

The 2010 season has already begun in Cleveland. The GM of 2009 is gone. With Randy Lerner steadfastly prepared to FINALLY bring in a respectable, credible entity to run the football operations - and giving that entity full control to hire/fire his underlings - there's little chance the Head Coach of 2009 will survive either. So what happens next? Does Mangini survive the season? Who comes in as new football czar here? Who will his coach be? And who will his quarterback be? Chris Hutchison tries to make sense of it all in this week's Browns Outsider.



### ***A View From The Cheap Seats***

I'm going to state something that most people won't agree with.

Right now, the Browns are fascinating.

Not just locally. Oh no. League-wide, the Browns are the subject of much discussion.

How is that possible with a 1-7 team? Simple. They're bad.

No, they're horrible. Historically awful. And they're unbelievably dysfunctional. They're one of those teams that fans around the nation ogle at and say, *"Can you believe how jacked up the Browns are?"*

*"Yeah, I know! They SUCK."*

For instance, I was having some issues with my HD Receiver on Sunday, so I called up DirecTV to have them do their thang. As the Help Dude (in an office in Oregon) and I were waiting for the system to reboot, he heard the football on in the background.

*"You watching football?"* he asked.

After replying in the affirmative, he asked, *"Are you a Browns fan?"* (knowing that I live in NE Ohio).

*"Yes, and enjoying the bye week."*

He laughed. *"I hear ya. I'm a Rams fan, and even I feel bad for the you guys ."*

You can take your stinkin' pity and stick it, Help Dude. But it does put our plight into context.

---

However, the fact that the Browns are this bad isn't what makes them so interesting. There are lots of bad teams out there, but only a few get the national pub - the fame and fortune and everything the ever goes with it - of being a train wreck. And not just an ordinary train wreck, oh no - a train wreck with mangled legs and bloody stumps sticking out of the twisted metal everywhere, mutilated fingers clutching frozenly to broken arm rests. The occasional sightless eye rests in a pile of goo - where is the crushed and severed head from whence it came?

This train wreck happens just about every year in Cleveland, and each year, fewer survivors emerge from the carnage.

---

Even that isn't what makes them fascinating for me at the current time, however. It's the fact that Browns are once again ready to detonate. Yup, they're set to blow it up again. They'll just keep pulling that trigger over and over again until maybe - accidentally - they'll actually get the thing right. They're not even waiting until the season ends any more; they're starting the next year by Week 8.

Which, in this case, ain't such a bad idea. The quicker you can make this year go away, the better.

*Change. □ A future that is different from the present.*

Where do we want to be? *Anywhere but here.* When do we want to get there?

*As soon as possible*

.

There is much merit to patience and consistency and staying the course... but this likely isn't the time or place. I'm afraid that this current situation has fallen apart at such a rapid pace that there is no salvaging it. There is only recognizing that you have walked into quicksand, and that admitting mistake, backing out of it, and taking a new path is probably more prudent than trying

to plow ahead and *stay the course*.

The 2010 season has already begun in Cleveland. The GM of 2009 is gone. With Randy Lerner steadfastly prepared to FINALLY bring in a respectable, credible entity to run the football operations - and giving that entity full control to hire/fire his underlings - there's little chance the Head Coach of 2009 will survive either. The Mankinis Regime is already as good as done, surely going down as one of the shortest and most disastrous regimes in NFL history.

So what is (sadly) always the most exciting time of year - the offseason - has arrived early in Northeast Ohio.

*It's Christmas, it's Christmas in heaven.*

---

I shouldn't be excited about this, should I? This is a bad thing, right? This turnstile of rapid turnover is only a sign of a bad organization, the kind engendered by reactionaries. The fact that we have to swap regimes every other year and endure losing season after losing season is only a symptom of the

instability of the top of the football food chain. Welcoming further change is like welcoming extra kicks to the beans.

