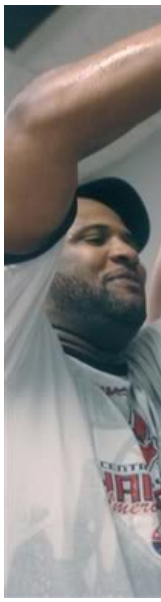
The Browns missed their opportunity to make it an all around enjoyable sports weekend for the CTown sports fan community by coming up short in Oakland, but all in all, it's tough to complain this morning. The Buckeyes took Northwestern out back behind the woodshed. And the Indians are heading back to the playoffs! And have the best record in Major League Baseball! Brian McPeek hits on the Bucks, Browns, and Tribe in his Monday morning Weekend Wrap.



The Hunt For a Red October

That certainly was easy, no?

All it took was replacing 40% of the starting pitching staff you broke camp with, watching your two off-season veteran acquisitions either get hurt or fail to produce, surviving 42 or so of the most agonizing saves ever recorded, suffering through about three weeks of offense that would have bored soccer enthusiasts, turning last year's failed closer into a dominating 18 game winner, finding an all-star caliber 2nd baseman that started the year playing for the Akron Aeros, persevering through your All-Star DH's season long funk and fending off the defending American League champions.

Anything else? No? Ok. Check those minor speed bumps right off the sheet.

The Indians are the 2007 Central Division champions.

After a huge mid week sweep of the Tigers, the Indians took two of three from the staggering Oakland A's and set off a celebration on Sunday at the Jake that's been 5 years in the making.

Fausto Carmona got the win Friday night and Jake Westbrook absolutely dominated the A's on Sunday with a career high 9 strikeouts in a 6-2 Tribe victory.

When, fittingly enough given the season he's turned in, Rafael Betancourt struck out Mark Ellis on a high fastball, multiple celebrations broke out on the field and in the stands. The team's celebration carried over into the clubhouse and the Central Division flag was again raised at the Jake.

Almost as importantly to the Indians was the fact they won the title without relying on a Tigers loss and they won it at home in front of an appreciative and hopeful crowd.

With the Central title in hand, the Tribe also has the opportunity now to set up their rotation for their playoff meet-up with the Red Sox or Yankees as well as to procure home field advantage throughout the postseason.

Enjoy it folks. This team has played excellent baseball throughout the season and they were handed absolutely nothing. You can argue that what they've actually accomplished over 162 games is more impressive than whatever takes place in October. This team is capable of going deep into the playoffs with C.C Sabathia and Carmona anchoring the rotation. But even should the short series playoff format trip them up, they're set up to be a serious contender for years to come.

And you're all now set up to enjoy every gut wrenching pitch that playoff baseball provides.

Cleveland fans will take that anxiety over apathy every October.

Speaking of Apathy

Did the Browns defense fly separately to Oakland? Not that the offense was any great shakes. But judging by the fact that the Raiders rushed for 186 yards and converted a 3rd and 23yd screen pass (that everyone in Greater Cleveland knew was coming) for 27 yards and a first down, I'm wondering if the defense was forced to lay over in Tulsa, Denver or somewhere else due to weather related issues.

To say the Browns defense was apathetic toward tackling and defending would actually be higher praise than they should be accorded. The 26-24 loss to the Raiders falls mostly on their clean, lightly used shoulder pads.

Forget about the blocked field goal that ultimately ended the game. This game was decided between the tackles and it was no contest. LaMont Jordan rushed for 121 yards and Justin Fargas averaged over 8 yards per carry for another 50 yards.

QB Derek Anderson was largely ineffective all day until the final, frenzied drive and was unable to lead enough sustained drives to at least give the defense a blow. Anderson threw two picks right to two stationary Oakland defenders and failed to see or hit numerous open receivers all day. The Raiders controlled the ball for 60% of the game and were able to comfortably allow QBs Josh

McCown and Daunte Culpepper to manage the game instead of actually forcing them to make plays.

KR Josh Cribbs again injected some life into the Browns with a 99yd kick return for a touchdown, but the specials teams wouldn't get away unscathed. The Raiders got tremendous pressure through the middle of the line on Phil Dawson's 40yd attempt on the last play of the game and 6'6" Tommy Kelly busted through and cleanly blocked the kick. Any scoring opportunity for this Browns offense should be treated as delicately as a Fabergé egg and the special teams dropped the egg in this case.

So now Cleveland is 1-2 heading into what becomes basically a must-win September game against the Ravens next Sunday at Browns Stadium.

Bad defense and mediocre offense and special teams play tend to put you into these unenviable positions.

On the Other Hand They Could Be Northwestern

The Browns did show more defensive presence than did the Northwestern Wildcats against the Ohio State Buckeyes on Saturday. Had this been an officially sanctioned title fight it would have

been Tyson-Spinks circa 1988. Had it been a non-sanctioned fight in some suburban Columbus bar, it would have resulted in a quick but bloody death for Northwestern.

The Buckeyes raced out to 28-0 lead with less than 10 minutes gone in the first quarter. They led 45-0 at the half. And they called off the dogs and didn't score at all in the 4th quarter, choosing instead to salt away a 58-7 win that wasn't that close.

Buckeye receiver Brian Robiskie piled up 70 receiving yards and two touchdown catches before the band had reached their designated seats and before 4 minutes had expired off the game clock. Robiskie added another TD catch less than a minute into the 2nd

quarter for a tidy sum of 89 yards and 3 TDs in about 16 minutes of "work".

Chris ‘Beanie' Wells ran for a

Justin Fargas-like 8 yards per carry on his way to 100yds and a touchdown. Maurice Wells scored a couple more for good measure. QB Todd Boeckman attempted only 14 passes on the day and threw for 180 yards and 4 TDs. In fact, every Buckeye QB and a couple of high school recruits in town for their recruiting visit saw action and completed at least one pass against a Northwestern team that lost to Duke (they of the 22 game losing streak prior to

meeting up with Northwestern) a week ago.

Universities across the country are calling Northwestern this morning to see if they can pencil the Wildcats in for their Homecoming games.

This looked to be the Buckeyes easiest match-up of the season thus far and the good news is

that Ohio State came in and absolutely wiped the floor with Northwestern. The Buckeyes gave Northwestern no room to breathe and no reason for hope from whistle to gun.

At some point in the season, actual tests will be presented for this Ohio State team. But it certainly wasn't this past Saturday, nor will it be this coming weekend. The Buckeyes travel to Minnesota Saturday for

an 8pm tilt with the Minnesota Golden Gophers. Minnesota boasts a 1-3 record with losses to both Bowling Green and Florida Atlantic staining an otherwise outstanding season.

Getting fat on the likes of Division 1-AA and MAC teams, as well as two conference patsies like Northwestern and Minnesota, is all well and good. You can only play who's on the schedule. And the work and

learning being done at the expense of these sacrificial lambs will hopefully pay off when the degree of difficulty gets turned up later in the season.

No need to worry about it today. For today they feast.