Gary checks in with his regular end of the work week look at all things Lingering, and starts this week's look at the Browns odds to win the 2009 Super Bowl, and what they mean. Gary also hiits on the Mussolini ... err ... Mangini press conference from this week, the current economic state of Major League Baseball, the Buckeyes 2009 recruting class, and the mass quantities of Steeler jersey-wearing Yinzer's that have invaded northeast Ohio.

Surprisingly they don't yet have the odds on who will win the coin toss

For those of you who think I never have anything positive to say about the Browns, this one's for you:

Sportsbook.com already has released their odds on teams winning next year's Super Bowl. Shockingly, the Browns aren't at the bottom. At 55-1, they are ahead of the Bengals, 49ers, Raiders, Rams, Lions and Chiefs.

That's an acknowledgement of sorts that there is some talent on this team.

The Browns' other two divisional rivals, the Steelers and the Ravens, fared much better. The Steelers are an early 10-1 to repeat while the Ravens are a mere 14-1. The Ball Boy's former team, the Jets, are a 25-1 favorite, far ahead of the Browns. Somewhere in there is a question to ponder.

I'm not a degenerate gambler looking for new and exciting ways to have someone separate me from my wallet, so these odds hold only fleeting interest to me. But even if they held great interest, you have to think that they'll undergo a fairly healthy makeover once the draft is complete and the bottom-feeding teams, like the Browns (oops, sorry), find still more creative ways to squander their picks.

That's why they are bottom-feeders in the first place (sorry, again).

But if you're inclined to do something with this there are some intriguing bets. For example, the 8-8 Chargers are a 12-1 favorite, only slightly worse than the Steelers and better than the Ravens.

Maybe they odds makers are banking on Norv Turner getting the boot as head coach.

The Cowboys are a 9-1 favorite, just behind the Patriots.

Again, this seems to have been established without any appreciation for the fact that Wade Phillips is still in charge and Tony Romo is dealing with a girlfriend with a weight problem (according to People magazine, anyway, which I never read).

Truth be told these sorts of things are meaningless unless you're WKNR's Kenny Roda and you're looking for topics after just completing your 26th consecutive "Aren't the Steelers great, call me with your thoughts" show in a row.

But the other side of the coin is that it's often the bookies that are the most accurate at figuring this stuff out because it's their money at stake, so there is that.

Thus, maybe the Browns really are in for another tough year or maybe there is money to be paid.

Pick your poison, just don't say you weren't warned.

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Not enough hot air to even fill a balloon:

For those of you who think I never have anything positive to say about the Browns, skip to the next item.

Mangini, for reasons not fully explained, held a press conference on Wednesday with the sole goal, apparently, of reminding everyone that Cleveland still has a NFL team and he's still a NFL head coach. It would have been far more interesting if Mangini actually had some news to deliver, such as that LeBron James had indeed signed with the Browns.

The glass half full types might have seen this press conference as a means for Mangini to reach out to the fans, just to let them know "hey, I care about you, we're getting after this mess." After all, Mangini did address the mural issue.

He said some nice things about D'Qwell Jackson and Josh Cribbs.

The rest of us will see this for what it most likely was, just the first in a series of encounters with a coach who has absolutely no intention of ever saying anything of substance to the media. Yes, he talked about the mural, the mural, the mural.

Yes, he said he respects the history and tradition of the franchise.

But if you were looking for any clues about how he feels about the roster, what the team is thinking heading into a busy off season, forget it.

While it's only been a month, it has been a month.

He has to have an opinion or two, no?

Does it matter whether Mangini displays some level of transparency between his operation and the fans he expects to remain on the bandwagon? It depends on who you ask. Right now there are a healthy number of fans that just want to see success and are willing to pay almost any price to get it.

If that means a truculent head coach with enough paranoia to make even Bill Belichick blush, fine.

It's a legitimate sentiment.

There are a healthy number of others, however, he want to be coddled a bit, acknowledged for the time and money they've invested in this team, only to be ignored like a crazy aunt from Scranton. These fans want to be respected and that translates in the first instance into not being talked down to by either the owner or the coach.

It's a legitimate sentiment as well.

For now and unless or until he struggles, Mangini will be banking on the sentiment of the fans in the first camp. In the meantime, expect a frosty relationship between Mangini and the local media at a time when Randy Lerner needs something more approaching the media's current relationship with President Obama.

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Maybe it's the heat and the humidity:

Transitioning over: Unless you're one of major league baseball's dwindling "have" teams, the real cost to winning a World Series is hardly ever discussed. Fans are familiar with the dismantling the Florida Marlins did soon after taking the measure of the Indians in the 1997 World Series, or the dismantling the Marlins did after winning the 2003 World Series.

But one of the reasons Florida did that was to purge itself as quickly as possible of the high cost incurred to secure each title.

It's an object lesson.

A story in Tuesday's USA Today about the Arizona Diamondbacks is instructive. Right now, the Diamondbacks are having somewhat of an identity crisis brought on by the huge debt the team undertook to win the 2001 World Series and, the theory goes, the Cinderella-like season of the football Cardinals.

