As he does every Monday morning, Brian McPeek checks in to recap the weekend that was in Cleveland sports. The top news? The continued resurgence of our Cleveland Browns. A solid road win in The Big Apple against the Jets has the orange and brown now at 8-5 on the season and in the catbird's seat for a playoff spot. And it's looking more likely by the day that we'll be playing the Steelers first round. Brian also hits on the triumphant return of Mr. Glass, Larry Hughes ... and the fan meltdown over the Indians acquisition of Jamey Carroll.

New Surroundings

What do you wear to a BIG regular season football games?

I'm at a loss. I have no idea how to act. The Browns have a huge game coming up next Sunday against the Buffalo Bills. The Browns took care of business against the Jets to run their surprising and refreshing record to 8-5 on the season. The Browns win, coupled with a Tennessee loss in OT to the Chargers gives the Browns the inside track to a wildcard spot if, IF, they can win a couple ballgames the rest of the way.

On Sunday in New York they did just that. Barely.

I have to believe Jets coach Eric Mangini needed a big effort from his fantasy football place-kicker Mike Nugent in whatever league he plays in. That would explain him kicking field goal after field goal in the final three minutes of the game.

I also imagine the Jets special teams meetings last longer than some Kubrick films given all the maneuverings Nugent made on onside kicks, squib kicks, fake onside kicks that resulted in squib kicks and whatever else the Jets use but didn't show on Sunday.

Jamal Lewis continued his second half surge with 120 yards and a rather large 31yd clinching TD with about a minute left. Derek Anderson was mediocre but he found Braylon Edwards often enough to get the Browns out of the New York/New Jersey area with a win. The defense was stellar and stout on an early goal line stand that ended with a Sean Jones interception of Kellen Clemens. They were less than stellar for most of the 2nd half, allowing the Jets a couple easy scores to make things more interesting than they rightfully should have been.

You don't have to be great to win these games. Just a little bit better than the team you're up against. The Browns couldn't rise to that challenge in the desert last

week but they got it done against a pretty bad (but feisty) Jets squad this past Sunday.

So now the 7-6 Bills come to Cleveland next week for a game with severe playoff implications for both teams. Not since the "Run William Run" game against Atlanta five years ago have Browns fans had a chance to cheer their club with anything other than draft position on the line.

At the beginning of the season all that was asked was for this club to not make me feel stupid for my patronage and to give me some excitement on Sundays in the fall. Mission accomplished. Now, like everyone else in this season of giving, I want them to give me more.

Thank God

Larry Hughes returned to the Cav lineup this past weekend against the Charlotte Bobcats. Everything is going to be okay now.

Perhaps spurred on by his return and his 6-17 shooting effort, the Cav were able to stay with the Eastern Conference power all evening long. Which was a nice change of pace given the rest of the week.

The Cav lost by embarrassing amounts to New Jersey and to the Gilbert Arenas-less Washington Wizards before staying close to the Bobcats. Sure, the Bobcats had lost 7 straight games before beating the Cav, but they went into the game Saturday clearly confident that they were the more talented basketball team.

And they were.

And that remains the fatal flaw of this Cavalier team. They have no other threats on the floor when LeBron James is either resting or ailing. This past week alone exposed that fact once more. Two

mediocre teams and one aspiring to mediocrity had more talent than did the Cav without LBJ. New Jersey clearly outclassed Cleveland with Jason Kidd and Richard Jefferson on the court. Washington, even without Arenas, was superior in scoring and playmaking ability with Caron Butler and Antawn Jamison. Even Charlotte, with Raymond Felton, Emeka Okafor, Gerald Wallace and Jason Richardson, out-paced anything Cleveland could throw out there.

Short of some miraculous Kidd or Andre Miller deal, this is the 2007-2008 Cleveland Cavalier club. It's LBJ and stay out of the way. All Cav fans can pray for is James stays healthy and takes all the big shots from here through the end of the year. In the East, that may be enough if the game's singular best talent can take over like he did in last season's playoffs.

Incidentally, there is not a single player on this

roster that should not be included in some type of deal to land a PG in the mode of either Kidd or Miller. That includes Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Drew Gooden or any other player you need to include in a deal that would land Miller or Kidd in Cleveland. A decent PG on this club makes the players remaining here in Cleveland exponentially better.

But when you're in contract hell like the Cav are for the next year or two, it's tough to find anyone out there who wants to bail you out.

In Case You Missed It

The www.theclevelandfan.com message boards were on fire with draftniks, minor league-ophiles and just plain haters up in arms over the Indians minor trade with the Colorado Rockies that brought utility infielder Jamey Carroll to the Tribe in exchange for a player to be named later.

You can find my article on the amusing message board explosion here.

From a strict baseball sense (and not as another psychological profile of message board users) this deal means next to nothing. The Indians received a marginal major league player who fills out their roster in exchange for a marginal minor league prospect.

While this certainly isn't a tit-for-tat with the Tigers after they acquired Miguel Cabrera and Dontrelle Willis for a bucket full of prospects, it's indicative of both how the Indians perceive their 2008 club as well as how they typically do business. This is not an organization that throws money at the free agent du jour nor is it an organization that sees itself as being able to decimate its minor league organizations by

pedaling all of its high ranking prospects for one impact player, no matter how great a player that may be.

The Tigers took a chunk out of their prospect list this off-season and they also go into 2008 with a Red Sox-like $140m payroll. That's not happening in Cleveland. Not today and not in the foreseeable future.

The Indians won more games last season than all but one franchise (the World Series winning Red Sox) and they're justifiably content to return most of their roster from last season, including a dominating pitching staff, to try and return to that same level this season. Banking on better years from Travis Hafner and Grady Sizemore and on continued development from Franklin Gutierrez, Ryan Garko, Asdrubal

Cabrera and Jhonny Peralta is a more sustainable method of competing each year than is depleting your prospects or your bankroll.

That said I'd be shocked if the Indian don't seek to upgrade over their current corner outfield options. The asking price on players like the oft-mentioned Jason Bay is too high right now. Like a house going up on the market, his price will likely become more negotiable in the spring as the Pirates stare another dismal season more squarely in the face.

And I'll be shocked if either Jamey Carroll or the player being traded for him ever get more mention than they have this weekend.