Man, a great piece here from Mansfield this morning. In it, he thoroughly and comprehensively addresses the question he's been getting from our readers on e-mail. What would YOU do to repair this Browns team? Mansfield lays out his blueprint. For free agency. For the draft. And for the coaching staff. And what he proposes is not only realistic, but leaves us with a pretty intriguing squad for the 2007 season that would have me personally pretty optimistic.

OK, so I write op-ed and I'm not always the biggest yes-man, errrrrrrrrrrr, supporter of the direction of one of the worst organizations in professional sports record-wise over the past two seasons. Some peeps think this makes me negative; a hata even. Others think I'm unfair to the Randy Lerner-Savage-Crennel team and I don't give enough credence to the concept that they face huge challenges left over from their predecessors who turned in the same results they are presently handing in. Others may even think I am a bad fan. Most all of my dawgs who disagree with my takes respond with the same line: well, what would YOU do?

Glad y'all asked.

Hey look, I don't need to defend my fan credentials. I have more than enough chevrons on my sleeve. I'm reminded of the classic Dave Mustain lyric when he sneered, "Whaddaya mean I don't support the system? I go to court when I have to." So let's get past all that crap. I love the Browns, but I'm sick of the rudderless suck I see on and off the field, and I'm sick of the cynicism as well. I just want them to show me there is a plan and they are executing it. Attending a Cavs game where they schooled the Clippers recently, two dudes watching the game with me compared and contrasted the brilliant job Dan Gilbert has done with the Cavs' game experience to the last Browns game they attended. It was boring, CBS is bland, and the fans surrounding them turned the game into a bitch session the first time a negative play happened. Never mind that the fans were right and Frye's interception allowed Baltimore to steal a game they deserved to lose; the point is that the Browns as an organization are flat lining. They realistically have about two more seasons before attendance will nosedive regardless of the teams PSL strong-arm tactics that almost guarantee ticket revenue.

They don't have time for a five-year plan.

This ain't Russia and Phil ain't Stalin.

So here's my plan to fix the Browns. It is based on these few overriding beliefs:

This organization is not headed in enough of a positive direction so that the present course ensures success if only given enough time. Savage just hasn't "hit" on enough acquisitions in two years and Romeo hasn't shown he can coach a damn lick. I'm not sayin' it can't happen. I'm not saying it won't happen. What I'm sayin' is that by any objective measure this organization hasn't accomplished enough to where In Phil I Trust.

Having said that, the Browns need to stick with Savage for the next two to three years come hell or high water. 0 – 16? Keep Phil. The River catches on fire again because of the inflammable toxic suck draining down West 3rd through the once-proud now dead-as-a-doornail east flats? Stick with Phil. Why do I believe this? Having lived through Bill Belichick, and a host of other talented people who have done on-the-job training with the Browns and made their mistakes here only to go onto great success elsewhere, I can see Phil's potential. The guy seems smart, appears to know talent from his past, and is perhaps only held back by his hubris that hopefully enough failure will beat out of him. I can see Phil getting fired after next year, going into quiet mode, and re-emerging in his 50's to build a dynasty somewhere else. I've seen this movie before.

I can't say the same thing about Romeo Crennel. Get him the hell out of town.

Like it or not, because the Browns were not a good team in 2004 and Phil decided to gut enough marginal support players to necessitate a complete re-boot, the Browns took a step back before they could move forward. Phil then essentially wasted 2005 as his own personal evaluation year (that was $550 in tickets for one seat, but so what?) after he executed what looks like a draft worthy of Butch's early efforts. Mix in some good, old-fashioned Cleveland Experience ™ bad luck, and the Browns are at least two more off-seasons from playoff contention respectability. It can't be helped.

Balance wins in the NFL. Not just great defense. Not just a high-powered offense. Not just a running game. You need to fix it all rather than just keep adding onto an area of perceived strength while leaving other areas a complete mess. You need to make sure you do not have any areas that are hemorrhaging in this league of match-ups.

