

Pieces of information and robotic statements continue to leak out of Berea from the Browns socially inept owner Randy Lerner. Given nothing but canned statements that seem to make little sense, Browns fans are left to speculate, gnash their teeth, and read comments from national writers about our beloved Browns being the laughing stock of the NFL. Enter Chris Hutchison to try and filter out all the white noise and make some sense of this mess for our readers.



A View From The Cheap Seats

Yes, following a long period of useless inactivity, much has happened in the space of a short time, and not all of it makes sense. In Cleveland, this is what we like to call Standard Operating Procedure.

Let's start at the beginning. On Sunday, the Browns were in the middle of another mind-numbing meltdown. Apparently, on their way into the locker room for Halftime - down 16-0 - they discovered Randy Lerner in the tunnel, staring angrily at each

of them (or at least what Randy thinks is "angry" - my guess is that most of the players didn't even realize he was there).

Here's an excerpt from [an article](#) by Steve King of the Orange and Brown Report written just after the game:

[Lerner] waited right there and glared at the players and coaches again as they came out of the locker room and took the field for the second half.

The owner was clearly fuming, as visibly irate as he's been since he took over ownership of the club when his father, Al Lerner, passed away on Oct. 23, 2002.

"I'm tired of this (stuff)!" he said.

Later, he confided to an associate of the team, "This is terrible."

"So what do you do?" the associate asked.

Lerner replied, "I don't know.";

Not yet, at least.

One observer said head coach Eric Mangini after the game "felt as if the owner was looking over his shoulder.";

And maybe he was.

The observer said Lerner wants to talk specifics with Mangini, including finding out the exact role of general manager George Kokinis, whose hiring he lobbied for strongly with the owner after he was hired as coach.

This was followed shortly by [an article](#) by Mary Kay Cabot of the Plain Dealer:

[Lerner] indicated that he wasn't ready to give up on Mangini despite being obviously distraught about the state of the team. But he did strongly indicate that it's time for him to bring in a football authority who can help straighten out this mess.

"There's absolutely no question about that," he said. "The highest priority that I have is a strong, credible, serious leader within the building to guide decisions in a far more conspicuous, open transparent way. I can maybe defend decisions by saying I've sought advice and I've brought people in, and we've gone to see people -- and I think my highest priority is to have a stable figure that represents the voice that explains the decisions."

To me, this sounds like Lerner is saying he needs to hire a President of Football Operations to monitor the current Head Coach and GM and ensure that the henhouse doesn't run amuck. Additionally, seeing as Mangini's dearest enemy is anything "conspicuous, open, or transparent", it seemed that Randy was speaking of withdrawing all of Mangini's non-coaching power, and if he didn't like it, he was free to go intercourse himself.

The next day, George Kokinis was escorted from the Berea facility.

Many saw the firing of a figurehead GM as nothing but making Kokinis a scapegoat for Mangini's failures. Whether this is true or not is yet to be seen.

My initial impression of the Kokinis exodus was this: I don't see this as scapegoating Kokinis. I see it as Kokinis was Mangini's guy, which made him guilty by association. Plus Kokinis, despite having power written into his contract, refused to wield it. Basically, he sat back and allowed Mangini to make whatever moves he wanted, which made him completely useless as a GM.

So Lerner shit-canned him so that he could put someone else in his place that would rein Mangini in.

Lerner, believing that Kokinis didn't do his job and doesn't deserve to get paid the entirety of his contract, is trying to scrape up dirt on Kokinis so that he can invoke the ol' *terminated with cause* clause and keep those couple millions in his pocket.

Then Lerner responded to an e-mail interview in [this article](#) that came out on Wednesday:

Question: The Kokinis firing indicates the Browns are in another

state of transition. How do you justify changes being made in-season after only eight games after a complete overhaul in January?

Lerner: My justification for the recent change is that circumstances dictated the action taken and I can assure you they were unforeseen... We are not at liberty to discuss the details of George's departure at this time.

Q: Is the departure of Kokinis a reflection of Eric Mangini's judgment?

Lerner: No. It would be unfair to point to Eric in explaining George's departure.

