



The Cleveland Browns coaching search is two weeks old now and the team has not made a decision yet on who will replace the fired Rob Chudzinski.

Whether or not owner Jimmy Haslam and CEO Joe Banner are any closer to finding Chudzinski's replacement is still unclear and while the situation is less than ideal, it may not be as dire as many are making it out to be.

But there is little doubt that the past two weeks have certainly left everyone so terribly, terribly vexed.

There are things that are known about the coaching search, while there are probably just as many things that people assume to know. While what we know is a pretty straight forward question to answer; what it all means may prove to be a bit trickier of a question.

We know that the Browns will not be hiring Bill O'Brien, Lovie Smith or Jay Gruden, who have accepted jobs with the Titans, Buccaneers and Redskins, respectively.

It may be guilt by association, but we're OK with the Browns not talking to Gruden. We're a bit surprised the Browns did not talk to Smith, as he is a solid coach. He's not great, but he would have been the best coach the Browns have employed since 1999.

As for O'Brien, the Texans moved on him rather quickly once the season ended. Houston had a jump on everyone else after firing coach Gary Kubiak during the season so they knew they would be looking for a coach, and O'Brien reportedly was planning to leave Penn State even before the season was over. The fact that Houston and O'Brien came to an agreement so quickly is interesting and meant that the Browns probably never had a real chance with O'Brien, even if they had expressed an interest.

Thankfully for the Browns, [New England offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels excused himself from consideration](#) after interviewing with the Browns. No one knows if McDaniels was ever a serious choice for the Browns, or if they were just interviewing him to get general manager Mike Lombardi to pipe down, but they never offered McDaniels the job so it is hard to label that one as a "miss."

While the Browns still cling to the silly notion of not confirming that they have met with a coaching candidate, we can all pretty much agree that the names that have been linked to the current opening are probably accurate.

The Browns have interviewed San Diego offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt ([who reportedly has now accepted the Tennessee job](#) , so strike him from the list), Green Bay quarterbacks coach Ben McAdoo, Arizona defensive coordinator Todd Bowles and Seattle defensive coordinator Dan Quinn. In a bit of a surprise move, the Browns reportedly interviewed Mike Munchak on Monday. Munchak was fired as head coach in Tennessee, where he was 22-26 in three seasons, [but has at least one backer for the Browns job](#)

The Browns have not moved on any of these candidates, however, because they are hoping to talk to Denver offensive coordinator Adam Gase – who will not interview until after the Broncos are eliminated from the playoffs. (So, go Patriots!) It's not just the Browns that Gase is not talking to; he has told everyone he will not interview until the season is over.

They may or may not be interested in talking with Auburn's Gus Malzahn.

In addition to the opening in Cleveland, Minnesota (which reportedly will have a [second interview with Cincinnati defensive coordinator Mike Zimmer](#)) and Detroit are all still looking for a coach, so the Browns have only missed out on hiring Whisenhunt from among the group they have interviewed.

What we don't know is what a lot of this means and what Haslam and Banner are really thinking. Because the Browns have not hired a coach **right this very instant** the search has been labeled a fiasco, a radioactive waste dump, and pretty much any other negative analogy the media can come up with.

What exactly were the Browns supposed to do differently? (Other than not put themselves in this position in the first place, obviously.)

If the team had hired a coach a day or two after firing Chudzinski, they would have been criticized for not conducting a thorough search for a replacement. (You know, like the thorough and exhaustive search that led them to hire Chudzinski in the first place.)

But by waiting and actually interviewing multiple candidates in an attempt to get this right, a narrative has been created that no one wants to take the job – despite the fact that the Browns have not actually offered the job to anyone. We're still kind of fuzzy on how you can reject a job that was never offered to you in the first place.

The Browns are certainly culpable in this, of course, by firing a coach after just one season. But it is not like they are the only team in town that has bungled their coaching hires in recent years.

After Eric Wedge was let go following the 2009 season, the Cleveland Indians hired Manny Acta despite the fact that he had one of the worst managerial records of the past 50 years. Less than three years later, the Tribe fired Acta after he posted two seasons with 90-plus losses.

Except for 2007, the Indians have been pretty much as irrelevant as the Browns since 2002 – finishing with a record under .500 eight times in the past 12 years – and have had to resort to Dollar Dog Nights and promotions to get people to Progressive Field. But they got a pass on Acta because they landed Terry Francona, who led the team to a Wild Card spot last year.

After the Cavs fired Mike Brown following the 2009-10 season, the team hired Byron Scott. Three years and 166 losses later, Scott is out and Brown is back in because owner Dan Gilbert had a change of heart.

But the Cavs have somehow been able to avoid the dysfunctional label despite currently sitting at 13-24 on the season. All we hear about is “low-risk, high-reward” contracts and “asset acquisitions” while being asked to ignore that the Cavs have four players selected in the top four of the past three drafts (including a No. 1 overall pick in Anthony Bennett who can’t get off the bench) on their roster but can’t get their act together. Oh, and definitely don’t worry about that 44-point loss, nothing to see there. It’s all part of the “process.” These things take time, you know.

No one knows if the Browns are going to get this next coaching decision right. After all, this is a team that hasn’t made a correct coaching hire since Marty Schottenheimer in 1985. (Let that sink in for a moment.)

But can we at least wait until they actually hire someone before we decide they got it wrong?