As we sit and wait for the owners to lift the lockout that they have imposed, I begin to grow anxious without having any true NFL news to digest. I have finally recovered and re-energized myself after the stress of the NFL draft and I find that there are no minicamps to get a glance of Greg Little catching passes nor any free agent signings to get excited about.

So I have been 'forced' to watch the 2010 season all over again studying the Rams offense and re-watching the games in which Colt McCoy played.

I was floored that I could watch the complete season as many times as I wanted for the same price as a bacon cheeseburger and a few Blue Moons. If you are ultra bored and have some time I recommend going to the ‘game rewind’ section under the video tab at NFL.com and watching some games. It may stir up some bad memories of the past season but if you can watch without feeling those negative emotions it is a great way to get some football during this down time.

In the coming weeks I will have some articles that breakdown what I saw from a Pat Shurmur offense that has me pretty excited and I will also try plugging Browns players into Shurmur’s offense in an effort to predict how some of our players will be utilized in the upcoming season.

For now I want to talk about the overall theme that has me excited about for the upcoming

season and that theme is “New Attitude”. It can all be summed up as the offensive mindset of a head coach.

The “old school” defensive mindset that has permeated the last few versions of our Cleveland Browns has been junked in favor of bringing in an offensive coordinator with an aggressive mindset and it is a breath of fresh air that Browns fans everywhere desperately need. That means saying goodbye to the ultra conservative overall mentality that most defensive head coaches usually bring to the table and hello to the aggressive, attack-oriented mindset of an offensive minded head coach.

Don’t misunderstand what I am talking about…By no means I am saying we don’t need to play great defense. Anyone who knows me understands that I, like most of yo,u LOVE a great defense. I am talking about the overall mindset of a team.

The last few head coaches brought some of the toughness and passion back to the field but the overall mindset of the team was conservative. The mindset on defense was one that tried to say “Ok, if we stay sound in our fundamentals and stay at home you (the opponent) will eventually make a mistake”. To me that is not getting it done in today’s NFL.

You need an attack mentality to counter the aggressive and complicated passing games that defenses face in today’s NFL. When you talk about competing with the upper tier teams you can’t just be predictable and ‘sound’.

This was evident in the middle of the season in which the Browns played the Patriots and Saints, and these games are perfect examples of what I am talking about.

Tom Brady and Drew Brees are two of the best QBs in the game and if you just sit back and try to be fundamentally sound they will eat you for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You have to disquise and attack on defense and you need to carry that attack mentality into the offense and special teams. The Browns took it to both of those teams by attacking on every level. They didn’t sit back trying to use counter blows and hope, they were aggressive and threw plenty of power punches.

They attacked while taking the team mindset that if we attack and execute, we WILL win. This is a very different approach than saying “if we can counter you to stay in the game we will have a chance to win in the end”. For those two games the Browns exhibited a hunter’s mentality and shelved the meek mindset of the hunted.

The new attacking and aggressive mentality I expect the Browns to play with is based on a few different data points.

The first point is simply the fact that we have an offensive coordinator as a head coach. In general the offensive mindset is one of attacking and dictating, so the really good offensive coordinators naturally have this mindset from the start.

The second data point comes from coach Shurmur’s background. He hails from the Andy Reid coached Eagles who offensively were always attacking and had no problems putting the ball in the air 40 times a game while the defense was led for years by Jim Johnson who had a long history of creating many aggressive blitz- zone defenses over the years. This is the style of play Shurmur was used to in Philly and, if you watch the entire Rams season and not just the offense, you will see an aggressive and dictating offense from Shurmur to go along with the exact same style of aggressive defense from Steve Spagnuolo.

Spags learned this defense from Johnson as an assistant coach in Philly, so Shurmur is used to aggressive defenses complementing an attacking offense.

The third data point are the words of the man himself. Pat Shurmur said ,“We will be an aggressive, tough football team” and although free agency has not started yet, the first 3 picks in the draft should be an indication of the type of players Pat Shurmur wants on his team. Phil Taylor, Jabaal Sheard, and Greg Little have five stars in the ‘aggressive and tough’ categories and this should be an indication that the Browns plan on going after teams rather than simply trying to counter them.

Also, when it comes to trends, the NFL has always been what they call a “copy cat” league. More times than not you see teams using things from other teams that have worked well, and so the fact that the last two Super Bowl Champions have had aggressive offensive head coaches matched up with aggressive defensive coaches only enhances the popularity of that

coaching combination. You also saw Jason Garret go get Rob Ryan to run his defense down in Dallas. Ryan is aggressive by nature, and I believe he only showed conservative game plans at times during his tenure in Cleveland due to Eric Mangini's conservative approach.

Now, the one thing in the whole equation of calculating the level of aggression on defense that makes me a little uneasy is the defensive coordinator. Dick Jauron doesn't have a history of being one of those ultra aggressive defensive coordinators. In recent years, however, he has gotten much more aggressive. That was evident the year Brady Quinn broke his finger against Buffalo because the Browns could not handle the inside blitz pressure Jauron was creating by blitzing his inside backers play after play. Jauron also spent time in Philly last year learning more of Jim Johnson's aggressive zone blitz schemes from Sean McDermitt.

The coaching staff the Browns have put together will also aid Jauron in turning the defense into one that attacks rather than absorbs. Ray Rhodes (current Browns coach) was the Seahawks defensive coordinator and Dwaine Board (Browns DL coach) was the defensive line coach for Holmgren in 2005 when the Seahawks led the league in sacks with 50. They also coached together in San Francisco holding the same titles in 1994 and finished second in the league with 51 sacks that year, so their combined wisdom should pay dividends for a team trying to change its defensive mentality.

Offensively I am not worried at all about Pat Shurmur's ability to attack teams. If you watch the Rams last year he did a wonderful job attacking teams and keeping defenses off balance with a cast of players much less talented and experienced than the ones he will have here in Cleveland.

So while having a more conservative defensive Head Coach like Mangini or Romeo Crennel is not a waste and I don't consider the strategy stupid or useless at all, I am simply happy for the change. I have grown tired of being the prey and will welcome a much more aggressive mindset. It is more exciting and it will bring the Browns closer to the version of the team that I grew up with that played great defense but didn't play defensively.

That defense had lockdown, aggressive corners like Hanford Dixon and Frank Minnifield, safeties that controlled the middle of the field, guys like Clay Matthews, Chip Banks and Michael Dean Perry harassing QBs and thumper MLBs like Mike Johnson. The defense got their name from being rabid, aggressive dawgs and not the cute and cuddly type or the smart and cunning type.

The offense pounded you with the running game, but stayed aggressive and efficient in the passing game while it took its fair share of shots downfield.

Teams knew when they came to Cleveland they needed to pack a lunch because it was going to be an all day affair.

Isn't it just natural to respect the aggressor in an aggressive sport? Don't you respect an aggressive boxer who came to fight more than the skilled counterpuncher who plays chicken the whole bout? I mean, even when he loses but goes down swinging you tend to have a certain level of respect for what that aggressive fighter tried to do.

Only time will tell what a Pat Shurmur coached Browns team looks like on the field. But if he sticks to what he said he will do and provides us with a team that is aggressive and one that chooses to attack rather than put all of its effort into countermeasures, then this is one Browns fan that will be excited and welcomes that change.

It is time to get back to seeing rabid, aggressive Dawgs protecting our house. Cleveland needs the kind of watch dawgs that don't have a problem with not only chasing you out of the yard but that also will take a nice chunk out of one of your butt cheeks.

Just so you will remember where you have been and think twice about coming back.

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