In sports, there are two paths of loyalty. The first is a fans loyalty to their team, and the other is a professional athletes loyalty to their contract. That's it, that's as far as loyalty goes in professional sports. It just so happens that *these* athletes play for *our* team, and *our* money, more or less, pays their salary. So in other words, our respective loyalties directly intersect each other, and in consequence, from time to time things get a little messy. Over the years, the dollars of the industry piled up, the fame increased, our exposure and awareness became constant, and we got attatched. The only thing we share in common is our ability to simultaneously exchange the harsh reality that "this is a business." In the end, really what we have is a complicated love triangle.

But the relationship between the professional athlete and the fan isn't that complicated. It's mutual; completely, one-hundred percent, mutual. We're only as useful to them as they are to us, and vice versa. That's all it is, that's all it ever has been. Do I care that the Browns are kicking Josh Cribbs to the curb? No, I'm glad; the guy is over the hump. I like Cribbs, I wish him luck, but as a fan I have an agenda, and so do you; you actually have the exact same agenda as me. You probably don't need me to tell you this, but guys like LeBron James have their own agenda's, too. When they conflict with ours, it sucks. It really does. The fact of the matter is that things like loyalty and integrity don't exist in the mutuality between athletes and fans. We keep wanting to believe that they do; however, only when it's convenient for us to believe so. In the case of LeBron James, yea, it's more than convenient to believe so. He broke our hearts, made us look dumb, you know the whole spiel. When something of this magnitude happens, you remember. And when it happens in your formative years, you hang on to the lingering side effects for a while, maybe even forever. But in the giant realm of things, right now LeBron means nothing to Cavs fans; and Cavs fans mean nothing to him. If he were to put on a Cavaliers uniform again, all of this will suddenly change. And it's supposed to. That's how it works.

So when it comes to these rumors about LeBron coming back to Ohio, I'm not going to fight it. I'm not going to hope, or wish for it, either. In fact, it would appear that I'm about to disect it. Don't worry, I'm not proud of myself for doing this; I'm aware we still have 16 more months. But whether you love it or hate it, the Cleveland Cavaliers are the overwhelming favorites to land the services of LeBron James in 2014. This isn't just something that *could* happen, it's something that likely will.

If the Miami Heat has any intentions of keeping LeBron beyond the summer of 2014, they might want to start by exploring the plausibility of Inception, and whether or not its possible. In other words, Pat Riley is going to have to find a way to convince LeBron that he can keep winning title with Joel Anthony and Udonis Haslem. The only other alternative is to convince James, Wade, and Bosh (or at least two of the three) to take another pay-cut, and ask Heat owner Mickey Arison to swallow the $48 million tax that would come as a result. The ladder option seems do-able, until you recall last week, when LeBron was petulently bitching about the fact that he doesn't get enough credit for taking less money to play in Miami. Obviously we can't read too much into someone's words, especially a dude like LeBron, but I gotta say .... that I'm inclined to believe he won't be signing another deal at a discount rate. He's the best player on the planet, at some point you want to be paid like it.

LeBron will pursue a max deal, and rest assured, he will get *that* max deal. Financially speaking, as of right now, there are
11 teams
that could potentially offer James max dollars in 2014: The Bobcats, Pistons, Jazz, and Kings, just to name a few. But as you would expect, only a couple of teams will legitimately be in the running: Namely the Hawks, Lakers, Cavs, and some dark horse team that will eventually emerge because they'll find a way to dump all of their cap space on some degenerate franchise like the Nets.

Note: The Nets and Knicks will not be among the teams in the running. You might not have known this, but there's a certain disgrace threshold in sports, the ultimate form of

embarrassment a franchise can attain —the Nets have attained it; the Knicks are one more first round elimination away from joining them.

By 2014, the Atlanta Hawks may or may not have Dwight Howard, so they are scary. But they'd have to find a way to dump Al Horford, and the whole ordeal of doing so would just be a mess, not to mention a complete waste considering Danny Ferry is Atlanta's GM. Wait, would LeBron actually team back up with Danny Ferry? Likely not, but mostly because he simply wouldn't want to go to Atlanta. But if he did... (slap-to-face)

The Lakers, meanwhile, could offer LeBron the following incentives: The chance to play in Hollywood alongside Dwight Howard and a 43 year old Steve Nash. And the fantastic, once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to finish his career in the shadow of Kobe Bryant.
(Hmmm, something about this doesn't smell right.)
We're not positive, but we're pretty sure this is why LeBron passed on Chicago back in 2010 despite the fact that it was the best fit for him. He didn't want to play under the shadows of Jordan. And I can't blame him.

We're also pretty sure Howard won't be staying in L.A. The Lakers might actually be a worse fit than if he were to go to the Bobcats. Who is the dumbass in the media who thought *"Oh yea,*

LeBron would jump at the opportunity to fill Kobe's old shoes"
and then decided to make this rumor? Oh, wait, it was Brian Windhorst.

If the argument is that L.A. is the perfect place for James to further enhance his brand and accomplish world domination as a global icon, I keep wondering why he wouldn't have just gone to New York in the first place? The biggest market in the country? The opportunity to play in front of a sold out MSG crowd every night? For a fan base that cares about their team, appreciates greatness and genuinely likes basketball? Why?

Better yet, why Miami? Ok, I don't feel like answering that. But ultimately this is why LeBron's decision was a double kick to the groin of every Cleveland fan. Because he chose to go to one of the worst sports city's — a place built around clubs, beaches, night life, the idea of vice in general — and a city with the most apathetic and undemanding fan base in sports. One thing's for sure though, when the time comes to leave Miami in the rear view mirror, it won't be that hard; there won't exactly be a ton of negative backlash attached. At least not as much as there would if it were, say, I don't know, New York.

This brings us to the Cavs, I guess. Next season, their roster will consist of six first round picks, all likely 23 years of age or younger, and all selected within a three year time frame. Considering that all of these players will still be under their rookie contracts — which pays

significantly less in the new CBA than it did before — you can see why people like Marc Stein believe the Cavs are in the best situation of any team not named the Thunder. Simply put, this team is ahead of the curve. By miles. What the Cavs are doing right now is something that has never been done before. There's no precedent for it; not even Oklahoma City. I'm strictly referring to the amount of draft talent they have been able to collect in the ridiculously short span of time they have collected it. It is unheard of.

Teams are desperate for picks, it's become the name of the game under the league's new bargaining agreement, and Cleveland has had more of them than any team. And they conveniently began doing this just as the new CBA was signed. Two years from now, the Cavs supporting cast could put Miami's current group to shame.

Right now would you trade Dion Waiters for Dwyane Wade?

What about Tristan Thompson for Chris Bosh?

Kyrie for LeBron?

My Answers: No. Hell No. And, Booooooooo!!!

[redacted]

[redacted]