If we've learned anything about ourselves along the way, in this seemingly never-ending saga of being Cleveland fans, it's this. We don't like being told how to feel it. It's like virtually every character on ABC's LOST uttered at one point or another,
don't tell me what I can't do.
From "grow up" to "get over it", we just want everyone to stop telling us what to do or how to feel about certain things because we don't fit in the line with the status quo.

On those days when we choose not to be doormats, to ignore the criticism of our fans and our city, we are told to know our place.

It's gotten to the point where we can't even have the in-fighting amongst ourselves and chalk it up as a family spat of sorts because we don't have any common ground as a fan base; there are fans and there are critics.

The fans end up being the victims, and the critics are simply an extension of the naysayers from outside the city, county, and state lines. Any more, it doesn't make much of a difference who makes the suggestions; don't tell us how to feel. We don't want to hear it about Lebron James, Art Modell, Ray Lewis, Dan Gilbert, or Larry Dolan.

If there's a legitimate argument to be made, one that can enlighten us and change our minds, feel free to present it.

Otherwise, let us be us, and don't get pissed because we don't want anyone walking all over us.

I mean, that's where I'm at, in a place where I don't have to take anyone's crap because I don't fit in the box they want me to be in.

So, after seeing the Baltimore Ravens win Super Bowl XLVII on Sunday night, I thought I'd share with you exactly where I sit with everything. Some people may share this sentiment, whereas other may choose not to. I'm not out to be the person I've come to dislike, no one should feel obligated to feel any certain way about things; we're just out to share some perspective.

I am proud to say that I did not give the Baltimore Ravens the satisfaction of ruining my week, or even my night.

I doubt there's anyone more surprised by that than I am. You don't have to go back very far to find a version of me so angry about the Baltimore Ravens run of success this January, a couple of weeks or even a couple of hours. I'd grown fatigued of those lessons in life that dictate life isn't fair, and between Art Modell's Hall of Fame candidacy and the very realistic possibility of Ray Lewis going out on top, to encouraging cheers and praise, I had essentially reached my boiling point.

I wasn't pulling my hair out, but more than once, I'd weighed the possibility that the Perfect Storm of all the worst case scenarios in sport would actually drive me insane.

Art Modell had moved the team he owned, the one I'd been foolish enough to call "my team" in 1995. I was too young to deal with it then; I just worked every Sunday and pretended football didn't exist. The Browns may or may not have made the playoffs in 1995, in a parallel world where Baltimore has no offer for Art Modell, but in reality, they did not.

The Browns, coming off a playoff appearance in 1994, traded Eric Metcalf to gain draft position, which was all for not when Kyle Brady was taken by the Jets a pick ahead of the Browns upgraded position, in the 1995 draft.

Combined with a dreadful 1995 season, which was possibly a result of the off-field distraction that rumors of The Move had become, Cleveland netted draft position and picks that netted Baltimore Jonathan Ogden and Ray Lewis, once the dust cleared.

On Saturday, Ogden was officially announced as an inductee to this year's Hall of Fame class. In five years, Lewis will join him, and he will deserve to do so.

Honestly, it surprises me that a loose tie like that, between the Browns setting up the 1996 draft for Baltimore and the career longevity of Ogden and especially Lewis, would eat at me.

When Matt Stover, the last remaining 1995 Cleveland Brown on the Ravens roster, left Baltimore for Indianapolis in 2009 after 18 years with the franchise (no matter how the colors and history is parsed out, the old Browns and new Ravens are the same franchise), I really thought it was over.

Modell hadn't owned the team in years, and there were no holdovers.

What Modell had once stolen was no longer his, and it existed with nothing that was once ours.

For years I had believed things about Ray Lewis, that he was just the victim of some bad luck in Atlanta over a decade ago, and I never really questioned anything. It wasn't until about a year ago that a friend of mine, one who isn't a Browns fan, mentioned how he believed that Lewis was a cold-blooded murderer.

I dismissed the notion, and decided to read up on things, to make sure this friend had all of the facts, that there was no way Lewis did it, no matter how much a Browns fan would have wanted that to be so. I ended up feeling very differently about the benefit of the doubt that I'd offered the Ravens linebacker for the better part of a decade.

To make a long story short, the facts that I'd gathered had led me to doubt his absolute innocence. Now, I obviously wasn't in Atlanta, outside the club, that night, so I really don't know whether Lewis did or did stick Jacinth Baker or Richard Lollar with one of the brand new knives that some of his friends had purchased that week, but I'm left to believe that the two young men who originally hailed from Akron are dead because of Ray Lewis. It doesn't matter to me, whether he actually did any of the stabbing, if Ray Lewis was a social worker, Kellye Smith wouldn't be raising Richard Lollar's daughter on her own. I won't apologize for believing that, even if some hurl the perceived insult, "typical Cleveland fan" at me.

RIP THE DEVIL
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