The real problem with living in the Cleveland area these days is that seasonal affective disorder is not confined to the depression we all tend to feel as the brutal winter bears down month after month. Unfortunately it also extends into the symptoms we also tend to feel as each professional sports team takes its turn in the box.

Where once summer's light promised to be the cure for what ailed you, all it does now, just like the flickering light of the seasons that follow it, is turn what were once symptoms into a way of life.

There is no great insight to be gained from one game into the Cleveland Indians' season. Indeed there is no great insight to be gained from any one game into any Cleveland Indians' season. But the loss on Friday to the Chicago White Sox still served as a reminder that seasonal affective disorder isn't going to abate any time soon even if the sun does manage to break through more than once a week.

Unfortunately, there's no one thing to blame nor is there just one thing that can turn this around, assuming wins and losses are what define your sports experience. Each of this town's teams are at the belly of a downward curve whose cumulative effect has been to make this and not some mythical place in New Jersey, a town full of losers.

The seasons of our discontent really began, in large measure, with the bizarre and dispiriting playoff loss the Cavaliers suffered at the hands of the Boston Celtics. We all watched with puzzled looks on our faces as LeBron James came up empty time after time in that series and once again the one team we all thought would go all the way ended up like every other team of

our extended generation that we thought would go all the way: broken down on the side of some other town's road to a championship.

In retrospect of course it was clear that James had tanked the series because of some sort of disjointed thought process that he thought would make his planned exit our of Cleveland more palatable. When he quit on the Cavs and this city it left us irritable, sad and depressed, exactly the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder. Not a surprise.

The Indians, on their way to another 90-loss season, didn't give the fans any chance to pull themselves out of the dive. It wasn't just the losses that piled up like pennies in the bedroom change jar, it was how those losses piled up as well. The team wasn't particularly talented either, the usual mix of has beens, petered out prospects and next wave wannabes.

In the midst of all that though James revisted us all to essentially redefine what it means to be self-centered. He toyed with this city and others in one of the bigger frauds perpetuated by any athlete ever knowing all along he was heading to Miami to try and stack the NBA deck against the rest of the league.

It's one thing to watch a car wreck from a comfortable distance. It's a whole other matter to be sitting in the front seat of a beaten down Buick without seat belts or air bags as it bears down on a semi-tractor trailer stopped in the middle of the freeway.

James took a blowtorch to his reputation, which was all fine and good, but he also took a blowtorch to the collective psyches of a town looking for even the tiniest reason to look forward instead of wallowing in the past.

The win against Miami the other night was fun and a measure of revenge but in the cold light of the next day the Heat still stands as one of the better teams in the league and the Cavs have literally gone from first to worst, a status that won't change for probably another 10 years. Look it up.

Then as the Indians polished off the final phases of another lost season, the Browns jumped in

with lots of misplaced promise and proceeded to lose their first three games of the season. When the season was almost half over, they stood at 1-6 and it became clear that whatever progress was promised wasn't going to be realized.

The Browns did tease their fans with improbable wins against New Orleans and New England but then won only twice more and when the dust settled, so did the Browns at an all to usual 5-11. Oh yea, another coach got fired, the reboot switch triggered once again.

There were some fun moments in that season if you were willing to look, none better than the on-going argument between the Eric Mangini apologists and haters as they debated his merits or lack thereof as the season came to an end with another blowout loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

There were the usual small amounts of light, too, in the form of players like Peyton Hillis and Colt McCoy who brought a few sparks to the offense, perhaps enough to give the fans the kinds of teases that losing seasons tend to give their fans. It's like the birdie you make on the 18th hole even though you shot a 97 for the day. There's always something to keep you coming back.

Then of course the circle was once again complete as the Cavs season began. It started well enough with what in retrospect turned out to be a rare win, this time against those same Boston Celtics that James hid from just months before. But where the season really fell apart was that much anticipated game on December 2nd against those posers from Miami. This town needed its measure of revenge. It needed a reason to believe. What it really needed was to see someone knock James on his ass a few times.

Instead what it got was a soul-less team that stood in awe of the one player they still considered the King and proceeded to get blown out by 28 points. In all the losses by all the teams that fans in this town have seen over all these years, the loss to Miami was perhaps the most difficult to absorb.

It was a meaningless early season game in a waaaaay too long NBA season in once sense, but in another it encapsulated all the hopes and fears and rejections and disappointments this town has ever felt in one relatively confined two hour period. If there was ever a reason for this town

to feel unworthy, this was it. That loss begged the question of where do we go from here? There is no answer.

It also started a downward spiral for the franchise that made it once again made this town a national joke as the Cavs proceeded to lose all but one of their next 34 games. Roll that around your minds for a minute.

The Cavaliers spent literally theirs and our entire winter months from December through February winning exactly 4 games. Any wonder that we all suffer from seasonal affective disorder?

It's that kind of run up really that provides all the context anyone needs for the Indians' home opening loss to the White Sox. It was nice to see the Indians make it relatively respectable but let's face it, they were also down 14-0 at one point. It's hard to actually imagine a worst worst-case scenario.

The Indians' ace by default, Fausto Carmona, stood at the mound throwing batting practice to a compliant White Sox lineup that looked grateful to have gotten in a little extra time in the cage. Justin Germano then came in and tried to replicate Carmona's performance.

There were some positives, there always are when you're trying to find a reason to pull yourself out of the doldrums. The Indians collected 17 hits, which is just one less than they gave up to the White Sox. And every player in the lineup had at least one hit except, naturally, the one free agent the Tribe bothered to sign this off season, Austin Kearns.

As usual, though, the positives didn't outweigh the negatives as another Indians season is off and running once again.

Still I can't see any end game in picking on the Tribe too much. All they were doing was continuing a cycle that has turned out to be much bigger than they can conquer on their own. It's too big for any one of us to conquer on our own.

This seasonal affective disorder will abate at some point, it has to. And perhaps it really is us that holds the key. Medication could help but the real key to getting through it is to remember why we follow these sports in the first place. Wins and losses, like players, come and go. It's the games. It's always been the games.