The Coaching

There is no point to Romeo Crennel remaining as head coach. Read that slowly and let it sink in and understand why and what it means. Why is keeping Romeo a waste of everyone's time rather than an example of stability? Because no one expects him to survive. This is evident in the off-season assistant coaching carousel. We heard all about the need for continuity from Phil, the need to "let the seeds take root". Then we saw several coaches jettisoned, and a top-flight special teams' coach bail. We saw assistant coaches hired with almost no supporting credentials that objectively suggest success. Why? They believe this is a short-term situation. The only people it matters that Phil is trying to impress, NFL insiders, see right through this facade.

If Romeo coached well, but the results weren't showing up yet, you could make a case to keep him. If he were young and the growing process from career assistant to head coach were worth

the pain of going through, you could rationalize him paying dividends down the road. The team commits few penalties, and some opponents have praised the physical style of play, but other than that what can you point to that is done well? Are the young players developing? Is the team disciplined in its approach? Is he a good X's and O's guy? Do you like the temperament of the team and its will to compete on a weekly basis for 16 Sundays?

Marty Schottenheimer is now in available. Reports are that the Browns aren't interested. That's a damn shame. Without repeating Rich’s cogent case to hire Marty , this is a guy who has made a career out of taking floundering suckage and transforming it into nothing short of Super Bowl contention. He did it here, he did it in KC, he was doing it in DC, and was recently fired after going 14 – 2 and losing by 3 points to one of the truly great modern franchises of all time that was a mere two minutes from a Super Bowl birth itself (and probable victory over a poor NFC team). They got to 14 -2 on Marty's watch after being a franchise so bad that the NFL equivalent to the Bush family engineered the draft so their lil' Eli wouldn't have to have his career dead ended there. Maybe Marty is done and just wants to enjoy winter in La Jolla, and who could blame him? He doesn't need the money. But the man has to have the burn to silence his naysayers, and the poetic justice of doing so on the North Shore is too rich. Marty would bring discipline, know how, and the type of credibility that Phil's ill begotten continuity façade cannot, all without changing the schemes and using existing the talent and assistant coaches. Marty fixes everything that is wrong with the coaching staff.

The only holdup I can see is the ego of two men. Phil seems head strong in the manner of A.J. Smith, and seems hell-bent on proving some asinine point with keeping Crennel instead of improving the team. For Marty, it is likely that his days of not having any front office input are over after Snyder and Smith. Get past that, and Phil has a head coach who can step seamlessly into his scheme and talent pool without having to start over. Browns fans have legitimate hope that we have a proven, winning head coach, and more importantly, a significant tie back to the days when we loved our team, not just the concept of what our team once was. We deserve each other.

The Draft

The development curve of this franchise has to be at a point where Phil moves past the dreaded Best Player Available (BPA) concept. There are several units where the young talent is in position to develop and either prove itself or not, but stocking up with more and more draftees behind the existing talent is utterly nonsensical. There are other units where they are nearly devoid of any starting talent, let alone depth. Stop the madness Phil. Draft for need. Don't let me hear the words "wide receiver", "linebacker", "safety" or "tight end" on draft day.

I used to try to pinpoint exact players and was into the whole draftnik and mock draft scene as much as anyone. Now I see the folly in that approach. The draft itself in terms of any one potential player is damn near a crap-shoot. I've seen plenty of reasonable draft picks turn out to be busts, and I've seen reaches justify themselves as good players. I saw the Browns draft the safest pick ever, a man of impeccable character and work ethic that is arguably the most talented, complete player at his position. He started nearly every game for his team in college. Then Courtney Brown busted as hard as any top pick ever made. So I don't do the "you gotta

take this guy or I'm throwing bricks at the TV" thing much anymore, if at all. What I mostly do is the "take a guy like this" thing.

