



CRENNEL: NEVER TOO OLD TO BE THE HEAD MAN

The campus of Western Kentucky University and the head coach’s office at Cleveland Browns Stadium are separated by 460 miles ... and 35 years.

Cleveland Browns rookie head coach **ROMEO CRENNEL** accepted his first football coaching job at Western Kentucky (his alma mater) in 1970 as a graduate coaching assistant. Today he holds the reins to one of the NFL’s most storied franchises. When the Browns host the in-state and AFC North rival Cincinnati Bengals on Kickoff Weekend, Crennel will be 58 years and 85 days old, making him the 11th-oldest rookie NFL head coach since 1970.

The Lynchburg, Virginia native coached 11 seasons in the college ranks (1970-80) until being hired as the New York Giants’ special teams/defensive assistant coach in 1981. Crennel then served the Giants (1981-92), Patriots (1993-96) Jets (1997-1999), Browns (2000), and Patriots (2001-04) as an assistant coach before returning to Cleveland this season. In the Giants’ Super Bowl championship years, Crennel was the team’s special teams coach (1986) and defensive line coach (1990), respectively. He was the Patriots’ defensive coordinator in all three of their Super Bowl wins.

“Now I have the opportunity to take the next step, be in charge of a team, and see if I can be as successful as I have been in the past,” says Crennel.

Pro Football Hall of Fame coach **BILL WALSH**, who walked off three Super Bowl fields as a champion with the 49ers, knows what Crennel faces as he aims to move the Browns from the cellar to the mountaintop.

In considering Crennel’s impressive resume, Walsh says, “There’s clearly an advantage in developing your skills and philosophy as a coach and teaching people. There isn’t a substitute for experience. He has a distinct advantage over others in that regard.

“I thought I had that advantage after I had spent 10 years as an assistant,” adds Walsh. “On the other hand, a ‘first time’ is a ‘first time.’ The unknown is out there and he’s still a rookie head coach, but his advantage will be his command of his knowledge and teaching ability.” A look at the oldest NFL rookie coaches since 1970:

ROOKIE NFL HEAD COACH	AGE	SEASON	TEAM
Dick LeBeau	63 years, 22 days	2000	Cincinnati Bengals
Bud Wilkinson	62 years, 133 days	1978	St. Louis Cardinals
Rod Rust	62 years, 38 days	1990	New England Patriots
Dick MacPherson	60 years, 301 days	1991	New England Patriots
Ernie Hefferle	60 years, 124 days	1975	New Orleans Saints
Gary Moeller	59 years, 291 days	2000	Detroit Lions
Mike White	59 years, 242 days	1995	Oakland Raiders
Jerry Burns	59 years, 226 days	1986	Minnesota Vikings
Jim Bates	58 years, 174 days	2004	Miami Dolphins
Bud Carson	58 years, 135 days	1989	Cleveland Browns
<i>Romeo Crennel</i>	<i>58 years, 85 days</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>Cleveland Browns</i>



NOLAN MARKS A FATHER-SON HEAD-COACHING FIRST

In many walks of life, it is commonplace for sons to follow in their father’s footsteps. In the NFL, it is a rarity. Only four sons have followed their father’s career paths to the sidelines, but none have coached on a permanent basis the same team their father did.

Now new San Francisco 49ers head coach **MIKE NOLAN** will. Mike follows in the footsteps of his father, **DICK NOLAN**, 49ers head coach from 1968-75.

While Dick was putting together a 56-56-5 record that included two trips to the NFC Championship Game, Mike remembers running along the sidelines as a ball and towel boy.

“There are a lot of great memories for me,” says Mike. “I had a great relationship with a lot of players, like **DAVE WILCOX** (49ers linebacker from 1964-74). For them to throw me a towel was a big deal.”

Ask Mike Nolan to name the person who influenced him the most and he quickly responds, “my father.” Mike also becomes the second NFL head-coach son of a head-coach father to follow a father who was an NFL defensive back. Dick Nolan was a cornerback and safety for the New York Giants and Chicago Cardinals from 1954-61, playing in the Giants’ NFL Championship games in 1956, 1959 and 1961.

The other NFL DB who produced an NFL head coach (**DAVID SHULA**) was **DON SHULA** who played the position for Cleveland, Baltimore and Washington from 1951-57.

FATHER-SON HEAD-COACHING DUOS

Father	Team(s)	Son	Team(s)
Jim Mora	New Orleans (1986-96), Indianapolis (1998-2001)	Jim Mora Jr.	Atlanta (2004-present)
Dick Nolan	San Francisco (1968-75), New Orleans (1978-80)	Mike Nolan	San Francisco (2005)
Bum Phillips	Houston (1975-1980), New Orleans (1981-85)	Wade Phillips	New Orleans (1985)*, Denver (1993-94), Buffalo (1998-99), Atlanta (2000)
Don Shula	Baltimore (1963-69), Miami (1970-95)	David Shula	Cincinnati (1992-96)