We should strive to not be reactionary. We should try to remain rational. But there is a very good reason why no one should be crying the Cuyahoga over this: *Whether or not you agree, change is coming anyway.*

The new Head Honcho ain't gonna want Mangini. It's as simple as that. Barring a miraculous turnaround, there's no possible reason to keep him around, not when Head Honcho can just bring in his/her own Head Coach, who will be replete with considerably more tolerance than his predecessor. Considering Mangini's poison reputation, the disaster to which he helped give birth, and the plethora of mistakes he has made, why would a new Head Honcho not start fresh?

Mangini is almost certainly *Dead Coach Walking*. You don't have to like it, but you might as well accept it.

I am not celebrating change or dancing on the grave of another Browns regime. I am simply recognizing a virtual inevitability and embracing the future. In all honesty, how could it possibly be worse?

---

*Anywhere but here. As soon as possible.*

---

I take no joy in Mangini's failure. I wanted him to work out. When he was hired, I felt the move was meritorious. He fit all my personal criteria: *Experienced, fairly young, comparatively successful, a disciplinarian, a man with a clear plan and goals*. The way I saw it, of those men with Head Coaching experience **that were willing to come to Cleveland in 2009**, he was the best option.

But he was disadvantaged from the start, coming to an impatient city full of fans and media that disliked him from the moment he stepped off the plane, taking over a team devoid of talent with a culture of losing firmly implanted. He didn't have the clout of the big boys (Cowher, Shanahan, Holmgren, etc.) to fall back upon, nor would he receive the patience that normally accompanies a rookie Head Coach.

Don't get me wrong - I'm not feeling sorry for Mangini. There's a difference between coming in and not having success and coming in and fielding a completely inept team. Plus, by being granted the power to act as his own de facto GM, he doubles any blame that might fall his way because there's no one else there to share the teams' failures. His mistakes have been numerous and onerous.

However, I also don't get the level of personal hatred directed his way. Mangini might be a lot of things, but I don't think he's a bad person. I don't buy that he's an evil dictator or a demon with man-boobs. From a recent [interview with Clark Judge](#) on CBS Sportsline (well worth a read):

**Q:** *I tell you what intrigues me. You are easy to talk to, you have a range of interests and you are candid with your answers. Yet there is a perception of you as an ogre, a control freak, someone who is hard-headed and difficult to work with. In fact, the first thing that comes to mind when I think of you now is that bus trip in May to Hartford. I assume you don't agree with those characterizations of you. If that's accurate, how do you correct them?*

**Mangini:** *That's a great, great question. I feel really good about the person I am. And I feel that the things we do are never malicious; they're never done for the sake of doing them or*

*showing that I'm in power or making someone feel bad about himself. The things we do are to empower people. We want them to be disciplined because it's the right thing to do. We want them to study because it's the right thing to do, and it makes them a better player.*

*The bus trip to Hartford was one of those things that, in retrospect, I shouldn't have done, but here was my feeling: This was an event that is done for kids that have nothing, absolutely nothing. They never see pro football players. Hartford has the third-highest infant mortality rate. It has one of the highest homicide rates in the country. I was talking to a little boy one time who showed up late, and I said, "Why are you late?" And he said, "I had to go to a funeral. My friend just got shot in the face." For a day those kids get to interact with positive male role models who are there to help teach them.*

*[Boxing trainer and analyst] Teddy Atlas always used to tell me that caring is like any other muscle. You have to exercise it to get strong. And I want the rookies to care about people. I want rookies to appreciate what they have; to remember that a lot of people helped them to get where they are. And they didn't do it because there was anything in it for them; they did it because it was the right thing.*

Mangini strikes me as a good man who has very clear moral and psychological traits, traits which he expects his entire team to emulate. If there's one thing that he has impressed me with in his time here, it was his clear plan. He knows exactly what he's trying to do and how he wants to do it. Again, from the Judge article:

**Q:** *Tell me, then, if I'm a season-ticket holder here, given what happened with your GM and what is happening on the field this year, why should I believe there is hope for this team now or in the future?*

