Naturally, reports from Tony Grossi and Chris Spielman that Jim Tressel may have an eye on the Browns have created a buzz amongst both Browns and Buckeyes fans. We've run a couple stories saying why we think that it's at least feasible. Gary Benz says he's here to end the nonsense. Jim Tressel isn't going anywhere. And he's about to tell us why.

Given the several columns on these fine pages and elsewhere linking Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel to a possible slot next year as the Browns latest man in charge, someone has to be the contrarian.

I've listened to the arguments in support of a potential Tressel departure, but in the end I'm not sure it amounts to much more than a hill of beans, or buckeyes.

Take, for example, the argument that Tressel has nothing to prove at Ohio State. At this juncture, he's won one national title and is playing for another. The Buckeyes are heavily favored, but so too was Miami in 2002. But even assuming that the Buckeyes win, why does that automatically translate into the popular conclusion that there is nothing left to prove? The unique aspect of college football is that every year brings its own set of challenges, particularly considering that your raw goods are immature 18-22 year old young men. It's this particular allure, I think, that has kept other coaches with nothing to prove, like Bobby Bowden and Joe Paterno, firmly entrenched in their respective jobs for decades.

In fact, the analogy to Paterno is probably the most apt. Tressel may be revered in Columbus, but he's still only been there for five years. He hasn't even come close to achieving the myth-like status that Paterno enjoys in Happy Valley. Paterno, like Bobby Knight, is an educator

at heart. His challenge each year comes in molding young men to be not just good athletes, but good students and, ultimately, good citizens. Paterno is one of the key fundraisers for Penn State whose influence has permeated the entire student body at Penn State. The good he has done for his university and his sport extends well beyond what happens each Saturday in the Fall.

The sense I get is that Tressel fashions himself as an educator in this same mold. He, too, consistently displays a rare and sincere interest in the welfare of his players. Recall, for example, that one of the last people convicted felon Maurice Clarett called before being arrested was Tressel. This speaks volumes to the fact that Tressel did his best to remain a positive influence in a former player's life, even after that former player tried to bring Tressel's program down. If Tressel has a coaching hero, I suspect it's Paterno and not Paul Brown.

When viewed in this manner, it is never a question about proving to some unknown or unnamed "them" that you're a good football coach. It's all about shaping lives and contributing to society in a way more lasting than a fleeting victory in a bowl game. This is the kind of opportunity that only college sports presents. The nature of the pro game in any sport is so transient and the players are so different that having this kind of influence is more an accident than anything else.

But even moving beyond the intrinsic value that coaching major college brings, I've never bought into the argument that being an NFL head coach is the final summit to be scaled for a college coach. I've written about this before, but in summary most NFL coaches are products of the NFL system, meaning that while they may have had some college experience, most of their coaching experience was gained at the pro level through various assistant's positions. In other words, NFL owners don't typically embrace college coaches as their saviors, save, for instance, the painful failed experiment in Cleveland. In fact, the trend these days seems to be the reverse, with Pete Carroll and Charlie Weis being prime examples.

There are other compelling arguments as to why Tressel won't leave Columbus for Cleveland as well. Toss out any talk of a monetary award. Tressel already makes plenty in Columbus and doesn't seem to have adopted or embraced a lifestyle that requires a few more millions. He has a lucrative contract and lucrative perks already at his disposal. In short, there's no financial play to make that would likely turn his head.

You can toss out, too, the “challenge” of restoring the Browns to their glory. Given how pro teams operate, this is a challenge with several variables that are out of your control, especially if you’re a “young” coach. Whatever happens with the Browns and Romeo Crennel and Phil Savage, it seems clear that at least at the outset, Tressel’s input into personnel moves would be limited, at best. If Savage is tossed, it just makes room for a new GM.

Over the last several years, it has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that no NFL head coach can also effectively act as his own general manager. The demands of each job are too great and every time it’s been tried, it’s failed. Thus, Tressel essentially would be asked to coach the players his GM has obtained, much like Crennel. Contrast that with his present gig. Right now, Tressel has very limited constraints on his ability to recruit and sign the kinds of players he wants. Some argue that recruiting is the biggest hassle for a college coach and this is likely true. But it beats the heck out of getting stuck with overweight nose tackles, uninspired linebackers, and high draft choice wide receivers whose personal agendas have nothing whatsoever to do with winning. Besides, Tressel has proven to be an incredibly effective recruiter and seems to revel in his ability to continuously restock.

Finally, you can toss out the Cleveland connection. Undoubtedly Tressel has a soft spot for his hometown pro team. We all do. But why that automatically means he’d rather abandon what seems to be his dream job in favor of the Browns escapes me. If that’s the most compelling reason for assuming that Tressel would leave Columbus, why aren’t people making the same argument with regard to, say, Urban Meyer at Florida. He’s from northeast Ohio as well. In fact, Meyer seems more likely given his vagabond ways. Whereas Tressel’s career has been characterized by his lengthy tenure at Youngstown State (when other, larger opportunities likely presented themselves after any one of his national championships there), Meyer is fast becoming college football’s version of Larry Brown. Meyer, unlike Tressel, comes across as someone with something to prove and every move he has made in his rather short career underscores that notion. That’s not to criticize Meyer at all, it’s just to point out that he’s at least as likely a candidate for Columbus as Tressel, maybe more so.

Of course, Tressel could prove me completely wrong on this score. I’ve been wrong before. But I have a good feeling about Tressel and what makes him tick. And it doesn’t seem to be the time bomb that is permanently ensconced in Berea.