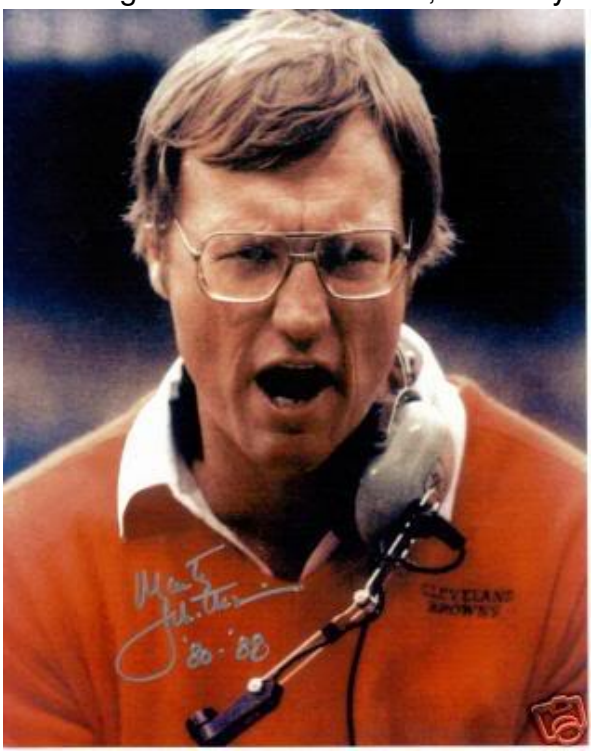
"There's a gleam, men! There's a gleam! Let's get that gleam!" Marty, Cowher, Billick, Andy Reid, Steve Spagnuolo. The Romeo Crennel replacement talk is in full swing, and Hiko gives our readers his thoughts on all of these candidates in this week's Browns Outsider. Hiko also spends a good chunk of this piece talking about the NFL Draft, and very little of it talking about last week's loss to the Texans.



A View From The Cheap Seats
Week 11- Cleveland vs Houston

This is what we like to refer to as a "necessary evil".

Despite the fact that little fun can be gleaned from an exercise of attrition - such as Sunday was - it was an essential component in sealing the fate of one Romeo A. Crennel.

He has guaranteed his departure. He slit his own throat. He stuffed his pants with nitroglycerin and did the twist. He jumped from the plane with a napkin-sized parachute.

He's done in Cleveland. Nothing he can do can save him at this point. He'd be gone already if there were even a decent interim candidate.

Not only did the team play with all the inspiration of a seasick crocodile, but Romeo, who earlier that week had deemed Brady Quinn OK to play - even with a broken finger - then yanked him entering the 4th Quarter, throwing Derek Anderson back into the mix for a "spark", with predictable result.

This smacked of utter desperation and hypocrisy and confusion for so many reasons.

A - You ever remember Romeo yanking DA? DA would suck out loud for weeks on end and Romeo wouldn't pull him. DA could've thrown rocks at old women in the stands and masturbated in the huddle and Romeo would've let it go. Do you think that the Houston game was the first time a game was still winnable late and the team needed a "spark"? Hell no! But Quinn, in his 3rd game ever, throws 2 picks and he gets the hook.

Christ, imagine if Anderson got benched every time he threw 2 picks. He'd never finish a game.

Yes, Quinn was injured. But that wasn't why Romeo pulled him, so I discount that excuse. Romeo pulled him because he was desperate to win and didn't know what else to do.

Too bad Romeo wasn't "desperate to win" earlier this season. You know, when salvaging the season was still a realistic possibility. Which brings us to...

B - How do you let things get to this level before you start trying to make changes? Everything Romeo is doing screams "too little, too late". And it's on such an embarrassingly public stage, you almost feel bad for Romeo as he flops his way toward unemployment.

But he's got no one to blame but himself. Sure, Chud's playcalling has blown field mice this season, and Tucker's Defensive schemes have become increasingly passive, but, in the end, Romeo is responsible for their performance too. Not to mention that personnel issues are Romeo's call, and he kept DA in there far too long, and he still isn't getting Jerome Harrison in there nearly enough. The clock management, the misuse of Time Outs, the indecision, the lack of focus, fire, and motivation... these are all on Crennel's head. Which just shows you that...

