Back, back, back ... GONE!!! Mansfield Lucas leaves the yard this Sunday afternoon with an EPIC rant on the Browns coaching staff shenanigans of this off-season. The Browns have brought back the limited and lame duck Romeo Crennel, lost their best assistants (Jerry Rosburg and Jeff Davidson), and assembled a patchwork network of no name assistant coaches to surround the embattled Crennel in his third year at the helm. And Mansfield is pissed off. A hard hitting and sobering column.

And Other Observations on the 2006 Post Season Coaching Staff Moves

In the vast wasteland that is television, VH1 is Ice Station Zebra. The whole network is built on crap programming. It is the 30 and 40 something equivalent to when you were in your early 20's living in a house full of dudes and had nothing better to do at 4 AM than kill the last Shaeffer case and watch either soft core HBO or cheesy USA network "blow 'em & up beat 'em down" flicks from the cable you were stealing. Maybe you had some mac and cheese made with water instead of milk and butter and you were wishing like hell a pizza shop was still open and all the weed hadn't been cashed the night before. When you get older with a suburban family and your 4AM becomes 11PM and killing Shaeffer cases in a night and stealing cable would earn you a trip to divorce court, VH1 becomes your methadone. It's the same damn scene.

One of the finer pieces of sociological jabberwocky on VH1 is the decades' series for the 70's, 80's and now 90's they produce with dedication and diligence worthy of J.K. Rowling. You know, they slice in videos and pop culture topics of the day with their "personalities" interspersing what passes for wit. Were else can Mo Rocca get airtime where the majority of viewers are straight? On one decade series, however, there is something phresh. Gilbert Gottfried, 1980's movie and comedian refugee, perhaps best known as the voice of the AFLAC duck, does a 30 second bit called "What the F*^% ?!?!" Gilbert brings up something whack, rants, and at the end of every segment yells in his obnoxious voice "What the f%$#?!?!?!" at the top of his lungs.

It works.

So in tribute, a veritable cornucopia of homage to Gilbert and his genius segment, I offer my take on the recent Cleveland Browns' coaching changes that have assembled the offensive coaching equivalent of Oceans Eleven meets The Dirty Dozen meets The Magnificent Seven meets The A Team. Not so much.

The Cleveland Browns limped through their last loss of the season to the Mighty Houston Texans with an offensive coaching staff comprised of the following:

Offensive Coordinator / Asst Head Coach - Jeff Davidson
WR Coach – Terry Robiske
RB Coach – Dave Atkins
QB Coach – Rip (not Torn) Shearer
OL Coach – Jeff Uhlenhake
Quality Control – Carl Crennel

As of today?

Offensive Coordinator – Rob Chudzinski
Asst Head Coach / QB Coach – Rip Shearer
Senior Offensive Asst Coach (I am not making that up) – Dave Atkins
RB Coach – Anthony Lynn
OL Coach – Steve Marshall
TE Coach – Alfredo Roberts
WR Coach – Vacant (I think Michael Jackson-Dyson-Jackson is available)

Let's start off with a basic premise from Phil Savage. Firing Romeo Crennel is not an option because Romeo can't be held accountable on a higher standard than Phil or anyone else due to the severe talent limitations on the team. Therefore, Romeo must stay.

Hey Phil, you inherited a 4-win team that had the 8th ranked total defense in the NFL and after two off seasons and spending millions on free agents and turning in a 4-win season and the coach can't be held accountable?

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"

The other reason to keep Romeo, and Phil for that matter, we're told, is the need for continuity. Too many times the Browns have started and rebooted with new coaches since expansion nearly a decade ago, and the unavoidable turmoil of having three whole head coaches in nearly a decade, exactly one more than Pittsburgh, New England, Chicago and the same as the New Orleans Saints and a host of NFL franchises had in the same period, is an insurmountable hurdle. Making a change to the head coach now would be unfair and a setback. We can't have a setback as three wins compared to four wins would not be an acceptable option. But the salient point is we must have continuity.

But let's proceed to fire or reassign every offensive assistant coach though.

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"

Jeff Davidson was the frontrunner to remain as offensive coordinator. Eric Mangini sought Davidson out for the same role last year without any Offensive Coordinator experience, so to hang onto him the Browns promoted him to Assistant Head Coach. In any other year when a

team doesn't go from three wins to the conference title game under a first-year head coach in a city decimated by natural disaster on a scale unseen in American history, Mangini wins coach of the year. Yahweh Himself, according to David Halberstam and the national pundits, groomed Davidson and he learned at the side of Charlie, now of Charlie and the Football Factory. He received all of ten games to pick up the pieces of a mess perpetrated by Romeo keeping a friend employed, who allegedly set about creating a schism among the offensive coaching staff, with the very same talent that holds Romeo faultless for 32 games, that Phil is not accountable for assembling.