Question: Another criticism of your last coaching/GM search was that you hired the coach before hiring the general manager and that would leave the GM beholden to the coach. Do you regret doing that?

Lerner: I don't believe the GM was in anyway beholden to the head coach. They had distinct and clearly articulated duties and responsibilities.

Q: You spoke after the game in Chicago of the urgent priority to have a "strong, credible leader" to oversee the football operations. You had the opportunity to appoint someone in that position in January but you chose not to. Why?

Lerner: I take issue with the word urgent because it could imply that a decision is imminent or could be made hastily. I recall saying it was the "highest priority" and by that I meant that we must have a visible, proven leader on the football side. In regards to why I didn't hire that person in January, the answer is that I expected the GM to evolve into that role.

Q: Do you see a scenario where Mangini would not be back in 2010?

Lerner: No.

Q: When you visited with Bill Cowher last year, he said he wasn't ready to return to coaching in 2009 but asked, half-jokingly, "can you wait a year?" Would you revisit the possibility of Cowher coaching the Browns?

Lerner: We have a head coach.

That was followed up by [this news](#) :

Cleveland Browns coach Eric Mangini said today he'll have input into the hiring of the team's new general manager.

Mangini's first hand-picked general manager, George Kokinis, parted ways with the Browns on Monday, with no word from either side on whether he was fired or resigned.

"Yeah, Randy and I talk a lot, so I'm sure we'll be very engaged in that (decision)," said Mangini.

Say WHAT???!!!

What's that colloquialism about "those who don't learn from their mistakes...?"

OK, now that I've stopped the bleeding from the forehead gash that I got from banging my head on the table, I will try to think rationally about this.

There are really only 2 options here:

Option 1 - Randy Lerner is the most naïve person I've met in many a moon.□

I can only think of one person more so. In another life, I worked as a bartender at a casino in SoCal, and one night a young lady came up to me and marveled at my red hair.

"*Is that real?*" she asked.

"Yes," I replied.

She looked at her boyfriend, then back at me with a joyful expression, as if she just discovered a unicorn.

"*Is all your hair red?*" she asked.

"Yes."

"*Even... down there?*" She pointed to my groin.

"Yes. *Even there. Especially there.*"

She put her hands over her mouth in shock - like I just melted a rock with my mind - then walked away, giggling hysterically.

"*Her first time in America,*" her boyfriend explained apologetically.

From Atlantis?, I wondered to myself.

I wonder if Randy knows about red pubic hair.

Option 2 - Randy Lerner has calmed down from Sunday and is tactfully saying all the politically correct things, masking his true intentions.

With his track record of failure, it's hard to trust Lerner to make the correct decisions. But the man wasn't born a billionaire.

What's that? Oh... uh... well, he doesn't seem overly stupid, then.

According to various sources, Lerner tried to tap Ernie Accorsi again in the attempt to fill his front office positions. It looks at this point like Accorsi will not be taking the GM position, certainly not when Accorsi stated this after [being contacted](#) by the media:

"I am not taking any GM job anywhere. Period. I am not

taking any full-time job. I serve the league office as a consultant. I have consulted in various areas with four NFL clubs the past two years. I have no agreement to consult with the Browns at this time ."

But perhaps Lerner is hoping Ernie WILL consult with the Browns, acting as a kind of temporary President of Football Operations, hiring either a permanent President or a valid GM. Either way, the new Head Honcho would make the determination whether or not to keep Mangini, and, judging by last year's GM candidates that bowed out in droves due to Eric already being in the fold as coach, it's hard to see an eventuality where Mangini stays.

Regardless, Mangini should not have personnel power again. He should not have the say-so on the 53, and he should not have the say-so on the draft or free agency. That's only if you consider the off chance that he stays. If I assume that Lerner is rational and intelligent, I'd have to say that it'll be curtains for Mangini after this season. Lerner feels like Eric duped him, and it's likely he and the new Head Honcho will heed the advice of *Grease*

:

Randy, you must start anew.

Don't you know what you must do?

Hold your head high, take a deep breath and sigh.

Goodbye to Mangini.

