There is no question about it, Shaun Rogers is having an amazing season. However, the Browns once again have one of the worst rush defenses in all of football, yielding an amazing 150 yards per game on the ground and 4.7 yards per carry. And over the last three seasons, the Browns rush defense has gotten worse, and the tackling has gotten poorer. Gary says that the buck stops with Romeo Crennel, a point that is hard to argue.

If you were confused by Cleveland Browns head coach Romeo Crennel's press conference on Tuesday then you now have a better idea of what it's like to play for him and sit through a meeting.

In one breath, several actually, Crennel had to admit was obvious to everyone: his defense isn't any good. Sure, he admitted it in the context of a defense that looked like it had taken tackling lessons from the Vassar flag football team, but it was an admission all the same. In another breath, several actually, Crennel sang the praises of nose tackle Shaun Rogers, saying again that Rogers is having an amazing season.

The problem is that the internal inconsistency of the two statements never seemed to have occurred to Crennel.

Maybe it's possible for the nose tackle on one of the league's worst defenses to actually be having a Pro Bowl caliber season, as some including Crennel have suggested, but for now the only thing that is certain is that Rogers' ability stands out mostly because of the lack of same by those who surround him.

This isn't to suggest that Rogers and even Corey Williams haven't been welcome

additions to the Browns, or even that Rogers isn't having a good season. But the truth is that his impact has been minimal.

The problem plaguing this team for years, a problem Crennel was brought in specifically to fix, has been its inability to stop the run.

In 2006, the Browns were 29th in the league against the run, giving up 142 yards a game and 4.4 yards per attempt.

In 2007, their statistics were slightly better but they hardly improved.

The Browns' defense was 27th against the run, yielding 129.5 yards per game and 4.5 yards per attempt.

Enter Williams and Rogers. Yet following the Buffalo Bills' game on Monday night, the Browns' rush defense once again finds itself in very familiar territory. They are 28th in the league, yielding an amazing 150 yards per game on the ground and 4.7 yards per carry.

Based purely on these statistics, how exactly can anyone conclude that Rogers, or anyone on the defense for that matter, is having a monster year let alone having any impact on the defense?

The Bills game was particularly telling. Entering the game, the Bills were 28th in the league in rushing.

It was hardly a case of an indestructible force confronting an

immovable object.

All the game proved is that when bad rushing faces bad defense, bet on the bad rushing.

After the game the Bills improved their ranking by four places and now find themselves 24th.

Now, going from 28th to 24th may not be particularly meaningful when neither ranking is all that impressive in the first place, but the fact that one of the league's worst rushing teams, featuring a running back who didn't have a 100-yard rushing game in his career until Monday night, could literally run right through the Browns' defense is all the proof anyone needs that Crennel's supposed status as a defensive genius is as inflated as Charlie Weis' status as the savior of Notre Dame football.

Crennel isn't wrong when he observes that Rogers is clogging the middle and usually occupying more than one offensive lineman. But isn't that just

another way of Crennel saying that the other 10 bodies on defense can't seem to handle the rest of the opposing team's offense even though they now have them outnumbered?

In that context is it any wonder that Rogers' stands out and that Crennel has trouble connecting the dots?

Crennel can gush all he wants about how Rogers' push allows the Browns to drop more players into coverage. But having more mediocre players available for coverage Monday night against a team with a quarterback literally wetting himself at the thought of having to throw downfield doesn't seem all that necessary. Once the Bills' Edwards was intercepted for the third time in Monday night's first quarter, the Bills ceased to have any lateral throwing game.

Nearly every pass from that point on until Edwards' last pass was a simple screen or swing pass at or behind the line of scrimmage.

In response, the Browns' defense was in fact crowding the line of scrimmage for three quaters, which was the right move, and still couldn't solve a running back duo in Marshawn Lynch and Fred Jackson that isn't exactly the reincarnation of Jim Kiick and Larry Csonka, let alone Kevin Mack and Earnest Byner.

This is where the tackling part comes in. Assuming for the sake of further argument that Rogers was indeed clogging the middle of the line like a beast how was it that Lynch and Jackson still found more than enough space to run up 186 yards on the ground?
What about the additional 58 yards Lynch got catching 10 passes at the line of scrimmage? The answer lies in the defense's inability to execute the most fundamental aspect of defense imaginable, tackling.

Crennel said that he and the coaching staff continue

to emphasize tackling though he admitted that it's a little late in the season to practice it. If there's one thing I'm with on Crennel it's this:

there's no reason a team of professional football players 10 games into the season need to practice tackling.

They've been doing it since pee wee football.

If the average defensive player is 25 years of age, that means that he's been practicing tackling every summer and fall for the last 17 or so years.

If he can't tackle by now, how in the name of Phil Savage is he going to learn now and how did he get signed in the first place?

The reality is that tackling, like rebounding in basketball, is far more about effort than technique. I f you want to measure a team's intensity, particularly early in a game, watch how it tackles.

A player that isn't tackling well is just another way of saying that his effort isn't there.

That's why it's hard to discount what both Jamal Lewis and Josh Cribbs said last week about certain players quitting.

Usually when a player makes that accusation he isn't necessarily talking about one individual or another. What he's referring to is the lack of effort that his teammates are giving on each and every play. When Denver receivers were running essentially unmolested on the Browns' defense two weeks ago it wasn't hard to conclude that the effort wasn't there. When Lynch and Jackson were running essentially unmolested on the Browns' defense Monday night, it wasn't hard to conclude that the effort wasn't there either.
The Browns can celebrate Monday night's win all they want, but if they are being honest with themselves they know that but for the suddenly golden leg of Phil Dawson and the suddenly tin leg

of Rian Lindell the outcome would have been different.

Any win in the NFL may be a good win but a win doesn't necessarily right every ship either.

At this point in the season, it's hard to express much more outrage over a team that fundamentally lacks effort. It's been obvious in the results each week. But to the extent that the shortcomings of Crennel need to be further chronicled, feel free to add the inability to instill professionalism to whatever list you're maintaining.

It's nice to see Crennel offering praise to a player like Rogers. And maybe Rogers really is having a legitimately great season, a year in which he deserves to go to the Pro Bowl. But unless and until the front office decides to find a coach who can actually get the rest of the players around Rogers to step up their effort and start

tackling the player in the different color jersey with the ball tucked into his side, it's going to be hard for anyone else to notice, or care.