C - He's lost the team. If a coach loses the team, his job is forfeit. Job requirement #1 of Head Coaching in the NFL is leading the team.

Sure, the players like Uncle Romeo, but they don't respect him. They know there's no retribution for their actions or performance (unless they should publicly humiliate the GM). They know they won't

get benched unless someone from the ivory tower forces it. And they also know, just like the rest of us do, that Romeo is history. There's no reason for them to play hard for him - he's the walking dead, a zombie. They're just playing out the string to get to the offseason and hopefully some massive changes.

They like Romeo, but not enough to join him on the plank.

And that's what he's walking. The embarrassing game against the Texans was a microcosm of the entire season, and it ended with the home crowd - those that remained - chanting for Cowher.

No matter how slow the Browns' brass is, I guarantee that they got the message loud and clear. If they were wavering in their decision beforehand, they aren't now.

It's over, sports fans. Romeo Crennel's time as Head Coach of the Cleveland Browns will last 5 more games. 5 games with a lame duck coach, disinterested players, and Derek Anderson back at QB.

I haven't been this excited since I noticed I had ear hair.

First Quarter

Dieses Spiel ist nicht wert durchlebt noch mal.

End of 1st: Oilers 7, Browns 0.

Second Quarter

Este juego no vale la pena volver a la vida.

Halftime: Oilers 13, Browns 6.

Third Quarter

Ce jeu n'est pas la valeur revit.

End of 3rd: Oilers 16, Browns 6.

Fourth Quarter

This game is not worth re-living.

Final: Oilers 16, Browns 6.

Offensive MVP: Kevin Mack. His power running style started paying big dividends late in the game, and he's just got a nose

for the Goal Line.

Defensive MVP: Michael Dean Perry. He's a big reason the Browns are so stout against the run, and is really an underrated pass rusher. His pressure on Warren Moon kept the Browns in this game until the end.

Conclusion

~~~How ‘bout them Cavs?

~~~I've come up with a new script idea, and I will throw it out there for all of you.

It's *A Christmas Carol* with zombies.

It ain't be copyrighted. Fire away. If you can write the script better (or quicker) than me, then more power to you.

I haven't decided yet how the beginning or middle should go. But I can see the end. Scrooge comes out before an army of zombies, draws two automatic rifles slung to his back, and starts blowing away. The zombies - all the zombies - go

down as their brains get blown out. Brains, brains, and more brains. The snow runs sno-cone red. I want the camera covered with mangled foam latex and red karo syrup.

Then Scrooge stares at the gory twitching mass, tucks his guns back in their holsters, and says "*God bless us, every one* ."

It's A Wondeful Life ain't got nothin' on that.

~~~I'm still shaking my head about the Quinn benching. The season's over, and you're benching the one guy that the team REALLY needs to see play. Obviously, he was having
~~~

a bad game, but benching Brady Quinn when he's playing like DA to bring in the original DA? Brilliant move.

~~~Quinn's first pick was a terrible throw. Either he didn't see the Houston defender, or he didn't get enough loft on the
~~~

pass. But the second pick - that one is on Braylon Edwards. When you run a slant route, it is imperative that the Receiver get the inside position on the Corner. No slant route in the history of mankind has worked without that aspect. No QB in the history of Earth has completed a slant pass when the WR has just given up on the route.

Braylon's attempt at running that route wasn't even good enough to be described as half-hearted. It was quarter-hearted. He might as well have caught the ball and handed it to the defender. He just let the Corner have a free run at the ball. Either he didn't know it was a slant route, or he didn't have enough energy to actually try.

~~~In all fairness, a number of DA's interceptions were resultant from Braylon's carelessness as well.

Not to mention all the drive-killing drops. He's up to, what? - 18? 20? He had a bunch in this game alone.
~~~

Watching him try to catch the ball is like watching Shaq shoot free throws. Every once in a while, one goes in.

Braylon Edwards has lost his damn mind.

He is such a freakin' head case at this point that it might finally be beneficial to sit him down.