Honestly, removing Mangini's personnel authority eliminates one of my biggest reservations about him. And I STILL feel like he deserves the rest of the season to try and doggie-paddle his way back down Shit Creek. He'll probably get it, too, since it probably won't be until after the season that this whole new power structure is finalized and decisions of the hire/fire Head Coach magnitude are made by the new Head Honcho.

But, in a logical situation, I really see very few scenarios in which Mangini survives this purge. It would take a minor miracle for the new President and new GM to come in and say *"Wow, yeah, why bring in my own guy when we've already got someone as popular and successful as Eric Mangini at the helm? "*

My current impression of the situation is this: I don't know what to think, although I have hope that - at the least - Mangini will be removed from personnel decisions.

But it's hard to say. Everything is ambiguous and opaque and cloudy. Is Randy mad at Mangini, but keeping it on the down-low? Does he really feel that Kokinis is somehow to blame for this whole mess? If he fired George because he thought Kok wasn't doing his job properly, doesn't that indicate that he felt Kokinis wasn't counteracting Mangini's poor personnel decisions, which indicates that he feels that Mangini is inept?

Who's to say when your team's owner answers questions via sterile e-mail because he refuses to be subjected to recording devices? Perhaps he fears - like various ancient Native American tribes - that the camera will steal his soul.

With the vacuum of data, all we can do is predict an outcome by analyzing the decisions Lerner has made in the past. Were they intelligent? Were they well thought out? Were they successful? Were they justified?

And, with that track record in mind, do you then feel that the

right decision will be made this time?

For many of you, the answer is no - a thousand times no. Unfortunately for you, Owners cannot be fired. They cannot have their contracts bought out. It doesn't matter how much you howl, a bad owner can just continue on interminably if they so desire. Just ask Al Davis.

So before you just randomly throw out more "*He just needs to sell the team!*

"-isms, consider this quote from the Lerner

[e-mail interview](#)

:

Q: You indicated last year that you wouldn't own the team forever if you thought you weren't going to be able to turn it around. As long as the team's record continues to be what it is, you're going to be questioned about the possibility of selling. Is selling a possibility after a season like this?

Lerner: No.

"So what do you do?" the associate asked.

Lerner replied, "I don't know."

Game Recap

In all the to-do, I almost forgot there was a game. Almost.

The Bears proved that they are not very good, almost matching the Browns in futility as the Cleveland D played some inspired ball and got a lot of pressure on Jay Cutler. But they couldn't overcome Derek Anderson, Steve Heiden, Mo Massaquoi, and the Five Turnovers.

The dam finally broke and even Matt stinkin' Forte got his TD's ('bout time, sorry excuse for a Keeper). The final nail was another DA pick-6, hopefully his last in a Browns uniform.

Final: Bears 30, Browns 6.

Conclusion

Time of Possession: Chicago - 37:25, Cleveland - 22:35

Total Yards: Chicago - 369, Cleveland - 191

First Downs: Chicago - 20, Cleveland - 9

It's incredible how consistent the Browns are this year. In 6 out of 8 games, they gained 200 or less yards, including the last 4 (all under DA's direction). And they actually managed their lowest Time of Possession of the season.

There's bad, and then there's epically bad. What the Browns are doing this year Offensively is so awful it's almost

impressive. You'd think they'd
eventually
do something right, even if by mistake.

Gameballs

Kamerion Wimbley - Nice pressure all game on Cutler, and ya gotta love the Roughing the Passer penalty. Those will be bad if the Browns ever get good, but, for now, it at least shows that the team ain't gonna roll over and die.

George Kokinis - For making it brief.

Honorable Mention

Kaluka Maiava - An excellent play by tipping the ball that was picked. Not always in the right position, but I like his aggressiveness.

Eric Barton - I've been ripping this guy all season, so when he made several very nice plays in this game, I made it a point to write his name in big letters on my notepad.

Jamal Lewis - The only Offense we had.

Wall of Shame

Derek Anderson - At the half, Mr. Anderson had a 0.0 QB Rating. " *Is it always this bad?*" asked my friend who lives in Chicago and was watching the game with me. Yes. Always.

Eric Mangini - So... after 5 1/2 games... with about 3 minutes left... down 24... deep in our own territory... NOW it's finally a

good time to bring in someone other than DA? Best chance to win my ass... why do you think I'm turning on you???!!!

