



Nothing marks the transition from one year to the next like a nice coaching change. Here in Cleveland, it's one of the ways we know it's time to buy new calendars.

We might not even notice that the year has upped another digit if not for the departure of yet another Head Coach.

Naturally, the end of an "era" brings the dawn of another - hopefully "The One" that will finally bring us to... well, at least somewhere better than here.

Since no one had ever heard of the dude before 2 weeks ago, the hiring of Pat Shurmur was met with a universal yawn. And that was from the "supporters". There remains, of course, a throng of people that are mad that Holmgren didn't "make a splash" or hire "their guy".

And then there's those few that were gonna be bitchy no matter who Holmgren hired.

Personally, this hire doesn't excite me. Nor does it piss me off.

You see, I couldn't care less who Holmgren hired.

How can that be?, you ask.

Easy. I'd rather Holmgren be making the coaching hires than Randy Lerner, and there is no magic formula for hiring Coaches.

Any guy could be The Guy.

Any guy could be a bust.

Do I have any less hope for Shurmur than I would have for, say, Jon Gruden? No. Gruden could've easily been a disaster in Cleveland.

There's no way to know.

No matter who Holmgren was going to hire, my feelings were very succinct: *Whoever it is, I hope that they will be the right choice.*

I hope that they succeed, and I will give them every benefit of the doubt that I can muster until they prove undeserving.

But I expect them to fail.

That's not a slight to Mr. Shurmur. If the Browns had hired Bill Cowher, I would expect him to fail. If the re-animated corpse of Paul Brown crawled out of his grave as vivacious and sharp as his young self, I would expect him to fail.

If God himself/herself was convinced to take a break from his/her other duties for a few years and coach the team, I would expect him/her to fail.

That's my defense mechanism, and it's been solidly in place for years now.

So welcome, Coach Shurmur. Odds are you'll end up just like the rest of the gentlemen who came and flamed out for the last 12 years. Good luck breaking that karma chain.

Regarding "Pat"

Heretofore, I shall no longer refer to Pat Shurmur as Pat Shurmur. As one gentleman on the boards pointed out, he doesn't know anything about this guy other than he doesn't care for the name "Pat".

I concur. He should go with his full name, which I assume is Patrick. Patrick Shurmur. Yes, that sounds more dignified.

And if he needs to shorten it, well, go with "Paddy" instead.

Because Paddy O'Shurmur is a Coach I'm ready to go to war for. Pat? Not so much.

Regarding Why

Listen, I'm not gonna sit here and blow sunshine up your ass. Paddy is a dull hire. He's not a big, recognizable name.

It's as sexy a pick as Fat Bastard.

And the coaching "search"? It included interviewing 3 guys, one of whom was - let's face it - likely just adherence to the Rooney Rule.

A week ago, we could've speculated on up to 20 guys that were potential candidates (or at least interviews). A week later, Paddy O'Shurmur wowed 'em so bad that they didn't need to talk to anyone else.

It is obvious that this was a premeditated move. We should not waste our time speculating who Holmgren did or didn't contact - it's clear that he had his eye on O'Shurmur from the very beginning.

What we don't know is why.

Let's delve into useless speculation for the possible reasons:

1. He's easy to control. Mike Holmgren doesn't want to put in the hours necessary to coach the team himself, but he wants a guy that will run his system and will adhere to his "suggestions". Some would describe the situation as Puppetmaster and Puppet (which is probably simplistic, but the general public likes things simple).

In comes O'Shurmur, who's studied the "system" in Philly for 10 years under Reid. He's also relatively young - 45 - and wouldn't be sniffing another Head Coaching job if not for Holmgren.

Not to mention that Holmgren is his mentor's mentor - the Godfather, if you will.

O'Shurmur himself admitted that it would be "silly" not to use Holmgren as a resource. Which means, in all likelihood, he'll listen to the Walrus' "suggestions".

2. He has a relationship with Tom Heckert. O'Shurmur and Heckert worked together for 8 years ('01-'08) in Philly, and one must assume that O'Shurmur wouldn't be here today if Heckert didn't vouch for him. Knowing that there won't be any cockfighting between his GM and his Head Coach can be very refreshing for a President. When the entire unit is speaking the same language, a lot less is lost in translation.

This is a solid aspect of the hire.

3. He's a QB "Guru". Every significant year Donovan McNabb spent in Philly, O'Shurmur was his QB Coach. O'Shurmur also helped develop Kevin Kolb and especially Sam Bradford into viable NFL QB's, not to mention somehow pulling a productive half-season out of half-baked Jeff Garcia in 2006. THA T part of his resume is unquestionably solid.

I'd have to think that his ability to work with Colt McCoy and hopefully make him a successful QB in the West Coast system was central to this hire, because as your QB goes, your team goes.

Assuming that this move was made with McCoy in mind, that means Holmgren has built his bed with Colt and Paddy as the bedposts... a brave move indeed. He'd better know what he's doing.

4. He "blew them away" in his interview. This is probably the one you'll hear, and the least likely to be true. I will assume that he did just fine in his interview, but it isn't believable that they decided to forego any previously unscheduled interviews because Paddy freakin' O'Shurmur blew 'em away.

It's not like he was going anywhere.

5. His agent is Bob LaMonte, same as Holmgren. I'm sure that this didn't hurt, but I hardly think this was a make-or-break aspect of the hiring, no matter what the conspiracy theorists say.

It just so happens LaMonte reps a lot of Coaches and coaching prospects.

Woooooo.

6. He will run the West Coast. No need to really re-hash this - it kinda goes hand-in-hand with #1. Being a Puppetmaster can be hard work, and there's less need to do it if the Puppet believes in the same things you do.

No need to push or manipulate - which makes Paddy not so much a Puppet as a Parrot.

