The details of Cleveland's 103-87 loss to the Magic in Confederated Products Arena Sunday evening are unimportant. As you may have guessed Orlando hammered the Cavaliers on the boards, 61-35, with Dewey Howard racking up twenty caroms and Ryan Anderson adding seventeen. The Magicians never trailed in moving to 31-17 on the season. Manny Harris led the Cavaliers with twenty points, but, with all due respect to the undrafted rookie from Michigan, that isn't important either.

No, what is important is that the Cavaliers lost their twentieth game in a row on Sunday, moving them into a five-way tie for the fourth-longest losing streak in NBA history. Just five more losses in a row and Cleveland will own the longest losing streak in the history of the Association, snapping the mark of twenty-four straight set by… the Cavaliers, in 1983. That, more than the mundane details of another in a long, long line of beat-downs, is what makes this night unique.

Instead of going into the gory details of what went down in Orlando on Sunday, I've decided to go another, even gorier route. Here, for your perusal, is my list of the five sorriest teams in the history of Cleveland sports. Some were around before my time; some, unfortunately, were all too within my frame of reference. In a city sports history replete with losers, here are the biggest, in order.

4.) 1977-78 Barons (22-45-13): Record-wise, this Barons team wasn't the worst in the NHL, or

even in its conference. St. Louis, Washington and Minnesota sported worse records than Cleveland, which was bad enough to finish dead last in the Adams Division, fifty-six points behind the front-running Boston Bruins. No, this club's notoriety lies in a most dubious distinction, which we'll get to in a minute.

The Barons were the demon spawn of the California Golden Seals . One of the members of the six-team expansion Class of 1967 , the Seals struggled on the ice and at the gate for the entirety of its stay in the Bay Area. Not even the flamboyant ownership of Charles O. Finley (who clad his team in white skates in an echo of the white-shod baseball Athletics) could save the Seals. After nine consecutive losing seasons the club finally gave up on the Bay Area and moved to Cleveland.

The move was made on short notice. The NHL approved the transfer on July 14, 1976, less than three months prior to the start of the season. Cleveland fans didn't have much time to become acquainted to their new team, and what they saw at first glance, they didn't like. The Barons limped to a 25-42-13 record in 1976-77, missing the playoffs. The following season was even worse. After defeating Vancouver on February 17, 1978 to move to 19-33-7, Cleveland ripped off a fifteen-game winless streak. The last game of the season (and of the franchise) was, appropriately, a loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins. Just in case you're wondering, the NHL Barons went winless against Pittsburgh during their two-year sojourn in Cleveland.

1977-78 marked the last season for big-time hockey in Cleveland. Discouraged by the losing and by dismal attendance figures at the Coliseum, owners George and Gordon Gund merged the franchise with the Minnesota North Stars. The Barons thus became the last club in major North American sports to fold to this day. That's the dubious distinction.

3.) 1999 Cleveland Browns (2-14): Whenever the Browns get off to a slow start (pretty much every season, in other words) there's always some fan on the message boards who proclaims that this latest incarnation of the Orange and Brown is "just as bad as the 1999 team!" And the answer to that statement is always, "Dude. Not even close."

That's because the expansion 1999 Browns were one of the sorriest teams in the last quarter-century of NFL football. They finished with the worst record in the league, were last in total offense and total defense, last in rushing offense and rushing defense, last in scoring offense and didn't send a single player to the Pro Bowl. Eleven of their losses were by double

digits. The Browns were one of two teams in the history of Cleveland sports to lose every home game on the schedule (the expansion 1937 Rams were the other.)

Indeed, the '99 Browns were fortunate not to go winless. Their two victories, in New Orleans and in Pittsburgh, came on a last-second Hail Mary and a hurried last-second field goal, respectively. Only some poor clock-management by Saints coach Mike Ditka and an ill-timed roughing-the-passer penalty on then-Steelers linebacker Mike Vrabel stood between Cleveland and what was then an unprecedented 0-16 record.

Of course, you could argue that the 2000 Browns, who went 3-13, were shut out four times, scored a paltry 161 points and at one point gave up ninety-nine unanswered points, were even worse than the 1999 edition. But at least that team won a couple of games decisively- by seventeen over the Bengals and by eight over Bill Belichick's Patriots. And they won a couple of home games, too. In terms of number of losses and sheer lack of talent, no Browns team is quite as woeful as the one that kicked off the new era.

2.) 1981-82 Cavaliers (15-67): Other than "bottomless suckitude" the phrase that best describes the 1981-82 Cavaliers is "utter chaos." Four different head coaches- including Chuck Daly- skippered this ship of fools and twenty-three different players manned it. The Cavaliers finished with the worst record in the NBA- two games behind the almost equally woeful San Diego Clippers- shot the lowest percentage in the league and allowed opponents to shoot a scorching 51.2 percent.

