

Jack Bauer Named Browns' Head Coach

Written by {ga=jonathanknight}

Friday, December 02 2011 12:00 AM - Last Updated Friday, December 02 2011 5:34 AM



The following takes place between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. on the day after yet another mind-numbing loss by the Cleveland Browns.

Events occur in real time.

The doors open in a plush office in the crystalline corridors at Cleveland Browns Stadium. MIKE HOLMGREN gets up from behind his desk as fictional federal agent JACK BAUER, star of the hit TV show 24, is escorted into the room by a secretary.

HOLMGREN: Ah, Mr. Bauer. So good to see you again.

Smiling, he extends his hand. BAUER, not smiling, shakes it.

HOLMGREN: I want to thank you again for coming on board as head coach. I know you're primarily a rogue federal agent specializing in counter-terrorism and don't have any football

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experience to speak of, but I think you're just what we need to pull us out of this little funk we're in.

BAUER smirks and looks out the large window overlooking the field far below.

JACK BAUER: All due respect, but this isn't a little funk. This is the sports equivalent of Kosovo.

HOLMGREN shrugs and walks over to a long mahogany table on which rest glasses and bottles of whiskey.

HOLMGREN: That's what I like about you, Jack. Your intensity and commitment. The last two coaches I've had here lacked both of those things. I'm hoping you can inject some spirit and life into this franchise.

BAUER walks over to a framed team picture of the 2011 Cleveland Browns hanging on the wall. He speaks without looking at HOLMGREN.

JACK BAUER: I used to be in the military. Used to do field work for the CIA. I've been to some horrible places. I've seen some pretty terrible things. I've been beaten, tortured, strangled, shot, and electrocuted. *[He gestures toward the photo.]* But I don't think I've ever been this scared in my whole life.

HOLMGREN pours BAUER a drink.

HOLMGREN *[chuckling]*: Oh, come on, now. It's not that bad. There are some nice players on this team. *[He holds out a glass to BAUER.]* Some good building blocks. We've had some nice drafts.

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JACK BAUER *[not taking the glass]*: So has Selective Service.

HOLMGREN *[placing the glass back on the table]*: Well, we've brought in some other talented guys.

BAUER strides over to HOLMGREN'S desk and picks up a copy of the team's roster.

JACK BAUER: Really? Show me one playmaker, Mr. Holmgren.

HOLMGREN: Well, there's Josh Cribbs...

JACK BAUER: So you do know he exists! Tony Almeida owes me 10 bucks.

HOLMGREN: ...and Hillis. Peyton Hillis. Fans love him.

JACK BAUER: Used to. Now that he's been on the cover of Madden his agent won't let him play with a runny nose and he can't show up on time to talk to a bunch of kids.

BAUER tosses the roster back on the desk.

JACK BAUER: It's bad enough you don't have any talent, but now you're losing games because you can't break the huddle in time.

HOLMGREN: I know.

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JACK BAUER: And because your long snapper is distracted by shiny things.

HOLMGREN sighs.

JACK BAUER: Big piece of meat who was specifically drafted to do nothing but slide a ball between his legs three times a game. Now he can't even do that.

HOLMGREN: That's why we released him.

JACK BAUER [*voice dripping with sarcasm*]: Yeah, because all of this is *his* fault. You needed somebody to throw under the bus, and he was the perfect candidate because his name sounds Frenchy.

HOLMGREN rubs his forehead.

JACK BAUER: A lot of your guys don't belong in the NFL, Mr. Holmgren. Hell, a lot of your guys don't belong at St. Ignatius.

HOLMGREN: Look, you haven't been in this game nearly as long as I have, Mr. Bauer. You forget that I was the one who discovered Brett Favre and built the Packers into their current dynasty. These things just take time.

JACK BAUER: Is that right? How much time, Mr. Holmgren? Your attendance is the lowest it's been in 40 years. You've got kids growing up in Cleveland who'd admit to being part of the Taliban militia before they'd admit to being a Browns fan. Your fan base is dying, Mr. Holmgren, and you're the one hooking jumper cords to their nipples.

