As Browns fans, there hasn't been much to be happy about since the team returned to the league in 1999. But this is the one time of the year you can be happy, optimistic, and full of bravado as a fan. And Mansfield Lucas isn't missing his opportunity to show the love while he still can. Training camp starts one week from today!

Ahhhhh, it's mid July, I've had a nice, relaxing few weeks to chill and enjoy the best Cavs season ever, and partake in baseball season.

Too bad baseball season ends next week. Not really.

Thank God NFL football is back and training camp opens in about a week. Just think, starting on July 27th there is Cleveland Browns football activity until the rest of 2007, at least. Righteous.

Despite my occasionally having issues with Phil and Romeo and the punkin-domed homies, I am no hata. Nuh-uh. Far from it. I love the Browns like I love beer. I hit my share of games in the flesh, too. Unfortunately, the best part of the game for most of the time from 1999 until 2006 took place from about 7:00 am until noon in the damn Muni Lot. At last year's opener, the human incarnation of Cap'n Morgan himself, turns to me and busts out with *"This year, it's gonna be DIFFERENT!"* His accomplice, who goes by Lou the Toe despite wearing a Jim Brown jersey, sustained by a breakfast of Kamchatka screwdrivers (

one man pours while the other man's liver fails
), grilled meats, and assorted Great Lakes and Guinness, keeps up the rap about how we gonna shred this season and kick major booty. I find myself buying in, and come Monday my voice is gone from screaming *"IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII got a feeeeeeelin', Browns be goin' to the SUUPER Bowl!"*
at the top of my lungs on the epic walk with the thousands from Muni Lot to
The House-We-Drunks-Built
. Hell, you gotta lose your voice for something while the games are close. Past the Frankenbongers. Past the decked out RV's. Past the mountains of empties all the way to the gates of CBS, the cry goes up.

C'mon, if you're a Browns fan, you know the seasons you go through within a season. One of our other STO TCF pundits and I were talking about it this week. Check out his take on the STO / Cleveland Fan Browns' forum. But ignore his ending and what we Browns' fans believe to be the cynical inevitability of our time honored reality, otherwise known as
"Woe is Me Syndrome"
, or
"WiMS"
TM
as our own Dr. Phil coined it
. Now is the time for unbridled optimist in us to have his or her day.

Every day one draft choice is going to start and be an impact player this season, perhaps a pro bowler the next. The second year players are going to blossom because after all, they were

just rookies last year and will get better, right? Every free agent signed will be better than he was on his former team and fill a hole nicely, and it will all just gel perfectly. Charlie Frye is going to have the light bulb go off, and Brady Quinn will show well in limited action, meaning we'll be able to trade one for a high pick AND have the young QB of the present and future. Braylon gets over his issues and explodes like all great wide receivers in year three. The Souldjah reveals that he had the most successful micro fracture surgery ever, and by mid season we're wondering what in the world we're going to do with both Hank Fraley and LeCharles Bentley, and marveling at our 7 quality defensive backs when Gary Baxter plays dime safety. Injuries? What are those? Jamal Lewis puts up 1,800 yards behind Joe Thomas, who looks like Tony Boselli. Ryan Tucker finds the fountain of youth with his knee after a season of rest, and Eric Steinbach and Seth McKinney give us the best pair of guards since Joe D and Robert "I'm not Stonewall" Jackson. Kam-Rahn Wimbley is Derrick Thomas re-born, and Nyquil Jackson puts runners to sleep with his hits - behind the line of scrimmage. Willie McGinest decides he gives a damn after all, but Peek is also a force. And 950 pounds of well-marbled defensive line beef actually stuffs the run.

It's July. Dream. Do it. When you go to camp or watch the nightly reports on STO, let yourself go for a while. You just bought the mega millions ticket. Ignore the numbers that will soon be coming from the drawing and live the fantasy. Where will you be and what will you do on September 9th when a Brady Quinn to Syndric Steptoe slant hangs the 60

th

point on the arrogant Appalachians and their slacked jawed mullet-under-trucker-cap-headed yinzer fans stand agape while Toothless Ben is

doing an Elvis Grbac

on the bench after being

Turkey Jonesed

, mumbling if anyone has seen his bike (

and his baseball

)? Where will you be and what will you do when we win the Super Bowl? Don't succumb to WiMS yet. It's not even August.

There's a gleam, men. A *GLEEM*. Let's get that gleam. This year, it's gonna be DIFFERENT!