**Mangini:** *Being here in the past and getting to know the people of Cleveland, I feel like they deserve a team filled with men who will make them proud on Sundays and every other day of the week. That's what I said in my press conferences. I want my kids to cheer for this team, not just because we're winning on Sunday but because of all the other stuff we're doing throughout the week. We're committed to finding those men. We're committed to building an organization that they can support, not just in Year One but in Year 10. And that doesn't happen instantly and it's not easy. It's like anything else in life that's worth having. You have to work at it. This is a city that's built by and with hard working people who are good people.*

**Q:** *That's fine, except this is a team that scored nine points the last two games. How do you convince people that is progress?*

**Mangini:** *Unfortunately, there is the very obvious progress, which is what is happening on the field. And that is what we're all committed to. But there's other progress, too, and I don't think a situation like penalties is something that's not substantial, even though it's not sexy. It shows that discipline has changed. When you look at the kids that we've brought in and the people that we've brought in, anyone who is exposed to them will know what we're committed to; anybody who looks into their backgrounds will know what we're committed to. When you combine that with the work ethic that this group has, things will change.*

*... I really do believe in the things we're doing. I do believe in good people. And after experiencing what I experienced in New England and in New York with Bill Parcells and their commitment to a certain type of player, I know it works. I've been there. I've seen it. And I know it's hard. And I know you're going to take hits and that it's a process. I really have a conviction about that, so that when those things do happen I'm comfortable with it because I've been through it.*

This is the crux of the problem, and here's why:

**1. Just because Bill Parcells or Bill Belichick were successful with The Plan doesn't mean Mangini will be .**  
There is no cut-and-dry blueprint. Every situation is different. The players, the team, the organization, the fans, the media - they're not always going to be the same. So because Plan A worked in Situation A doesn't mean Plan A will work in Situation B.

That, and the fact that Plan A was implemented in Situation A by Coach A. There's no saying that Coach B would have been successful using Plan A in Situation A, even though Coach A was.

It's good to have a Plan. It's good to have clear Goals. But life has taught me many times that the Situation dictates the Plan a lot more than the Plan dictates the Situation.

**2. It's nice to have a team made up solely of model citizens and good people, but that might be a luxury Mangini can't afford .** It worked in New England, or so Mangini claims, but not every player on that team is the kind of person we'd want our children to emulate. Hell, even on the current Browns

squad there are players that Mangini brought in himself that are less than model citizens (Abe Elam, for one).

I more translate Mangini's term &quot;*good people*&quot; as  
&quot; *people that aren't a pain in my ass* &quot;.

Finding talented players is difficult enough - finding talented players that are also ego-free hard-working soldiers is doubly so. Jettisoning (or ignoring) players for those of lesser talent just because they spend more time watching video is probably not the way to build things when your talent base was ground floor to begin with. Now you're currently fielding a team that can rarely compete at the NFL level, and the hope is that the extra (mostly late round) draft picks that have been acquired will be used to select those talented model citizens that will propel the Browns to prolonged greatness.

I'm sorry, but I just don't think Eric Mangini's equal to that task.

I know that many great Head Coaches struggled their first year(s). For the Chuck Nolls and Bill Parcells and Tom Landrys of the world, I cannot remember their first years (even if I were

alive). But I'd bet a shiny penny they didn't feel like this one does.

This has gone south so fast and so hard that I can't see it ever being saved. The reason that teams like the Steelers are always so good is that they DON'T have constant change. But you have to have the right people in place. You don't stick with - say - a Matt Millen simply for the sake of sticking with him.

*You got to know when to hold 'em. Know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away, and know when to run.*

---

I still don't advocate immediate firing. I think Mangini deserves the rest of the season to prove himself to the fans, the owner, the media, the future Head Honcho, the world... even if it's futile. Even in the unlikely event that the team looks vastly better in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the season, I have to wonder how Mangini will handle having the 53 man roster dictated to him?

It's hard to see a future with Eric Mangini in it.

---

So, who is the future?

---

There are (and will be) many rumored candidates to take over Football Operations, so let's take a look at some of them:

**Mike Holmgren** - This seems to be the strongest rumor at this time. It seems the Browns are interested in him more as a VP of Football Operations than a Coach. Basically, they would want him to run the show the way Bill Parcells does in Miami.

