

## The Dilemma

Written by {ga=davekolonich}  
Thursday, December 10 2009 7:00 PM -

---

Does anything ever come easy for the Browns? Although our beloved franchise currently sports a 1-11 record, with an angry Steeler team - possibly ready to "unleash hell" - coming to town, it's quite easy to suggest that we have seen better days as a Browns Nation. However, something funny has happened over the past few weeks. Simply put, Eric Mangini may be proving his worth to the franchise. And before your mouse finger twitches with anger, at least consider that while the Browns are indeed 1-11, Mangini may slowly be accomplishing the initial stages of his franchise revamping. Does anything ever come easy for the Browns?

Although our beloved franchise currently sports a 1-11 record, with an angry Steeler team - possibly ready to "unleash hell" - coming to town, it's quite easy to suggest that we have seen better days as a Browns Nation. Which we have - who can forget those dizzying heights of 2007, or even the short-lived Bruce Gradkowski era of a year ago?

Taking a look at the current direction of our franchise, one could easily assume that the best chance for some elusive better days ahead lie in yet another change of direction at the top. Based on the comments of Randy Lerner some weeks ago, it appears that our overmatched owner has finally conceded that this franchise needs a new vision to guide it - assuming of course, that there was a vision established in the first place.

Or, in other words, myself and legions of other Browns fans are counting down the days until Lerner finally makes the long-overdue move of hiring someone to run his inherited franchise.

And certainly, in order to bring a top executive to the lakefront, Lerner will likely have to give this new "football czar" complete control over the franchise, which includes Eric Mangini - who no doubt currently claims full power.

And again based on the team's current record, perhaps most of Browns Nation would not be too devastated if such a thing occurred. In fact, the fortunes of Mangini have almost been an afterthought within the context of this debate.

However, something funny has happened over the past few weeks.

Simply put, Mangini may be proving his worth to the franchise.

And before your mouse finger twitches with anger, at least consider that while the Browns are indeed 1-11, Mangini may slowly be accomplishing the initial stages of his franchise revamping.

## The Dilemma

Written by {ga=davekolonich}  
Thursday, December 10 2009 7:00 PM -

---



## The Dilemma

Written by {ga=davekolonich}  
Thursday, December 10 2009 7:00 PM -

---

Consider that over the past four games, there has been some decent progress found within the almost nameless losses. While the Browns have not measured up talent-wise against any of their recent opponents, Mangini has no doubt prepared his team to at least stay competitive. And perhaps more importantly, Mangini has shown that he is a quality motivator.

During no portion of the past month of games have his Browns ever remotely quit. Overpowered and overwhelmed, yes - but never completely defeated. And while this team is still years away from becoming legitimate, at least there are some scant signs of progress.

And perhaps even more telling, the players themselves seem to be gelling. Gone are the consistent criticisms and back channel gossip that seemed to plague Mangini for the first portions of the season. Over the past month, the current Browns, at least the ones who are still standing, seem highly motivated and eager to keep playing.

Could you say the same even one year ago?

And if all this wasn't enough, even the likes of Tony Grossi, he of the Mural Whitewashing and Bus Trip rumor-mongering has even made similar claims.

And while I'm not directly advocating that Mangini should be crowned Emperor for Life anytime soon, I am somewhat encouraged by the initial results of his work.

However, it's Cleveland Browns football, so there's always a catch.

Let's imagine that Mangini retains his current position heading into 2010 and Lerner backs away from his talk of hiring a real football executive to run the team. What happens then?

In an ideal scenario, Mangini is given more time to establish his system, find his own players and improve this team from the bottom up. It is not improbable to think that after the additions of 6-7 more quality players, the Browns could begin to reach at least an average record.

And to take it a step further, perhaps Mangini could grow this team into a winner, if he were given additional years. Always remember, this is &quot;[a process](#) .&quot;  
ot;

## The Dilemma

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

Thursday, December 10 2009 7:00 PM -

---

However, what happens to the organization if Mangini runs unchecked for the next 2-3 years? Will we see a second coming of the Butch Davis regime?

Which brings me to the second scenario...



## The Dilemma

Written by {ga=davekolonich}  
Thursday, December 10 2009 7:00 PM -

---

If Lerner indeed brings in a new face to take over the franchise, certainly we would have to expect yet another front office and player personnel shakeup. And based on the insatiable craving for power that is inherent in NFL nation-building, Mangini will likely either be looking for work elsewhere or will be hand-cuffed for his foreseeable future in Cleveland.

And in terms of progress, what happens to Mangini's vision - which is arguably starting to take effect right now?

As I have stated - repeatedly - the Browns problems begin and end with a muddled system of operations that is largely the fault of a weak owner who does not possess the vision, organizational skills or sheer will to structure a successful NFL franchise.

And the cruel dilemma here - and the main reason for Mangini's initial hiring - is that any progress that Mangini currently delivers will likely preserve the flawed system of management that has existed in Cleveland for over a decade. Always remember that Lerner thought that Mangini would be the guy to essentially take control of a floundering franchise.

Or, to put it this way - do you want Mangini to succeed within a flawed system - if such a thing is possible, or would you rather have another "fresh start", where an actual football person runs this franchise as an actual football team - which again would likely cast Mangini to the nether regions of the league?

And while I have gained an appreciation for Mangini's efforts this season - and in full disclosure, I always root for the underdog - I am not anxious to see him completely dominate this franchise in the coming years. Again, never in the recent history of league has such an arrangement worked. To stake all current and future power in the hands of one person is simply a bad idea.

However, at the present, it appears that Mangini is making some small gains.

So, here's the question - do we start all over again, or continue "down this road"?

And if you have an easy answer to this question, I would love to hear it.

Maybe Randy Lerner would as well.