The weather problems that wracked the opening weeks of the MLB season led to much debate locally about what the sport can do to remedy the situation. Naturally, the topic seemed like a good one to let our roundtable chew on in this recurring Sunday feature. Start the season later? Start it out west and in the south? More divisional games early? TheClevelandFan.com writers opine ...

"The Roundtable" is a regular weekly Sunday feature that will continue throughout the year covering hot topics surrounding the Browns, Buckeyes, Cavaliers, and Indians. One question. Several different answers from TheClevelandFan.com panel.

The Indians are about to wrap up their longest homestand of the year, a ten-gamer that turned out to be, uh, a three-game homestand. Thanks to Mother Nature, the Indians-Mariners four-game set last weekend was completed whitewashed, and the field conditions and weather forecast was so bad for the rest of the week that the Indians had to temporarily move operations to Milwaukee and play the Angels for a three-game set.

What transpired with the weather the past week with the Indians led to many debates around the watercooler this week on whether or not cold weather teams should open at home or on the road when the season starts. Also, some flaws in the scheduling system that major league baseball uses came to the forefront that need obvious fixing. TheClevelandFan.com writers opine on the situation below....

Steve Buffum: No. Cold weather teams should open with division rivals and teams in close proximity to make potential make-up games easier to schedule and arrange. Seriously, this is a non-issue, they just did it badly. When the best advice is, "Well, don't be a bloody moron next time," that means the problem wasn't that serious in the first place.

Tony Lastoria: Yep, the cold weather teams should start on the road. Occasionally, you can schedule a season opener at a cold weather site, but for the most part the cold weather teams should start on the road. And, in at least Cleveland, that has happened as the Indians last started a season at home in 2001 against the White Sox, and before that 1996 against the Yankees (which was snowed out by the way). So, in all but two of the last thirteen seasons, the Indians have opened on the road. Good job by Major League Baseball there (MLB).

But, what I want to see, and we saw this from 1997-1999, is the Indians open on a West Coast

trip hitting three cities. Kill two birds with one stone and get one of the West Coast trips out of the way, and ensure the games are played. The West Coast teams do not have to worry about weather generally, nor the southern teams, so whether they have to play the cold weather teams in April at home or in September has no affect really on ticket sales.

Then, when the cold weather teams come home after a West Coast trip, or an East Coast trip hitting the domed stadiums and more southern sites, the cold weather teams open at home against division opponents. Playing most of your home games the first month against division rivals helps ensure the games can be made up since those teams will be in town two more times throughout the year. And, for some of the domed/southern teams that maybe opened on the road, they host some of the west coast teams while other west coast teams play each other. Doing it this way, there is no reason that at the end of April all teams will not have played the same amount of home/road games, so no one is playing 25 games on the road in September.

Gary Benz: This is such a no-brainer that it's hard to believe that the problem hasn't been solved after all these years. But then again, considering that we're dealing with Bud Selig, the baseball commissioner, it's likely the problem will never be solved. He has repeatedly said that this issue is complicated because so-called "warm weather" teams don't want to play a disproportionate number of April games and lose prime dates to the "cold weather" teams in the summer. That's a fair point, but it seems that this point has been used as the primary reason for not finding a way to make the schedule work for the overall good of the game and the fans.

Given an unbalanced schedule, interleague play, a lack of doubleheaders, and an extra round of playoffs, all of which benefit the owners generally, the primary duty of the schedule makers is to find a way to maximize the chance that all games will be played when scheduled. Having Seattle's and Anaheim's only visit to Cleveland be the first week of the season is taking an unnecessary risk that didn't need to be taken. But by taking these risks, major league baseball has put an unfair burden on teams who will have to make these games up in a truncated period of time late in the season with the playoffs on the line.

Rich Swerbinsky: Here's my answer to baseball's early season weather problem:

Very simple. Each team plays one scheduled doubleheader each month, six in all. Make three of ‘em traditional, and three of ‘em twi-nighters so owners don't complain about losing six games of ticket revenues.