Some have protested Holmgren's track record as GM in Seattle, where he eventually had to give up his GM duties to concentrate on Coaching. I argue that in a VP

scenario he would neither be the GM nor split his duties. I'm sure he would have a say in everything, but the GM would ultimately be responsible for player acquisition (in theory).

I can see this working.

Also, with Holmgren comes the rumor that he would bring in Jon Gruden - his former assistant - to Coach. If this were the case, the Browns' NFL Cred would go from 0 to 60 in 3.6 seconds.

**Rich McKay** - He was under consideration for the GM job last year, but dropped out when he found out he would have to work with Mangini. Many feel he's not interested in Cleveland any more because of that experience, but giving him autonomy and full control of the Operation might change his mind.

If he were chosen, he would certainly fire Mangini almost immediately. He would also bring with him a track record

of drafting success (9 years in Tampa): Mike Alstott, Warrick Dunn, Ronde Barber, Derrick Brooks, John Lynch, and Warren Sapp were all his selections.

**Tom Heckert** - He was also under consideration for the GM job last year, and dropped out for the same reason. And add the same rumor that he's not interested in the Browns any more because he doesn't think Lerner knows what he's doing.

Heckert became GM of the Eagles in 2006, but he was the Director of Personnel before that, so he's been Andy Reid's right hand man for quite some time on a team that has loads of talent and has maintained a high level of success. However, Reid always has final say in Philly, so Heckert may be looking for a situation in which he can finally have control (like Scott Pioli last year).

**Ron Wolf** - Wolf has had an incredible career in player personnel for the Raiders, Buccaneers, and Packers. The list of players acquired under his tenure is ridiculous: Art Shell, Jack Tatum, Howie Long, Brett Favre, and

Reggie White (to name a few).

Ron has been retired since 2000 though, and you can add his name to the list of GM's with recent bad experiences in Cleveland after he was brought in as a consultant in 2004 with Butch Davis, but quit after he was made to feel unwelcome by the ex-coach.

**Ernie Accorsi** - A very successful GM in the past for the Browns and Giants, it is highly unlikely that he is a legit candidate. He's been quoted as saying he's not interested. But he has Cleveland ties, and he's friends with Randy Lerner, so it would be foolish not to include his name in the mix, even as a long, long, long, longshot.

**Bill Cowher** - I don't think many are considering him for the VP role, but that's probably the kind of power you'd need to give him to get him here as Head Coach. So if you're hiring Cowher, then you're basically letting him run Football Operations. Is this something the Browns want to do? Maybe not. But Cowher would certainly add that credibility to Cleveland in a damn hurry.

**Mike Shanahan** - I highly doubt the Browns have a shot at landing him. He'll want the same power as Cowher, and his failures at Player Personnel are what got him canned in Denver in the first place. Also, he's likely looking for a more high-profile job, like Washington or Dallas. But I'll throw him out there nonetheless.

**Marty Schottenheimer** - He's happily retired and has no experience running Football Operations, but people keep mentioning his name because of his association with the "Glory Days" of recent Browns football. Personally, I don't see him as a viable option.

**Bernie Kosar** - He's already under contract with the Browns as a "consultant", and due to his relationship with Cleveland Browns football and the Lerner family, many see him as a VP-in-Training. That very well could be, but I'd be pretty damn wary of him taking over the job in 2010. He would be a complete and utter unknown, and I don't think that's what we're looking for at this juncture.

**Chris Hutchison** - Some might argue that he's under-qualified, but he has assembled an impressive array of talent that has propelled him to a fantasy league championship 4 of the last 10 years, including the legendary undefeated season of 2004. He's also local and a life-long fan of the Browns, so his dedication and passion will never be questioned. And he will likely take far less than the other candidates for the job (although nothing under \$500k, thanks). Additionally, he is every bit as functional under the influence as Bernie.