Lots of people have touted trading him, but I think that's just foolishness. Who takes his place? Stallworth is gone after this year (thank Buddha). You gonna start Syndric Steptoe and Lance Leggett? Not to mention that a man of Braylon's size and speed is a rare combination. If he could revert to 2007 form, I'm sure everyone would be cool with him staying.

Essentially, you aren't gonna get comparable value in return for Braylon even if you did trade him, especially if he does get his head back on straight. And the huge hole that losing him leaves in the lineup... it would require being filled by a high draft pick or expensive free agent, a pick or cap space that could otherwise go toward shoring up the multitude of other holes.

Why create a new hole when there's already so many to fill?

Hey, I wanna smack Braylon in the chops with a komodo dragon as much as you, but let's not cut off our nipples to spite our breasts.

~~~Braylon's struggles have wreaked havoc upon the Browns' Offense, but I blame the coaching staff for this as much as anyone else. Remember the first game that Quinn played against the Broncos? He was efficient with his check downs, but Braylon only got one catch. *Oh my God* !, screamed the masses, *Quinn needs to get Braylon more involved* !
~~~

So now it looks like everyone is going out of its way to get Braylon involved, to the detriment of the team.

Here's a breakdown of how many times Receivers were targeted: *Edwards - 16, Winslow - 6, Stallworth - 4, Lewis - 2, Steptoe - 2, Wright - 2, Cribbs - 1, Harrison - 1, Heiden - 1, Vickers - 1*
. That's 16 attempts to Braylon,

20 to the entire rest of the team. And of those 16 balls to Braylon, only 5 ended up as completions.

Why the disparity? I will agree with all that Stallworth has been useless, but you kinda have to throw the ball in his direction for him to matter. He only has 12 receptions all year. Steptoe has 14. Cribbs has just 2! They are over-targeting

Braylon.

There is no doubt that Edwards is probably the Browns' best weapon, but there are other players on this team, and if Braylon is targeted this much and isn't having a good season, then the Offense sinks with him. This is especially the case when Derek Anderson is at QB, because he has eyes almost solely for BE. 8 of his 14

passes went to Braylon, and he was rewarded - as he has been rewarded all year - with the dropsies.

Derek Anderson does not do a good job of reading the whole field, instead focusing on one or two guys. If those guys aren't able to make the play for him, then he fails. As Braylon Edwards goes, so does Derek Anderson.

Quinn sent 8 of 18 passes at Braylon, which is probably too much as well. There are too many weapons on this Offense to be forcing a guy to "get more involved". Look at a team like New Orleans. They lost their #1 Receiver Marcus Colston for most of the season and Jeremy Shockey has been a non-factor. Yet, Drew Brees still manages to throw for 500 yards a game, making household names out of Receivers that the Browns cut

from their Practice Squad long ago.

Why? Offensive design combined with a QB that knows how to take what the Defense is giving him and find the open man. It doesn't matter what number the Receiver is wearing. A TD pass to Joe Schmoe counts just as much as a TD pass to Da Star.

You saw something similar happen when Winslow was out - the QB could no longer solely target KW, so he had to throw it to whomever was open.

Another reason to get Braylon out of there for a little while, because these guys need to learn that they don't have to apply for the Edwards bailout program play after freakin' play. That'll give Braylon some

spare time to go see Nurse Ratched and see if she can't up his electro-shock wattage.

Or give him that lobotomy he's been needing.

~~~How ‘bout them Cavs?
~~~

~~~ Romeo Crennel announced in a press conference this week that Brady Quinn is his starting QB for the 2009 season. Which caused everyone in the room to laugh.

&quot;*What, on Madden*?&quot
~~~

; chortled Tony Grossi.

~~~I do agree that the QB needs to be determined prior to Training Camp opening next season. No QB competition. No controversy, no side-taking, no-melodrama. After the season, choose one. Send the
~~~

other packing for some draft picks.

