With a layoff between games, a high profile opponent, and interest in the team severly elevated ... Tribe fans are in full panic mode heading into this series. Check our message forums. Listen to sports talk radio. You'll see. In Brian McPeek's latest, he says Yankee fans are the ones that should be worried ... noting the age and performance level of their starters for games 2, 3, and 4.

Much has been made about the worrying, hand wringing and teeth grinding going on amongst The Indian Nation with the start of the series against the Yankees just hours away.

Fans are anxious after four days of not second guessing Eric Wedge or commenting on the daily efforts of the home club. Rather than relax and kick back after 162 games in a successful season, Tribe backers have taken to questioning just where this series is going to go bad. The primary suspects:

- The Yankees have an outstanding, patient offense that can score runs in bunches
- The Indians are inexperienced
- Joe Borowski anchors the Indians bullpen and he hasn't exactly been automatic in the 9th inning all season long
- Paul Byrd is the potential Game 4 starter in the Bronx
- This is Cleveland. These badges of honor we wear have been earned in regard to disappointment

There's some truth in every one of those concerns. But you're nowhere near alone Tribe fans. I'd go so far as to say every team in the playoffs has concerns. Looking at just the American League the Red Sox have concerns with who pitches effectively after Josh Beckett, whether Manny Ramirez is healthy and productive and if Eric Gagne is going to go nuclear any time he's called upon.

The Angels wonder where their offense is going to come from, if their running game is enough should they fall behind early and whether Vlad Guerrero is healthy enough to anchor a faltering lineup.

And that brings us to the Yankees. Only the most arrogant and boorish Yankee fan, of which there are thousands upon thousands, would defend the fact the Yankees don't have issues or concerns. And not just chinks in their armor, but potentially large, gaping holes in their boat.

Let's not overlook the fact that, despite a strong finish, this Yankee team is still a wildcard team. They did not win their division for the first time in years. Their slow start and a few stumbles during the year cost them the opportunity to procure home-field advantage in any series they play this post season. In this ALDS opener, that honor and advantage goes to the Tribe and to you.

Only the most ardent Yankee supporter would feel comfortable with a starting rotation of Chien-Ming Wang and 3 guys who could have starred as the elderly gentlemen in ‘Cocoon'. If you think reasonable Yankee fans are looking forward to seeing Andy Pettite, Mike Mussina and 45 year-old Roger Clemens on the mound you're sadly mistaken. This is not 1995. And even the most potent solutions and pharmaceuticals Clemens can pull out of his safe aren't going to return

his 1995 fastball.

This Indians team, inexperienced as they may be, has a decided edge in the starting pitching department. The old saying that good pitching beats good hitting is cliché' only because it's true. CC Sabathia has developed into a top-tier pitcher as well as a player who has accepted the burden of responsibility for this staff. He will not back down. He has become a complete pitcher, able to pitch himself out of innings or go deep into games without his best stuff. He's developed a drive and a fire that inspires a staff, a team and a town.

Fausto Carmona may be inexperienced in regard to playoff baseball. But you have to have confidence in a man who has confidence in himself. And Carmona, despite his failures of a year ago, is a pitcher who has confidence in himself and in his stuff. And well he should. It's some of the best stuff in baseball. He is a tough night when you're in the box.

On the offensive side, tell me there is a fan in New York who isn't ready and waiting for Alex Rodriguez to fall on his face again this October. Game 1 may well be the key to this series in regard to A-Rod and the Yankees. If A-Rod goes 0-4, regardless of the quality of his at bats, the pressure builds on him to almost unbearable levels. 2 bad games from Rodriguez and he goes into Game 3 carrying the weight of the world into the box for his first swings of that ballgame in Yankee Stadium. He has failed time after time to answer the bell in October. A couple of difficult at bats against pitching that can surely evoke such struggles and all hell breaks loose in New York.

As for the Tribe offense, this is a team that simply grinds out at bats and never quits. The Indians actually have more players in the top 30 in the pitches-per-plate-appearances category than the often-heralded ‘patient' Yankee hitters.

As to the bullpens, Rafael Betancourt and Rafael Perez take a backseat to no tandem in the majors as far as set-up men go. And Mariano Rivera is not even close to the same pitcher he was 10 years ago. He was nearly unbeatable at that point in his career. And I say ‘nearly' unbeatable because, as great as he was, I recall him being beaten in a rather big game of the '97 ALDS match-up between these same two teams.

Do not let the numerous Yankee band-wagon riders and media shills fool you. This team is old and has leaks. There is no doubt they are dangerous. But they are eminently beatable and they are playing in Cleveland for the first two tone-setting games.

Don't sit back and wait for something to go wrong. Get up and set that tone early and lift your team, a team that is gritty and gutsy and represents you, the Cleveland fan, extremely well. Lift them up like they've lifted you up all summer and send them to New York with a choke-hold on this series.

The first team to 3 wins moves on. It's 0-0 in your backyard starting tonight. You get exactly nothing just for being the Yankees. No extra strikes, no run on the board before the game starts. All you get for being a Yankee starting tonight is the overbearing pressure of having to live

up the legacy of ghosts and a whole lot of hype.