What do you get when mix two potential starting quarterbacks with a depleted-by-design receiving corps, and top it off with the mentoring of Brett Favre? It's kind of hard to tell, but we might find out this summer. What we do know it that the long, strange saga of the Cleveland Browns might become palpably more interesting in the next six months, if not more successful. Papa Cass writes about the latest, and strangest, development with the Browns QB situation in his latest column for us.

What do you get when mix two potential starting quarterbacks with a depleted-by-design receiving corps, and top it off with the mentoring of Brett Favre?

It's kind of hard to tell, but we might find out this summer. What we do know it that the long, strange saga of the Cleveland Browns might become palpably more interesting in the next six months, if not more successful.

If nothing else, Eric Mangini is walking to his own beat as the guru of Browns football operations. He's scrapping the receiving unit with little indication of what is to follow. Kellen Winslow is gone, Joe Jurevicius is gone, Braylon Edwards' name has reportedly come up in trade talks, and David Patten has made his triumphant return to Cleveland.

Oh, yeah -- Donte Stallworth killed a man with his car, too. That adds another layer of complexity to the matter of who is going to be catching passes for the Browns this fall.

While the receving unit withers away, Mangini and GM George Kokinis are apparently committed to returning both Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn to training camp this summer, and letting the pair battle it out for the starting job in an open competition.

If this isn't a rebuild, it sure as heck feels like one. Mangini is throwing two quarterbacks against the proverbial wall to see which one sticks better. If Edwards is jettisoned, neither one will have much to work with in the way of playmaking receivers, thanks to the "remodeling -- pardon our dust" sign hung on the entire unit.

Unless Mangini has some unforeseen tricks up his sleeve, 2009 looks to be a season of discovery for the new Browns regime. And by discovery, I mean lots of tinkering coupled with losing as Mangini tries to figure out how to piece together a winning organization from a hybrid of his personnel and Phil Savage's personnel. The result for '09 will be some kind of transitional, mutant football team.

It's perhaps the most maddening part of a regime change -- all the truths that we as fans have already found to be self-evident need to be proven all over again to the new guys in charge. We already know that Anderson completes underneath passes with the same velvety touch as a jackhammer. We already know Jamal Lewis will cry to the media when he doesn't get his totes. We already know Kamerion Wimbley is a one-trick pass rushing pony. Mangini and Kokinis have yet to discover some, or all, of these things. Film can give you an idea of what you're getting yourself into, but until a coach has actually watched his players in action, it's hard to pass accurate judgments.

For the fans who have watched the pathetic football parade of the past 10 years, however, we can go ahead and flip to the back page of the novel. We already know the answers to the questions.

Perhaps the most glaring evidence that Mangini is still feeling his way along is the news on Wednesday that he has reportedly asked Brett Favre to come to Cleveland as a quarterback consultant, helping to perhaps tutor Anderson and Quinn, or maybe simply to help Mangini sort through the oncoming QB controversy.

It would be a thrill in many ways to have one of modern era's truly elite quarterbacks in camp, wearing the team colors, imparting years of knowledge

onto the Browns' pair of young signal-callers. But the backfire potential is also great.

It's hard to envision Favre accepting a background role. Maybe he would. Maybe he's finally content with his decision to retire. I'd rather labor under the assumption that once a waffler, always a waffler. And the last thing the Browns need in camp is two young QBs and an aging QB who has once again caught the football bug.

Don't just imagine Brett Favre in a Browns uniform. Imagine the firestorm of media coverage and heaven knows what else that would descend on Browns camp if Favre suddenly decided that he enjoyed playing for Mangini, if he decided that the best way to solve the Browns' QB problem is to strap on a helmet and take the field. Who is going to deny him, especially in an organization desperate for success and positive PR?

Imagine Anderson and Quinn stapled to the bench because Favre, once again, couldn't let the spotlight go, and try to tell me that would be healthy for the Browns organization in the long run.

Maybe I'm jumping way ahead of myself, but Favre has already backtracked once. Even if he is 100 percent retired, Favre would still overshadow a great deal of the goings-on at Browns camp by his mere presence, even if he's just wearing a cap and t-shirt and pacing the sidelines.

Favre has a lot of information that could be valuable to a young quarterback. Maybe he could help Mangini sort out this two-horse race. But there are too many plot threads dangling out there for me to think it would be as simple as Favre coming to town and teaching Mangini's young charges the ABC's of winning in the NFL.

At this point, it's all speculation. You could still color me surprised if Favre is in town at the start of training camp. But there is a little food for thought to go along with the intrigue.

When you step back and take it all in -- the dismantling of the receiving corps, the

decision to stick with both Anderson and Quinn, the invitation extended to Favre -- it's a curious equation that might only make sense to Mangini and Kokinis at this point. But whether or not it makes sense to fans and scribes in March is immaterial. The bottom line is, it has to lead to wins on Autumn Sundays, if not this year, then certainly next year.

As long as there is a method to the madness, I'm willing to give it a chance. In eras past, we placed our hope in a long line of leaders who we thought had a grand plan, only to find out that Carmen Policy was a glorified mouthpiece, Butch Davis had paranoia issues and Phil Savage was out of his element as an administrator.

Maybe Mangini, Kokinis and their offbeat 2+0+1 equation is exactly what the doctor ordered. It certainly can't be worse than anything presented to us by Policy, Davis or Savage, right? Right?