Does the Browns roster really need to have its collective hide toughened this much? That's what a lot of Browns fans are starting to wonder as the first preseason game approaches this weekend. Less than two weeks into the first training camp of the Eric Mangini Era, and there are already media-conveyed squeals coming out of Berea that say certain players, who are nameless as of yet, are unhappy that Mangini is working their well-compensated fingers to the bone. Erik Cassano talks about it.

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Well, not entirely nameless. Jerome Stanley, the agent for Syndric Steptoe, took his beef with
Mangini
to the media
following Saturday's rainy practice, in which
Steptoe
suffered a shoulder injury that ended his season before it began. The full-speed practice in the rain was excessive, Stanley asserted, essentially accusing
Mangini
of handling his client in a reckless fashion.
Steptoe
, who was fighting an uphill battle to make the team to being with, was waived by the Browns on Tuesday.

The complaint of Steptoe's agent is just a scratch on the surface. A Yahoo! Sports article by Jason Cole notes that there is an emerging trend of players complaining at the Berea complex. Cole said Braylon Edwards -- a well-known squeaky wheel -- has been particularly irritable since camp started. Much of it might have to do with a lack of a new contract, and a springtime trade to the Giants that went belly-up. But it's clear that Edwards is, at least right now, not having a lot of fun playing for Mangini.

The grumbling is probably going to get worse before it gets better. There is blame to shoulder on both side of the equation.

The players -- at least the ones who were here last year and beforehand -- are guilty of having to be dragged kicking and screaming into a camp where Job 1 isn't necessarily to minimize contact and keep everyone healthy. At least to the naked eye, that appeared to be Romeo Crennel's primary goal every summer.

The results of Camp Romeo were actually counterproductive. The Browns suffered more injuries and were less-prepared for physical football with Crennel's spare-the-rod approach. Even worse, the players became conditioned to expect a relatively low-impact camp atmosphere. Going through the motions was enough.

Mangini now has to uproot that culture, and predictably, the players are going through a great degree of culture shock. Their island in the Sun has just turned into Parris Island, and they're not liking it.

With that in mind, it's easy to see why Mangini brought so many ex-Jets along for the ride this year. This isn't Dwight Clark filling out the roster with 49er castoffs because it's a quick fix. Mangini wanted to bring some Jets players along with him, in part, to help ease the transition for the guys who weren't used to his style.

"Guys will get used to it," Jets transplant David Bowens told Cole. "The second year, he eases up. He's just trying to establish himself."

Mangini had better hope that guys like Bowens can start to gain followers in the locker room. Because while Crennel tended to take a minimalist approach to leadership and discipline, Mangini's style is heavy-handed for first-time users. He is a coach with new-school methods built on a foundation of old-school discipline, taking bits and pieces from the leadership styles of his primary mentor, Bill Belichick, and the likes of Bill Parcells and Ted Marchibroda, who he assisted early in his coaching career.

Mangini has spent the past 15-plus years as a football sponge, absorbing information from two of the best football minds of the past 25 years, sanding and polishing his head coaching style in three years with the Jets, and hopefully what we'll witness in Cleveland is a veteran head coach employing a system that works. But the byproduct of football saturation bombing is what we're seeing so far in Browns camp.

Mangini is ramming all things football related down the throats of his charges, and his players aren't taking well to it. Transition is never easy, but Mangini could alienate his players as easily as he could burn off the baby fat of the Crennel regime and turn his team into hardened warriors.

That's the groove Mangini needs to find. He needs to toughen his players and acclimate them to his system without burning them out, to the point where they tune him out and call their agents en masse, asking for the next ticket out of Cleveland.

For now, the burden is primarily on the players to adjust to Mangini. As much as they might not want to, the players need to recognize that this is what an NFL camp is supposed to be -- physically grueling and mentally challenging -- as compared to what Crennel let them get away with for the previous four years.

But once all are aboard who are coming aboard, Mangini needs to make good on Bowens
' promise and back off the accelerator a bit in Year Two.

Discipline is good. Education is good. Tough love is good. Alienating half the roster and antagonizing the coach is not good. Sooner or later, the players will be within their rights if they get upset with Mangini for cracking the whip too hard. We're not at that point yet, but when we reach that point,
Mangini
had better be the first to notice.