So in that context, here's how I roll with the draft. I focus on a specific area that I can fix, and leave the other areas for next year and impact free agents. This year I focus like a laser on one thing in the draft: fix the offense, particularly the running game. Period. The D Line will need to wait for 2008. I want the failed vets of the past gone. Andruzzi, Coleman, Tucker – gone. I want to keep Fraley and Friedman out of necessity. If LeCharles Bentley ever plays again, it is gravy.

Here's how I'd play it by round, assuming we stay in the slot and don't trade down:

Adrian Peterson – RB - Oklahoma

Justin Blaylock – OG/OT Prospect - Texas

Ben Grubbs – OG - Auburn

Dan Mozes – C – West Virginia

Trade – 2007 5th rounder and 2008 5th rounder for David Carr

Best Available OT or DT prospect

Best Available OT or DT prospect

A note on David Carr. Some may say I am overpaying for him. Others may say it'll take a 3rd or 4th rounder. The point is this kid has more talent than any QB coming out not named JaMarcus Russell. Carr has developed bad habits in a horrendous situation, similar to the one that ended the careers of many, including Tim Couch. I'd bring in Carr and essentially red shirt him for 10 games until I made my mind up on Frye and Anderson. If neither Frye nor DA step forward, and I doubt they can or will, I bring Carr along in a run-first power offense situation. I truly think that in a recycled situation, David Carr can be the Browns' QB of the future in the manner of Vinny Testaverde in the mid 1990's.

Free Agency

Conventional wisdom says you get your core from the draft and you fill in your holes with free agency. I have a contrary view. I have no idea whatsoever why you can't sign impact players into your holes rather than bodies. I'd rarely, if ever, sign more than two free agents a year. But you can best believe that the guys I'd sign would be true playas who would be a long-term part of the core. Otherwise, I'd let my kid draftees and UDFA's fill the other roles. I see no reason to fire buckshot and land mediocre free agents who eat up your cap space and give minimal return. That is, unless you really enjoyed Percy Ellsworth. If you are "committed" to losing 10 to 13 games a season, at least have the sense to do it with kids who have upside.

If the Browns Do the Right Thing ™ and finally address the OL in the draft and land an impact running back, the gaping holes that must be filled, come hell or high water for 2007, are down to a starting cornerback and a little defensive line rotational depth. Part of my two year plan would be to dedicate the 2008 draft to landing that long-elusive impact defensive lineman – or two – and filling in the gaps at linebacker for the kids drafted in 2006 who don't step it up or to upgrade Andra Davis.

That said, my top target would be Nate Clements, by any means necessary. The only thing that prevents this is the Bills slapping the franchise tag on Nate. Sure, Clements will be the most highly sought after free agent, like Bentley last year, and we'll have to overpay up the yin yang. But when you have $26 million in cap space, and the home town pull for the former Shaker Heights Red Raider, and you have the potential to solidify your corners with two top notch players for the next half-decade, you spend whatever it takes. Fail here and the pickings get a whole lot slimmer. You may be forced to draft a corner when you need to fix the lines, or else you're looking at another year of Ralph Brown getting flambéed and Daven Holly chasing with his back to the ball. No dunkashein, bitches.

I then move to band-aid the defensive line for another season with rotational help. Look, you are not going to sign a stud, impact DT or nose in free agency. You need to draft them. What you can do is make sure you are six to seven deep with bodies so that your linemen can rotate, eat blocks, and are hard to move. I'd go hard after Terdell Sands and think hard about making him my co-starting nose tackle with big Ted. Yeah, yeah, I know DT and nose require some different technique and all, but we're not talking brain surgery here folks. In the world of pro sports, changing from two-gap DT to NT ain't launching rockets. If I can get six consecutive hard plays from Terdell on running downs and then the same from Ted, I should be able to rotate enough to cause some real issues for other teams. There is no true starter and you let them split plays as co-starters. Then I just hope like hell I can get another rotational season out of Orpheus, another so-so year from McKinley and Eason, and a day two pick or project player can do better than Hoffman and Babba O for a few downs a season. I just resign myself to stumbling around with Frazier off the bench and maybe some UDFA types as rotational depth. But I see no reason to spend money here. Next draft I'd fix the DL as hard as the OL, and maybe mix in an ILB in round 2 to sandwich DL picks in rounds one and three. I want Leon Williams to gain weight and move to becoming Wimbley's bookend partner. They should commit this talented player to a position instead of making him the next Chaun Thompson.

