With how badly FOX and the rest of the national media wants Boston to come back and beat us, you just know we're going to be force fed stat after stat about all the teams that have come back from down 3-1. As a matter of fact, it started within seconds of yesterday's final out. In his latest, Erik Cassano takes an objective look at the history of the 3-1 lead, and assesses the Red Sox chances of overcoming it.

I guess it was predictable.

The first graphic that flashed on the Fox screen following the final out of the Indians' 7-3 Game 4 win Tuesday night was a reassuring pat on the back for the Red Sox and their fans.

Sixty-five teams have fallen behind three games to one in a best-of-seven series. Ten of them have come back to win.

Most notably --- say it with me -- The 2004 Red Sox Who Rallied From An 0-3 Deficit Against The Yankees, Then Went On To Win Boston's First World Series In 86 Years.

In the tradition of Steve Buffum's "Inning of Crap" and "Aura of Crap," I'm thinking Fox should get that trademarked. We're certainly going to hear it a lot leading up to Game 5. Fox's and ESPN's coverage prior to Thursday's Game 5 will likely be sprinkled liberally with '04 Red Sox

references, and the inevitable montage of recent teams to rally from 3-1 deficits to win playoff series.

On one had, they do have a point. We can scoff at how blatantly the national media wants the Red Sox to rally and win this series, even though in order to do it, Boston will probably now need to burn themselves out physically and emotionally, and drain their pitching staff in an all-hands-on-deck Game 7.

But it still bears mentioning that while a 3-1 series lead is a commanding lead, it's not an insurmountable lead. One of the more famous rallies from 3-1 a deficit (outside of the '04 Red Sox) was the Red Sox in the 1986 ALCS, when Dave Henderson's famous homer off Donny Moore erased a ninth-inning Angel lead, helping send the series back to Boston, where the Red
Sox
won the final two.

There were also the Royals in the 1985 World Series, the Pirates in the 1979 World Series and the Tigers in the 1968 World Series.

But this isn't a column about appealing to your typical Cleveland feelings of dread, even when things are going well. This is simply about being sensible and not counting your chicks before they hatch.

The vast majority of teams that go up 3-1 in a series win it, even when they lose Game 5 at home and are forced back on the road to get the final win.

In 1997, the Indians held Baltimore on the precipice with a 3-1 lead in the ALCS when the most unlikely of Oriole heroes, Scott
Kamieniecki
, pitched Baltimore to a Game 5 win, setting up the second helping of Mike
Mussina
we all dreaded. It took 11 innings and a Tony Fernandez homer to break the scoreless tie, but the Indians won Game 6 on the road.

It can be done. Even if Josh Beckett once again outpitches C.C. Sabathia on Thursday and forces the series back to Boston.

Should Boston win Game 5, you will likely encounter increasing numbers of New England fans and media sycophants who want to invoke the pseudo-holy name of

the '04 Red Sox. If you have the opportunity, you might want to remind them that this Red Sox team is not that Red Sox team.

That Red Sox team had a younger Curt Schilling, Pedro Martinez and Derek Lowe taking the mound just about every night. This Red Sox team has a 40-something Schilling, unproven
Daisuke
Matsuzaka
and 40-something Tim
Wakefield
to compliment ace Beckett. So far in this series, the old "Pedro and Pray for Rain" Red
Sox
of the late 1990s have shown up: do what you can against their ace, then beat everybody else. It's how the Indians won the 1998 division series against Boston.

The Red Sox's epic rally against New York three years ago was more of a rivalry thing than it was a baseball thing. A year after losing the pennant on an Aaron Boone homer, Boston's hatred of the Yankees reached a critical mass, kind of like when Ralphie beat up tormentor Scut Farkus in "A Christmas Story." That 0-3 rally probably doesn't happen against Cleveland, or any other team not named the Yankees. The Red
Sox
had simply had enough.

The advantage Boston has in being down 3-1 is they have no choice but to take it one game at a time, and if you lose, it just wasn't meant to be this year. A fatalistic attitude tends to calm teams down.

The Indians, the team that has utilized the one-game-at-at-time attitude so well, is facing the temptation to start looking at the big picture, one victory away from the World Series. It's up to Eric Wedge to keep his team focused on the Game 5 task at hand.

It's up to the Indians, most notably Game 5 starting pitcher C.C. Sabathia, to not get ahead of themselves. Throughout his career, C.C. has had trouble controlling his emotions, trouble preventing himself from becoming frustrated and agitated when the sailing isn't smooth. He's controlled his temper very well for most of the season, but the stress of the postseason appears to have affected him so far.

There is no such thing as a low-pressure postseason start. But if C.C. can't relax and pitch with confidence with a 3-1 lead, at home, with the support of a crowd anticipating a pennant clinch, one has to wonder when he'll be able to.

If the Indians want to avoid any perceived 3-1 jinx, they need to do four things: One, turn off ESPN and Fox, and their 2004 rain dance. Two, don't be intimidated by Beckett. Three, don't be intimidated by the prospect of returning to Boston. Four, realize that no matter what happens, they are in the driver's seat for the rest of the series.