He never won the big one. He never even played for the big one. That tagline might follow Marty Schottenheimer around for the rest of his days. His failure to get a team to the Super Bowl in 21 NFL head coaching seasons is the most famously infamous line on his resume. But Marty has some very redeeming qualities as well. And has consistently taken teams with little talent and made them winners wherever he has been. Erik Cassano talks Marty in his latest piece for us.

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That tagline might follow Marty Schottenheimer around for the rest of his days. His failure to get a team to the Super Bowl in 21 NFL head coaching seasons is the most famously infamous line on his resume.

The fact that during his tenure coaching the Browns, he presided over two of the most spectacular playoff flameouts in team history -- you know them as "The Drive" and "The Fumble" -- might cause you to proceed with caution when warming to the idea of giving the 65-year-old a second crack at resurrecting Cleveland professional football.

And to that, I say: If you're worried about what might happen should the Browns reach another AFC Championship Game, someone needs to check your garage for paint fumes. Give me The Drive and The Fumble any year over the decade-long procession of failure that has been the Cleveland Browns since 1999.

Rumor has it that Schottenheimer wants back in the coaching game, and he'd be interested in a second tenure with the Browns -- though he has vaguely denied an interest in a return to coaching on several occasions, most recently Thursday night on NFL Network.

Not that denials are to be 100 percent believed. Generally, money talks and other

stuff walks in the world of professional sports. Schottenheimer is likely no exception.

If Bill Cowher's allegiance to the the Rooney family and Steeler Nation is strong enough to withstand the gobs of cash Randy Lerner appears poised to throw at him after the season,
Schottenheimer
is a worthy (if nearly as expensive) Option 1A.

There is an overwhelming reason why: wins and losses. Schottenheimer has far more of the former than the latter.

Schottenheimer has a career 200-126-1 coaching record. In 21 seasons with the Browns, Chiefs, Redskins and Chargers, he's led a team to a losing record only twice. His teams have won double-digit games 11 times. He's won eight division titles.

Unlike Cowher, Schottenheimer's body of work can be judged outside of the context of one team. With few exceptions, he's won wherever he's gone.

He's won with quarterbacks ranging from Bernie Kosar to Steve DeBerg to Joe Montana, Steve
Bono
to Rich Gannon to Elvis
Grbac
, Drew
Brees
and Philip Rivers. He's won with running backs ranging from Kevin Mack and Earnest
Byner
to Christian
Okoye
, Barry Word, Marcus Allen and
LaDainian
Tomlinson
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Different players, different systems, different styles. Schottenheimer has adapted to his resources and kept winning.

The belief here is that Schottenheimer would be an excellent foundation-building coach for this Browns team, which has a decent amount of talent, but lacks discipline, fundamentals and a collective identity.

Schottenheimer is a coach who can step in and establish instant credibility with his players, something Romeo Crennel appears to have done only by playing the role of Mr. Nice Guy. Where players like Crennel personally, they'd be forced to respect someone like Schottenheimer. The respect factor is obviously absent from the current coach-player relationship in the Browns locker room, no matter how many players stick up for Crennel.

Schottenheimer would bring a dominant personality to the head coach's position, and a sense of law and order will likely follow. You don't last more than two decades as an NFL coach without being good at developing discipline in your players, eradicating mistakes and sloppy play, and getting everyone focused on a common set of goals.

Twenty-one seasons as a coach says Schottenheimer understands that in order to build an army, you need to build soldiers. Right now, the Browns are more like a ragtag militia.

Of course, there would be a catch to Marty's second tenure as Browns coach: It likely wouldn't last more than a few years. At 65, it's reasonable to wonder how much gas Schottenheimer has left in the tank. Three or four years of organization-building might be enough to drain the remaining juice out of Schottenheimer's engine.

That's why, should he be hired as Browns coach, Schottenheimer would need a very specific short-term goal: To turn the foundation of the Browns organization from quicksand to concrete. Schottenheimer would be called in to lay the framework for future success by reforming the team's football operations (which might or might not include the assistance of Phil Savage or another general manager), getting rid of the rampant fundamental

flaws currently plaguing the team on and off the field, and developing a well-defined team identity.

All the while, Schottenheimer would need to be developing a successor -- maybe son Brian, currently the offensive coordinator of the Jets. His successor could then hopefully build upon the foundation laid by Schotten heimer and turn the Browns into a perennial contender.

A great coaching system is what teams like Patriots and Steelers have, and what teams like the Browns need. And when you get right down to it, save for a rough-around-the-edges Bill Belichick, the last time a Browns coach developed anything resembling a successful system was Schottenheimer nearly 25 years ago.

The other major drawback to Schottenheimer is his checkered history with the management of teams he's worked for. Friction with Art Modell over a lack of an offensive coordinator paved his way out of Cleveland in 1988. Redskins owner Dan Snyder fired Schottenheimer after one season in Washington to make way for Steve Spurrier. Schottenheimer's relationship with Chargers president Dean Spanos was notoriously icy, and ultimately led to his firing after a 14-2 season in 2006.

In much the same way it would be difficult to envision Savage and Cowher coexisting for long, it would be difficult to envision Savage and Schottenheimer sharing space without stepping on each other's toes. Whose side you take would depend on whether you believe talent evaluation or coaching is more important to a team's success.

The most important quality the next Browns head coach can possess is a track record of success as an NFL head coach. It appears that Randy Lerner concurs on that point. But beyond that, it's time for Lerner to dig a bit deeper and look at how the success of his coaching candidates has been achieved.

A candidate from a successful organization does not always equal a successful hire. Carmen Policy, Dwight Clark, Chris Palmer, Butch Davis, Savage and Crenn el
have all proved that to greater and lesser degrees.
Cowher
has 15 seasons and 149 victories with the
Steelers
as his main selling point. But until he successfully runs a second NFL team, the eternal debate will rage on whether he was the generator or beneficiary of a rock-solid organization in Pittsburgh.

Viewed through that lens, Schottenheimer is something of a safer pick than Cowh er to
lead the Browns out of the doldrums. He developed perennial winners in three of his four NFL coaching stops, which means there is reason to believe he could once again develop the Browns into a winner -- or at the very least, do the dirty work of organizational muck removal.