I've always been a long-term thinker; it's just how I'm wired. Cleveland sports are so deeply embedded in my DNA that I probably have John Hart to thank for that.

During my elementary school days I was always thrilled to read news that our beloved Wahoos had inked guys like Lofton, Thome, Ramirez, and Vizquel to long-term deals. Those were sound business decisions and in general it's probably a good policy to forego instant gratification for a bigger payoff down the road. (There's definitely a PG-13 joke to be made there, but I have too much journalistic integrity to pull the trigger. You're welcome.)

"Waiting for next year" has long been the mantra of the Cleveland fan. When you're six years old, that's no problem whatsoever. After all, very few of us had much perspective or feel for life's inherent brevity while we were still wearing short pants.

To say that the last few years have been lean for fans on the North Coast isn't even an understatement – it's just wrong. The Indians haven't had a winning season in five years. The Browns are in the same boat, posting a robust winning percentage of .281 during that timeframe. If memory serves, something bad happened to the Cavaliers a couple years ago, but all I can remember is a rage blackout.

Recently Cleveland has been on the receiving end of countless jokes. Some of them are founded in truth, but as a good friend of mine frequently points out, most people who trash Cleveland haven't ever visited the city. (Otherwise known as the *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* corollary. Yeah, I'm a dork.)

Regardless, I'm willing to concede that Cleveland's rough winters and smaller market don't make it much of a destination for free agents. This is particularly true in the NBA, where players routinely gravitate towards higher-profile cities like New York and Los Angeles.

Cleveland is a great baseball town when the Tribe is competitive, but the state of Major League Baseball leaves smaller markets like C-Town boxing one-handed when it comes to free agency or even retaining their own quality players. In the NFL, free agents are vastly overpriced and the best ones usually never hit the open market.

My somewhat long-winded point is that for each of the Cleveland teams and their respective circumstances, quality drafting and player development is the best (and sometimes only) way to compete consistently. For the last few years, that grim reality has left me – and I know I'm not alone here – hoping to see some of our lousy clubs post inflated loss totals to improve their draft positions and hopefully return to competitiveness more quickly.

As of today I'm tendering my resignation from that club. I just can't do it anymore.

The 2011-12 Cavaliers have been a big part of this decision. Sure, it would be great if they could add a premier small forward or shooting guard via the NBA lottery, but that possibility doesn't help me pass the doldrums of winter any more quickly. Sports are meant to be a pleasant distraction and watching the Browns play out their December schedule *hoping* that they will come up short leaves a very bitter taste in my mouth.

Obviously we'd all go absolutely crazy if one of our ill-fated teams could somehow win a title. A higher draft pick could help, but teams (especially our teams) whiff on top picks all the time. There are no guarantees.

The fact that we have such an inferiority complex built on years of losing has, frankly, made us all a little too title-centric. Getting to the summit is the goal and if we ever reach that point it will be fantastic, but I'm beginning to believe that the ride is much more important.

For something that we as fans have almost zero control over, it just doesn't make sense to *hope* your team is going to lose and take no pleasure in their victories. A few random wins during the regular season probably won't mean much in the bigger picture of winning a championship, but what they will do is give us some excitement on an otherwise boring Tuesday night in February when there's a foot and a half of snow on the ground.

I'm going to assume that most people reading this have at least played an organized sport in some form of rec league at some point, and if you haven't then just bear with me. While it's great to win league "championships," the reality is that you often end up on teams that are mediocre or downright awful. You know that there's little or no chance of being number one, but it's just fun to compete and take a victory home once in a while.

I'm trying to bring that philosophy to my day-to-day fandom, because making championships the *sole impetus* for following a team just doesn't seem like a great investment of my time and sanity anymore. Winning championships is still a big part of following a team, but focusing on rings and trophies can't trump the simple pleasure of enjoying victories.

There are other arguments I planned on making here; teams rarely go from worst to first overnight, building a winning culture is important, and one player can't win on his own (not even in basketball), etc. In the end it comes down to the fact that I need to enjoy wins. If I can't do that, then why invest all this time and emotion?

Although the Tribe certainly has a shot to make the postseason in 2012, it's likely that Cleveland's playoff drought will stretch another 2-3 years before a team breaks through. Do you really want to spend all that time hoping the Cavs lose 65 games and that the Indians embarrass themselves badly enough to take a chance on the next Stephen Strasburg? Maybe you can live with that and that's certainly your prerogative, but because my perspective has shifted (and also because I've come this far without hitting my self-imposed quota for *Star Wars* references), "I'm getting too old for this sort of thing."