

Erik Cassano has the cure for the Browns ills - Hire Urban Meyer away from the University of Florida. Cassano argues that Meyer has turned around desolate programs at Bowling Green and Utah, and has Florida back in national championship contention in just his second year there. He's from the area, and the Browns already have the offensive weapons to make his system work. Interesting column and proposal from Papa Cass here.



Visit the Papa Cass weblog at <http://papacass.blogspot.com/>

It finally occurred to me last night: I know what the Browns need to turn their fortunes around. And they don't have to look any further than Gainesville, Fla.

The Browns need **Urban Meyer** as their head coach. And that's why, today, I am officially kicking off the "Bring Urban Back to Ohio" campaign.

For those of you scratching your heads, thinking that if the Browns should go after any college coach, it should be Jim Tressel, let me give you a short history lesson.

In 2001, I first met Meyer when he became the coach of my alma mater, Bowling Green. He wasn't a blowhard. He wasn't a cantankerous leatherhead. He was simply good.

I was the sports editor of the student newspaper that fall when I watched the Bowling Green football program undergo an amazing transformation with little fanfare. With quiet, effective steps, Meyer eliminated the sludge left behind by former coach Gary Blackney, who likely stayed around a few years too long, and installed a new, exciting brand of football that he truly believed in.

It wasn't the paint-by-numbers football that Browns coach Romeo Crennel and offensive coordinator Maurice Carthon lean on; it was adventuresome. It embraced the big play. And if the big play didn't work, Meyer didn't abandon it for screen passes. He kept calling for it.

Meyer's offense, kind of a hybrid between a spread and West Coast scheme, turned an undersized quarterback in Josh Harris into an NFL prospect. With it, the Falcons performed the biggest turnaround in college football that year, jumping from 2-9 in 2000 to 8-3 in 2001, including wins over BCS conference teams in Missouri and Northwestern.

In one season, Meyer turned around a stagnant football program with very little roster turnover. His team latched onto his passion, enthusiasm and willingness to stick his neck out.

When Meyer left for Utah after the 2002 season, we might have been disappointed in BG, but we knew this was a coach destined for big things. Sure enough, he led Utah to a BCS bowl game and managed to get starting quarterback Alex Smith picked first overall in the NFL draft.

Then he was on to Florida and the real big-time of college football.

Meyer probably isn't ready to leave Florida just yet. But give him a few years to make the Gators back into a national powerhouse. Then he might be ready for the next challenge. By then, the only place he will not have conquered will be the NFL.

In a sit-down interview with me shortly after he was hired in BG, Meyer said he had no desire to go to the NFL.

"I have had opportunities to go to the NFL, but I love the college game," he said.

That might still be true, but let's wait and see what happens when he's scaled the college mountain and starts thinking about a seven-figure payday in the pros.

Now, I know what you are thinking: college coaches have a long history of falling flat on their faces in the NFL. The mentality is much different. NFL coaches are dealing not with wide-eyed kids but with grizzled veterans made callous to authority by million-dollar paychecks and years in the game. They can't just step in and demand respect. It has to be earned.

But Meyer, I think, doesn't view himself as a cure-all football guru the way Steve Spurrier and Butch Davis did upon arriving in the NFL. What Meyer would need is a general manager savvy and knowledgeable about the ways and means of the NFL. A GM who knows the salary cap, free agency, the draft, contract negotiations and above all, has a talent eye similar to that of Meyer.

The GM would need to be good enough to let Meyer do what Meyer does best: be an inventive, creative coach.

The Browns have the personnel to fit a Meyer system. Braylon Edwards is a playmaker. Kellen Winslow Jr. is a tough possession receiver who specializes in yards after the catch. Dennis Northcutt is a deep threat. Joe Jurevicius is a middle-route possession receiver.

Charlie Frye is a mobile quarterback, kind of a bigger, more athletic version of Harris and Smith. Reuben Droughns and Jerome Harrison could give Meyer all types of different looks out of the backfield.

I don't think it would take long for Meyer to put the right pieces in the right places, at least on offense.

Meyer is an Ashtabula native who played football at the University of Cincinnati. He knows what a rabid football area this is. Passionate fans are something he demands when he takes over a football program.

When the time is right, the Browns would provide a suitable project for him.

He is one of the few coaches who I think could return exciting football to the shores of Lake Erie.