So word comes out through The Morning Monolith and other media sources that during his interview JD told Phil that certain players on the offense that Phil says out one side of his mouth aren't talented, lo and behold, aren't talented and need to be replaced. I am guessing at least one has a last name that rhymes with "die", as in "if that rag armed bum who runs around like a chicken without a head and can't read a D to save his life plays QB for us again, I'm gonna die". Phil, who says he and Romeo can't be held accountable because he hasn't had enough time to assemble enough talent in two years, apparently doesn't see eye to eye that the talent is deficient? Phil passes on JD, and in less than a day JD has the offensive coordinator job for the Carolina Panthers, a good team but a couple seasons removed from playing in the Super Bowl for John Fox, an infinitely better and more accomplished coach than Romeo Crennel.

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"

So the Browns need an offensive coordinator and the opportunity for continuity is gone. We're starting over on O scheme-wise…. Palmer, Arians, Robiske, Carthon, Davidson and now who? About the best thing anyone can say about Romeo is he was around Bill Belichick, so even through osmosis he had to learn something about defense. Right? Right? I mean, pretend you didn't see him play prevent with no pressure for a quarter and let Ben Roethlisberger, who was picked more than a field of California iceberg lettuce when pressured this season, slice him up to lose the biggest game of the season and buy into the myth, errrr, possibility that Romeo is more than a jewelry remora and knows a thing or two about D.

Maybe he's just out of his element on offense, and he needs an experienced offensive coordinator who can run the show independently, teach all these young players the game, hold the troublemaker accountable, and install a coherent system that gives the offense an identity, like the 3- 4 should give the defense eventually. So I'm sure we'll look for an experienced NFL offensive coordinator, or maybe get our version of a Norm Chow from college, like the Titans did, to match him with a stud franchise QB later.

The first rumored candidate, Jason Garrett, QB coach for the Miami Dolphins has no offensive coordinating experience. All y'all out there in cyberspace land who watched the Dolphins this season and said to yourselves, "Damn, look at that O! We have to get us some of that!", raise your hands. Or maybe all y'all are saying "Damn, look how he made Joey Harrington a good NFL QB, and what he did to straighten out Culpepper before his injury! That's our guy!" Or not.

We couldn't even land him. He took up Jerry Jones's offer to join that Cowboys staff "in some capacity" with rumors first of head coach, then offensive coordinator; we'll see I suppose.

Maybe it winds up lateral move. Anyway, your choice is the Browns or Cowboys. You know the Cowboys. Jerry Jones? The man who decided he could do as well as Jimmy Johnson and ran him out of town to come down from the owner's box to be GM? Chan Gailey? Dave Campo? Enough abject failure to re-grow a brain and hire Bill Parcells, only to saddle him with TO and make other player decisions and drive Parcells away? That guy.

But wait. There's more. Rather than bring in an experienced coordinator, Phil summarily hires a career assistant position coach with almost no experience other than coaching tight ends. Hey, I know that the tight ends coach has long been recognized as the nerve center of any great offensive coaching staff strategically, but this seems like a reach. I did say "almost no experience", however. He did serve as OC for the Browns under Terry Robiske for four games with Luke McCown running the show.

Rob Chudzinski does love Cleveland, so we got that going for us, which is nice. Look, I know what San Diego did on offense, and I watched them a lot. If you think Marty and Cam all of a sudden became great offensive minds, then you'd think Eric Dickerson, Walter Peyton, Earl Campbell and OJ Simpson's offensive coaches were great minds, too. Figure the rest out on your own.

So let's take stock of the offensive coordinator hiring process and end result.

Phil's stated reasons for keeping Romeo are a desire for continuity and a free pass for bad talent.

Phil then runs JD after 10 games because JD says, allegedly, the talent is bad.

JD studied offense with Belichick and Weiss.

Chud studied offense with Butch, Robiske and Marty.

I hear all the Kool Aid chuggers yelling, "Why are you always so negative. Give him a chance!" Look, Chud may be the next Bill Walsh (probably for the next team he works for after he fails here). That's not the damn point. Phil wants continuity, but he fires the OC twice in one season. Then he compliments Romeo, a 3rd year head coach who'd never spent an hour in over 30 years of coaching on the offensive side of the ball, with a 30 -something first-time coordinator with an unimpressive resume besides being alive and in proximity when Shockey, Winslow and Gates, three of the most raw talented TE specimens in NFL history, took the field.

