Browns season is right around the freaking corner. Three weeks until training camp. Two months until the home opener with the Cowboys. And it can't come soon enough given the way the Cavs season ended and the way Indians are playing. In Peeker's latest, he starts to look ahead to Browns season, noting fan enthusiasm is so high, he fears a slight letdown. And talks about the '08 Browns, their expectations, and the coming season.

Thank God. Browns season is nearly upon us.

What with the baseball season in Cleveland having crashed but still in the process of burning, one can turn his or her attention fully toward training camp and the start of the 2008 NFL season and avert one's eyes from the plumes of smoke and the carnage at Progressive Field.

It all gets under way for the Browns in three short weeks.

Hey, speaking of which, do you all remember last season?

Do you remember when the good guys, infused with a little bit of new blood and new talent, came within one game of extending their season? They were just one win away from playing their most meaningful games in years.

Remember how they stayed relatively healthy and really came together as a cohesive unit?

Do you remember all the good will and euphoria the team created and all of us looking ahead to the last couple games as we tried to will the team to another win?

How about how, right before our eyes, the team seemed to develop a couple of stars that promised to be productive for at least the foreseeable future? Remember how exciting it was and just how such high expectations were created for this season?

Yeah. Me too. All of that is what really makes *this Indians season* such a crushing, bitter, painful disappointment. It's also why I look forward to this Browns season with my fingers crossed and one eye closed.

The Browns captured our hearts last season with a 10-6 record and they gave us hope after seasons without it. That they did so was especially startling given their season-opening 34-7 beat down at the hands of the Steelers. I didn't see 6-10 coming, much less 10-6.

But the Browns also sent 2008 expectations skyrocketing, much like the 2007 Indians did after coming a game away from the World Series last fall.

I'm not here to kill any buzz you may have carried with you out of a productive Browns season last year. And I'm not trying to be a harbinger of doom. God knows you can't fall out of your chair in this town without landing on one of those already. I'm here to provide some balance and some perspective to what promises to be an interesting Browns season. I'm here to remind you (as if the Indians did not) that past earnings are not necessarily indicative of future success.

What I will acknowledge is that the Browns of 2008 are substantially better and more competitive today than they have been at any time since they returned to Cleveland in 1999. Offensively they are a legitimate threat to score every time they put the ball in play. They sport a game-breaking wide out, a punishing running back with gas left in the tank and a competent quarterback (whichever of them ultimately is under center) to lead the offense.

They can also lay claim to a tight end that is among the game's very best and an offensive line that was vastly improved last season due to a couple of acquisitions prior to the 2007 season.

If that's not enough the Browns also boast a Pro Bowl KR/PR in Joshua Cribbs. That means they can also score at times *when the opponent puts the ball in play*.

As to the defense, the hope is that Shaun Rogers and Corey Williams do for the defensive line and the defense as a whole what Eric Steinbach and Joe Thomas did for the offensive line and the offense.

With Rogers and Williams helping to tie up offensive lineman there is an increased opportunity (theoretically) for Kamerion Wimbley. D'Qwell Jackson and rookie Beau Bell to make more impactful plays either at or behind the line of scrimmage. There would also be (again, theoretically) less time for the defensive backs to have to chase premier wide receivers all over the field with the front seven applying more pressure.

But I'm not falling into the trap with the Browns that the Indians so cleverly set.

This Browns team will sneak up on exactly nobody this season.

This Browns team also plays a murderous schedule if last year's NFL records are any indication.

This Browns team is also painfully thin in regard to depth at the RB and DB positions. The season ending injury to CB Daven Holly was a kick in the teeth. Already thin due to the trade of Leigh Bodden to the Lions for Rogers, the Browns also lost DB Kenny Wright after he was arrested twice in thirty-five days for marijuana possession.

So while there is cause for optimism given where the Browns are as opposed to where they were a couple years ago, there's certainly no guarantee that the Browns will get to or improve upon the 10 wins from last season.

As Cleveland fans we tend to cling to the next biggest, greatest hope around the bend after the team that's currently playing disappoints us. We let 40+ years of aggregate disappointment ride with the next team's season. It's what keeps us going.

But like a heroine user seeking more and more of the drug to maintain or reach a high, the crashes of our expectations and the disappointments they beget become more difficult to withstand. Sports are the opiate of the Cleveland masses and we're already eyeing our next big score starting on July 23rd when training camp opens.

After the recent release of LeCharles Bentley I certainly don't have to advise that injuries can decimate the talent and depth of a football team before a season even begins. After watching Eric Wedge choke on the success of last season I don't have to caution fans that building a team into a winner and then actually going and out and winning under heavier expectations may be easier dreamed than done.

Just a word of caution Browns fans. Nothing more.

I'm with you in expecting big things this fall. I'm just hanging toward the back of the pack and approaching the season with both hands behind my back, those fingers crossed, and fully exposed to some type of sucker punch in the face.

I'm not saying that because of T(he) C(leveland) E(xperience) that it's coming. I'm just saying there's a bit of danger in assuming it's not.

Quietly now: Let's Go Browns.