The architect of this disaster was Ted Stepien, one of the most notoriously incompetent owners in American sports history. The Pittsburgh-born Stepien was a showman who considered it a good idea to drop softballs off the Terminal Tower, run Joe Tait out of town and trade a half-decade's worth of first-round draft picks for the dregs of the Dallas expansion draft. Stepien was not a popular man in Cleveland and neither was his team- the 1981-82 Cavaliers drew an average of 5,768 out to the Richfield Coliseum, the second-lowest in the NBA. Only the Clippers, then as now owned by the noxious Donald Sterling, drew fewer.

But it wasn't until the final stretch of the season that the Cavaliers truly made their mark as an all-time stinker of a team. After defeating San Diego in overtime on March 17, 1982 to run its record to 15-48, Cleveland dropped its final nineteen games of the campaign. Heartbreaking squeakers, blowouts, games in which the offense malfunctioned, games in which the defense took the night off- the Cavaliers lost them all. Cleveland then dropped its first five games of

1982-83 to establish the longest losing streak in NBA history at twenty-four.

But hey, at least Cavaliers fans had the top overall pick in the draft to look forward to after the nightmare of 1981-82, right? Wrong. Three seasons earlier Cleveland had traded its 1982 first-rounder to the Lakers for the immortal Don For
d. Less than a month after defeating Philadelphia in the '82 Finals, Los Angeles happily used the top pick on North Carolina forward James Worthy. That's life for the Lake Show- and for the Cavaliers.

1.) 1899 Cleveland Spiders (20-134): No doubt about this one. The '99 Spiders are not only the worst team in Cleveland sports history they're almost certainly the worst team in Major League Baseball history- and they might be the worst team in the annals of major North American sports.

Strange thing was that the Spiders were one of baseball's most successful clubs during most of the "Gay '90s," with Hall of Famers Cy Young and Jesse "the Crab" Burkett leading a powerful roster that finished in the first division four times during the decade. But in '99 Cleveland fell victim to the infamous "syndicate system," the practice of one ownership group owning multiple clubs in the same league. The ownership group in this instance was the Robison brothers, who were sort of a cross between Ted Stepien and Art Modell. Frank and Stanley Robison owned the Spiders as well as the St. Louis Cardinals. At the time St. Louis was a much bigger city than Cleveland and then, as now, was regarded as a stronger baseball market. Indeed, despite finishing forty-two-and-a-half games behind the Spiders in the 1898 standings, the Cardinals had more than doubled Cleveland in attendance.

Naturally the Robison brothers wanted to strengthen their St. Louis holding. Just as naturally they did so at the expense of Cleveland. Over the winter and spring of 1899 they shipped every Spider of note- including Young, Burkett and another future Cooperstown inductee, Bobby Wallace- to St. Louis. Replacing those worthies on the Cleveland roster was a collection of baseball refuse. The maneuvers worked like magic for the Cards, who rose from 39-111 in 1898 to 84-67 in 1899.

The results in Cleveland were less sanguine. The Spiders became far and away the worst team in baseball overnight. As if that wasn't enough, the Robison brothers were also in the habit of transferring their club's home dates to the opponents' ballparks, another odious practice permitted by the National League in those days. Starting in early July of 1899 the Spiders

played fifty consecutive games on the road, came home for seven straight, played twenty-six more in a row on the road, played one final game at home, and finished the season with nine straight away from Cleveland. So at least the fans didn't see much of their awful club.

And they were awful- transcendentally so. Cleveland suffered through six double-digit losing streaks, including a twenty-four game skein late in the season. The Spiders won consecutive games only once and finished the season losing fifty-five of their last fifty-eight games. Their 134 losses is still the highest single-season total in the history of Major League Baseball- by far. That winter the National League put the Spiders out of their misery, contracting them along with three other clubs. Two years later the American League opened for business with a new Cleveland entry- the club that would later become known as the Indians.

So who is the fifth team on this list? Who do you think? The 2010-11 Cavaliers are here with a bullet. All that's left is for this wretched season to play out and for this horrific excuse for a basketball team to find its exact place on the list. My feeling is that they'll end up second. No one, not even these Cavaliers, will beat out the 1899 Spiders.

Then again, the Cavaliers might just lose the rest of their games and finish 8-74, at which point we'll have to reconsider.

Next: Monday night at 7:30, when the Cavaliers go for twenty-one in a row in Miami against LeBron and the Heat.