The Browns had no legitimate chance of winning on Sunday and have only a fleeting chance of winning any of their remaining games, mainly because they finish up in a 3-week do-loop against Kansas City, Oakland and Jacksonville, teams nearly as bad as them. But when they take the field each week already knowing this, that doesn't mean the season should be as pointless as it's been. Is there anything happening right now that is actually furthering along "the process" that Eric Mangini harps on? Gary gives us his thoughts.

After another perfunctory, uncompetitive loss, this time to the Cincinnati Bengals on Sunday, the question is begged: is there any point to the Cleveland Browns' season any more?

The Browns had no legitimate chance of winning on Sunday and have only a fleeting chance of winning any of their remaining games, mainly because they finish up in a 2-week do-loop against Kansas City and Oakland, teams nearly as bad as them. But when they take the field each week already knowing this, that doesn't mean the season should be as pointless as it's been.

According to head coach Eric Mangini, all this season's ever been about is his vaunted process. Giving him a large benefit of that doubt, then shouldn't this season really be about furthering that so called process? Stated differently, why is it that Mangini forsakes his own high draft picks in favor of the discarded waste of others and the ritualistic servitude of aging veterans who won't be here next year?

The fact that the season was lost before it really started was known several weeks ago so it isn't as if winning ever really was the point. Somewhere around halftime of week 1 it became pretty clear that Mangini had done enough damage to the franchise to make it uncompetitive in the near term supposedly at the expense of building a nice, bright future. Instead, each week has been another nearly unobstructed pointless step in no particular direction. When Cincinnati Bengals' loudmouth self-promoting receiver Chad Ochocinco says he doesn't care about the Browns, he's speaking for a legions of others as well.

Mangini's calling card and the mantra he repeats like Rain Man pining for Wapner is that this is all part of the rather painful process that the franchise needs to endure in order to be redeemed. He speaks as if he views his work as that of an endodontist performing large scale root canal on 10 teeth at a time in order to eventually stop all the pain. It's as if he's about to say that someday we'll look back on this and it will all seem funny.

But the fans are mad, the team is sad and owner Randy Lerner is going to find himself without any money if he doesn't step in soon. The franchise is in decay but that's the overview. The worst sin of the moment is the fact that the season hasn't just become unwatchable, it's become pointless.

The Indians of my youth were repeatedly bad, out of nearly every pennant race by the 4th of July. The Indians of the present are becoming much the same thing. But at least when they were out of it they'd use the rest of the season to empty out the "talent" from the minor leagues and give them some needed major league experience. Sure it made you wonder why the Indians kept charging major league prices to view minor league talent, but it at least served as the most visible sign that the Indians were building for some amorphous vision of the future.

With the Browns, what fans get is Mangini's near outright refusal to make the rest of this season meaningful for players that might still have

a future in the league. Sure, Mangini has re-inserted Brady Quinn as quarterback and that's to his credit. The only way to find out if he has enough between the ears to play this game at the highest level is to actually let him play.

What then, though, of players like David Veikune and Brian Robiskie? Both are second round picks by this very head coach. Second round picks aren't supposed to be throwaway choices or walking the sidelines in street clothes on the 11th game of the season. They represent the very building block of every franchise, not the parade of undrafted free agents and waiver wire acquisitions that Mangini seems to court. Yet they are merely afterthoughts, relegated to some island of misfit toys.

Mangini didn't address the Robiskie situation directly. He never does. Just know though that he addressed it indirectly by commenting on why Jake Allen, just signed off of the Green Bay Packers practice squad for goodness sakes, could get some playing time. It's because he looked good in practice.

Let's stop there for just a moment. Allen was signed off of another team's practice squad just last week. He's barely had time to check into a hotel, let alone practice. He couldn't possibly understand offensive coordinator Brian Daboll's overly complex and completely nonsensical offensive schemes, mainly because virtually no one whose been here the whole time does either. Yet he supposedly put on a good enough show in practice to warrant playing time against Robiskie, a guy whose

been here the entire season?