This allows you to start the season one week later, April 8th. Does it take weather totally out of the equation? No. But it helps. Combine that with early home games for northern teams being divisional, so they're easier to make up.

You can't have southern teams play a disproportionate number of home games in April, only to have more road games later in the year ... when games are more crucial, and ticket sales are higher. They'll never agree to it. The owners will never agree to a shortening of the season, which will take money out of their pockets.

John Hnat: Ask that question to a group of fans of a cold-weather team, after they've just seen four games canceled by an unusual (but not at all unprecedented) snowstorm, and the results would be a bit skewed, no?

So I am going to avoid the easy target (of COURSE cold-weather, open-air-stadium teams should open on the road, unless you think games being called on account of blizzards is a Good Thing for baseball), and point the finger where it should be blamed: the schedule. The real problem in the Indians/Mariners' case is not so much that the series was scheduled for Cleveland in early April (again, putting aside the absurdity that the dome in Seattle was sitting unused while the Ms and Tribe watched snow fly for four days); it is that this was the only time this season that Seattle traveled to Cleveland.

And that leads us to (1) interleague play and (2) the unbalanced schedule. On point (1), it's a novelty whose time has come ... and gone. We tried it, it was kind of fun for a couple of years, and now it is a drag. Cleveland-Pittsburgh is a great football rivalry; as a baseball rivalry, not so much. Let's stop trying to force-feed these rivalries, and reclaim those games for regular league play.

On point (2), I apply the Wife Test: when my wife recognizes players from an opposing team, then the Indians are probably playing them too many times. And she does recognize members of the White Sox. (Granted, she mainly recognizes Jim Thome, which is essentially the free space on this particular bingo card.) Fewer games within the division means more games against teams like Seattle, and that means more opportunities for scheduling throughout the season. And then we're not left to move games to neutral sites or to wonder when exactly they'll make up the four games that just got whitewashed.

Erik Cassano: As I recall, the Indians opened a number of seasons in the mid and late '90s either down south or on the West Coast. It virtually guarantees no

rain delays, but it's not exactly fair.

Cold-weather teams with open-air stadiums deserve a chance to host season openers. You can't simply take that chance away based on the possibility of a freak snowstorm.

To me, it's like telling the Marlins, Devil Rays and Astros that they can't host late-season games because they play in hurricane-prone cities.

Baseball is a game designed to be played outdoors, which means teams are going to, within reason, have to roll with the punches of whatever the local weather dishes out. What happened to the Indians and Mariners this past weekend is an extreme example, like the Marlins-Expos series that was chased to Chicago by a hurricane several years ago.

Teams do have to plan for contingencies, and even sometimes those plans are rendered

inadequate. But one snow-choked weekend in Cleveland should not sound the signal that baseball should be banned from all cold-weather, open-air stadiums prior to mid-April.

Todd Dery: The answer is a simple and plain "yes." All you have to do is look at what happened to the Indians and the Mariners. Not one, not two, but FOUR games were snowed out due to the snow storm over the season's first weekend. At some point, those four games will have to be made up, and the Mariners do not return to Cleveland the rest of the season. This kills off days where the teams need to rest, as well as killing the pitching staffs.

More than likely, a doubleheader will take place at some point involving the two teams, and one of those games will be started by a minor league call up. Think about it, the Indians could be in the thick of a pennant race with everything on the line in September and young Adam Miller may have to be brought up to start a game with Kelly Shoppach catching. Victor Martinez can't catch both ends of a doubleheader.

Its easy for MLB to have figured this out and they haven't. Any particular reason Colorado opened at home against ARIZONA? What about the Yankees starting at home against TAMPA BAY? Not good enough? Washington started at home against FLORIDA. Seattle has a retractable roof on Safeco Field, yet they make their one trip to Cleveland in April? Genius. Again, its a no-brainer. Start the cold weather teams on the road.