Brian Daboll - There is no termination too speedy for this gentleman.

Steve Heiden - Bad fumble.

Mo Massaquoi - Bad fumble.

Randy Lerner - Please be blowing smoke about Mangini helping pick the next GM.

2001 - I was in Chicago for my birthday, flying in from LA for the Browns-Bears affair. It was Butch Davis' first year, and the Browns were a surprising 4-2. Hope was high.

You know what happened after that. The Browns blew a 14 point lead with about 30 seconds left and lost in OT on a Tim Couch Pick-6. It was by far the craziest thing I've ever seen, and it was just the beginning.

Crazy shit became the norm after that. There was Bottlegate, then Dwayne Rudd's helmet toss, then the complete-meltdown-choke-job-Northcutt-ball-dropping playoff game against PIT... and before you knew it, you were expecting the Browns to lose in some bizarre fashion.

That started the (latest) trend of every Browns fan always anticipating the worst. And then it came. After the playoff game, it got ugly quick.

Year after year of endless suck ensued. Even the infrequent bright spots (like 2007) were marred by the bad luck of Indy resting all its starters and allowing a mediocre Titans team to take the last playoff berth via tiebreaker.

Well, I was back in Chicago this weekend, the idea being that this is where the evil began 8 years ago, and perhaps the 2009 Bears-Browns contest would somehow exorcise the football demons that have possessed us since.

Sigh. Maybe I should've just shelled out the extra bucks to hire a priest.

After the game, Jamal Lewis basically said that he was done after the season, that he was sick of the losing, that he was too frustrated to go on another year. And this was somehow news.

Welcome to Cleveland, Mr. Lewis. Every damn fan in this town has - at one point or another - proclaimed that "*they're done* "
t; or "
they're sick of the losing
" or "
they're too frustrated to go on
".

If he actually goes through with it, then it's news. Otherwise, it's just another guy voicing the frustration that we all feel.

Upon hearing that Lerner wanted to have discussions to "*find out the exact role of general manager George Kokinis*", the first thing that popped into my head was a scene from *Office Space* (and, [judging by the boards](#), I wasn't alone). So here's Lerner's hired guns interviewing poor George:

<http://www.fancast.com/movies/Office-Space/22934/681583844/People-Skills/videos>

Another strong argument for the absolute essentiality of a competent Front Office was laid out by Kerry Byrne of CNNSI in this [excellent article](#) about why parity in the NFL is dead:

There's no perfect explanation for the death of parity, especially in the wake of the league's open efforts to keep it alive. But it's obvious the league's efforts to legislate equality have failed.

Here's one guess why: the NFL, with so many players and so many coaches and so much turnover and so many moving parts, is all about management. And, right now, management has never been more important.

Humans are not equal in talent, whether they're in the front office, on the sidelines or in the huddle, and the notion that a few rules will "level the playing field" is being mocked openly on the field right now.

What the NFL has done, actually, is create a system that ends up rewarding well managed teams and punishing poorly managed teams. The Colts, Patriots and Steelers continue to fine tune the system year after the year and win year after year. The Browns, Lions and teams like (in recent years) the Redskins make poor and sometimes desperate off-the-field decisions that make them uncompetitive on the field.

Back in the day, before the efforts to "level the playing field," a poorly managed team could splurge for a season or two on talent and compete. Money is the great equalizer. But that weapon has been removed and now, more than ever, not less than ever, NFL teams are dependent upon smart decision-makers and good executives. The NFL has maximized, not minimized, inequality on the playing field by maximizing the importance of management.

Sums it all up. Yep, back in the day, Randy could've spent his way out of this quagmire. But in a league where all teams must compete on an even playing field, the talented (both mentally and physically) organizations will always win and the fools will always lose.

If your not-so-bright friend were able to play the weekly poker game with 10 times the chips of everyone else at the table, he might be able to compensate for his stupid decisions and even win one once in a while. But since everyone starts with the same number of chips, you know he'll be a goner before his second beer is gone. He just doesn't grasp how the game is played.

The Browns are your half-retarded poker buddy, constantly going all in on a 3-5 off-suit and hoping for something - anything - on the river.

