In the world of baseball, October gets all the chicks.

And rightly so. It's exciting. It's dangerous. From one day to the next it can make you wildly happy or plunge you into deep depression.

It's the Don Draper of the baseball season.

At the other end of the baseball timeline is April. While it generates more than its fair share of excitement with the pomp and circumstance surrounding the start of the season, much of that flag-waving giddiness fades away by sunset on opening day (ex: this year's Indians' attendance totals following game one.)

You're left with a cheerful yet schizophrenic month in which the weather oscillates between Hey-Spring's-Finally-Here and Dammit-This-Is-Still-Winter. You get a lot of rainouts (and/or snow-outs), a few gorgeously bright afternoons, several frosty nights, and loads of enthusiasm mixed with sheer lunacy.

It's the Charlie Sheen of the baseball season.

It's not necessarily that we care more in April than we do in, say, August, or that a team generally plays any better in the first month of the season than it does in the third. But across the board, we pay attention more, and consequently, each game in April takes on greater meaning.

It's the closest baseball comes to matching the ebb and flow of the football season. For the first month of the schedule, we treat each game as a welcome event, not just "Who are we playing now?" then routinely checking the score on muggy summer mornings.

In April, we anticipate each series, we actually read the standings, and we comb over the box scores with a little more veracity.

Some would say it's because we haven't been beaten down yet, that our spirit has yet to be pulverized like a woozy raccoon crossing the Autobahn. Others contend it's that the new-car feeling of the fresh season hasn't worn off yet. Usually it's a combination of both.

But even if your team winds up embarking on a triumphant season, your enthusiasm in April is markedly different than your enthusiasm in August.

There may not be leaves on the trees yet, but there's a colorful, pastel Easter-egg tint to these early season games. The nights are misty and cool and coated with the clouds of our own breath, but it feels genuinely liberating just to be outside, freed from the prison of winter.

Your team may still be figuring out its identity and the quality of the games may not be at the level you'll see in July or August, but the purity - and perhaps innocence - of the season is still intact. We're still genuinely excited about just being able to watch a game - to hell with the outcome - and get juiced about the potential of coming home from work, cracking open a beer, and nestling into the couch not for another Cavaliers' loss or a meaningless college basketball game, but baseball.

Consequently, April becomes its own little season inside a season. And for teams that wind up sucking on the tailpipe from Memorial Day on, that mini-season can become more memorable

than the larger one that contains it.

Take the Indians. (Please!)

While the 1990s stand out like a flamethrower in a natural gas plant, there was that little three-decade stretch there in which the majority of each season was about as substantive as something off the McDonald's Dollar Menu. Thirty-four seasons, 33 fourth-place-or-lower finishes, 27 losing records, and thousands of crappy games.

But lest we forget, there were a handful of fun little Aprils in there.

One of the first that comes to mind is 1988. By the time the season was over, the Indians would finish 78-84 and come in 11 games back of Boston in a decidedly mediocre AL East.

Yet that April was pretty awesome.

The Tribe lost the opener but still started 6-1. Then 11-2. Then 14-3. They were written up in *Sp orts Illustrated*
, which comically explained that they'd meant 1988, not 1987 when they predicted the Indians to be the best team in the American League 12 months earlier.

(For what it's worth, it didn't hurt that the Indians played Baltimore seven times over this string, smack-dab in the middle of the Orioles' infamous 0-21 start to the season, but let us not quibble over details.)

On the last day of that April, as Michael Dukakis was battling Jesse Jackson for the Democratic nomination for president, the Indians held baseball's best record at 16-5 and were hosting the eventual American League-champion Oakland Athletics in NBC's Game of the Week on a sunshiny Saturday afternoon at Cleveland Stadium.

Everything was clicking in that wide-eyed Tribe spring of ’88.

Joe Carter was hitting .354. Brook Jacoby .346. Even Cory Snyder was up over .300.

Greg Swindell was 5-0 and all but unhittable. Doug Jones sported the best mustache in baseball along with four saves and a 0.00 ERA.

May arrived, and whoomp, there it was. The Tribe suddenly lost nine of 10, and while they gallantly hung around in the division race until late June, they never again played as well as they did in those first four weeks. As a result, April of 1988 hangs over recent Indians history as both a pleasant little memory and a tease of what might have been.

But more importantly, that April run has us talking about an otherwise forgettable 1988 season 23 years later.

It wasn’t the first - or the last time.

In 1964 and 1981, the Indians started May in first place, only to wind up in sixth. Then there was the quintessential Indians’ April flame-out of 1966, when the Tribe won its first 10 games and 14 of its first 15. From that point forward, the Indians went 67-80 to finish fifth, a distant 17 games back of Baltimore.

Even in some of those Jacobs Field years that turned out all right, April still stood out as the high point of the season. The 1998 Tribe flew on auto-pilot for most of the season after an energetic 10-2 start. The following year, scoring like JFK at a Tupperware party, the Indians roared to a 16-5 start, then kept it up for a couple more weeks into May and stood at 29-10 before that “Ooops-We’re-In-The-Central-Division” lethargy kicked in and they started coasting.

More recently, there was that completely unexpected 11-1 start to the 2002 season - in the first of what would be many “rebuilding” campaigns. It was capped by an incredible rally from an eighth-inning, five-run deficit to beat Kansas City on a chilly Saturday afternoon before 28,000 at Jacobs Field.

With Matt Lawton in right, Brady Anderson in center, and Ryan Drese as their No. 3 starting pitcher, the Indians somehow had the best record in baseball. But soon enough, the clock struck midnight with a string of 15 losses in 17 games and we were off to the races for an 88-loss season, followed by a 7-20 April in 2003 and an even more scrumptious 94-loss season.

Our last little April flash came five years ago, when the Indians won six of their first seven to tease us into thinking they would pick up where they left off after a dazzling 2005 season, only to wind up six games under .500 when all was said and done.

We’re due, baby.

For lots of things, of course, but as we wait for a payoff of Biblical proportions, I don’t think a kick-ass April is too much to ask.

Does an entertaining first month compensate for five more of mediocrity? Of course not.

But if a miserable season is like getting a shot from the doctor, a fun April is like the sucker you get on the way out. It still hurts and your cheeks are still damp with tears, but the sugary nectar of the sucker makes it almost tolerable.

Here’s hoping the Easter Bunny brings Tribe fans more than eggs this April.