The truth is that no one who hears that explanation will believe it's the truth. It's these more subtle but insidious gestures that make Mangini uniquely unqualified for his current job. He can try to polish his image all he wants with meaningless interviews where he answers nothing directly, but his actions are what make him the worst head coach in the history of this franchise. Whoever is in second place-Chris Palmer, Forrest Gregg, Nick Skorich, take your pick-is in no danger of moving up a notch.

If Robiskie's biggest sin is that he's not fast enough, it's not as if he suddenly got slow. His speed seemed ample enough to warrant a second round selection but it's as if Mangini just woke up and figured out that Robiskie isn't ever going to be a team's number one receiver and is punishing him daily for that.

If it's Robiskie's route running, then how bad must it be compared to Mohamed Massaquoi? This isn't meant as a slam to Massaquoi, either. He's a nice receiver and will be a good complement on a team with a true number one receiver. But his route running is borderline awful. Isolate on him during a game and you will see a receiver who is wildly inconsistent. If it's a 7-yard down and out, Massaquoi may go 6 yards one play and 9 the next. He hasn't yet figured out that hitting that 7-yard mark each and every time is what gets you the ball consistently.

A quarterback has to know where you're going to be. Massaquoi also has trouble understanding his assignment on the blitz. He turns up when he turns in and turns in when he should turn up.

All of these flaws are correctable and Massaquoi is making progress, mainly because he's getting playing time. But Robiskie has to sit and watch, hamstrung by a head coach that seems to be holding him out in an act of vengeance. Maybe he's ineffective on special teams. Maybe he objects to participating in Mangini's so-called post-practice opportunity periods. Maybe he should have signed his contract sooner. Maybe he doesn't wear his tie to team functions. But whatever it is, it can't be lack of talent. How could anyone tell? This team has none to begin with and acting as if Jake Allen, a practice team player sitting idle the entire season is suddenly impressive enough to warrant playing time is simply dishonest.

As for Veikune, if anything his case is even more compelling. He supposedly is making a switch from defensive end to linebacker on a team with a serious deficiency at both spots. Instead of Mangini giving him valuable playing experience against credible competition, he has him going only against, well, it's not clear who he's going against in practice.

Because Veikune isn't a starter, he probably gets only a few

reps each practice session. Maybe he's on the scout team, meaning that his practice is limited to a few reps of physical contact and plenty of walkthroughs. But as for any actual experience, there isn't any worth noting. For him, like Robiskie, the year's been wasted.

Meanwhile, Mangini brought in Matt Roth, a waiver wire pick up from Miami, this week. Roth is more experienced but didn't arrive for any sort of practice until Thanksgiving and yet found himself in a starting role a few days later.

The Browns are short at linebacker both because of injury and incompetence. But this is a situation tailor made for getting a young player valuable playing experience. What is Mangini worried about? That a running back coming out of the backfield might catch a pass and have a big gain? Oh wait, that's already taking place on nearly a weekly basis and Veikune is nowhere to be found.

If Mangini wants respect for his process and the latitude to give it a go for another year, then he has to provide some sort of compelling vision of the future. To this point, all he's provided is a muddled view of a team in constant transition with no end game in site. If the process is about building for the future, then why has he wasted the year for two high round picks that should be part of that future?

Even if every one of the remaining games on the schedule was winnable, the Browns won't be a winner this season. The only point from game 1 forward should have been about building the future. Instead it's been about only one thing: eviscerating the past. Any talk that it's about the future is lip service designed to buy Mangini more time to do exactly what no one's quite sure.

When the final words are written on this season it will turn out that this entire exercise, from the idiotic quick hire of a discredited coach to the disjointed draft to the preseason quarterback competition to the post-opportunity practice sessions to the dumping of the handpicked general manager to the erratic play calling to the self-proclaimed house of cards the defensive coordinator built will turn out to be one pointless exercise that begs the most obvious question of all: why is Mangini even being permitted to coach the last 5 games?