It was a typical week as the President of the Brett Favre Fan Club for Peter King, but he actually had a valid reason this week. Regardless, stuck somewhere on Page 4 of [Monday Morning QB](#)

was this blurb about the Browns:

I've made this point in the last couple of weeks, and it's more true now than it has been all season: The Cleveland Browns are no better off today than they were 10 years ago, when they were an expansion team, in the middle of their first season back after a four-year absence from the league.

*Just look at the quarterback play. In 1999, the season's midpoint came on Oct. 31. This year, it came on Nov. 1. Comparing the numbers of **Tim Couch**, who started Games 2 through 8 in 1999, and **Derek Anderson**, who has played all but the first 10 quarters this year:*

Year	Player	Team W-L	Comp-Att	Pct.
1999	Tim Couch	1-7	104-196	.530
2009	D. Anderson	1-7	66-154	.429

Well, we'll ignore the fact that it was only a three-year absence, Pete. I don't blame you - there have been plenty of years since The Return where it seemed the Browns did not exist. Some would argue that they've been gone for 14 years now. The point is that even the national media (historically millennia behind on anything Browns-related) has started to catch on to the plight in Cleveland.

Hell, that 1999 season was 100 times more fun than this year. That team was *supposed* to be that bad. Every game was nothing but progress, a step towards some magnificent future. And THEY beat the Steelers.

In 2009, I can think of many adjectives for the future, and none of them are synonyms for "magnificent".

And when we start thinking of the Tim Couch years as the "Glory Days", we have indeed sunk low.

You will notice that I have largely ignored the scheduled fan late-walk-in that 2 guys are trying to organize to "let Randy Lerner know that the fans aren't happy".

That's because it's silly, and I think so for 2 reasons:

1. America will watch the Monday Night game (when it is

supposed to happen) and wonder what the hell a protest is trying to say by having paying fans crammed onto mezzanines.

2. Half the damn stadium won't show up until after Kickoff regardless.

I don't know what you're trying to accomplish anyway. I think it's fairly clear that Randy Lerner knows the fans aren't happy. He probably isn't happy either. Randy's issue hasn't been that he doesn't care - it's that he's done a piss poor job of hiring anyone that can do a damn thing about it.

Braylon Watch

In order for the conditional pick the Browns received for Braylon Edwards to be bumped from a 3rd Round to a 2nd Round pick, Mr. Edwards must meet certain incentives. The goal is rumored to be 55 catches and a certain number of TD's. For the sake of argument, let's say 5.

Goal: 55 catches, 5 TD.

Progress (4 games): 13 catches, 2 TD.

Yet to go (8 games): 42 catches, 3 TD.

How the hell is this guy gonna catch enough balls to make the cut? Even that TD catch he did have... man, he butchered that like a Christmas hog. Off his fingers, off his knee, off the defender, back into his fingers... he's just got the worst hands in the history of upright man.

So go ahead and write that 2nd Round pick off right now. Damn you Braylon Edwards, you can't do anything right.

QB-O-RAMA - Version 2010

We need a QB. Last time I checked, QB was a fairly important position on a football team, and the fact that we don't have one is a problem. We need a lot of other shit too, but (Apollo willing) hopefully we won't be picking this high every year. When you have a high pick in a year when every QB worth a damn is coming out and you don't currently have on your roster any QB worth crossing the street to piss on if he were on fire ... well, you fill in my train of logic.

Like Jon Gruden just said on MNF, *"You've gotta have the right coach, but you've GOTTA have the right Quarterback*
."

I'm not sure how much sense that makes, but you get the picture.

Sam Bradford - Oklahoma (vs. Kansas State) - DNP. Falling faster than the leaves from the trees in my backyard.

Colt McCoy - Texas (vs. Oklahoma State) - 16 of 21, 171 yds, 1 TD, 34 yds Rushing. Not beautiful numbers, but actually one of his better performances of the season.

Jake Locker - Washington (Bye) - His sub-par but still decent game against Oregon last week suddenly looks a whole lot better compared to the beat-down the Ducks have laid on everyone else.

Jimmy Clausen - Notre Dame (vs. Washington State) - 22 of 27, 268 yds, 2 TD. This guy is really forcing me to pay careful attention.

