The drumbeat is starting to grow louder for the Browns to part ways with head coach Romeo Crennel. So much so that even Bud Shaw woke up and jumped on the bandwagon. We've been beating this drum here at The Cleveland Fan for years now. In Gary's latest, he talks about the likely end of the Crennel era, and if the head strong Phil Savage would be able to co-exist with a Bill Cowher, the overwhelming favorite amongst Browns fans to become the team's next head coach.

The Cleveland Browns gave their fans a lot to dislike in the last week and everyone I'm sure has their own list. For me, the fact that they gave up nearly 1,000 yards of offense to two teams that aren't exactly reincarnations of the 2006 Indianapolis Colts tells you pretty much everything there is to know about the state of the franchise. It was the most yards any Cleveland Browns team has ever given up in two straight games. That's ever as in ever.

When you're team has sunk to that kind of level, it's hardly a surprise that the drumbeat is starting to grow louder for the Browns to part ways with head coach Romeo Crennel. Bud Shaw of the Plain Dealer is on record. So, too, now is Patrick McManamom of the Akron Beacon Journal. The News-Herald's Jeff Schudel is a reluctant hold out although even he admits it's getting more difficult to defend the coach who puts that product on the field each week.

Of course it's nice to finally have some company. Nearly two years ago, in my first column for TheClevelandFan.com , I wrote the following:

If there is one thing we can tell by now, it's when a coach is on the verge of getting

canned. The results are clear on the field and in the locker room. Players fighting, airing grievances in public, playing without passion or inspiration. Those are the telltale signs of a coach who's lost control. The signs were there long before the University of Miami finally pulled the plug on head coach Larry Coker just as they were there long before Ohio State pulled the plug on John Cooper. And only a fool would try to deny the signs on this Cleveland Browns team.

I may have underestimated general manager Phil Savage's commitment to Crennel, but as I sit here two years later, tell me exactly what's changed? In the last few weeks there has been in-fighting, players questioning the front office and its coaches, the front office questioning its players and a respected veteran running back who has publicly questioned the heart of this team, nine weeks into the season.

Crennel puts on the brave face but his abject honesty will ultimately be his downfall. Too often, his assessment of the team's performance underscores an alarming lack of insight into the pulse of the team. After the Denver loss, for example, Crennel said: "we have to figure out what we have to do defensively to play better in the second half." It was just the latest variation of a similar statement Crennel makes pretty much each week.

Perhaps even more damning is that nearly everyone else watching can tell him why this team can't perform. There's an offensive line that has stopped opening holes. There is the head coach's steadfast decision to stick with quarterback Derek Anderson all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. There's the uncontrolled massive ego of Braylon Edwards who would rather channel Ricardo Montalban than Jerry Rice. There's Kellen Winslow and all the demons in his head that he can't keep under control. There's a defense playing a scheme without the talent to execute it. There's a defensive backfield being patrolled by rookies that are still a few seasons away from respectability and veterans who likely wouldn't start for any other team. There's the incredibly bad clock management, week after week. There's the questionable decisions, from when to kick a field goal to when to accept or decline a penalty, that pop up nearly every week. There's the team that takes the field each week ill-prepared for the challenges it will face. Should I go on?

But of course these aren't things that have just emerged in the last few weeks. They've been there all along. Some you can lay blame on an insecure general manager who seems to take advice only from those who will agree with him. But too much can be laid at the feet of a head coach who spent a long career as an assistant mainly because virtually every other front office in the league, except the one in Cleveland, knew he wasn't head coach material.

The case for Crennel has never been an easy one to make. At most, his supporters will point to his honesty and integrity. Good traits, certainly, and something that are 1 and 1A on the list of key traits for any leader. But it takes far more. What else is there? The only other trait that even Phil Savage has been able to identify is that Crennel brings stability. To this day, I still don't know what that means. Any head coach brings stability until he's been let go, so it's not so much a trait as it is a state of being.

Taking Savage at his word that stability is a trait, like the other positives with regard to Crennel they haven't translated to sustainable on-field success. Crennel has never been able to transfer the respect he commands into performance on the field. Because of his background he's much too deferential to assistants who don't deserve the leeway they've been given. He has no idea how to pull out the best from a player, how to take someone with modest talent and turn him into a force and how to take someone with real talent and get him to consistently perform at the highest level.

Perhaps the reason Savage can't see Crennel's shortcomings stems from an inability by Savage to understand what traits really make a great head coach. Savage's own strengths run toward the player evaluation side. As the last few weeks have demonstrated, he's an extremely poor manager himself who likes to think otherwise. In that context, it doesn't surprise that he has little idea what makes a great head coach.

It doesn't have to be that hard. All Savage really needs to do is compile a list of the traits of some of the great NFL coaches, past and present. He'll see some

common threads. Passion. Preparation. Attention to detail. The ability to make tough decisions as soon as they need to be made. The ability to see two moves ahead instead of just reacting to what's taking place at the moment. An ability to find the pressure points of each individual player and to push them when they need to be pushed and to also take your finger off the button at the right time. Should I go on?

If you're thinking, like me, that most of that defines Bill Cowher, the former Pittsburgh Steelers head coach, it's not by accident. Cowher would be the overwhelming choice of a fan base transitioning from disgruntled to indifferent so it's worth asking whether Cowher should have a future in Cleveland.

That's a no-brainer, except where Savage is concerned. Simply put, Cowher has been far too successful and is far too strong of a personality for a guy like Savage to handle. Savage likes his coaches compliant. Take the players I give you and figure out how to win with them. The next time I ask your opinion about a player will be the first time.

Cowher would have none of that. His long and successful run and the easy life of retirement put him in the enviable position of being able to pick and choose his spots. Ask yourself this: if you were Cowher would you work for Savage? Frankly, the only way Cowher lands is Cleveland is with many, many millions of owner Randy Lerner's money and the freedom to assert his authority beyond just what happens each Sunday. That isn't going to happen with Savage here. Savage's contract wouldn't allow it and Savage's ego couldn't handle it.

Assuming that Lerner takes his usual laissez-faire approach to the Browns this off-season, Savage probably sticks around. If that's the case, Crennel may go but in his place will be essentially another Crennel, either a lifelong assistant just happy to have the chance or a college head coach with mostly modest success. If you're thinking that Iowa's Kirk Ferentz fits that description, it's not by accident.

Looking back at Thursday's game, it wasn't just that the Browns' defense was overmatched. They lacked any semblance of professionalism. It reflected poorly on Crennel in the first instance and Savage ultimately. It's probably why Savage, assuming he stays, will be forced to part with Crennel. A coach like Ferentz would bring a different vibe, but that's about it. Given as much latitude as any head coach in the college ranks, Ferentz hasn't ever been able to find anything more than intermittent success. In other words, he'll be the perfect hire for Savage.