Perhaps you remember the exact moment when you knew what you had been missing all these years. Or perhaps it dawned on you gradually. But somewhere along the line, you were let in on a little secret that had been kept from Cleveland long enough to be forgotten. There is nothing like October baseball. And it's back on the North Coast. LETS GO TRIBE!!!!!!!!

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The playoffs of the NHL and NBA are two-month marathons conducted at a time when the days are lengthening and the weather is warming, and feature two- and three-day breaks between games. All enough to put the proceedings out-of-sight, out-of-mind on days when your team isn't playing a game.

The playoffs of the NFL are a weekend affair in the dead cold of January, and the Super Bowl so overshadows the conference playoffs, it practically feels like an extension of the regular season if you don't have a rooting interest.

But then there's October. October baseball. October baseball in a city that has seen more than its share of dark, desolate Octobers without baseball over the years.

National scribes can gush about the title-festooned tradition of New York, the way baseball is in the blood of New Englanders, the everlasting devotion of Cubs fans through 99 years without a World Series crown.

I say October baseball means more here in Northeast Ohio, where inferiority complexes reign and winter tends to bring gray skies, snowstorms and losing

football.

We need it. We've needed it for longer than we've needed Browns victories on Autumn Sundays. For longer than we've bled scarlet and gray on Autumn Saturdays.

For 107 Octobers of dying daylight, falling leaves and dropping temperatures, we've needed it. And too often, our local nine hasn't delivered.

But this year is one of the years it's different. This year, the hunger has been fed. For at least one week, hopefully longer, we get to come together as a community, every day, and feed off of what the Indians did the previous night. Every morning becomes like the Monday morning after a Browns game. The conversations spill over from the office water cooler and into the streets. East, West, city, suburbs, the Indians become Cleveland's common denominator when they reach the playoffs.

Flags bearing Chief Wahoo's likeness are draped over business and residence windows alike. There is a noticeable rise in the amount of Tribe hats, shirts, jackets and ties adorning passers-by. Goofy parody songs find their way onto the radio. The net sum adds up to "Tribe Fever," but it speaks to something deeper in all of us.

This was the seed that was planted the first time your dad played catch with you in the backyard, probably when you were too little to even know what you were doing. This was the bulb that took root when you went to your first ballgame at that rusty dinosaur of a stadium on the lakefront. The Indians weren't any good back then, October baseball was something that played out elsewhere. But you learned the game. It became something that embedded itself in the deepest part of your conscience.

People who think baseball is too slow, or that it primarily involves a lot of crotch-grabbing and seed-spitting, they don't get it. Maybe you didn't quite get it until Tony Pena hit that walk-off homer against Boston in 1995, winning the Tribe's first playoff game since 1948. Maybe it didn't finally click until Kenny Lofton sprinted home from second base in Game 6 against Seattle, and you knew your team was going to the World Series.

Maybe it came full circle when that line drive zinged past Charlie Nagy's head in

Game 7 two years later, and for a while, you wished you weren't burdened by this game, this team.

But at some point, you realized the power of October baseball. The power to lift you up and send you crashing back down to Earth. The power to unify an entire city in joy, suspense and sorrow. The last rays of warmth we can capture as the Sun sets on another summer of stretching out in the upper deck of Jacobs Field with a cold beer in your hand and a scorecard in your lap.

For just the 10th time in 107 years, the Indians are playing October baseball. Now older and wiser, you understand what that means.