HOLMGREN takes a sip of his drink.

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HOLMGREN: See, you're just like the fans.

JACK BAUER: The ones you have left, you mean?

HOLMGREN chuckles.

HOLMGREN: That's funny, Mr. Bauer. The fans will love that.

JACK BAUER: Mr. Holmgren, I've killed three people since SportsCenter. I haven't slept in 72 hours. So maybe you should be a little more afraid of me than you are now.

HOLMGREN *[ignoring him]*: I think you're overreacting. Once you get in that locker room and see what kind of talent we really have....

Before he can finish, BAUER knocks the drink out of his hand with one elbow and smashes the other into HOLMGREN'S neck, knocking him to the floor like a downed walrus. In a flash, BAUER whips a handgun out of his jacket and levels it at HOLMGREN.

JACK BAUER *[screaming]*: You have no talent!!

HOLMGREN *[whimpering on floor, gasping for breath]*: I know. I know.

JACK BAUER: You've got a city so desperate to follow something that doesn't suck that people are actually pretending to get excited about Cleveland State basketball! This is a football town, Mr. Holmgren. These people worship this team even though watching it is like watching Jerry Sandusky host an episode of Romper Room.

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BAUER crouches down so he's at eye level with HOLMGREN, whose eyes settle on him, terrified.

JACK BAUER: Don't worry. If I wanted to kill you, you'd be dead by now. But you are going to be held accountable for your part of everything that has happened. You will not be able to hide behind that Super Bowl ring. Right here, right now, you are going to face justice.

BAUER places the gun on the floor and pulls a dishtowel off the table with the drinks. He twists it into a rope.

JACK BAUER: You probably don't think that I can force this towel down your throat. But trust me, I can, all the way. Except I hold onto this one little bit at the end. When your stomach starts to digest it, I pull it out, taking your stomach lining with it. For most people, it would take about a week to die. Very painful. But still not as bad as watching your team try to convert on third down.

HOLMGREN [*desperately*]: But...why? Why are you doing this?

JACK BAUER [*unnaturally calm, still kneading the towel*]: I need to know what you're doing here. Why is it exactly that this franchise is such a joke?

HOLMGREN grunts.

JACK BAUER: You're the football genius, Mr. Holmgren. Everything you touch turns to gold: San Francisco, Green Bay, Seattle. Why hasn't it happened here?

HOLMGREN mumbles something unintelligible.

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JACK BAUER: You've drafted the wrong guys. You've hired the wrong coach. You brought in Jake Delhomme to be your starting quarterback!

HOLMGREN: Yes, but...

JACK BAUER *[screaming]*: Jake Delhomme!!

HOLMGREN cowers back into the corner, unable to respond.

JACK BAUER: If you don't tell me what I want to know, then it'll just be a question of how much you want it to hurt.

HOLMGREN sits up, more scared than ever.

HOLMGREN: How far are you willing to go?

JACK BAUER: As far as I have to. Who are you working for? The Rooneys? The Modells? LeBron?

HOLMGREN just stares with bulging eyes.

BAUER leans forward, grabs HOLMGREN by the lapels of his jacket.

JACK BAUER *[screaming]*: Who are you working for?!

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HOLMGREN *[stammering weakly]*: I work for the Browns...that's all. I work for the Browns...they pay me and I work for them....They give me Polish sausage and I...

JACK BAUER: You are going to tell me everything I want to know or I swear to God I will hurt you before I kill you, and no one will be able to stop me. Make no mistake about this, this is personal. And if you think for a second that I am scared to shoot you because you coached Brett Favre, you don't know me.

HOLMGREN *[mumbling]*: I'm doing the best I can...

BAUER picks up the gun, storms over to the framed team picture and rips it off the wall.

JACK BAUER *[screaming]*: *This is the best you can do?!*

BAUER flings the picture across the room, levels his gun and fires. The frame explodes, sending millions of glass shards spiraling into the carpet.