---

I forced to choose my preference (and to disregard the last entrant under protest), I guess I would select Heckert, followed closely by McKay and Holmgren. Here's a bit from the [Heckert bio](#) :

*His first draft with the Eagles produced Lito Sheppard, Michael Lewis, Brian Westbrook and Sheldon Brown, the first three earning Pro Bowl selections. In 2004, the Eagles added two-time Pro Bowler in Shawn Andrews,*

*another Pro Bowler Trent Cole in 2005, and two other rising stars in DT Broderick Bunkley (2006), LB Chris Gocong (2006, LB Stewart Bradley (2007), and WR DeSean Jackson (2008). Prior to the 2004 draft, he also engineered the trade of 3<sup>rd</sup>-string QB A.J. Feeley to the Dolphins for their 2<sup>nd</sup> round pick in the 2005 draft, which was used to select WR Reggie Brown.*

*Heckert has also shown a knack for finding key rookie free agents (S Quintin Mikell, C Jamaal Jackson, DT Sam Rayburn, WR Greg Lewis, and LB Akeem Jordan among others) who not only earned roster spots, but have been solid contributors to the Eagles recent success.*

Not to mention this little blurb:

*Favorite Team Growing Up: Miami Dolphins until my dad started working for the Cleveland Browns*

*when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade.*

During last year's GM and Head Coaching search(es), it seemed that there was no potential candidate in the league that didn't have a previous Browns affiliation of some sort.

Wonder if that'll be the case in 10 years?

---

Brady Quinn has been named the starter again. Just in time for a re-match with the Ravens, the team that sent him to the bench in the first place.

This is very exciting news. I am very excited. I can't even express how excited I am, which just shows my level of excitement.

Let's hope he at least gets a fair opportunity to nail his coffin shut on his own this time.

---

I will believe the Bengals are legit if they go into Fixburgh this week and win.

Until then, they're still a pretender.

---

When I was in Chicago the other weekend (the weekend the Browns were in town), I went to a bar with my friend before we shot off to the Northwestern-Penn State game. As we downed drinks and greasy food and watched Ohio State just murder New Mexico State, we noticed that a man wearing a Northwestern jersey had approached another man at a table next to us and was talking in an annoyingly animated voice.

I tried to ignore, but my friend asked me, &quot;*Is that Dave Wannstedt*?&quot; Glancing over, I saw that, yes indeed, it was Dave Wannstedt sitting at the table, and he was being accosted by some middle-aged autograph seeker. Not only did the man irritate

me (sitting a table away), it was obvious from Wannstedt's pained expression that the man irritated him as well. But, being who he is, he had to maintain control and endure this fool.

That reminds me of how much I dislike:

1. Anyone above 12 (not accompanied by someone 12 or under) that seeks autographs.
2. Anyone that approaches celebrities in public and thinks said celebrity gives a f\$%\* about what they have to say or wants them to do anything but die.

The worst curse in the world would be to be

famous.

---

## **Braylon Watch**

Braylon was on a bye this week too. Extra time for clubbing and dropping 10 grand on tequila and discussing plea-bargains with his lawyer.

---

## **QB-O-RAMA - Version 2010**

**Sam Bradford** - Oklahoma (vs. Nebraska) - DNP. Will need a really good scouting combine.

**Colt McCoy** - Texas (vs. Central Florida) - 33 of 42, 470 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT, 13 yds Rushing. Part of me wants to blow this off as a non-conference patsy, but UCF ain't all that bad. So, nice numbers, Doe Eyes.

**Jake Locker** - Washington (vs. UCLA) - 23 of 40, 235 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT, 23 yds Rushing. Washington has been keeping it close against everyone... and then just finding a way to lose at the end. Guess I need to order some remote college sporting package to be able to watch any of his games.

**Jimmy Clausen** - Notre Dame (vs. Navy) - 37 of 51, 452 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT. Not sure I blame Clausen for Notre Dame sucking. The Domers have sucked for a long time with a variety of players at the helm, usually a lot worse than they suck right now.

**Tony Pike** - Cincinnati (vs. Connecticut) - DNP. A couple weeks ago, this guy was being talked about as a high 2<sup>nd</sup> Rounder. Now, he's going to have trouble even re-gaining his starting job against super-freshman Zach Collaros.

