Now it's finally time to say, "Welcome to Cleveland, Pat Shurmur."

Because of an off season beset by labor problems and a lockout, Cleveland Browns fans really haven't had the proper chance to get to know Shurmur, and he them. When Shurmur awoke Monday morning after a disaster of a game against the Tennessee Titans it was really the first time that he got to fully understand why this Browns' franchise puts the "fun" in dysfunctional.

How he deals with a mini crisis that he mostly created will say a lot about whether or not Shurmur will ultimately be successful as a head coach.

The wreckage of a game poorly played against the Titans is still smoldering. It's being fanned by all the various things that have fanned every flame in this franchise's inglorious rebirth: pissed off fans, clueless players, unsure coaching, oddly silent management.

This is the point, really, where Shurmur is going to have to decide what kind of head coach he

wants to be and team president Mike Holmgren is going to have to decide what kind of president he wants to be. In the aftermath of the Browns' loss, whatever strategy the two have landed on thus far might need to be reworked.

The most immediate crisis has to do with how a team can roll up more than 400 yards on offense, dominate time of possession and still suffer a blowout at the hands of a better but not great team.

Much of that is easily explained by the rather strange play calling by Shurmur, who serves as his own offensive coordinator. Apparently caught up in the emotion of the game (which is the danger, really, of serving as your own coordinator), Shurmur showed little commitment to a balanced offense at any point in the game and went with his instinct to throw the ball nearly every play, especially in the second half.

The pass plays he did call were unimaginative and the few runs he did add, particularly, at crucial moments, were strange. All you need to know on that count is that on a 4th and 1 play he called for a pitchout to his 3rd string running back. The play prior, which was 3rd and 1, was a dive play without a fullback.

Shurmur's play calling and his ability to perform two jobs before he's proven definitively he can perform one of them competently is just one of the issues fans are concerned about. The other is Shurmur's handling of the team's best offensive player, Peyton Hillis.

There's a rather disturbing chill between Shurmur and Hillis at the moment and it's mostly Shurmur's fault. It stems not from anything that happened in the Titans game but from the decision, apparently Hillis', to not play the previous week against Miami.

Hillis was replaced by Montario Hardesty and while Hardesty had a nice game, it wasn't a breakout performance. Yet when it mattered most against the Titans on Sunday, more often than not it was Hardesty on the field and Hillis left on the sidelines to ponder his fate. Even as Hardesty was proving his inability to catch a 3-yard pass consistently, Shurmur stayed with him and left Hillis to stew in his juices. You could see the frustration in Hillis' face.

The average fan can't possibly know what it takes to suit up in a NFL game, particularly when you're hurt or not feeling well. But I got a feeling that the average NFL fan wouldn't have gone to his day job with a strep throat, a fever and having just lost 10 pounds because of the flew. That's why companies have sick days.

But the NFL is a place where guys are supposed to play sick and hurt. The warrior mentality predominates and there's little tolerance for any player who doesn't suit up unless his limb is literally hanging by a thread, just ask Jay Cutler.

So it's not a surprise that there are players, former and active, among the Browns who are grumbling about Hillis not playing against Miami a week ago. But the biggest grumbler seems to be Shurmur, who for reasons pointed or petty has decided it's best to let the question of Hillis' commitment to the team linger.

After the game, Shurmur had a chance to step up and protect Hillis and decided instead to double down on the message he already was sending throughout the game by keeping Hillis on the sidelines. As the media probed Shurmur every which way to find out why he used Hillis so strangely against the Titans, the questioning naturally turned to the circumstances of the week before.

Shurmur said, succinctly, "he was sick. That was my understanding." See, that's the kind of mind games that coaches like to play. Former head coach Eric Mangini made a hobby out of doing just that. Shurmur could have stood up and protected his running back by saying "Peyton was sick. I assessed his condition and he was in no shape to play against the Dolphins. I didn't want him getting even sicker because I knew we'd need him against Tennessee, so I sent him home. That's the whole story and there is nothing more to it."

But instead Shurmur left Hillis dangling with his "that was my understanding" comment and said nothing, really, in his press conference on Monday to take the sting out of that statement. It speaks volumes. It tells you that Shurmur didn't buy Hillis' reasoning and it was also a message to the other players that they shouldn't think of ever using the same excuse to miss a game. Maybe that's why Alex Mack played with appendicitis.

But it also was an unnecessary and petty move by Shurmur to keep a controversy going that

doesn't serve the team dynamic well. No good can really come from having Hillis' teammates question his commitment and dedication.

Meanwhile, Hillis was doing his own talking in the locker room after Sunday's game, letting the media know that he and the head coach are indeed seeing things differently. When a player is upset with his playing time or the quality of plays being called when he is in, he always tells the media that they will need to ask the coach that question.

Hillis' postgame quotes were full of "I just run the plays that are called" and "you'll have to ask the coach about that" phrasing. It's the typical passive-aggressive way a player challenges a coach without calling him out publicly. Otherwise, a player like Hillis would have just toed the company line with a perfunctory "we just didn't execute" explanation of why a play didn't work.

So now Shurmur has a full-fledged locker room problem on his hands and one that he initiated. It will be interesting to see how he gets out of it or if he even wants to. Monday's press conference suggested that he was taking the easy road with a "controversy, what controversy?" approach. Some head coaches, like Mangini for instance, just let the pot boil and Shurmur's mostly done the same. Maybe that's effective but there is at least 10 years of dysfunction within this franchise to suggest that it's not very successful to building a team in this town.

This year's bye week is early but it didn't come a moment to soon. There's work to be done and much of it is inside Shurmur's head. He'll either recognize his mistakes and get them corrected or he'll take the road traveled by the Manginis and Josh McDaniels of the world and insist on his own correctness as he drags the team further down. In Cleveland we've already seen the latter. It would be refreshing to see the former.

This is your time, so welcome to Cleveland, Pat Shurmur.