I don't even care which one it is. Personally, I think that DA stands for Death Arrived, but if he's the Browns QB, then I support him. But one of them has to go. We can't do this shit again next year.

~~~Who will be making that decision? Browns Owner Randy Lerner emerged from his cave long enough to hold a press conference of his own. People have been calling for him to be more vocal, or even to sell the team, which I find to be reactionary.
~~~

The owner's job is this: Be rich enough to foot the bills, hire the right people, and get the hell out of the way. Lerner has done a fine job at accomplishing the last point, and he certainly has the dough to pull off the first. It's that middle thing that's the big question mark.

If you truly want this to become an unbridled cluster-spork,

then, yeah, have Randy Lerner sell the Browns to a new owner. That will blow it up sky high. I don't think we've reached the point of complete obliteration.

And will this new owner have the cash reserves to be a true player in the league, or will he end up being the NFL version of the Dolans? Lerner has the cash and then some, and he's willing to spend it. He just

needs to spend it on the right people.

Anyhoo, cognizant of the calls for him to be more vocal, Randy showed up to talk, saying basically... nothing. He was non-committal in all areas. But, if one were pressed to try and read between the lines, I'd have to say that it sounded like Romeo is gone (duh), but Phil Savage will get one more

chance.

When asked about Savage's future, he said, "*What you do is you weigh, as with anybody, strengths and weaknesses. I think Phil recruits as aggressively as anybody could ever ask a guy to do, and as thorough as anybody could ask, and I think we've been the beneficiary of those skills, that determination*

and that commitment. I think you've got to cut the guy some slack. He has stayed as committed as ever to doing what he does and those responsibilities do cut across a wide variety of roles, and they're difficult roles. Obviously the demands of player and talent and future talent evaluation, contracts, and other roles in the building. I think he is capable of doing the job ."

Sounds like an endorsement (sorta) to me.

I'm mixed on how I feel about that. I think that Phil does a good job scouting, and the roster is certainly more talented than when he arrived. But he's so bad at public relations and player relations and media relations... I've said before and I'll say again that he needs someone to take those

responsibilities from him.

And there's the possibility that certain Head Coach candidates might demand full personnel control. Would Phil be able to step back from his former power to accommodate these (this) coaches?

I'm on the fence about it, but I

guess I could live with Phil coming back for another shot. If he does, it is imperative that he succeed in all 3 of the following areas:

1. Move Quinn or Anderson. Having both of them back to start 2009 is just incompetent, because it shows that you can't evaluate QB talent and don't trust your own judgment.

2. Succeed in supplementing

the depth through Free Agency.

