John Hnat is fascinated with Browns fans downright giddy reaction to the firing of Maurice Carthon. In this excellent column, Hnat delves deeper into the Mo C firing, and examines the mob like mentality that Browns fans developed towards the teams embattled former offensive coordinator. His conclusion? Fans of this team are so thirsty, they will drink anything you give them.

I've been trying to understand why the firing of Maurice Carthon has been received so enthusiastically by Browns fans.

Understand, that's not because I have any love for Carthon. His numbers as an offensive coordinator speak (or should I say groan?) for themselves: Last in total yards of offense per game; 29th in number of plays run; 25th in points per game; last in total rushing yards; second to last in rushing yards per carry. (The points statistic is actually overstated, if you can imagine. The Browns are among the league's best in kickoff and punt returns, meaning that their offense typically has less distance to go to get to the end zone or at least into field goal position.) Those numbers may actually be an improvement over last season's, but that's damning with the faintest of praise.

Carthon's brusque personality and reported conflicts with others on the team (both players and coaches) have been described extensively elsewhere; no need to keep fishing in that lake.

Add to that the sports truism that coaches are hired to be fired. Want to be the most popular guy in town? Be the assistant head coach. Want to be the most hated guy in town? Remove “assistant” from that title. It looks like that truism applies to coordinators as well.

All guys are convinced of three things: that they bang like apes, that they’re great drivers, and that they can run an NFL offense. It doesn’t matter that their “resume” consists of drawing up a hook and lateral play that scored the winning touchdown for a neighborhood game thirty years ago (and that the score happened only because Billy Cunningham’s mom called him to supper, distracting him long enough so that he missed the tackle). Every fan out there with a Frye (or Couch … or Kosar …) jersey on his back on Sunday afternoons is convinced that he can call plays better than the guy who actually has the job.

So it’s certainly understandable to expect some degree of good riddance for Carthon. (Not that it should give us much hope for the 2006 season. Make a list of all the teams that have fired a coordinator halfway through the year, then turned their season around.)

But there’s something more here. Something unique to The Cleveland Experience. Michael J. Fox’s character in the movie “The American President” put his finger on it:

“They're so thirsty for it they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there's no water, they'll drink the sand.”

Make no mistake, Browns fans are thirsty. We’re parched. Dehydrated. Haven’t seen a drop of water in years. The last football team here moved to Baltimore; if this one skips town, it ought to relocate to the Atacama .

It's not even so much thirst for a winning team, although that is of course the dream. We just want *competence*. We want *hope*. We want a pulse in the offense. We want to see Josh Cribbs return the ball all the way to the opposing 25 yard line, getting tackled yet again by the kicker, and think something other than "cool! they're in field goal position!". We don't want the feeling that the game is over if the Browns fall behind by a touchdown. We want to see the ball in the hands of those high draft pick playmakers like Braylon and Kellen. (We're so enamored with the team, we're on a first-name basis with them, you see.)
We sure as hell don't want to see Lawrence Vickers throwing a pass. Ever.

That's why Carthon's firing has really resonated with Browns fans. I suppose it's possible that Jeff Davidson really is a Bill Walsh in embryo, and that his promotion will allow him to unlock the juggernaut hidden deep within whatever exactly it is we've seen on offense the past six games. (Although it is impossible to ignore that he was the position coach of the team's weakest unit.) But he doesn't really need to do all that well in order to earn a free pass from Browns fans, at least for a while.

Why is that?

The reply of Michael Douglas's character to Fox's says it all:

People don't drink the sand because they're thirsty. They drink the sand because they don't know the difference.

(*The author hastens to note that he does in fact bang like an ape and is an excellent driver.)*