

## Mike Holmgren, in the Locker Room, with a Clipboard

Written by {ga=mattvan1}

Sunday, January 02 2011 5:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, January 01 2011 12:25 PM

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- a) Is the answer to the question “Who murdered Mangini?”
- b) Is what we might see in September?
- c) Both a and b

Apparently, Colonel Mustard is otherwise engaged. There are not a lot of professional sports franchises in the city of Cleveland. Thus, there are not a lot of head coaches who make their living trying to bring this city its first championship in over 45 years. Many Acta, Byron Scott, and Eric Mangini might want to consider pooling their funds to hire a personal protection service, which may not save them from being fired but at least it might stop them from being lynched, figuratively, in what passes for “the media” in Cleveland. Or replaced on the field by someone from their own front office.

Mangini, in a cruel twist most likely caused by tempting fate through his appearance on the HBO series “The Soprano’s” a few years ago, is apparently about to be done in by his own family. None other than the Godfather himself. Yes, that guy. Goo goo g’joob. Normally, I would not shed a tear over the fact that an NFL coach is about to lose his job. After all, 5 wins is 5 wins, whether you get them from a 4 game winning streak at the end of the season or by

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playing out of your mind against two of the NFL's elite teams and then sleepwalking through your other 14 games.

But this situation is different. If we are to believe the rumors, Mangini will be fired because either The Walrus has an ego the size of Avon Lake, or Big Mike has a former flame with which he wants to reunite. Laugh about it; shout about it when you've got to choose. Either you look at it, you lose.

The debate over whether Mangini deserves the axe will rage non-stop for the next few days, and frankly I don't care much for the discussion. What I do care about is the rationale behind the move, if indeed it happens. Fire the guy because you believe he has lost the team, his players underachieve, he won 6 games or fewer two years in a row, he has an unreasonable man-crush on his OC, you liked him better fat. Whatever. Just don't fire him because the grass is greener, whether that greenness comes from the Walter Middy belief that you can still coach, or because one of your old posse looks like an animated movie villain and spouts clever remarks as a commentator. Note to Mike – those types of irrational decisions never end well.

I know Holmgren and I know Gruden. Not personally. I know *of* them. I am familiar with their body of work, which, on the surface, is impressive. As was Parcell's before he went to Dallas. As was Lombardi's before he went to DC. As was Forrest Gregg's before he led the Lions to Super Bowl XVI. Wait, not really. Strike that. The point being that coordinators move back and forth and those who don't cut it as the HMFIC seem to fall back into their DC or OC role as if it were their childhood bed and they have returned from college. See Crennel, Romeo. The "let's re-cycle the once successful head coach because he has a great track record" doesn't work anymore – if it ever did. Ask the Bills about Chan Gailey (if you consider his original Cowboy tenure "successful").

Or Danny

Snyder about Mike Shanahan.

If Mangini gets fired, and I am not advocating that he should, I hope I am not too familiar with his replacement – it should be a relative surprise. Maybe I have heard about the guy because he is a coordinator on a playoff team, not because he once worked for Al Davis and lived to tell about it. Find me the next Mike Tomlin, or Sean Peyton – easier said than done, I realize but let's not go back to the frat house and pick a guy just because "he knows the system".

Holmgren has brought much needed credibility to the Browns. He is respected not only by his players but throughout the league. The 2010 draft was successful and overall things seem to be

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finally moving in the right direction. Let's not flush all of that away by letting your ego get in the way of making a sound decision.