3. Make the right decisions/moves in the draft to secure a franchise Middle Linebacker.

Oh, and get the Head Coach right. Yeah, that might be important.

~~~Who are the Head Coaching candidates? Many of you out there, myself included, feel that this team needs a coach with NFL experience and a record of success. Here's a list of Super Bowl winning coaches that will not be employed as a Head Coach for another team come July 2009:
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Brian Billick, Bill Cowher, Dick Vermeil, Mike Holmgren, Jimmy Johnson, Barry Switzer, George Seifert, Joe Gibbs, Bill Parcells, Mike Ditka, John Madden, Tom Flores, Don Shula.

To address those that I dismiss out of hand - *Vermeil*, too old, *Holmgren*
, not going to come to Cleveland,

Johnson
, definitely not coming to Cleveland,
Switzer
, uh no,
Seifert
, done,
Gibbs
, done,
Parcells
, busy with his other job,
Ditka
, done,
Madden
, way busy with his other job,

Flores
, done,
Shula
, lost too much weight on Nutrisystem.

That leaves:

Brian Billick - This self-proclaimed genius did lead his team to a title, but, as an

Offensive guru, never once fielded a decent Offense in Baltimore the entire time he was there. He leaves, a rookie steps in, and they look just as good as they ever did. Plus, he's irritating and arrogant as all get-out. Really, his only redeemable quality is his Coors Light commercials.

Bill Cowher - The candidate du jour. He's supposedly already

bought houses in Strongsville, had dinner in Parma, and opened an account at the Blockbuster in Independence. His history of continued success and team discipline makes him the most attractive contender of them all. It would bring instant credibility to the franchise, and would scare the shit out of the Yinzers.

However, Pittsburgh also

doesn't seem to miss Cowher, and bringing him in would probably entail giving him full personnel control, which may or may not involve the exodus of Phil Savage. While dumping Phil is a small price to pay to get Cowher, the former Steeler coach has never had full personnel control before, and just giving it to him carte blanche makes me a little wary.

Here are some other candidates that have had NFL experience/success:

Marty Schottenheimer - The sentimental choice of those that remember the glory days of the late ‘80's and want a rapid return. Despite always choking in the playoffs, Marty's teams consistently at least get there, which also would be an improvement over our current

situation.

Andy Reid - Assuming Philly gives him the boot, Reid has a good track record. However, he seems burnt out to me. I think this guy needs a year or two off to re-charge the batteries before he can be effective again.

Steve Mariucci - I like Mooch, but am very ambivalent about

having him as a Head Coach. His last stint trying to turn around a losing franchise did not end well, and that's exactly what he'd be taking on if he came here.

Jim Fassel - I have no interest in anyone who is so stupid as to be actively campaigning for the Raiders job.

Mike Martz - I have no interest in anyone who is named Mike Martz.

Dan Reeves - Time is not on his side.

Then we get into the hot coordinators:

Josh McDaniels (Offensive, New England) - He's from Canton, so he's obviously brilliant. He's studied under The Genius (although the last 2 coordinators under Belichick that went on to Head Coaching didn't light the world on fire). He comes from a coaching family. And maybe the most impressive thing on his resume is how he turned Matt Cassel from Matt Cassel into Tom Brady. His youth is his only drawback.

Steve Spaguolo (Defensive, NYG) - Well, he is enticing. He's done a lot in the last 12 months, much of which is to be admired. His only drawback is that he favors the 4-3, and that means overhaul.

Rex Ryan (Defensive, Baltimore) - His Defense is impressive, but it was the same for the coordinators before him, Mike Nolan and Marvin Lewis,

both whom went on to mediocrity as Head Coaches. Maybe it's the system and the players, and not the brilliance of the coordinators. Nonetheless, he has been successful at what he has done, and he comes from Coaching stock.

Jason Garrett (Offensive, Dallas) - He ain't leaving Dallas. If it looked like he might, then Wade Phillips would be

unemployed the next day.

Jim Schwartz (Defensive, Tennessee) - I don't know much about this guy, but he works for Jeff Fisher - maybe the best coach in the NFL - and his Defense is just *awesome*
. How bad could he be?

Brian Schottenheimer (Offensive, NYJ) - He's done quite a nice job introducing Brett Favre into the Jets Offense this season, and his last name sure won't hurt around here, either.

Leslie Frazier (Defensive, Minnesota) - He was fired by the Cincinnati Bengals. That is not a glowing endorsement. Do you know what it takes to get

fired by the Bengals? You have to be caught eating the corpse of the person you just murdered. And then they *still* might hire you back.

Russ Grimm (Offensive Line, Arizona) - People have been mentioning him for years, and I'm not sure why. The Cardinals can't run block worth a damn, and he's never even

been a coordinator. He has no body of work. Why do people automatically think he can be a Head Coach? Because he's fat and has a mustache?

I think you're psycho if you want a college coach to come to the NFL and expect him to be successful - that's how different the college game has become from the pro game. But there's always a coach or two out there

that you can't help but be enticed by:

Urban Meyer (Florida) - Because of his instant success everywhere he's gone, people can't help but wonder. Plus, he's an Ohio boy.

Pete Carroll (USC) - He would be insane to leave SoCal, since

he has a job for life and a recruiting monopoly, but should he lose his mind and decide to head to the NFL, he's one of the few with NFL Head Coaching experience, and the only college coach I would personally consider.

Kirk Ferentz (Iowa) - His name gets brought up a lot because of his association with Phil Savage and his NFL ties, which

go back to the 90's Cleveland Browns. I think he's doing a decent job in Iowa, but going from the backside of the Big 10 to the NFL is... uh... too big a jump.

Butch Davis (North Carolina) - Heh heh. At least I amuse myself.

If I were to have to choose the ones that I'd be satisfied with, in no special order I'd go with: Cowher, Marty, Josh McDaniels, Schwartz, Ryan, and the younger Schottenheimer.

