If Monday night's national embarrassment did any good for the Cleveland Browns franchise, it's this: it now can't sink any lower. Even a loss to the Detroit Lions next Sunday can't make the situation any worse. Rock bottom has been reached. It's been a long hard ride getting there but at least there's no further to drop. Gary talks about "The Long Journey Down" in his latest column for us.

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But since this involves the precipitous drop of an inanimate object (and no team is more inanimate than the Browns), forget about Newton's third law of motion. Ther e is no equal and opposite reaction coming, at least any time soon.

The Baltimore Ravens are a mere shadow of their former selves. They are a very, very average offensive team with a defense now lacking the ability to still win games by simple fear and intimidation.

Ray Lewis meet Jamal Lewis.

Enjoy your time next year together reminiscing about how good you both used to be, because you were.

Just not anymore.

And yet, with all the Ravens' attendant problems, playing incredibly average was more than enough on both sides of the ball.

There it was, on national television, and why in the name of all that's holy were they on national television?, the Browns managing to put on full display for anyone interested in exactly what raging incompetence looks like a comprehensive primer on the depths to which this once proud franchise has sunk.

This is now worse than the expansion year, by leaps and bounds in fact. Head coach Eric Mangini, enabled by an owner with more passion and cents than ability and sense, has done a world class, benchmark setting job at sucking every last bit of life out of the team.

So well has he done his job in that regard that the Browns will defy Newton.

There will be no bounce back, at least not any time soon no matter who gets the key to this clunker next.

Monday's game really drove home the point about what a crock Mangini and his so-called "process" really is. Those still willing to give Mangini the benefit of the doubt he doesn't deserve act as if he has some secret recipe for turning around the franchise that no mere mortal can replicate.

Let's see if I can try. The plan here in Cleveland is to get better players at nearly every single position. To accomplish that we'll need to do a better job scouting and drafting, so we'll need guys that are good at that as well.

And just so we don't do anything on the level of Dan Snyder-stupid while we're getting this stuff done, let's make sure we have someone smart providing sanity checks on anyone's thought of inadvertently handing over $6 million a year to a washed up free agent.

For my next act, I'll teach you the secret to losing weight: eat less and exercise more.

The point is that Mangini's so-called process is nothing more than any competent NFL executive would put in place with any team. The task is daunting in Cleveland because of the utter lack of talent from the top of the pyramid on down, but fundamentally the task isn't any different than what any other team is trying to accomplish on a regular basis.

So let's dispense with the notion that somehow the Browns are on some cosmic journey that necessitates total implosion before redemption and recognize instead that this self-appointed King of Berea isn't wearing any clothes.

Even if Mangini had the capability of making smart decisions, and I've yet to see one, he is so lacking in basic leadership skills that he could never get them properly executed anyway. It's like the desk clerk at the car rental agency in the Jerry Seinfeld routine who can't distinguish between taking and holding a reservation. Mangini is the guy who can take reservations, he just doesn't know how to hold the reservation, which is really the far more important part.

Listening to Mangini after Monday night's game was to listen to a passionless automaton drone on cluelessly about why the franchise is in such a sorry state without understanding his unique role in it all. Every mistake that was made Monday night wasn't a cause for the defeat but a symptom of a far larger problem.

What Mangini can never fully appreciate is that the universe that he's created within the bubble of Berea is a flawed eco system where basic nourishment is lacking. It's as if Mangini is an evil auto mechanic and purposely seeing how much he can get out of an engine using but one quart of oil. What fans experienced Monday night was an engine in the process of actually seizing up.

Players can't grasp what Mangini's trying to accomplish because he's a poor communicator with an abject disdain for his audience. Players don't respond to his petty mind games and dirty tricks because this isn't the 1960s.

It's a digital society in which tech savvy players stay in constant contact with their friends and acquaintances on other teams to better gauge what's normal and what's not.

And when a Brian Robiskie sends a text to an A.J. Hawk, likely the usual response is "dude, that is so messed up."

Maybe he doesn't use the word "messed."

But the end is indeed near for Mangini. The most telling sign was the reaction by the players leaving the field after Brady Quinn threw his second interception that led to the Baltimore field goal and 16-0 lead.
The helmets were off.

Heads were hung in defeat and there was still a quarter and a half left to play.

It's as if the 50-some voices on that side line had the exact same thought: a team that's only scored 5 offensive touchdowns wasn't going to suddenly come to life with Chris Jennings at tailback and Robert Royal at tight end.

And that's not even to pick on Jennings and Royal.
They are just convenient markers.

Substitute any other two names you wish.

There are no innocent to protect.

These players know that Mangini is now a dead man walking. They wouldn't play for him when they thought he was a keeper and certainly aren't going to play for him knowing that there's no way he ends up being retained.

Having watched Josh Cribbs get lit up on a meaningless last play of the game was all the warning signal the rest of the team needed to reassess their priorities.

It's no longer about winning, it's about not getting hurt.

Because Monday was a nationally televised game, it was never going to be blacked out. The economic interest of the local media outlets made it an easy play to buy the remaining tickets and hand them out to charity. I'm betting they still went unusued.

But that won't be the case for the rest of the season. Sure, the Steelers game is sold out because there are a lot of local Steelers fans (and more converts each day) who can't get a ticket to Heinz field.

The rest are in real jeopardy and it's hardly a stretch to predict that they won't sell out.

Why would anyone buy a ticket?

The apologists can blame it on the economy because in their world, Mangini is the misunderstood genius orchestrating what he'd probably view as the greatest resurrection. But in truth this is exactly what the bottom looks like and since we're down here now we might as well get used to the view. It's going to be a long stay.