Paul Cousineau is an optimist by nature, even after years of reading bittermen like Livingston and Shaw. We try and provide a fresh perspective here, from people that actually grew up in this city cheering on these teams ... and Paul C does exactly that in his latest and greatest effort for us. Paul says a new day has dawned in C-Town. And regardless of what the PD or ESPN thinks, the future is looking bright.

Waking up this morning in Cleveland, all is well.

The stifling humidity on the North Coast has been replaced by much more manageable air, the ill effects of one (or two) too many beers at the Jake last night are minimal, my 1st place Tribe sits on a 4 ½ game lead in the AL Central, LeSaviour is imposing his will on the rest of the Americas, and the Browns finally have a QB that looks like he possesses that "it" factor that remains so elusive to define.

But wait, I'm still in Cleveland, right?

The town that receives more backhanded compliments from the national media in a year than any town has endured in a lifetime?

Think back for a moment - every "glowing" article about the Cavs, or LeBron, as they made their run to the Finals dwelled on the fact that Cleveland hasn't won a Championship of any kind since 1964 (sorry, Crunch fans - pro soccer doesn't count), how the city is in a freefall due to a loss of manufacturing jobs and a struggling economy, and how we're all so desperate for a winner that we'll throw our collective weight behind a precocious 22-year-old from Akron, in the hopes that he will brighten our lowly existences?

Look, I get enough doom-and-gloom from my local newspaper (which hasn't written a positive story about Cleveland, much less their sports teams, in about 8 years); I don't need to get it from the "national perspective".

The Indians have escaped the national media's loving gaze and continue to fly under the radar with, arguably, the best pitching staff in baseball, as The Boys in Bristol sit there and collectively wonder if it's too early to enshrine Joba Chamberlain in Cooperstown.

However, suffering through the mindless blathering of Steve Phillips, Sean Salisbury, Stephen A. Smith, and others on my television, which used to annoy and depress me to no end, I find myself unaffected.

Unable to be pulled down by the pessimism and cheap shots, I can't help but wonder why.

I'm from Cleveland. I was born with an inferiority complex, fostered by years of rabidly cheering for sports teams only to have my heart broken repeatedly.

Yet, I am still unfazed.

What in the Wide, Wide World of Sports is going on here?

I'm reminded of the "Seinfeld" episode, in which Jerry lets his emotions out of Pandora's Box. Sitting on the couch, rubbing his eyes after breaking up with a girl, he says, "What...what is this salty discharge." As he sat there, incredulously wondering what this new feeling was (in his case - caring for someone), I feel I can relate.

I find myself wondering - what is this feeling, the one that makes my chest puff out and gives me the ability to brag about MY teams? The one that allows me to win arguments with friends from other cities regarding our sports teams with one single word, "scoreboard"? Why is it that I'm the one placing calls to out-of-town acquaintances to gloat and peer down the end of my nose at the "less fortunate" for once in my life? I'm on the offensive, not avoiding calls and ducking arguments.
What's going on?

Is this Pride? Is this Confidence?

If so, what have you done with my old friends?

Where is Paranoia?

What have you done with Inferiority?

Where is Dread, or Embarrassment?

What have you done with them?

The simple answer is that Cleveland finally has something to be proud of - no some THINGS to be proud of:

The Cavaliers are mere months removed from the franchise's 1st NBA Finals appearance, led by best player in the NBA, who happens to be 22 and a local product who seems, by all accounts, to understand the enormity of his talent and his current undertaking.

The Indians sit atop the AL Central thanks to being built on starting pitching (just as we were told they would be when "rebuilding started) and a nucleus of young talent that rivals the one that captured our hearts in the 1990's when we needed something to take our minds off of the Cavs' ineptitude and the Browns' relocation.

To a lesser degree, even the Browns seem to have finally taken the necessary steps to move away from the category of laughingstock and towards respectability. Sure, the irrational optimism always rears its head this time of the year when it comes to the Browns.

But is it finally merited?

Name me another time in Cleveland sports history that three Sports Illustrated covers have been committed to Cleveland athletes (LBJ, SuperSizemore, Jamal Lewis) over the course of a summer - with

glowing, almost gushing articles about them in the pages of the magazine.

Throw in the fact that all are 28 or younger, and you cannot help but feel it.

A new day has dawned in Cleveland.

As the sun breaks out, take stock of where we are. While we have not yet reached the summit, it is within our sight. We stand at on an upper ridge of the mountain, completely unaware of how to handle the new view so far away from our usual position much further down.

For the day, shelve all of your complaints about your belief that tumbleweeds must be blowing through the Front Office at the Q this offseason, the perceived thriftiness of ownership next door, the inability of a particular SS to lay down a bunt, or the shortcomings of an affable football coach and his Swiss Cheese defensive line.

The glass is already half full and the tap is still going.

The Cleveland sports teams are trending upwards and they're doing it together. This ascent is not automatic nor is it immediate. Growing pains and disappointment promise to litter the road. But, for once, the road represents an ascent, not a descent into the mediocrity and indifference, to which we've grown accustomed.

None of the Cleveland teams are taking that "one last chance" or trying to slip through the closing window, as we saw the Pistons attempt and are currently watching the Yankees struggle to do. They're all on the rise (to borrow from the Cavaliers' playoff motto) and show no signs of taking a precipitous, unexpected tumble back to mediocrity.

It's time to take the proper perspective and appreciate it.

We stand, collectively, at the precipice of an unprecedented run of success in Cleveland sports. The first chapter of a new book is being written in Cleveland sports as we speak. It is a time that we will look back on with fondness and great pride.

Enjoy it and remember that, no matter what happened last night in Chicago or as the baseball season draws closer to October, the big picture is getting clearer and it's looking better every day here on the North Coast.