"There's a gleam men! Let's go get the gleam!" Man, just typing that still gives me chills to this day. Last night, Marty Schottenheimer was fired by the San Diego Chargers. And the Browns and owner Randy Lerner now have a golden opportunity to take a big step towards regaining respectability and a return to contention. Randy need to act immediately on this, and not doing so would be a huge mistake. I make the case for The Return Of Marty in my latest ...

"There's a gleam men. Let's go get the gleam!"

One of the most famous sound bites in NFL Films history. Of course, the quote comes from former Browns and now former Chargers head coach Marty Schottenheimer, talking to his team in a pre-game sideline speech before the 1986 AFC Championship Game. Marty was passionately referencing the gleam produced by the Lombardi Trophy, which was well within the team's sights at the time.

The Browns have been so bad for so long, that even the thought of the gleam has been laughable through what has been a decade plus of utter hell for the loyal fans of this embattled franchise. We all remember where we were when we heard the news on that fateful November morning in 1995. And then three years with no team, followed by eight years of rudderless suck. Eleven years of frustration. Eleven years of poor draft choices, injuries, being dominated in the trenches, and inept coaching. I'm sick and tired of it.

In the wake of the news that the Chargers foolishly fired Marty Schottenheimer last night, the Browns and owner Randy Lerner now have a golden opportunity to take a big step towards regaining respectability and a return to contention. Randy needs to act immediately on this, and not doing so would be a huge mistake.

Simply put, Marty Schottenheimer is one of the finest head coaches in the history of the National Football League, and the evidence to support this fact is indisputable. In 21 years as a head coach, Marty has a 200-126-1 record, and has amazingly suffered just two losing seasons. One of which was a 7-9 mark with a 1998 Kansas City Chiefs team that just ran out of talent, and suffered a litany of injuries.

And it's not like Marty has came in and taken the reigns of dominant teams and auto-piloted

them to playoff berths. After four and a half years as the team's defensive coordinator, he took over a miserable 1-7 Cleveland Browns team from Sam Rutigliano mid way through the 1984 season. The team finished 4-4 down the stretch, then made the playoffs the next four years, reaching the AFC Championship game twice. He then was hired to resurrect a Kansas City Chiefs team coming off back to back eleven loss seasons. He went 8-7-1 in his first year there, then led the Chiefs to the playoffs in six of the next seven seasons. And then most recently, he inherited a San Diego Charger team that had gone 1-15 and 5-11 in the two seasons prior to his arrival. They were .500 his first year on the job, and 35-13 over the last three seasons he was there.

Marty's critics will be quick to cite his reputation as a guy that can't win the big game. Schottenheimer has just a 5-13 record in the playoffs over his career. Some of this reputation is justified, and clearly there have been cases where Marty has tightened up in big games. But he's always right there. And if Earnest Byner doesn't fumble, Nate Keading doesn't miss that kick a couple years back, or Marlon McCree doesn't fumble that interception … is Marty still a choke artist? To me, the people that dismiss Marty as a failure for his inability to win the big one are like the people that blame John Hart for the Indians inability to get it done in the mid-nineties. If Jose Mesa and Tony Fernandez just do what they have done all year, John Hart is a hero in this town. But they choke, and John Hart is now a failure.

In any sport, all you can ask for is a chance to be there at the end. I'd do push ups on hot coals just for the chance to be able to blow a big game in January at this point. And for all the people convinced that Marty truly cannot win the big one … I dare you to tell me with a straight face that you think Romeo Crennel can.

Romeo Crennel is a nice guy. A solid defensive coach. He is not a head coach. It's that simple, and I've seen all the empirical evidence I need to. Romeo is nowhere near the head coach that Marty is, and at Romeo's advanced age, there's no time left for him to learn on the job. Romeo is what he is. A coordinator. Sorry.

For the sake of "continuity", recruiting free agents, and the lack of any attractive candidates … the Browns decided to give Romeo a third year. Well, there's now an attractive candidate out there. The climate has changed. The Browns need to admit that they screwed up in hiring Romeo, cut bait with him, and make this move immediately.

Free agency hasn't even opened yet. The draft is still two and a half months away. The Browns just hired Rob Chudzinski from Marty's staff in San Diego to run the offense! Marty is a 3-4 defense guy. We are a 3-4 football team, with a promising young 3-4 defensive coordinator in Todd Grantham.

In addition, Marty Schottenheimer football teams have the following hallmark: They run the football well, and they stop the run. Two things this franchise has been woefully unable to do over the last eight years. Amazingly, Schottenheimer has had a top ten rush offense for nine of his last ten seasons as a head coach, which spans through three different teams and goes back long before Marty was blessed with LaDanian Tomlinson. He also built the perennially soft Chargers into a team that has been stout against the run the last three seasons, finishing 3rd, 1s

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, and 7th

against the run over that span.

Could things be set up any better to bring Marty back to Cleveland to finish off his career? He could spend three or four seasons on the sidelines before transitioning into a role as team President. And then end his NFL career back in Cleveland, near and dear to his Midwest roots, restoring the franchise that gave him his start back to credibility.

Bring back the gleam Randy.