At the moment and indeed at any moment, Randy Lerner seems fixated on making the combination of Eric Mangini, the former New York Jets head coach, and George Kokinis, the current director of pro personnel for the Baltimore Ravens the team to resurrect the franchise. Gary's worried about these potential selections, and gives our readers his thoughts on Mangini and Kokinis in his latest column.

Because Cleveland Browns owner Randy Lerner seems almost singularly obsessed with New England Patriots' head coach Bill Belichick at the moment, it's fair to pull out one of Belichick's stock phrases in assessing Lerner's general manager/head coach search thus far: I can only go by what I see. And what I see is troubling.

At the moment and indeed at any moment, Lerner seems fixated on making the combination of Eric Mangini, the former New York Jets head coach, and George Kokinis, the current director of pro personnel for the Baltimore Ravens the team to resurrect the franchise. It's not a coincidence that both have a direct connection back to Belichick and his time in Cleveland as if that represents some sort of golden era in Browns' history.

While there is some book on Mangini, Kokinis is mostly an unknown commodity. Mangini has that mythical head coaching experience that Lerner seems to believe that the fans crave, disregarding even the recent success of John Harbaugh in Baltimore or Tony Sparano in Miami.

Mangini wasn't exactly a huge success or an abject failure with the Jets. Like most head coaches, his results ended up depending heavily on the successes and failures of his front office. His ticket out of New York was effectively punched when the front office decided to bring in Brett Favre to supposedly put the Jets over the proverbial hump. It didn't work. Meanwhile Chad Pennington was cut. As it turned out, the Jets would have been far better served by doing exactly the opposite. So be it.

Kokinis currently toils as the director of pro personnel, which is a subtly but distinctly different job than the one Phil Savage held while in Baltimore, director of player personnel. Kokinis' focus is on the players already in the league. Savage, like others who share his old title, focus on the new blood from the college ranks. The relevance here is that while Kokinis was negotiating contracts and focusing on potential free agents, someone else in the Baltimore front office was focusing on the draft. If the thought is that Kokinis will singularly improve Savage's miserable record in the mid and late rounds of the draft, there's nothing to suggest that outcome. So be it.

To say at this juncture that either hire would be a disaster would be unfair. Frankly, there's no way to make those projections. Mangini seems far more organized than Romeo Crennel ever was but on the other hand his teams faded when they needed to step up. Sound familiar? Other than the fact that he's worked in a successful organization, Kokinis is mostly a blank slate.

I say mostly because there is one thing we do know about him and that is that he and Mangini are fast friends. They toiled in anonymity under the dictatorial rule of Belichick more than a decade ago which supposedly hardened their veneer and sharpened their football skills. Apparently Lerner feels that if Mangini is his Matt Damon then he needs to complete the team with Mangini's version of Ben Affleck in the person of Kokinis to ensure that he has a team in place that is for once on the same page.

Maybe.

What Lerner doesn't seem to have considered, which is amazing really, is the downside of one friend working for another. The world is full of friends who went in to business together only to end up as mortal enemies. Maybe the reason that Mangini and Kokinis are still such good friends has something to do with the fact that they work in different organizations.

Making this situation potentially even more volatile is the underlying process Lerner has employed to land on Kokinis as a legitimate candidate for the general manager position. If the various reports are true, then Lerner was overwhelmed by Mangini during his interview. It was Mangini in turn that recommended Kokinis as his "personnel guy" and the reason a guy not even on the radar screen a week ago has emerged as a top candidate. This means that if both are hired, Mangini will be the one who hand-picked his own boss.

If that doesn't sound like an uh oh in the making, particularly for a franchise that has experienced almost nothing but for the last 10 years, then you just aren't paying attention. Why is it that Lerner feels the semi-accomplished Mangini is worthy of having that sort of responsibility at this juncture? Is there an acute demand for Mangini's services at the moment?

Giving Mangini the power to pick his boss may not have been Lerner's original intention, but that's the outcome and letting the inmate pick the warden has all the earmarks of creating a paper warden. If there's one thing that everyone at this juncture understands, the Browns need someone strong at the top. Lerner isn't that person. Savage wasn't that person. Now Lerner stands on the precipice of bringing in someone who may be reluctant to butt heads with the underling most responsible for his elevation in the first place.

Ultimately, this is the problem I have with Lerner's thought process. If he goes through with what looks like the current plan then it serves as confirmation that he's reduced a relatively complex situation down to seemingly simple solutions.

It is absolutely true that Savage and Crennel weren't on the same page, but that has nothing to do with them not being best friends and everything to do with Savage's shortcomings as an administrator. More to the point, the distance in the relationship between the two at the end should serve as a cautionary note to Lerner.

Savage and Crennel did have a good relationship before Crennel was hired. In fact, it was Savage more than anyone who pushed for giving Crennel the head coaching opportunity that Savage felt was long overdue. Savage pushed for this hiring knowing full well Crennel's defensive philosophies. If not a direct endorsement of those philosophies it was at least reasonable to conclude that Savage was on board with them.

Yet it was Savage that basically deviated from the plan by drafting and otherwise stockpiling the team with defensive personnel ill-suited for the schemes being played. Maybe it was because Savage felt that there were higher priorities to serve, but that decision came with consequence.

But that's only part of the story. Crennel took the job knowing that Savage had final say over the roster. Crennel may have been desperate to prove his mettle as a head coach, but he accepted the job with full disclosure. In doing so he had to know that there was every possibility that Savage would fail him, which he did.

But that, too, is only part of the story. What ultimately drove these two in different directions are the inevitable conflicts that can arise between a boss and a subordinate, particularly when they are both in survival mode. The fact that Savage and Crennel were once close made no difference.

Lerner seems almost willing to take the same chance with a Mangini/Kokinis team, even though it is hardly necessary. We already know that Mangini has thrown one former friend in Belichick, a friend who gave him his start, under the bus when it was in his best interests to do so. Spygate doesn't happen without

Mangini's inside information. Who's to say that Mangini wouldn't act similarly toward Kokinis the minute Kokinis does something contrary to what Mangini perceives are his best interests at that moment? If/when that happens, what's Lerner's next move to counter the disruption that will cause?

Many have suggested that this is Lerner's last chance to hire the right team to lead the Browns. Hardly. As long as he continues to own the team he has the luxury of making as many mistakes as he wants, even if that's not his intent. And since we can assume it's not his intent to mess up this decision, the question remains why Lerner would ignore all the red flags flying in his face at the moment in order to be the first owner to hire a new coach. If this was a case of letting perfect be the enemy of good, it would be one thing. But this is more a case of letting a good be the enemy of a quick.