It's officially the NFL off-season. Somewhere deep in the bowels of the Cleveland Browns' Berea complex, members of the team's brass are quietly, systematically analyzing game videos from the ill-fated 2008 season. There's been little news out of Berea from the new regime, with fans left to postulate and speculate on what Mangini and Kokinis may do to upgrade this football team. In Jerry's latest, he takes some time out to take a look at some of the more important decisions that will determine the fate of this year's Browns.

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It's hard not to imagine George Kokinis, Eric Mangini and their assistants enjoying beer and popcorn as if they were watching "NFL Follies" -- which is not a far cry from the game videos. (Which is to say, hysterical -- if you're not a Browns fan.)

Rather, we'd like to envision the team's new brain trust filling volumes of player personnel folders and making the decisions that have to be made to turn things around. *Does that player get good leverage on his tackles? Does that player always take a good path of pursuit? Is that player fast enough to play that position? Was that player's poor performance a result of not having the talent, or was it poor focus or bad coaching? And that one: Does he really have the instincts to play that position?*

It's a good bet that the 2009 roster will bear little resemblance to the 2008 roster.

"There is nothing pre-set where we have to turnover 20 percent of the

roster, 30 percent of the roster, or 40 percent of the roster," Mangini says. "Sometimes opportunities come up, sometimes they don't. Any of those decisions, any of those opportunities, any of those areas will be discussed by George and [me]."

Already, seven players (Ken Dorsey, Bruce Gradkowski, Antwan Peek, Terry Cousin, Mike Dragosavich, Jason Reda, Eric Young) are gone, opening at least a couple spots for players who might actually be capable of playing NFL-level football. And you can be sure there will be more vacancies posted.

Meanwhile, information coming out of Berea is of two varieties: little and none. About the only thing we've heard since Kokinis was named general manager is that ticket prices will remain the same. Well, whoop-de-doo.

In the absence of actual news, fans of the team from all over the nation are postulating in blogs, on radio talk shows, and on Internet message boards. (Those voices have about as much chance of being heard by the Browns' front office as individual voices concerning the supposed "stimulus package" being heard by President Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress.)

Unfortunately, fans are stuck with simply hoping that guys like Kokinis and Mangini will display the same personnel and roster intelligence as, say, Danny Ferry. Or even Mark Shapiro. (Realistically, what wouldn't we give for the Browns to finish with a .500 record in 2009 like the Indians of 2008?)

With those observations out of the way, let's take a look at some of the more important decisions that will determine the fate of this year's Browns.

1) What to do with the annual college draft? Are those "holes" in the current depth chart from a lack of talent, or are they the result of poor schemes, or can the holes be filled by other rostered players or, perhaps, by pick-ups in the free agent market? So do you use the No.5 pick in the first round, or trade it? If the choice is to use it, do you take a linebacker, a running back, another position player, or the best athlete available? If you want to trade it, who are possible trading partners? How much can you get for it? If you do, in fact, trade No.5, what college players do you consider selecting with the lower choices?

2) What to do to at least slow down the opponents' running game? You've

got one of the best nose tackles in the business (Shaun Rogers), and not much else. Or do you? Do you start from scratch with a complete set of new linebackers and defensive ends, or do you tinker? If you're doing a major overhaul, what free agents are available, and who are the college studs coming out in the draft? If you choose to just tinker, do you really want Andra Davis -- a veteran, a fine person and a great teammate -- back? Is Willie McGinest too old and slow, or does he have another season left? And Kamerion Wimbley -- what's with him?

3) How to get more pressure on opposing quarterbacks? Does Wimbley really have the potential to be an effective blitzer from his outside linebacker position? Are the defensive ends not doing their job? Are more frequent and a wider variety of blitzes needed in the defensive scheme? (In a related matter, will more pressure on the passer make defensive backs Eric Wright, Brandon McDonald, Sean Jones and Brodney Pool more effective?)

4) What to do about the quarterback position? Derek Anderson can throw long, but he can't throw short. Brady Quinn can throw short, but he can't throw long. (Or so it is said; we really don't know yet.) Is it in the team's best interest to keep both Anderson and Quinn, or should one be traded? If one is to be traded, which doesn't fit into the offensive scheme? Who are possible trading partners, and what can you get for the castoff?

5) What to do about the running back position? Does Jamal Lewis have another season left in his wheels? Was he too slow to hit the hole in 2008, or was the hole just not there? (And if it wasn't there, why not?) Are Jason Wright and Jerome Harrison acceptable NFL-level runners? If they are, what kind of offensive philosophy would most play to their strengths? Or is someone from the draft or free agent market needed to shoulder most of the rushing burden?

6) What to do about receivers? Can Braylon Edwards be coached to ever catch the ball again in Cleveland? Are Kellen Winslow Jr.'s days done, or will his knees hold up, or should he be considered trade bait? Does Joe Jurevicius come back from his injury? What about Steve Heiden? Would having a possession-type receiver (e.g. Brian Brennan, Wesley Welker) rather than Donte Stallworth be a better fit for the planned offensive scheme or not?

Because of the sad record of last year's team, the questions go on and on. So many questions, so little time. We remain Browns fans not because of last year's deflating performance or any similar performances of the last 10 years, for that

matter. We remain fans because it will be fun, interesting -- and even a bit exciting -- to see how Kokinis and Mangini will resolve all those questions that are currently swirling around in our minds.