Before he officially took over as the new owner of the Cleveland Browns, Jimmy Haslam III went on a tour to visit his soon-to-be partners in the money printing business better known as the NFL. With the hiring of Rob Chudzinski as the new head coach, it's apparent what Haslam learned on that tour: it's more important to hire a guy that looks like he has that new car smell then one who actually does.

It's why, really, Chip Kelly did Haslam and team president (CEO? Czar? I forget his title) Joe Banner a favor by taking his fat butt back to Oregon. Kelly would have been an interloper to the ways of the NFL where stripes are better earned over the many miles traveled as a low paid assistant first. No one wants a repeat of the Lane Kiffin/Oakland Raiders experience, including Haslam.

All that said, Chudzinski may be a surprise of a hire and with a barely indistinguishable resume from the recently-fired Pat Shurmur but he does have a certain sort of "it" factor, if Susie Spanos is any sort of judge. Let me explain.

Shortly after Chudzinski was hired by the Browns in 2007 as the offensive coordinator, I was at a wedding in California for the daughter of a close friend. Also on the invite list was Dean Spanos, the owner of the San Diego Chargers, and his wife, Susie.

At the reception the father of the bride introduced me to Dean and his wife as "a close friend from Cleveland." Dean seemed more interested in the nearby jumbo shrimp platter and made a beeline for it almost immediately. Susie stayed behind for a moment to chat.

She said "you must be a Browns fan" to which I nodded affirmatively, if not embarrassingly. Then she said "you got a good man in Chud. He'll do a great job for you guys in Cleveland." I told her that I hoped that was the case because the Browns then, as now, could use all the help they could get. She said Chud would certainly help and that the Chargers hated to lose him. Then as she turned to join her husband who looked to be into his 6th or 7th piece of shrimp by then she turned to me, smiled the toothy white-capped smile of the moneyed and gracious, and said "you watch. Someday Chud will be a head coach. Maybe in Cleveland."

Brilliant woman. Maybe arrived on Thursday when the Browns confirmed Chudzinski's hiring and I immediately thought back to that conversation with Susie Spanos. More outrageous predictions have been made but you have to give the woman credit. She was years ahead of the curve on this one. She probably should have said something to her husband. The Chargers are still looking for a head coach even as the Browns have theirs.

The fact that the Browns hired Chudzinski and the Chargers did not does beg the question as to why. The answer though lies probably in Chudzinski's relationship with Norv Turner, the beleaguered and recently fired coach of those Chargers. According to the rumor, Chudzinski plans on bringing Turner to Cleveland as offensive coordinator. Even if that rumor isn't true it says enough about the relationship between the two that Chudzinski's hiring by the Chargers would have been impossible. Even in the re-tread warmed over world of the NFL, there isn't enough snake oil to convince Chargers fans that Chudzinski would represent a new start.

That doesn't mean that Chudzinski wouldn't be a new start for the Browns. He is and actually brings with him a modicum of success both with the Browns and elsewhere. With Chudzinski as offensive coordinator for those two years, the Browns won 14 games which is just slightly below the two year totals of Eric Mangini and Pat Shurmur, combined. Chudzinski turned Derek Anderson into a one year phenom and that year still represents the Browns' high water offensive mark since their return.

Chudzinski was fired after the next season when the promise of that 10 win season turned into a far more typical 4 win season the next. There are reasons, there always are, for that 4 win season, there always are: injuries, malcontents (Braylon Edwards anyone?) and the like. But ultimately the Browns failed for the reasons they usually fail, lousy leadership. Romeo Crennel was an African-American version of Norv Turner: a highly competent coordinator who Peter Principled to head coach. The Browns cleaned house after that season and with that through out everyone associated with it, including Chudzinski. Maybe they should have turned to

Chudzinski then but Randy Lerner being Randy Lerner fell in love with Mangini quickly who then went about setting the franchise ablaze in a two year reign of terror. Lerner fell out of love later that season and in love with Mike Holmgren and you know the rest of that story.

If Chudzinski does bring in Turner it will at the very least be an interesting experiment to see if the Chargers simply had the formula wrong all along. It also tells you a key life lesson. Never burn bridges because you never know when you'll find yourself on the other side

Anyway, to get back to the original point, Chudzinski is exactly the kind of hire you'd expect a new owner working tirelessly to fit in like an old owner would make. He is young enough to be considered on the front end of a potentially promising career but he has enough NFL experience and hence cred to be considered a safe hire. It's the NFL way. There are plenty of Chudzinski's kicking around the NFL. Shurmur was one of them. So was the recently fired Mike Mularkey. In fact you can go through the ranks of the NFL head coaches right now and most of them were Chudzinski's at one time or another. You'll find the occasional Jim Harbaugh in there and someone will take a chance on Bruce Arians like they the Browns and the Chiefs did on Romeo Crennel. Trends change. This year it's the offensive mind that is in. Some years they'll look for the up and comer on defense. Every once in awhile someone will fall in love with a loon like Chip Kelly. But essentially the NFL hiring process is a meritocracy where you start, like Bill Cowher, as a special teams coach and work your way forward.

There's no way to know at the moment whether Chudzinski will be successful. I think Susie Spanos seeing a certain "it" factor in him is as good a barometer as any. He'll be successful, as I wrote about whoever the next Browns' head coach would be, if the support system around him is strong. That starts with Haslam, moves to Banner, and from there the general manager, the head coach and then the assistants.

The Browns find themselves in the relatively early stages of putting together that puzzle. They have the right owner in place, finally. Banner by all accounts is highly respected. There's no general manager in place at the moment, which comes next. On a parallel track comes the next wave of assistants, then the draft and then training camp and then another season. That's when we'll really find out if the Browns are finally on a path forward or are just playing out the first year of their usual two year cycle.