

In his latest, Papa Cass performs a case study of Romeo Crennel and Mike Brown, both second year head coaches with defensive backgrounds. Offense is foreign to Crennel and Brown. Neither speaks the language, neither has a history of coaching offense, neither has ever shown much interest in offense prior to becoming a head coach. Now that they are head coaches, they have kind of been forced to look offense in the eye. And they have no idea what they are staring at.



The sheer density of professional-level coaches will never cease to amaze me.

Show them something they're doing wrong, and they'll show you that you don't know what you're talking about.

Most of them got to where they are by having tunnelvision. As Bob Knight said on a recent ESPN SportsCenter feature, "coaching doesn't take a lot of talent." He meant that in order to coach, you don't need to run fast or jump high, or be a dead-eye jump shooter. You simply have to believe wholeheartedly in what you are saying and get your players to believe it, too.

Our case studies today are two of Cleveland's own: Browns coach Romeo Crennel, and Cavaliers coach Mike Brown.

They preach the gospel of defense like St. Paul to the Ephesians. Games are won and lost on defense and only defense. Defense is both the chicken and the egg. It spawns the offense, it sets the table, it is the manna that sustains the team.

That's how they were taught. And they would be 100 percent right, if not for the pesky fact that neither one of their teams possess the personnel to muster than kind of defense.

The lack of a dominant defense that can singlehandedly produce wins means some of the burden falls on offensive execution. That's where Crennel and Brown start getting into trouble, and that's where their coaching philosophies start costing their teams wins.

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Under Crennel and Brown, the offenses of the Browns and Cavs have been inconsistent at best, floating flotsam at worst. Game after game, the playcalling produces head-scratching. The Browns run Reuben Droughns into the line on third-and-10, down by multiple scores. The Cavs stand around while a dog-tired LeBron James dribbles and dribbles, trying to figure out how to make something happen.

If either the Browns or Cavs offense ever gets into a rhythm, it usually seems like an accident rather than the product of good coaching. Usually, the grooves are short-lived and don't offer much of a chance for reflection and analysis.

It doesn't take much video footage of the Browns or Cavs to realize their coaches don't have much of a clue about how to run an offense, and aren't very comfortable with offense. Yet neither coach has taken many steps to aid himself.

Crennel's first offensive coordinator was Maurice Carthon. He'd held the role in Dallas, but had never been the main playcaller until he arrived in Cleveland. He proved to be a colossal bust, better at rubbing his players the wrong way than calling plays. Crennel, out of loyalty, a dislike of change, or both, had to be convinced to fire Carthon midway through this season. His replacement is the more common sense-oriented but even less-experienced Jeff Davidson.

The Browns offense hasn't exactly flourished under Davidson, but at least Lawrence Vickers isn't attempting passes anymore.

Brown doesn't even have what you would consider an "offensive mind" on his staff. His top two assistants, Kenny Natt and Hank Egan, are frontcourt and defensive specialists, respectively.

Both Crennel and Brown are in their second seasons. Both have had ample time to discover what works and what doesn't work. An inexperienced, defensive-minded coach with no experienced offensive-minded top assistants doesn't work. Yet the Browns and Cavs continue to plod on with impotent offenses and coaching staffs that have few workable ideas of how to change that.

It's not as glaring of a problem with the Browns because their talent level isn't quite competitive yet. But if this Cavs season chokes to death on a lack of good offensive coaching, that's a big problem. There can be no wasted seasons with LeBron under contract.

It's time for Crennel and Brown to learn the most important lesson of organizational leadership: Hire people who excel where you are weak. It adds up to the net sum of making the organization stronger.

If they can't do that, or don't want to do that, they have to ask themselves: "Am I that dense, or am I afraid of bringing my potential replacement onto the staff?"