The Cleveland Browns today named Pat Shurmur as its new head coach, ending a search that wasn't necessarily as comprehensive as team president Mike Holmgren promised but was probably comprehensive enough. The task now falls to Shurmur to build on whatever it was that former head coach Eric Mangini was building in his two years with the club and to do it in a way that keeps the Browns from having to endure another coaching search two years hence.

Shurmur certainly meets the profile of the kinds of hires most clubs make these days. He's a "hot" assistant coaching prospect on the heels of a successful year in making St. Louis Rams rookie quarterback Sam Bradford a legitimate NFL talent and in the process helping make the Rams relevant again.

He also meets the profile of the kind of coach the Browns really need at the moment. He works well with quarterbacks and the Browns have an promising prospect at the moment that could benefit from some polish. He also has a clear vision of what a successful offense looks like. That alone will be a welcome change to a team that's struggled for the last decade to establish an offensive identity, or any identity for that matter.

Ultimately, what's being asked of Shurmur now is pretty much to replicate his success in St.

Louis, but with a broader platform. His charge is to make Colt McCoy a legitimate NFL talent and also make the Browns relevant again. Of those two main goals, the former is going to be far easier than the latter.

Browns fans, a dwindling but passionate bunch though they may be, already know their team isn't relevant at the moment. It's not the laughing stock franchise that the Cavs and the Indians have become but it is a team that most others look at as one of the wins on their schedule when it gets released. That's the mountain Shurmur will have to climb as he steps over the bodies of those who have tried and failed already.

Shurmur enters the franchise at one of the more interesting times of its existence. Before former owner Art Modell stuck a shiv into the collective backs of the community, the Browns were one of those teams that were as up and down as the mental health of its owner. Yet it had seen enough success over its storied past and had a committed fan base that required other teams to take it seriously. Sure, coaches came and went, but that was mostly because Modell had an emotional hair trigger in how he ran the operations.

The team that returned has always been a shadow of its former self. It had the name and colors and the record book. It just never had a guiding light. Al Lerner was certainly a Browns fan and a successful businessman but he had absolutely no clue how to run a football team. To his credit, though, he never claimed he did.

When Lerner died somewhat unexpectedly, his reluctant son Randy took over and basically carried on in the same fashion, but with one glaring exception. Randy was a Browns fan, certainly, but he was and still is far more interested in the European version of football. He mostly knew what he didn't know but was fairly clueless in how to change that paradigm.

But the one thing that Lerner finally did get right was hiring Holmgren. It's not that Holmgren is some sort of football deity; it's just that in him the Browns actually have someone who knows everything one needs to know about running a team. That doesn't mean that Holmgren will get every decision right, it's just that his decisions come with a presupposed level of confidence and respect.

To this point Holmgren has made three significant decisions and it would be hard to mount an

argument against any of them. First, he hired Tom Heckert as his general manager. While it's a low bar, Heckert is already the best general manager the Browns have had since their return and probably for years before that.

Second, he fired Mangini. I've heard all the arguments for the progress Mangini was making and it's not that those arguments are wrong. But there has been nothing Mangini demonstrated in New York or Cleveland to suggest that he's anything special either. In other words, holding on to Mangini for the sake of continuity would have been the rough equivalent of keeping the television tuned to the same channel because you're too lazy to get up and find the remote.

Third, he hired Shurmur. At the moment there's no way to tell whether Shurmur will effectively make the transition from able assistant to successful head coach but to look at it that way is to look at it like we always look at things in Cleveland. In truth, there's no reason to think that Shurmur can't make the transition to successful head coach. He's built the kind of resume that is prototypical of most NFL head coaches these days and from all accounts he's been very successful at each step along the way.

Stated differently, there's no reason to think this hire won't work out, though I expect that small but vocal group of Mangini fans to continue to take the position contra and judge every step Shurmur makes in the context of what Mangini would have done.

There will be fans who are disappointed that someone of a higher profile, like Jon Gruden or John Fox, weren't interviewed. Gruden, though, was never a viable option. He's proven over the last two off-seasons that he's just as satisfied to have his name bandied about. It strokes his ego while requiring little work in return. As for Fox, that one is more of a puzzle but the book on him is well known. Sometimes a new direction needs a fresh face.

Over the coming days Shurmur will make the rounds as he gets acquainted with his new environs. In that he'll find a skeptical media, certainly, and a fan base that will be cautious but ultimately hopeful. He'll say all the right things and come across as a man of confidence. But those are the easy tasks. More daunting will be commanding the respect of the players still standing. It won't be easy but that more than anything else will tell us quickly enough whether or not this guy is the keeper we're led to believe he is.