I went to great extremes to avoid the travesty that was last Sunday's swan song for Browns head coach Eric Mangini. Instead of going to the game on Sunday I spent Saturday night and Sunday morning in the back of an ambulance, in a hospital emergency room, having a CAT scan and a fun lumbar puncture procedure more commonly known as a spinal tap and being intravenously fed a cocktail of various narcotics like morphine and then dilaudin.

And going through all of that was still better than going to the game.

Thankfully for me there were still pain killers going through my system at 1pm last Sunday. I did notice that some faces in the crowd seemed to be as dulled and vacant as mine despite those people (although it's hard to say with certainty with Browns fans) not having access to the best drugs healthcare can buy and administer.

You always have to look on the bright side as you go through life. One could focus on the fact that before January 2nd my healthcare family plan deductible had been met or that a staggering amount of money was to be paid out for what insurance didn't cover, that I'm not permitted to drive or go to work due to dizziness, that I can look at the extremely bright lights of a computer monitor or televsion for only about 30 minutes before having to lie down, that I still have two more diagnostic tests to undergo Tuesday morning, that my neurologist has all the personality of a potato peel and that doctors had/have no clue why I suddenly felt like the runner-up in an Amish rake fight. So if this effort seems disjointed understand it's being written for those 30 minute blocks of time when I can actually look at the computer and the only reason I'm doing it is to try and restore some sense of normalcy and control in my day.

But hey, looking at the bright side I can honestly say it was nice not to be at Cleveland Browns Stadium last Sunday and it was nice to be glazed over the Monday when Mangini was let go

and all the pundits had their say.

I was an Eric Mangini guy. I thought what he instilled in the organization was worth the modest number of wins and that once order and discipline were a part of the Browns culture that Mangini deserved the chance to chase those wins before being sent packing.

But I can't argue with letting him go after his team wet the bed the last four games of 2010.

Mangini knew he was on thin ice with Mike Holmgren and the new Browns front office and that nothing less than improvement in wins and losses would earn him another year on the sidelines. He had a really good chance to be able to show that improvement and argue his case before his team lost to the Bills, Bengals, Baltimore and Steelers.

Mangini should be buoyed by the fact that he has two years left of regular paychecks coming from the Browns who are probably paying more people to NOT coach or work in their front office as they are paying TO actually coach and work in their front office.

But regardless of that fact Mangini had his chances to survive and he didn't cash them in. You can argue it's because of injuries or teams getting a book on the Browns and loading up to stop Peyton Hillis while daring Colt McCoy to beat them. Both are legitimate reasons why the Browns lost all four of their final ball games. But that doesn't matter. Mangini and the Browns gave Holmgren all the reason he needed to bring in someone he's more familiar and comfortable with and that's exactly what Holmgren will now do.

So, okay, you guys may know all that and understand all that but the important question is: now what?

Seems to me that you can take one of two tracks on the Browns coaching search:

1. You can set yourself up for disappointment by believing the Browns need to make a splash with a 'name' head coach or;

2. You can make the determination that Mike Holmgren is to be trusted and has the experience and knowledge to choose a coach that will make this football team better whether you know that coach's name and resume' or not.

I think it's that simple and I'm firmly locked into choice #2.

I think there is a common misconception that Holmgren's greatest value to the Browns is his membership in the 'Old Boys Club' that will automatically have him handing over the keys to the car to one of his cronies or protégés. People know Holmgren's affiliation with Jon Gruden, Marty Mornhingweg and the rest and assume it will be one of those ex-head coaches who get the job.

And it ***might*** end up being one of that crew that also includes Brad Childress, Mike Mularkey, Steve Mariucci and Dick Jauron.

But let me submit to you that the greatest value of a guy like Mike Holmgren, who we openly welcomed in Cleveland as a legitimate 'football man', is that he also has the benefit of understanding what makes a fine football coach and that he may be able to find you the next Andy Reid or the next Mike Holmgren from the coordinator ranks today.

Regardless of what you want to see happen it comes down to one thing and one thing only; do you trust The Big Show?

My answer to that question is that I do trust Holmgren but even if I didn't it wouldn't matter. This coaching decision will define Mike Holmgren as an NFL executive and will go a long, long way toward defining his legacy in Cleveland. It's that important and I think Holmgren understands that. And with the egos that NFL coaches and executives possess Holmgren has a lot of incentive to be thorough and be right.

So if he decides on a guy like Mornhingweg or Mularkey he's taking into careful consideration that these guys both were deemed failures in their first NFL head coaching gigs and he's hiring them because of their development since that time. The league allows for second (and third

and fourth) chances for many coaches (there's a guy who failed his first time around in Cleveland walking around in Foxboro with a crown on his head) and I'm betting Holmgren is not installing a guy in the position that he doesn't truly believe will make him look good.

I'm also saying that if your expectations are to be 'wowed' by this process and the ultimate decision of who will be coaching this team you should just get disappointed today and get over it tomorrow because Bill Cowher ain't walking through the Browns locker room doors and every other candidate is either inexperienced or has failed miserably at some point in their career.