Tony Pike - Cincinnati (vs. Syracuse) - DNP. I don't like the fact that he resembles DA. It's hard to look at him without revulsion.

Dan LeFevour - Central Michigan (vs. Boston College) - 20 of 34, 152 yds, 1 INT, 26 yds Rushing. His numbers have been awful in CMU's 2 losses, both against BCS teams.

You will notice the absence of one Tim Tebow, which is odd, seeing how much the media loves him and how he just came off his best week of the season. The reason for his disappearance is this:
Tim Tebow is not an NFL QB

.

I will admit that I had not watched him closely in past years (I hate watching SEC football), but I've been paying careful attention to all these guys this season with the draft in mind, and I have hence

improved upon my previous, heavily media-influenced conclusions. Upon viewing with my own eyes, I must now come to new deductions.

I'm not sure what he is. Maybe he's a Tight End, maybe he's a Fullback, maybe he's a Wildcat specialist; but what he isn't is a guy that you draft in the 1st Round and expect to perform on a competent level as a QB in the NFL.

Anyway, Wildcat Specialist Tim Tebow had 164 yards passing and 4 TD's (2 rushing) in his last game. A good game for a Wildcat Specialist.

NFL Bottom 10

Time to give some love to the misshapen, the unloved, the mutant, malodorous masses slowly swirling around the toilet bowl of humanity.

1. *Tampa Bay (0-7)* - As the last un-undefeated team, you get the honor of Numero Uno in the hearts of losers everywhere. Yes, Kellen. It's you.

2. *Detroit (1-6)* - If you lose to St. Louis, you drop. You drop hard.

3. *Cleveland (1-7)* - Movin' on up! To the Hell Side! We're gonna get a piece of the Hell Pie!

4. *Kansas City (1-6)* - Normally, the Bye Week helps out the weak and pathetic, but 2 of those unfortunate souls found a win this week, so... sorry.

5. *Oakland (2-6)* - They actually have the same number of points scored (78) as the Browns. That's an average of 9.75 points per game. Wow.

6. *St. Louis (1-7)* - They won... but it was against Detroit. Which is like losing your virginity to a goat.

7. *Washington (2-5)* - One of the few organizations more sporked than the one in Cleveland.

8. *Seattle (2-5)* - Mike Holmgren, Mike Holmgren... wherefore art thou, Mike Holmgren?

9. *Tennessee (1-6)* - Just one win, but showed that they - once they have removed their heads from their own asses - simply have more talent than the rest of the teams down here in the Underworld.

10. *Buffalo (3-5)* - They lost to Cleveland. How do you do that?

Reader E-mail

From Stanley Doe, Sandusky: *"The worst thing this organization could do at this point is fire another coach. They need to have a direction. They need to have a plan. They need to have consistency. How can they do that if they're changing coaches every year? It takes time. Tom Landry, Chuck Noll, Bill Parcells... all these guys would've been fired early on if today's fans would have had their way. They all started with losing seasons, yet proved that you can have success if you stick to your guns.*

"

That's true. But here's the question you have to ask yourself: *Do I really believe Mangini is a future Tom Landry, Chuck Noll, or Bill Parcells?*

Actually, the question you have to ask yourself

is this: *Do I feel lucky?*

Because for every Head Coach that started poorly but eventually became great, there are probably 10 times, 20 times, more coaches that failed anyway even though someone stuck with them through a rough start.

Sticking with a good coach can result in great success.

Sticking with a bad coach can result in compounded and prolonged failure.

The key is figuring out which type your coach is.

One could argue that Mangini is a good coach just waiting to happen. I'm not exactly sure I've seen what they have to come to that conclusion.

One could argue that we won't know if Mangini is a good coach or a bad coach unless we give him a fair chance to prove himself. I agree, and I think the rest of the season should be sufficient.

Normally, I would say that only one season is just foolishness, but Mangini has made so many mistakes that I have a hard time right now feeling at all optimistic about his chances to succeed, and if "giving him a fair chance" is just code for "delaying the inevitable", then I'm all for skipping over 2 wasted years and starting over right

now.

Next Up

The Bye Week

Insert joke about losing anyway.