My sense is that when one team in town has success, it raises the hopes and expectations of the others. Fans can multi-task. The fact that the Cardinals were in the Super Bowl should have far more positives for the Diamondbacks than negatives.

Thus I tend to discount the Diamondbacks' owners and theorists who see that as having any meaningful impact.

What is having an impact is the fact that this season (like the last and the one before that) the Diamondbacks have about $30 million in dead payroll as the result of deferred contracts to players no longer on the team. While the Diamondbacks had a reported $66 million payroll for 2008, when you factor in the additional $30 million or so owed to former players, it ends up being a payroll of almost $100 million, except without the benefit of the two or three players, probably pitchers, that would command an extra $30 million in salary. What the fans see is an ownership unwilling to shell out money to Randy Johnson and Orlando Hudson this last off season.

What the ownership sees is attendance of around 2.5 million on a ticket base price that is the lowest average in the league.

Expenses are high, revenues are low.

Anyone who has run anything more complicated than a paper route can understand that math.

As a result, a team that most put in the "have" category (it is the 12th largest media market, Cleveland is 17th) sees itself much differently. Does that mean they'd trade their World Series title or that Cleveland fans wouldn't gladly trade what amounts to the despair they've endured for years anyway for just one title?

Probably not.

But it likely means that as they build for the next run, they will do it the way general managers like Mark Shapiro have been trying to do it for years-slowly, methodically and on the cheap.

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Fools and their money:

In another fun little juxtaposition, the USA Today story on the Diamondbacks points out that one of those still owed money is Bernard Gilkey, to the tune of $500,000 a year for the next 25 years while a story on the opposite page talked about the $3 million raise Commissioner Bud Selig got last season on his previous $14.5 million salary.

On the surface, that seems like a pretty good pension that Gilkey's agent negotiated for a player whose accomplishments over a 12-year career can be generously characterized as modest. But then you remember that baseball executives have traditionally been among the dumbest money managers in the history of business, and in that statement I'm considering the first caveman that sold the first wheel for a rhino snout.

Then you also remember that Gilkey's deferred money amounts to $12.5 million, or about $500,000 less than Johnny Damon earned last season with the Yankees, which further proves the point.

And then, of course, you get to the surest sign, that the owners paid Selig

$17.5 million in salary last year and you start to actually feel like someone is picking on Gilkey even though, using a modest 6% discount factor, his $12.5 million over the next 25 years is equal to $2.9 million, or roughly the average salary of a member of the Indians last season.

I'm all for anyone getting the most money out of their employer that they can muster, but at some point doesn't it seem ridiculous for an owner to complain about Gilkey's deferred salary when that same owner signed off on Selig being paid as if he was the third best player in the major leagues.

Use whatever measuring stick you'd like and Selig's career accomplishments make Gilkey seem like Babe Ruth. Under Selig, baseball had the combined dubious distinctions of ushering in the steroids era and sanctioning an economic model that in 2008 featured a payroll differential of $188 million between the top and bottom teams in the league.

And for good measure, Selig continues to play nursemaid to a union that has even less interest in maintaining a drug-free sport or building a sustainable economic structure.

Fans may get outraged over the asinine contracts given to players like Gilkey or David Dellucci but that is seeing every tree and not realizing you're in a forest. Maybe the rich do get

richer, but when it comes to those who own and run baseball, the dumb get dumber.

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Everybody's doing the local-motion:

Depending on who you want to believe, Ohio State either had the top high school recruiting class in the nation or the 9th best.

Such is the wildly inexact science of analyzing recruiting classes. No matter what any of the various services or experts tell you, the accuracy of their predictions pretty much mirrors the accuracy of the Sportsbook.com odds sheet on winning next year's Super Bowl.

Trying to judge draft classes in the NFL is hard enough. Trying to do likewise for high school recruiting classes is next to impossible.

There simply is no good way to judge how the kid rushing for 5,000 yards for the local high school in Port Clinton matches up against the kid rushing for 2,000 yards for a

high school in Fremont, California, and that's assuming they play in similar divisions.

If you think the caliber of play between conferences in college football make it difficult to determine whether Joe Flacco has more upside than Matt Ryan, try making that determination in comparing high schools across the country.

One thing, though, is clear. Certain states, like Texas, Florida, Georgia, California and Ohio, produce a lot of talent. The better you are at keeping that talent in state, the more likely you'll end up with a decent recruiting class, no matter what Rivals.com or Scout.com says.

According to a study done by Sports Illustrated of the 65 BCS schools and Notre Dame between 2004-2008, teams that draw at least 50% of their recruits from within a 200-mile radius have a far better chance of winning consistently than those that do not.

The top 5 teams by that metric are no surprise: Texas, USC, Georgia, Florida and Ohio State.

Looking at Ohio State's class this year, 20 of 25 recruits meet that criterion. Let the good times roll, again.

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One of the more depressing sights this past few weeks is the number of locals wearing Steelers' jerseys. The temptation is to call them front runners.

The reality is that it's been a whole generation now since the Cleveland Browns gave anyone a reason to be excited.

Thus this week's question to ponder: On the show "24," if the chemical plant near Kidron, Ohio had indeed released its toxic chemicals on the surrounding population, which team would have lost more fans, the Steelers or the Browns?