Talk about your mixed bag. Cleveland Browns' general manager Phil Savage checked in with the media on Monday to give what amounted to a quarter pole assessment of his team. In doing so, Savage confirmed that despite a refreshing sense of realism toward the current situation, he's still every bit the dreamer that continues to value effort far more than results. Gary gives us his thoughts on Phil's Monday presser in his latest column.

Talk about your mixed bag.

Cleveland Browns' general manager Phil Savage checked in with the media on Monday to give what amounted to a quarter pole assessment of his team. In doing so, Savage confirmed that despite a refreshing sense of realism toward the current situation, he's still every bit the dreamer that continues to value effort far more than results.

He sees, for example, some of the same things that every Browns fan has seen, such as a struggling quarterback and a head coach who's piling up an impressive list of poor in-game decisions in a season only four games old. What he doesn't see, however, is much reason to do anything more than stay the course and assume that everything will work out fine. To put it in economic terms, if Savage was a congressman he'd see the economy tanking but likely vote against any plan

geared toward doing something about it. As Savage explained, "I've talked to people around the league, people who have been in this business for a long time, and you don't go blowing things up after a couple games."

Apparently he's not talking with anyone in Oakland or St. Louis who have done precisely that. Though neither of those franchises are a model to emulate, no one's looking to copy what the Browns have been doing the last 10 years either. But disregarding the tendency to think the need to consult others in the league means Savage still doesn't have enough confidence in his own instincts, one still wonders whether any of those experts he did speak with have a vested interest in telling Savage what he wants to hear, which is that Crennel's a good coach, Anderson's a good quarterback and the only thing separating the Browns from the elite teams are a basketful of injuries. If only.

Whether he admits it publicly is beside the point. If Savage doesn't know full well that the mismanagement that's taken place on the field this season is hardly confined to this season then owner Randy Lerner needs to find a new general manager. Year after year, Crennel has proven an inability to field a disciplined or prepared team. The poor decisions on the field goals and the clock mismanagement are old stories. The only news there is that they still aren't fixed despite Crennel's vows each and every season to the contrary.

But Savage, for reasons that have never been entirely clear, continues to paper over these persistent problems by attributing them to outside agencies and bad luck. To those who see things differently, who can discern a disturbing trend that is literally marching into their living rooms each week and slapping them in the face, Savage can only say that "as long as the players play hard for him, I don't think we have any issues at that position." It would be fun to give Savage a shot of sodium pentothal and find out what he truly thought when he watched the Dallas and Pittsburgh games.

At this juncture, Savage's bar for Crennel is awfully low. It seems that Savage believes that good results eventually will follow from earnest effort disregarding

the fact that earnest effort poorly coached could serve as this team's bumper sticker slogan. Both Crennel and his offensive coordinator Rob Chudzinski can tell everyone how they constantly emphasize the need to avoid the so-called self-inflicted negatives, but it's hard to imagine that the message has resonated with a team whose defense lined up in the neutral zone four times on Sunday, the fourth game of the season.

If the team had some fight in it, indeed if it had some feistiness, at least there would be some basis to Savage's abject faith in a head coach that has yet to accomplish anything despite given plenty of opportunity to do so. To date, the only thing that's evident is that this is a team full of players with conflicting agendas overseen by a coach who is incapable of getting them on the same page.

As much as Savage backed Crennel, he didn't mince much when it came to his unwavering support for Anderson either. What's hard to discern is whether Savage was trying to diminish any issue about who the starting quarterback should be or whether he truly feels that way. It's probably a little of both. What isn't so hard to discern though is that objectively, Anderson has done little this season to warrant that level of confidence.

Any number of statistics undercuts Savage's view and you can literally pick among your favorites. Anderson has only three touchdown passes in four games, but has six interceptions. In his last 12 games dating back to last season, he has 15 touchdowns and 16 interceptions. His quarterback rating is only 49.9 this season, which makes him better than exactly one quarterback in the entire league, Kansas City's Tyler Thigpen. His quarterback rating for those same last 12 games is only 64.75, which would place him in the bottom five of the league this year. He's averaging only 4.6 yards per reception this season, again making him better than only Thigpen in the entire league. His longest reception is only 23 yards, making him last in the league.

You can go on all day like that or just move beyond the hard statistics and go by

what you see. And what you'd see is that this season the Browns have had just over 40 offensive series. Outside of the one series early in the fourth quarter against Cincinnati on Sunday that more or less turned around a game that was as boring as it was poorly played, you'd be hard pressed to recall any series of note that Anderson has had this season.

The point here is not to beat up Anderson so much as it is to press Savage on how he can stand behind those kinds of results and yet not even consider a change, but the story last week reported by Fox Sports that "the other guy" got exactly two additional reps in practice last week support's Savage's claim.

In his press conference, Savage was quick to say that "D.A. still gives us the best chance to win." It may be a trite phrase by this point but it's also a conveniently self-serving view. The fact that Quinn doesn't given the Browns the best chance to win is a simple product of the fact that he hasn't been given much of a chance to show anything. That may have been perfectly understandable last season, even if you disregard Anderson's late season struggles, but this season is far different. There have been several situations in which using Quinn would have been highly advisable. But since Crennel continued the insanity of trying the same thing in the same way hoping for a better result we'll never know what kind of chance Quinn might give the team to win.

It's starting to look like Savage is losing interest in Quinn at the expense of Anderson, which is strange given how much Savage gave up to get Quinn in the first place. If nothing else, Savage is proving to be a conveniently agile and fickle judge of talent.

Savage may have tried to calm the waters, as he often does with these intermittent media events. But as the team continues to founder it seems his

efforts are far more geared toward pulling a few more skeptical bodies through a looking glass that is become ever more warped. It's no wonder that virtually no one in Cleveland is celebrating a victory over a certifiably awful team like Cincinnati. It's about as fulfilling as beating the St. Louis Rams at this point, or roughly as fulfilling as another Savage press conference.