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"

Well, there are always the assistant coaches to be hired. Remember, JD did double duty here as offensive line coach with former Buckeye Jeff Uhlenhake as his assistant, and had a great track record of coaching up guys in New England to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear year after year. Koppen, Kaczur, the list goes on. Second day drafted players starting as rookies and playing at a very high level. Position coaches can be critical, especially for positions that are "coached up" and have a history of players developed rather than highly drafted, and offensive

line comes to mind. There has to be some ground we can cover there by making a good hire. You have a line that is very old and breaking down, and it is likely that Ryan Tucker and Joe Andruzzi should retire, we may lose Cosey Coleman and Hank Fraley to free agency, and Bentley won't be back for this season – if ever. It is possible Kevin Shaffer may need to move sides, Isaac Sowells and Fred Matua are young players in need of coaching, and it'll take a hell of a coaching job to get anything out of Kelly Butler. Given the potential personnel turnover, do you consider going to a zone-blocking scheme? The University of Michigan did it in only a year with great success, maybe we convert to quicker linemen and Shaffer and Sowells have the potential to be athletic? Maybe we stay primarily base blocking and just add young maulers? But whatever the case, this is a critical hire for Phil given how poorly the offensive line has been since The Return, and the player question marks, right?

Phil hires Steve Marshall. Yes, THAT Steve Marshall. What was he doing in 2006? Chillin'. Out of football. NFL experience? Assistant OL coach for the 2005 Houston Texans, a team that gave up 68 sacks, most in the NFL, most after he was "promoted" to Offensive Line Coach after a few games. Like Romeo, he WAS hired by Chris Palmer, so he's got that going for him, which again is nice. Prior to that, 20 non-descript years coaching upper mid-level college programs for forgettable head coaches.

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"

Hey, the off-season coaching carousel isn't all a great big series of head scratching contradictions. Phil and Romeo did manage to execute a program to off all the "problem" coaches associated with Mo Carthon, Romeo's good friend he chose to keep on out of loyalty to ensure 2006 sucked as bad as 2005 on offense. I mean, how can Romeo be expected to actually control his assistant coaching staff so there isn't turmoil. He's only the head football coach in a post-expansion situation nearly a decade ago. There you are with those wacky expectations of accountability again. Typical gloom and doom, unreasonable, woe is me, Michigan player hatin' Cleveland Fan, aren't you?

It is good to see the loyal, competent assistant coaches like Rip Shearer get ahead. I don't know about you, but now that Rip is no longer just quarterbacks coach and is now assistant head coach, he can do for the team what he did for the young quarterbacks. Certainly you noticed the incredible improvement he made with Charlie Frye's game as far as NFL preparation. Comparing this season to Charlie's rookie season as far as his ability to quickly read NFL defenses, the speed with which his progressions increased, his pocket awareness, his poise, and the leadership on and off the field he showed with the other young players such as Braylan Edwards, I mean, you have to promote the man responsible for all of that, right?

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"

Look, I am a Browns' fan. If anyone is now after all of this, then odds are incredibly good they are too hooked to quit. I wasn't always cynical. In fact, most of the time I was downright bright eyed and bushy tailed in my optimism and support. I believed Sam Rutigliano was good for Cleveland. I believed we'd beat Denver all three times until the last gun. I believed until 1995 that the media maligned Bill Belichick unfairly and that the skills had diminished when he told

me so. I believed Art. I believed Carman Policy often told the truth. I believed that Butch was taking a step back to later take a step forward. I believed they fought their guts out. After about midway through the 2003 season, I don't believe any of it anymore.

Everything I see and hear Phil Savage doing is so contradictory it makes me believe he has no plan. He merely has philosophies, such as "draft good".

I want to believe Savage has had enough time to make a difference and his drafts will accumulate enough talent to show progress for 2007. I want to believe that the best assistant coach on the staff, special teams ace Jerry Rosburg, didn't leave in a lateral move because the ship is sinking. I want to believe that we couldn't attract a decent assistant coach for the vacant positions because Romeo isn't seen as walking the green mile and this team doesn't have a chance to not suck by the coaching fraternity.

Ehhh, screw it. No I don't. After I've been the skank and the Browns have gone Marv Albert on my back, I'm more than just a little "twice shy". Usually, I wait until the middle of the 2nd quarter of a game to go Gilbert Gottfried on the Browns. Now, I'm not even making it until the free agency period starts.

One last time….

"PHIL! WHAT THE F^%$?!?!"