Chris Perez got baited in by the New York media this week and made some comments that are sure to rub Cleveland fans the wrong way. After calling out Indians fans for booing him and not supporting the team nearly a month ago, Perez again made critical comments about the Cleveland sports fan base regarding LeBron James, the Cleveland Browns, and the low attendance numbers.

Perez, speaking with Tyler Kepner of the New York Times , had this to say regarding the continued Cleveland hatred for LeBron James:

"I don't get the psyche," said Perez, who grew up in Florida. "Why cheer against a guy that's not even in your city anymore? Just to see him fail? Does that make you feel good? I could see if the Cavs were in the championship, but that's their mentality.

"They've had a lot of years of misery. They say, 'You just don't understand because you don't live here.' O.K., maybe I don't. But that doesn't mean it has to keep going."

With Perez speaking candidly, Kepner pressed on, asking about the never-ending support and high attendance figures of the Cleveland Browns and the lack of both for the Indians:

“That’s what I don’t understand,” Perez said. “Their whole thing is, ‘We want a winner.’ Well, why do you support the Browns? They don’t win. They’ve never won. They left. You guys blindly support them. I don’t understand it. It’s a double standard, and I don’t know why.

“It’s head-scratching. It’s just — they don’t come out. But around the city, there’s great support. They watch it in the bars. They watch it at home. They just don’t come.”

Perez’s comments may polarize the fan base. Some people, most of them diehard Indians fans who are over the whole LeBron James thing, will nod their head feverishly until they start to strain the muscles in their necks. Other people are going to give a list of reasons why the Browns get more support than the Indians, ending with the often-overused quote describing the Cleveland sports landscape, “We’re a football town” and why LeBron James is still reviled for what he did.

Frankly, whether Perez is right or wrong, the timing of these comments is wrong. The Indians are struggling mightily, unable to score runs and unable to get consistent starting pitching. It doesn’t take more than a basic understanding of the American League Central Division to see that the Indians, warts and all, can win the division and be a playoff team. However, as bad as everyone else is, it requires the Indians to be less bad than those other teams. Right now, that’s not happening and the collective fan base is teetering on the ledge.

In today’s society, with instant media and knee-jerk reactions, it’s easy to take Perez’s comments in a very literal context. Doing that will disenfranchise some people from Chris Perez and possibly the Indians as a whole, although the organization did make it very clear during Perez’s last go-round with the media that they did not stand behind Perez’s comments about the fans, but did stand behind him as a member of the Indians.

If you look a little bit deeper, though, you see Perez’s frustration, but wish it was expressed more eloquently. Sunday football is a staple in Cleveland. It’s what some people eat, sleep, live, and breathe. It’s an institution passed down from father to son and son to son over the last 60+ years. From January to September, they long to sit in the Muni Lot at 6 a.m. on a cold Sunday winter morning drinking a beer and firing up the grill. From 1995-1999, that got taken away from Clevelanders. Forgive us, Chris, for being a little protective of the team that we had ripped away in the dead of night.

The Clevelander whose sports allegiance lies predominantly with the Indians has always been jealous of the treatment that the Browns get. Through failed draft after failed draft, over 70,000 still pack Cleveland Browns Stadium on Sundays anyway, just to watch a 4-12 team play. No front office in Cleveland, perhaps up until recently, has gotten more of a free pass than the Cleveland Browns. Considering that a franchise whose starting quarterbacks list over the last 12 years includes Charlie Frye, Spergon Wynn, Kelly Holcomb, Seneca Wallace, Jeff Garcia, and numerous others who amounted to nothing still sells lot of tickets and absolutely packs the complex in Berea during training camp screams of how much this city loves its Browns.

The Indians don't get that same treatment, having one the most fair-weather fan bases in baseball. Even in 2007, the people didn't start to come until August. We can easily list the number of reasons why the Browns draw better than the Indians - far fewer home games, once a week, games on days where people have off or can plan to be off, not doing outdoor parties or cookouts, etc., etc.

Chris Perez isn't thinking about those things when he says what he said to the *New York Times* reporter on Monday. He's speaking as an emotional person who feels that the team has earned respect. Irrespective of what your personal views about Chris Antonetti, Mark Shapiro, or the Dolans might be, the Indians are still Cleveland's team and they deserve the same amount of leeway that the Browns receive.

Ultimately, that's what Chris Perez is saying regarding the Browns. Whether he's wrong or not will be your decision, based on your convictions.

Now, regarding LeBron James, that's an altogether different thing. First off, let's interject the fact that Perez was acquired in the middle of 2009 and LeBron James had already been with the Cleveland Cavaliers for six years and took them from irrelevance to prominence in that time. Even though he was born in Akron, he was Cleveland's adopted son and the savior of the Cavaliers franchise.

Much like Perez is an emotional person, Cleveland is an emotional city. We've had tons of heartbreaks and not very many feel-good stories in sports. The culmination of all of those may have been LeBron James's televised middle finger to the city of Cleveland and Cavs fans everywhere on July 8, 2010. We were legitimately pissed off. Not just because LBJ was taking

his talents to South Beach, but because he duped us into believing he cared. That he cared about the city that practically raised him as a professional basketball player. It's no different than a break-up with a significant other. More often than not, you want your ex to be as miserable as humanly possible, except for wishing some sort of tragedy on them. You don't want to see somebody you used to love be happy or better off while you're spending your Friday nights in the fetal position crying about loneliness.

Hyperbole? Maybe. But, The Decision incited such rage from people that it caused scars that have yet to heal. Those scars were probably re-opened for some when James held the NBA Championship trophy and the Cavs and their fans looked on from their couches after their second consecutive lottery pick season.

For some, the grief period of nearly two full years has been enough. For others, they're still enraged by the five-head's departure to greener pastures, which clearly worked out for him. Still, his name is spoken in whispers, as if it's the late 17th century and he's a witch in Salem, Massachusetts.

Chris Perez is right. It's a double standard that we don't expect him to understand. But, it's our double standard and we're entitled to it as long-suffering fans of three major sports teams that haven't won a championship in most of our lifetimes. He's also right that the Indians deserve the same level of support that the Browns get, regardless of their faults, the inherent difficulties of Major League Baseball's non-capped financial system, and the questionable drafting record.

Winning cures all. If the Indians win, people will come. If the Browns win, people won't tack their tickets to a utility pole outside the stadium for someone to use for free. If the Cavs win, the Q will be packed. We shouldn't besmirch Chris Perez for what he said, but we should all agree that he should focus on winning games and let attendance take care of itself that way.