~~~ How ‘bout them Cavs?
~~~

Draft Update

Well, even though they lost, the Browns keep miserable company, and were unable to move up any from # 11 due to the shared incompetence of those around them.

This week, we're using footballsfuture.com

, and this is their Top 10 as of 11/26/08:

1. Detroit - Matthew Stafford, QB, Georgia

2. Kansas City - Andre Smith, OT, Alabama

3. Cincinnati - Chris Wells, RB, Ohio St.

4. St. Louis - Michael Oher, OT, Ole Miss

5. Seattle - Michael Crabtree, WR, Texas Tech

6. San Francisco - Malcolm Jenkins, DB, Ohio St.

7. Oakland - Brian Orapko, DE, Texas

8. Houston - Taylor Mays, S, USC

9. San Diego - Rey Maualuga, ILB, USC

10. Jacksonville - Eugene Monroe, OT, Virginia

Beanie Wells at # 3? Uhhhh... OK. Don't get me wrong - I like Wells. But I think # 3 overall is a little too way too high.

So here's who the Browns were given at #11:

Cleveland - Vontae Davis, CB, Illinois

From the outset of the draft, the Browns have been trying to find a way to land one of the corners available. As it works out, Davis is still on the

board and they couldn't be happier.

Just like last week when the Browns were taking Malcolm Jenkins, I'm cool with this selection. I might even like it better - I think Davis might be a little more skilled than Jenkins.

If Maualuga does indeed drop as far as # 9, I'd hope that Savage would actively explore moving up to get him. Another LB we should be paying attention to who is starting to get a lot of love is Aaron Curry, Wake Forest. Here's what Football's Future had to say about him:

In his first season on the field for the Demon Deacons, Curry earned Freshman All America honors after tallying 45 tackles, 7.5 f or loss, and one sack. His numbers almost doubled across the board as a sophomore, finishing the year with 83 tackles, 8.5 for loss, three sacks and an interception. Curry's junior year was his best to date however. He earned All ACC honors after posting career

highs of 99 tackles, 13.5 for loss, three sacks, and four interceptions. Three of those picks were returned for touchdowns.

Strengths

Curry is a complete linebacker prospect. He has the size, speed, strength, and

instincts to be an impact defender at the next level. Curry has good size and active stopping the run. He will weed through the traffic to get to the ball carrier and make the play. Curry's best trait may be his ability in coverage. He has the athleticism and speed to cover, but it is his awareness and ball skills that make him special. He has picked off five passes the past two years,

and is a factor in this area. He is one of the better linebackers in coverage available this year, and his all around skills give him the versatility to play in a 4-3 or 3-4 defense.

Weaknesses

Curry is such a good player

all around, it is hard to really tear apart his game. He could use his hands a little better getting off blocks at times, but that is technique that most college players do not attain until they get pro coaching. He also may not be the freak athlete with blazing speed to warrant a top ten selection, but that is just criticizing to criticize.

Future

Aaron Curry is part of a deep linebacker class that could produce a number of special players. He is as good as any on the outside and has the versatility to fill a lot of roles for his team in the league. He has the look of a first round pick and another solid season will only solidify that ranking.

It may just be that I am completely and utterly Linebacker-starved, but I just raised an eyebrow in sudden interest.

Next Up

~~~The Indianapolis Colts
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Offense: PTS - 22.5 (21st), YDS - 328.4 (17th), PASS YDS - 249.5 (6th), RUSH YDS - 78.9 - (32nd)

Defense: PTS - 22.2 (15th), YDS - 333.9 (18th), PASS YDS - 197.1 (12th), RUSH YDS - 136.8 (25th)

I don't give a good goddam what these numbers say. Indy has won 4 in a row, including victories against New England at home and Pittsburgh and San Diego on the road.

They cannot win the division, but they have enough veterans that they know what it will take to win

a Wildcard, and they are peaking. Against the abomination that is the Browns, they will not lose focus.

Remember the song *Novem ber Rain*
by Guns N Roses? Well, use that as a metaphor.

Colts 45, Browns 14.