don't know if Rob Chudzinski was the right man to lead the Cleveland Browns to a Super Bowl. There are many instances of head coaches improving with time; this season alone saw Carolina Panthers head coach Ron Rivera go from analytical whipping boy to a guy with a [catchy nickname](#)

and a team with a first round bye in the exceedingly difficult NFC. It's certainly possible Chudzinski could have taken to heart the lessons learned during a rough inaugural campaign and come back a much better coach in 2014.

But if Joe Banner and Jimmy Haslam are fully convinced after one season that Rob Chudzinski is not the right guy to lead this team to the promise land, the absolute worst thing they could have done is retain him for another season in an effort to appease the fans and media and to avoid making themselves look bad for hiring him in the first place.

The Browns' actions over the past year have made it imminently clear that 2013 was always

meant to be a throwaway year. Here's the money quote from Tony Grossi's [initial article detailing the Banner-Haslam press conference](#)

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"This is the crucial offseason for the Cleveland Browns," Haslam said. "Joe and I accept that responsibility. We have lots of room on the (salary) cap (and) 10 draft picks. We've got to hire a new coach. If we get that wrong, the responsibility's on us. We understand and we feel a lot of pressure to get this right for the city and for the fans."

It's really a brilliant plan for Joe Banner. He bought himself a throwaway year of running the team by somehow convincing Haslam that the Browns could not compete in 2013, an idea that was proven wrong when the team reached a 3-2 record behind merely adequate quarterback play in conference where [a blown call on a missed field goal](#) was the only thing that kept an 8-8 Steelers team out of the playoffs.

But really, all of that is beside the point now. Everything the Browns have done recently; trading draft picks in 2013 for picks in 2014, taking a project like Barkevious Mingo with their first pick, [refusing to sign any veteran stopgaps in free agency](#)

, going into the season with Brandon Weeden as the starting quarterback, constantly toying with the bottom of the roster, trading Trent Richardson; was done with 2014 in mind. It's not at all shocking that their head coach hire for 2013, and the subsequent firing of said coach, was also done with 2014 in mind.

This firing simply comes down to Banner and Haslam lacking the belief that Rob Chudzinski is the right guy to lead this team into consistent Super Bowl contention. The better question is whether or not Banner and Haslam believed Chudzinski was the right guy when they originally hired him; I would have been curious to see if the Browns would have retained Chudzinski if they had managed to hold on to win against the Jaguars, Bears, and Patriots. But fortunately for Banner and Haslam, Chudzinski never gave the duo any reason to keep him aboard the sinking ship (sunk ship?) that is the Cleveland Browns, and that is ultimately why he is no longer the Browns' head coach.

If there's one thing that has marked the tenure of Joe Banner and Jimmy Haslam, it's that the duo has total disregard for what outsiders think of what they're doing. Going back to when they traded a fourth round pick in 2013 to Pittsburgh for a third rounder in 2014, the tandem made it clear from the jump that they [did not care about what those outside the organization thought of](#)

[their moves](#)

. That ideology was on display when they dealt Trent Richardson, and it was on display again when they fired Chudzinski.

Banner and Haslam can be called a lot of things, but stupid isn't one of them. Both men had to know the media shitstorm that would hit following Chudzinski's dismissal. They were surely aware that fans would come up with derisive jokes such as [The Life Cycle of the Cleveland Browns](#) and that media members

would bestow the organization with the [dreaded D-Word](#)

, the word signifying that the organization is as far from winning a Super Bowl as they were when they returned to Cleveland in 1999. Yet they went ahead and fired Chudzinski anyway.

A lot has been made in the past few days of the idea that firing the guy they hired less than 365 days ago reflects much worse on the guys doing the hiring and firing than on the guy they hired/fired. There's definitely some truth to that; it's not optimal to fire your head coach after only one season. But I'd much rather the Browns fire the wrong guy for the right reasons instead of keeping him around in an effort to salvage their reputations.

This franchise is still fraught with doubt. The roster is still a mess, the entire coaching staff needs to be replaced, and the guys making the decisions haven't exactly done a great job so far ([save for the Trent Richardson trade](#)). Good luck finding a quality head coach that is willing to work for an autocratic CEO and an owner that may come under federal indictment in the coming months.

But the one thing that I love so far about this front office is that they refuse to kowtow to what fans and media expect out of them. In a sports town where the discourse is dominated by overreacting fans conditioned by decades of losing to distrust anything and everything a front office does as well as [media personalities that feed off that distrust to fuel their airwaves and blog pages with those same sensationalized overreactions](#), the Browns are currently operating above that fray. Whether or not Joe Banner and Jimmy Haslam bring in the right guy to coach this team ([they probably won't](#)

), I feel confident in saying that they will do whatever they think is best to get the Browns to the Super Bowl, reputations be damned.

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