As far as our own free agents? Let most of 'em go. They suck. The old men with bad knees and backs on the OL? Get your weak asses out of town. Terrelle Smith? All talk. Northcutt? Punt returners are a dime a dozen. About the only player I want I think they will let walk to play Phil's pick is Brian Russell. This guy is nothing short of the glue that holds the secondary together, and making Brodney Pool a starting safety takes him out of the extra LB/SS role he's starting to excel at in matchups, and that would be a shame. I'd keep Russell.

The Team

OK, here's how the coaches and two deep break down:

HC: Marty Schottenheimer

OC: Rob Chudzinski

DC: Todd Grantham

LT: Kevin Shaffer, Kelly Butler or day two choice as backup

LG: Ben Grubbs, Lenny Friedman

C: Hank Fraley, Dan Mozes

RG: Justin Blaylock, Fred Matua or Rob Smith

RT: Isaac Sowells or Justin Blaylock, with Kelly Butler or day two choice as backup

QB: Frye, Anderson, Carr

RB: Peterson, Droughns, Harrison

FB: Vickers, Droughns

WR: Edwards, Cribbs, Mosely or UDFA-type

WR: Jurevicius, Wilson

TE: Winslow, Heiden

DT: Roye, McKinley, Eason, Frazier, Orien Harris or a day two prospect

NT: Sands, Washington

OLB: Wimbley, McGinest, Williams, McMillan,

ILB: Davis, Jackson, Stewart, Unck

CB: Clements, Bodden, Minter, McCutcheon, Holly

S: Russell, Jones, Poole, Hamilton

I like my team for 2007. I like it a lot. We get a run-first personality with a potentially Hall of Fame quality prospect in Peterson leading the way, and three very different young QB prospects. We have passing targets with a ton of talent and great balance. There is an influx of strong, young, athletic offensive linemen, just the type Marty has always been able to get to gel quickly, except these kids have actual talent.

The defense is going to need to make due on the line for another season, although you have the potential for a nose rotation that is suffocating. The young linebackers Williams and Jackson need to land on permanent positions, be groomed and evaluated to see if they are building blocks for the future or not. McGinest needs to surrender reps. Wimbley is a rising young star in the league who needs to be featured like Shawn Merriman in an attacking scheme worthy of his talents, not a passive bend-but-not break arrangement played by the timid Crennel. The defensive backfield is as talented and deep as any in the NFL with Bodden and Clements at the corners, and Jones, Russell and Poole as a three-headed monster. They would allow you to blitz getting off the bus.

I started this plan talking about balance, and the need to have all the units strong and competitive. The 2007 Browns would potentially feature a young and talented offensive line and receiving corps with the potential to be as good as any in the NFL in the next few seasons. The running back would potentially be as good as any in the NFL. The quarterbacks would be a weakness in 2007. But they'd be a year older, with at least the potential talent-wise to manage the game, and they have enough raw talent for the Browns to get lucky. The position could be addressed in 2009 by a vet when the rest of the team is at playoff caliber. The linebackers are stocked with talented young players who need to be evaluated, and this corps may make or break Phil's legacy here. All that is missing is the play-making impact middle linebacker to upgrade Davis, and he can come in 2008. The defensive line is poor and we need to wait one more season to draft our Seymour and Wilfork-type impact athlete. The defensive backfield would be as good as any in the NFL. I don't mean potentially; I mean now.

So how about it Phil? How about an actual PLAN and not shotgun BPA hit and miss efforts to improve our team wearing our colors and bearing our name?