"We're excited to get things going and we're excited for the season. We do have to do some things to fill our roster out."

Six months ago, Pat Shurmur was hired as head coach of the Browns. Now, with the lockout over, he will finally get the chance to coach.

Ditto General manager Tom Heckert. The man who began rebuilding the Browns with a strong draft in 2010 will get the chance to continue the rebuilding process by signing undrafted rookies, signing veteran free agents and Browns free agents he would like back if they are willing to return, plus signing the players the Browns drafted in April. He and other general managers will be allowed to make trades through Oct. 18.

The Browns have 55 players under contract. Added to that group is kicker Phil Dawson, the Browns' franchise player, and tight end Evan Moore, an exclusive rights free agent. The Browns have eight draft picks. Add that up and Heckert still must come up with 25 players to round the roster out at 90.

"There is no question we're excited," Heckert said. "Pat and I have obviously been in the office. We're sitting around talking about a lot of things. At least now we're seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

"We're excited to get things going and we're excited for the season. We do have to do some things to fill our roster out."

That's because the Browns are in a no apologies youth movement. Soon after finishing 5-11 for the second straight year, Heckert made the decision to release six veterans well into their 30s, a group that includes defensive lineman Shaun Rogers plus linebackers David Bowens and Eric Barton.

Seventeen players from the Browns' 2010 roster are free agents, and of that group 15 are unrestricted. Some will be back, but many are not in the Browns' plans.

There are guys we want back and other guys we aren't going to bring back," Heckert said. "They might be good players and get a lot of attention from other teams. Hopefully the guys we do want back we'll be able to get back."

Teams were forbidden to contact players or agents after the lockout started March 12, but they could contact them beforehand. That allowed teams more than two months to let it be known which of their own players they wanted back. They were not allowed to contact potential free agents from other teams.

High on the list of Browns free agents Heckert wants to retain is defensive end Jayme Mitchell. Mitchell, acquired by Heckert last season in a trade with the Vikings, never got the chance to play under Eric Mangini. Before the lockout began, though, Heckert let Mitchell know he will not be ignored again if he returns.

"I think Jayme understands the situation," Heckert said. "He knows he's a better fit in a 4-3 and he knows we're going to use a 4-3. He knows I like him because I traded for him."

Heckert said he is ready for the free-agent flood to begin. Just don't expect an extreme makeover on the shores of Lake Erie when the free-agent waters subside.

"It's pretty much crazy all the time, anyway," Heckert said. "There are really two waves of free agency. The first wave is the guys who are going to get the big money and are in the most demand. Normally the deals are done right away. You're going to be on the phone as soon as you're allowed to talk to the agent. The deal is going to be done before you bring the player in.

"I think there will be a day or two to let the dust settle and see who else is out there. There are going to be a ton of free agents out there. I don't think you need to go crazy right off the bat.

"We're not going to be huge players in free agency. We really do believe

you build through the draft. If you can help yourself in free agency, you do it, but we're not going to sign 10 guys in free agency."

The Browns signed three free agents last year - tight end Benjamin Watson, linebacker Scott Fujita and offensive lineman Tony Pashos.