Here's how I summarize Browns Fan in terms of what they want: no 'Old Boys Club' retread and no 'unknown' offensive or defensive coordinator who's being hired to be a puppet of Holmgren. Think about it. Every head coach in the league was either an OC or a DC or a position coach, right? And every head coach in the NFL was assumedly hired by someone at least once, right? (You really need to have answered 'yes' to that one or you need to start back at the top) So if you don't want a guy who's got experience but failed at some point *during that experience*
and you don't want a raw OC or DC, well, tell me just who the hell do you want? Butch Davis Part Deux? Or is it Jon Gruden or tears on the pillow?

I hear a lot about Gruden's credentials and I wonder if people are rooting for Gruden because of the 'Chucky' persona and his intensity or because of his record. And when I recall that Gruden won his Super Bowl in Tampa with Tony Dungy's roster and then won a total of twelve games over the next two years I have to scratch my head. He's a good football coach (who has often left a trail of dead and discarded quarterbacks in his wake) but one who should remind no one of Paul Brown.

But people know him and they recognize his name and scowl and immediately that familiarity raises him in their eyes above a guy like Pat Shurmur, the Rams offensive coordinator and a guy you likely have no clue about.

You trust or you do not. There are no varying degrees here. It's like looking at your daughter's boyfriend in that regard. Unless you're completely sure that you trust that kid he's not getting out of your sight. You don't trust that guy 'somewhat' or 'to a certain degree' and let him take your daughter out of the house. It's the same deal with Holmgren.

You do or you don't.

If you do, you let this play out as it will and judge the results of the hire and your faith in two or three years.

If you don't trust Holmgren then warm up the pipes because you're in luck. Your misery will continue in the short term no matter what he does and I know plenty of people out there who aren't really happy unless they're miserable. Plus you can always tell us how much you hated the hire in two or three years if it doesn't work.

What Do We Know About Shurmur?

The 45-year old Pat Shurmur is the nephew of former Packer defensive coordinator Fritz Shurmur who worked under Mike Holmgren in Green Bay. So while Pat Shurmur has never officially worked for or under Holmgren he is not a complete stranger to The Walrus.

Shurmur also worked seven years for Andy Reid who ***is*** a direct Holmgren protégé and he did so as a quarterback coach for Donovan McNabb and Kevin Kolb. So Shurmur is a tried and true West Coast Offense disciple.

Steve Spagnuolo tabbed Shurmur to be his offensive coordinator in St Louis two years ago and in that role Shurmur took rookie quarterback Sam Bradford under his wing and led the Rams to the brink of the NFC West title and a playoff berth. Anyone who watched last Sunday night's game between St. Louis and Seattle that decided the division noted that Bradford worked underneath routes nearly all night long and rarely threw the ball greater than 20 yards downfield.

To sum up: West Coast Offensive disciple, from the Holmgren/Reid family tree, worked with quarterbacks in the WCO system including McNabb, Kolb and a young Sam Bradford. When you put that together with the fact that Colt McCoy seems born to run the WCO given his intelligence, ability to read defenses and throw the ball to the right spots on the field and his lack of a big arm, the potential hiring of Shurmur makes a lot of sense.

And if you're going to hire a newly minted head coach who doesn't have experience in setting up an organization underneath him right away, what better way do you know to mitigate that than by having Mike Holmgren himself here to help show you the way?

That won't stop the potential hiring of Shurmur (or any other coordinator for that matter) from being unpopular given most fans couldn't pick Shurmur out of a lineup but, again, it may turn out that this is the reason that you applauded the Holmgren hiring in the first place. Jammies…err…Randy Lerner could throw tons of money at a 'name' ex-head coach too. It took him literally seconds to fall in love with Eric Mangini and offer him everything but his soccer team for Mangini to come to Cleveland. But Lerner didn't have the knowledge, the people or the organization in place, with a real, honest to goodness football guy, to understand the intricacies of how all the pieces fit together and to dig more deeply into what coaches were out there that might be the best fit.

The more I think about it the more I believe Pat Shurmur (or someone a whole lot like him) is the next coach of your Cleveland Browns.

The Other Teams

Please. My head hurts enough with whatever is going on up there. I have neither the time nor the interest in watching the Cavs or following the January minutiae of Cleveland Indians news. If you want Tribe thoughts then you read Paul Cousineau and Al Ciammaichella (or Al Eyechart as I will now more easily refer to him). They go into far more depth on the Tribe than I can or care to.

If you truly want more Cavs news then you should also seek medical assistance. Just understand they are terrible and they are banged up and you pretty have the story. And that's not a bad thing. They're nicely aligned to have more than their fair share of ping pong balls in the hopper come lottery day next spring.

Given they lost the 'easiest' game on their recently started west coast road trip things are looking even better.

Stay well and don't take your health or your family for granted folks. Things change in literally a heartbeat that can turn it all upside down.

Talk to you next week and be sure to follow me on Twitter if you're into that stuff at www.twitter.com/peeker643