Terry Pluto wrote a column that caught Gary Benz's attention yesterday, advocating NOT firing Mike Brown, despite the fact that no one but message board doomsdayers have suggested doing so. Ultimately, Gary agrees with Pluto, suggesting the notion makes no sense right now. However, if GM Danny Ferry can

If Terry Pluto isn't the best sportswriter in town, he's at least the hardest working. His columns appear in the Akron Beacon Journal with such annoying frequency that you kind of get the sense that he's being paid by the word. Still, most of what he says is worth reading and he often brings a perspective that you simply can't find elsewhere.

All that being said, it's difficult to completely grasp the point of his column Tuesday morning regarding Cavs head coach Mike Brown. (See column here) On the surface he appears to be supporting Brown during these somewhat turbulent times facing the Cavs. But beneath the surface he seems to be posing a question that no one has yet specifically asked: do the Cavs need to fire Mike Brown?

To this point, and other than some minor rumblings on the local sports talk stations, there doesn't seem to be any real consideration being given by anyone of replacing Brown as the coach. Yet there was Pluto setting up the straw man and then seemingly knocking it down with ease by pointing out the general ineffectiveness of interim coaches. In fact, the defense of Brown was so effortless that it made one wonder if Pluto's real aim was to at least start the debate over whether Brown is the right coach for this team.

Maybe the question is being raised because owner Dan Gilbert still suffers somewhat from a reputation as an activist owner with little patience. That impression was forged soon after Gilbert took over when he immediately dumped a grumpy and intransigent Paul Silas as head

coach. But since then Gilbert has remained mostly behind the scene, allowing General Manager Danny Ferry to guide the action. Brown is Ferry's guy and there is scant evidence, at best, suggesting either that Ferry is unhappy with Brown or, more generally, that Brown at all is the main problem plaguing this team.

It's understandable the attention the Cavs rather dour play has drawn lately. The Browns seem to be forever engaged in a game of chasing their own tail and pitchers and catchers don't report to Winter Haven for another few weeks. But regime change seems a little drastic to even be discussing at this point, unless everybody is at least convinced of two key points: 1. there is another coach currently available that is objectively better than Brown; and, 2. that this team, as currently constructed, is underachieving.

It's always difficult to tell, of course, whether there is a better coach available. The answer to that question usually is a qualified "yes" irrespective of who the current coach is. Likely there is any number of coaches, usually current assistants, just waiting to break through and odds are that one of them will be a great coach. Finding that person, of course, is the difficult part, but pretending that there usually isn't someone better is simply naïve. The better and more pertinent issue is whether this hypothetically better coach can do more with what is currently on the roster than Brown. It's here that doubts enter.

A strong consensus seems to be emerging that Ferry's working assumption going into the season was flawed—that another year of growth coupled with a healthy Larry Hughes would magically elevate this team past the second round of the playoffs. In many ways, it's the same assumption Indians GM Mark Shapiro made entering into the 2006 season and we all saw how that turned out. Shapiro has since spent the off-season filling holes and bringing in veterans to complement a young team with some talent. Now, of course, some corners are screaming that he's not giving "the kids" the chance to develop, so it appears that Shapiro can't win either way. The point though is that standing pat while other teams around you continue to adjust has a better chance of succeeding if your team was already of championship caliber. Whatever one thinks of the Cavs last season, it was clear that talent-wise they were not a championship team and neither were the Indians at the end of 2005.

The silence coming from Ferry's office these days is deafening. It's doubtful that he's ducking the media. More likely, he's spending every waking moment trying to figure out how

to find a credible point guard without otherwise stripping away other key elements. Given the Cavs salary situation and its lack of draft picks, making a deal that can spark the team like Flip Murray did last year is a long shot.

If a deal is not in the offing, the only other option for the Cavs is for Brown to rethink his personnel. To this point he's been reluctant, hoping against hope that a stronger defensive effort holds the key and that somehow Eric Snow's skills will quit diminishing. And this is where Brown needs to be most careful. As a young coach he needs to learn that altering his philosophies is not a sign of weakness, rather it's a sign of strength. If Ferry can't make any meaningful maneuvers, Brown needs to adapt to his players rather than continuing to try to pound square pegs into round holes. This is a lesson that the best coaches in every sport eventually learned and is what Brown needs to learn quickly if he's going to quell talk of his being replaced. Continuing to do the same things in the same way but hoping for a different result is not a strategy. It's the definition of insanity.