**Dan LeFevour** - Central Michigan (vs. Toledo) - 29 of 36, 341 yds, 2 TD, 19 yds Rushing, 4 Rushing TD. This would be jumping a week ahead of the other gentlemen, but I watched some of this

game last night. I mean, you look at the stats, and, wow... LeFevour had 6 TD's and a crazy completion percentage. But he's listed as 6'3, 229, and I've gotta question those numbers because he doesn't look nearly that big. Not to mention that his arm looks pretty average, and most of his passes were to guys so wide open they could've built a barn and not disturbed any defenders. You can't blame him for that, but I have to wonder how his skill set will translate to the NFL? It's difficult to say.

So I'm interested - with caution.

---

## NFL Bottom 10

Celebrate those who embrace the effort, sweat, and sheer bravado that is required to achieve true dreadfulness in this day and age of supposed parity!

1. *Detroit (1-7)* - Back where they belong. The countdown to Suck Bowl 2009 is T-minus 10 days.

2. *Cleveland (1-7)* - After Baltimore, we'll get a lot of Bottom 10 questions answered in the prestigious *Drive for Worst*

TM

▪

3. *Kansas City (1-7)* - At least they're one Larry Johnson lighter, and that's definitely a case of addition by subtraction to avoid the multiplication of division.

4. *Oakland (2-6)* - Team 2 of the *Triumvirate of Shame*

TM

(Cleveland, Oakland, Washington, or C.O.W for short)

5. *St. Louis (1-7)* - All the bad teams had a bye at once.

6. *Tampa Bay (1-7)* - They looked like a completely different team with their rookie 1<sup>st</sup> Round QB Josh Freeman under Center. But I've been told that drafting a QB high is foolish because they don't really make a difference if you have a bad team.

7. *Washington (2-6)* - Why are they even perpetrating this charade with

## Jim Zorn?

8. *Buffalo (3-5)* - Still the only team to suffer the indignity of losing to the Browns.

9. *Seattle (3-5)* - Well, they won... against Detroit... after being down by 17... I guess that's good... sort of.

10. *San Francisco (3-5)* - Lost 4 in

a row and gave Tennessee their 2  
nd  
win - in San Fran.

---

On many a website, I see the  
ads...

**Britney Spears weight loss  
secret revealed!**

---

Were the ads honest, they would continue thusly:

*Britney Spears has lost 26 pounds since her divorce, and she looks great! When asked her secret, she replied, "I'm really rich and I have like 6 personal trainers and 3 nutritionists and a yoga instructor and a hypnotist, and all that time that real musicians spend writing music, I spend in the gym, because if I get fat, my career is*

*over.□ Basically, it's my job to stay thin, so it's kinda hard to figure out how I got chunky in the first place.&quot;*

*&quot;Oh, and liposuction.□ Don't wanna forget the cellulite sucker.&quot;*

## Reader E-mail

From Hector Doe, Topeka, KS:  
*"If it's up to me, I say it's  
time for cheerleaders. That'll  
give fans a reason to still come to  
games in December. "*  
;

Yep. A couple of bimbos  
wrapped in heavy coats a million  
miles away down on the field will

definitely head off those  
blackouts.

It was a quiet week on the e-mail  
front. Looks like everyone has  
stopped caring.

---

**Next Up**

*The Baltimore Ravens (4-4).*

Offense - 10

th

. Defense - 12

th

.

(In case you were curious, the Browns rankings are 31<sup>st</sup> Offensively and dead last Defensively).

The Ravens' D is down, but their O is up. As I believe I stated in the previous Ravens preview, they have plenty of both to whoop the Browns hides real good (although it could've been anyone I said that about).

I think the Browns O will look more competent under Quinn, but only if you consider punts

more competent than turnovers. I'm curious what positive things Jon Gruden will have to talk about come the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

*"You've gotta really respect a team that has helmets that are so orange."*

Ravens 33, Browns 10.