And a Parrot can take care of itself a lot easier than a Puppet.

As O'Shurmur called it in his introductory presser, "
We have a collective view
."

Is it enough to hire Paddy?

I dunno. It was for Mike Holmgren, and his vote is the only one that really counts.

And it's not like the possible coaching list was just teeming with names I "had" to have. Gruden probably wasn't coming here this year, and I had my reservations anyway.

Cowher certainly wasn't coming here.

The rest?

Are any of them really much more qualified/attractive than Paddy?

Some of them, maybe a little.

But it's not like you could point out one single guy on the "available" list and say "
We get that guy - we win a Championship
."

There's no formula for this, boys and girls. Reputable Coaches go bust-o all the time (look at Shanahanahan in D.C.). No-name schmoes that everybody boos from presto go on to win Lombardis.

All we can do is hope.

Regarding Backlash

Considering the lack of a true "search", considering O'Shurmur was the OC for the Rams (ranked 26th, only slightly better than the anemic Browns), considering no one had heard of him until a couple weeks ago, and considering the history of non-success here in Cleveland, skepticism and outright unreasoning anger are bound to dog this hire.

Even the most optimistic individuals are scratching their heads, trying to figure out how to get excited about this one.

Me? Well, the fact that this hire will be met with such universal disdain makes me more comfortable.

Chris Palmer wasn't a big hire, but everyone was excited anyway because the Browns were back. Butch Davis? People were going through the roof. Even Romeo Crennell was generally accepted as a solid hire.

But as the Coaches of the present start paying for the sins of their predecessors and the general frustration of the fans renders them irrational, both Eric Mangini and Paddy O'Shurmur have been ill received. Many an individual pronounced both as automatic failures and criticized/will criticize every move made by either without objectivity.

This lack of support, this dearth of anticipation... it gives me some hope. Why? Well, every

time we as a fan base have become excited about something Browns-related, it has ended badly.

Starting with expectations below sea-level with this team in the hands of a competent Offensive mind (we pray) with another year of Heckert's draft picks/acquisitions? In my opinion, that's not a bad place to be.

Regarding Unknown Head Coaches

This list, of course, has no bearing on whether Paddy will be a bust or boom, but let the naysayers be reminded of some of the other NFL Head Coaches that had no previous Head Coaching experience coming into their jobs and whose selection hardly excited the local fanbases:

Mike Tomlin, John Harbaugh, Mike Smith, Andy Reid, Lovie Smith, Mike McCarthy, Todd Haley, Raheem Morris, Sean Payton... not to mention a couple guys I think will make a big splash next year (like Jim Schwartz and Steve Spagnuolo).

And it's hard to argue that all those guys came into perfect situations/solid franchises like Tomlin and Harbaugh did.

Regarding The Defense

Unanswered during the intro presser was which direction the Defense would be going in. It was asked several times, but Paddy managed to sidestep the question at each attack.

In the end, he basically said "We're working on it, we can't tell you any more at this time."

If we read between the lines, it's pretty clear that Rob Ryan is gone. Mike Holmgren (and Uncle Fritz) always ran a 4-3 in Green Bay & Seattle, so the assumption is that the team will be going back to a 4-3 now that the Walrus has returned to domination.

However, Holmgren and O'Shurmur are both Offensive coaches, and I get the impression that they will let the Defensive Coordinator choose the system since that's not their specialty. Rumor has it that they're looking at Dick Jauron, who has a 4-3 history.

Whoever they hire as Defensive Coordinator, it is essential that he have experience. Paddy is a first time Coach, and he'll be taking on the play calling too, making him de facto OC.

There has to be a strong, experienced voice who's been-there, done-that somewhere on that squad, and DC would be the right spot.

Young Head Coaches always go through some growing pains, and it's always good to have a veteran there by their side to help them through their "puberty".

Regarding The Playoffs

I went 2-2 last week, predicting that the Packers and Ravens (easy one) would pull out wins. I

think pretty much everyone missed the Seahawks win, and the Jets... well, they won the same way they did in last year's playoffs - ugly.

The AFC Playoffs are now like Hell. Who the F do you root for out of the Jets, Steelers, Ravens, and Pats? Ugh. It's like getting to choose which venereal disease you'd like to have.

I always root for Baltimore these days over Pittsburgh, since I'm not accosted by the presence of semi-retarded Ravens fans on a daily basis. Semi-retarded Steelers fans? Different story.

So, yes, I root for the Ravens so the Steelers fans I see day-in and day-out can suffer.

My picks:

Baltimore at Pittsburgh - I'm going to go with the better team here... the Ravens. POS will throw at least one pick to Ed Reed.

New York Jets at New England - Remember what happened last time the Jets went to Foxboro? So do the Jets. It won't be that bad this time, but NY just ain't good enough to pull this one out.

Green Bay at Atlanta - The Falcons got screwed here. Because of the seeding process, ATL - the #1 overall seed - gets the tough team (Green Bay) while Chicago gets the 'Hawks.

And GB can definitely win this game.

I see it as very close, with Matty Ice making one of his comebacks at the end to pull the Falcons through.

Seattle at Chicago - Most people feel this will be a blowout, but that's how most people felt about the Seahawks game last week too. And... I still think this will be a blowout for the Bears. Their D will shut Seattle right down.

Person I Like Aaron Goldhammer More Than

Lord Voldemort

This was a tough one. Yeah, I know, I know, Voldemort's all evil and stuff, and he killed and tortured lots of people, including Harry Potter's parents. Not to mention that he *tried* to kill a freakin' one year old - that's just cold.

But he was an orphan who came from a long line of dark wizards, you know, so he's got that excuse goin' for him. Which is nice.

What's Hammer's excuse?