JACK BAUER: Your leading rusher is a guy you found in a Chipotle parking lot the night before a game. Your latest great draft pick leads the league in dropped passes. The right side of your offensive line is made of Caramello. You could put a backhoe in the middle of your defensive line and still not be able to stop the run. Your most valuable player is your God-damned kicker!

HOLMGREN begins to cry.

JACK BAUER: I'm done talking with you, you understand me? You've read my file. You know I'm willing to remove your appendix with a letter opener to get the information I need. So for the last time, why is this team so horrible? Why is it perpetually 5-11?

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HOLMGREN *[weeping]*: We just need a few more years...

JACK BAUER *[screaming]*: *There's no time!!* You're about to have your first generation of Browns fans who were born, lived, and died without ever seeing a championship! Half the population of Ohio are now Steelers fans! A kid born in Cleveland today has a better chance of successfully cloning a sheep than seeing the Browns make the playoffs in his lifetime!

BAUER suddenly puts his hand to his ear, where a tiny communication device rests.

JACK BAUER: What is it, Chloe?

HOLMGREN sits up, but BAUER keeps his gun leveled at him.

JACK BAUER: Copy that. *[He glares at HOLMGREN.]* Heat sensors report there's somebody in the closet.

BAUER strides to a large oak door to his right and rips it open, pointing his gun inside.

JACK BAUER: Don't move!! I'm a federal agent and the head coach of the Cleveland Browns!

PAT SHURMUR emerges with his hands up, trembling.

SHURMUR: It's OK, it's OK, it's just me. I was just waiting in there to see if you mentioned anything about needing an offensive coordinator.

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BAUER smirks.

JACK BAUER: I call my own plays.

SHURMUR: So do I.

JACK BAUER: And look how well that turned out. You took a bad offensive team and somehow made it worse. Your little West Coast Offense hasn't done....

SHURMUR grimaces. BAUER notices and charges toward him.

JACK BAUER: What is it? What have you done?

SHURMUR: Nothing, I...

JACK BAUER *[screaming]*: What have you done?!

SHURMUR *[cowering]*: Well, actually, that wasn't the West Coast Offense.

JACK BAUER: What do you mean?

SHURMUR: Well, I never really understood how the West Coast Offense worked...I just pretended like I did.

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JACK BAUER: And filled up a playbook with three-yard out patterns and handoffs to a tight end who'd never carried the football before.

SHURMUR nods, disgraced.

JACK BAUER: Get back in the closet.

SHURMUR nods weakly and steps back into the closet, shutting the door quietly behind him.

BAUER turns back to face HOLMGREN.

JACK BAUER: I'm going down to the locker room to talk to the players. I'm gonna need a hacksaw.

There's pounding on the door and shouting from the other side.

SECURITY GUARD: Mr. Holmgren - it's Stadium Security! Is everything all right?

BAUER looks at the door and then back to HOLMGREN.

JACK BAUER: This isn't over. I'm glad you hired me rather than a coach. Coaches have to play by the rules. I may have to break a few to make this work.

BAUER scoops up an end table and throws it through one of the large windows, sending broken glass falling like diamonds.

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JACK BAUER: Fix this, Mr. Holmgren. Even Jack Bauer can't win with a team like this.

BAUER \square *steps onto the windowsill and jumps out the window as the door bursts open and security guards rush in.*

SECURITY GUARD: Mr. Holmgren, are you all right? Who was that?

HOLMGREN [*eyes glistening with admiration*]: Our new coach. He's saved the world dozens of times. Single-handedly stopped a nuclear bomb from going off in downtown L.A. Prevented a biological weapon from being released on the public the same day he decided to kick his heroin habit. Rescued the president from terrorist kidnappers who tunneled into the White House with a rototiller.

HOLMGREN gestures toward the window.

HOLMGREN: He's the only man in the world who can save the Cleveland Browns.

He and the SECURITY GUARD look wistfully out the window.

SECURITY GUARD: Personally, I'd rather try to stop a nuclear bomb from going off.

HOLMGREN: Me too.

2:59:58

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