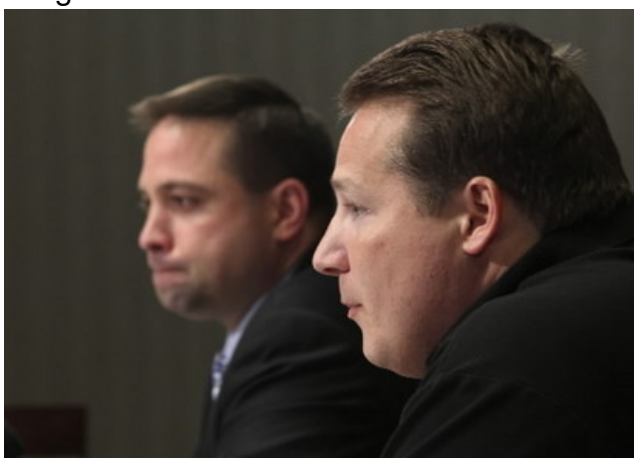
It's highly unlikely that anyone looks at Cleveland Browns owner Randy Lerner's firing of general manager George Kokinis as anything more than a bone thrown to a salivating dawg pound. They may not spit it back out but it won't solve their hunger problems either unless this is just a start and not an end. And just when you think this organization cannot get any more inept, they manage to once again out do themselves. Gary weighs in with his latest take on the evolving train wreck taking place inside the walls of Berea.



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Kokinis was the quintessential figurehead, hired to perform a job that lacked any coherent description. In his role as general manager, he performed roughly the same job that an exterior set on the Universal Studios lot performs. With the camera angle straight on, he looked like a general manager.

Move that angle in either direction and it was apparent he was just a façade, someone constructed from plywood and paneling nails to look like a general manager.

Three dimensional?

He barely was two dimensional.

Kokinis probably never really had much of a chance to succeed in Cleveland. Th e circumstances of his hire never made any sense to anyone other than, perhaps, Eric Mangini, Kokinis and Lerner, in that order.

Mangini got the weak hand of oversight a paranoid control freak craves.

Kokinis got a nice title and a bigger paycheck.

Lerner got peace of mind knowing that he did his job and brought in "football people."

It's funny how everyone not named Mangini, Kokinis or Lerner saw that this was a disaster in the making before any of the protagonists. Sure, there have been the occasional apologists and wishful thinkers.

But as the season slides down an ever deepening and slicker cliff,

even the most ardent are beginning to finally fathom that wreckage awaits the end of this ride.

The reason Mangini couldn't recognize the problem he constructed is because he's convinced he invented the sport and there's nothing left for him to learn from anyone. Lerner didn't know better because his thought processes are so malleable that he was easily manipulated in a way that he came to not just share but embrace Mangini's self-created aura.

There's a book or two to be written about this Browns season and if any of the parties are really ready to speak about it on the record and for attribution, they can give me a call. I'd be more than happy to write it and might even if they won't cooperate. In all my years following every Cleveland professional sports team (ok, not every team, I wasn't a fan of the Force or either of the two Arena Football teams) there's never been a season this fascinating, even if it has been for all the wrong reasons.

It's a Shakespearean tragedy being played out in real time. Lerner is King Lear, moneyed and aching to retire somewhere calmer.

Mangini is at least Edmund, scheming to overcome his bastard status as the guy that never played professional football and got his start as a ball boy.

King Lear, the play, didn't end well for either of those characters and if the Berea adaptation continues to play out unencumbered by subsequent events it likely will end up much the same way-with Lerner going insane and Mangini being betrayed.

This is the time to begin encumbering those subsequent events. Lerner can save his sanity even if Mangini's fate is sealed.

Lerner, as I've already suggested, can actually construct a viable plan around which he can get out of this mess and then retire gracefully to England, faculties in tact.

Mangini, with the Kokinis firing on the heals of the Erin O'Brien firing, is just burning more bridges in a bit of a Sherman-through-Georgia career. He already burnished two allies here in Cleveland to save his shaky status.

He alienated himself from anyone associated with the New York Jets before he got here and, for good measure, turned on his mentor and benefactor, Bill Belichick and his regime in New England, too.

If there's anyone left in the NFL to piss off, rest assured Mangini will get that done.

It is, after all, part of his process.

Where this all is going to is that Mangini is quickly become a leper among institutional NFL types and has been banished to his own private Idaho. Lerner, who hasn't shown himself to be a quick or savvy student of internal NFL politics, hasn't yet figured that part out.

When Lerner finally has that palm-of-the-hand-slap-to-the-head moment, Mangini will be gone, too.

It's the path Mangini has laid for himself and as he walks it, wreaking havoc and damage on the way, no one will shed a tear when he disappears from view.

The one thing that should worry Browns' fans most right now is how Lerner will go about repairing this mess. He's not shown any affinity to fixing anything, only an affinity for being easily manipulated. It's more than fair to suggest that Lerner shouldn't even try.

Instead, he should delegate this task to someone beyond question, an Ernie Accorsi-type (although Accorsi denies he's coming out of retirement).

But even having Lerner find that type brings far more risk than most should be comfortable with.

There is a lot of speculation at the moment that Bernie Kosar may be the person Lerner ultimately turns to as the franchise fixer. As much as Kosar remains a fan favorite, there's nothing in his background that suggests he's the right guy for that job. In fact, there's more in his background that suggests he's not.

That's not to besmirch Kosar and the troubles he's had in his post-football professional and personal life so much as it is to point out that if Lerner thinks he can curry favor with the fan base by leveraging Kosar's fading status in Cleveland as the new face of the team in some sort of quick fix move, the fans won't be so easily fooled.

Anyone listening to Kosar on pre-season broadcasts can't help but be impressed by his deep knowledge of offensive Xs and Os. They also heard Kosar be brutally honest at times about the sorry state of affairs, even in preseason.

It was refreshing.

But that doesn't mean Kosar has an eye for talent, just an eye for schemes.

Right now this franchise is so talent-deprived in every aspect of its operations, a person like Kosar will be easily overwhelmed.

The dire straights of this team need a far more experienced eye. If Ozzie Newsome really can't be bought (and I'm betting someone like Dan Gilbert could find a way to make that purchase), then Lerner needs to turn to someone like Bill Cowher, not as the head coach but as the club president.

Cowher doesn't strike me as someone eager to get back on the field anyway.

But given a chance to run a franchise, and perhaps get a piece of the ownership in the process, Cowher could very well be lured out of retirement.

I don't buy into the notion that the Browns are beyond hope.

To the right person, the chance to run this franchise right remains an alluring opportunity.

But whichever way this needs to go, Lerner would be well advised not to rush the decision this time. Lerner needs to really go through a credible, thoughtful and deliberate process (that damn word again) to get that person. Whether it's Newsome, Cowher or someone else, it has to be someone above reproach.

This franchise can be turned around and if the fans have demonstrated anything to this point, it's that they will buy into a realistic, credible plan.

Not something cobbled together by a discredited coach who probably doesn't even trust his mother.