Compared to the bloodthirsty throngs in Philly or Boston, the sports fans of Cleveland are a relatively forgiving lot. Failure alone will rarely turn us against one of our own. Combine that failure with a perceived attitude of arrogance, ignorance, or simple indifference, however, and a local ballplayer can quickly find himself the target of 50 years worth of bottled-up rage.

You'll know the names of these particular Browns, Cavs, and Indians, because you've spent ample chunks of the past decade shouting at them through your TV set, cursing their existence, and insulting their mothers on internet message boards. They were the loudmouths, head-cases, and screw-ups that never failed to disappoint. They are the 21 Most Infuriating Cleveland Athletes of the 21st Century.

The Rules of Infuriation

One of the key things to know about this list of supremely maddening players is that it doesn't actually include some of the great villains you might associate with this city's recent sports past—specifically, the ones that became reviled only after leaving town. Instead, this study of aggravation is centered on those players who managed to crawl under our skin and provoke our disdain while still wearing the local colors—no easy task in a sports town as desperately loyal as this one.

So, whether they were all-stars or role players, idiots or assholes, or just nice, well-meaning fellows we couldn't help but despise… let us start the healing process now and give them their proper due.

Cleveland Sports' Most Infuriating Players: 2000-2012

Honorable Mention
First up, how about a nod of recognition to the unpopular players not even hated with enough passion to make this list—guys like Gerard “Big Waste of Money” Warren, Drew “Neck Soul Patch” Gooden, Casey “Irritatingly Average” Blake, and the much maligned Quincy “Dropsies” Morgan, who has been kindly bumped off the Top 21 by the new king of the All-Hands team…

#21 – Greg Little
Wide Receiver, Browns, 2011-Present
In just his second season, the once vaunted UNC suspendee has made quite the impact on Browns fans—inspiring more Tourette’s caliber cursing fits than a Brian Daboll third-down play call. Though noted for his intimidating size and strength, it’s those buttery fingers that set Little apart—as he finished second in the NFL in dropped passes last season and is well on his way to pacing the league in 2012. On those rare occasions in which the football does stick in his mitts, Greg eagerly shows off his interpretative dance skills by mimicking the poses of far more famous and accomplished athletes.

#20 – David Dellucci
Left Field, Indians, 2007-2009
For five years, Indians fans have wondered how their team blew a 3-1 series lead in the 2007 ALCS. What we really should be asking is how a team with a starting left field platoon of Jason Michaels and David Dellucci ever got that far in the first place. As arguably the posterboy for the “Shaprio Sucks” side of the fence, a clearly past-his-prime, 33 year-old Dellucci was inked to a head-scratching 3-year, $12 million deal in December of 2006. He was supposed to be the long

sought solution to the Tribe's left field woes. What he became was utterly woeful in his own right. Across two and a half seasons in Cleveland, Dellucci (whose 29 HR season for Philly in 2005 sticks out like a Brady Anderson caliber fluke) managed to hit just .238 with 15 homers in 183 games. The combination of his uselessness at the plate and stable role on the payroll quickly made a whipping boy of poor Davey. We spoke ill of him to anyone who would listen, and sometimes—even now, three years after his release—we still do.

#19 – Darius Miles

Forward, Cavaliers, 2002-2004

Once known as "Frequent Flyer" Miles when selected out of high school by the Clippers in 2000, Darius was forced into a crash landing upon arriving in Cleveland in the ill-fated deal that sent Andre Miller to L.A. At a lanky 6-foot-9, Miles could certainly leap, but he also proved surprisingly uncoordinated, injury prone, weak on the boards, clueless at the stripe, and perpetually out of sync with everyone around him—all while displaying an inexplicable and increasingly obnoxious swagger (which included an OCD sort of celebration gesture in which he'd double fist-bump his own head). Darius averaged 9 PPG in two injury-shortened seasons in Cleveland, then scuffled along to Portland before falling out of the league at 27.

#18 – Matt LaPorta

1B/LF, Indians, 2009-Present

It's not really fair to identify him as the central reason for the epic failure of the Indians' rebuild, but we enjoy doing so anyway. Of course expectations were unreasonably high for the centerpiece of the CC Sabathia trade, but LaPorta's flameout at the Big League level might have been met with more sympathy if he didn't seem so frustratingly unadaptable. Across four seasons, his long swing and longer face have stubbornly held their old familiar shape, as Tribe fans wonder why we kept asking for the guy's promotion all year.

#17 – Jhonny Peralta

SS/3B, Indians, 2003-2010

With his familiar chubby cheeks and chinstrap beard, Jhonny Peralta antagonized Cleveland fans in large part by occasionally showcasing just how talented he could be when he set his mind to it. As a 23 year-old in 2005, he emerged as one of the game's top young shortstops--hitting .292 with 24 big flies and 78 RBIs—and he hit more than 100 homers during his 6+ seasons with the Indians. But there were times—loooong stretches of time—when the mild mannered Dominican would look astonishingly clueless at the dish, flailing blindly at any pitch that rotated. And while Casey Blake would at least get fiery at times, Peralta seemed perpetually bored with his profession—emotionless, slow afoot, ho-hum about the whole thing. For this reason above all others, he became an increasingly unlikable chap, inspiring subtle "ughs" every time he sauntered to the box. And while we're on the topic, re-arrange those letters in your name already, Jhonny. We're tired of informing Spell-check that, yes, we meant to type it that way.

#16 – Tim Couch

Quarterback, Browns, 1999-2003

Both statistically and aesthetically, one can easily argue that Tim Couch is still the best quarterback the expansion Browns have managed to produce. But as Cleveland fans adjusted to the weird new world of expansion football at the turn of the century, there was little appreciation for the efforts of a completely overmatched QB with virtually zero weapons at his disposal (though Kevin Johnson is still better than any pass catcher on the current club). Poor Timmy's war with the fans finally came to a head when—after only hearing cheers when being taken off the field with a concussion—a tearful Couch lashed out in a post-game interview. You had to feel for him a bit. He really was trying his best. But by the time he tossed his next awkward, wounded-duck pick into triple coverage, your empathy was left right back at the door

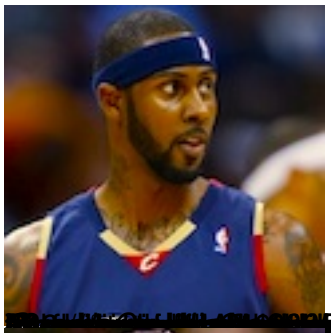
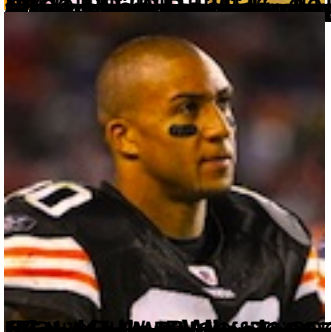
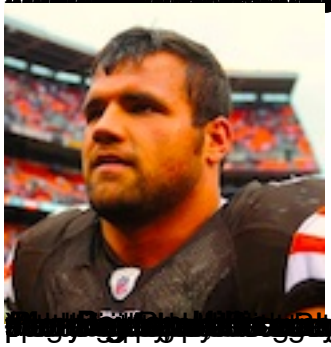
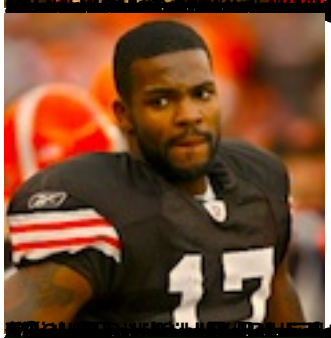
again. Really, we all owe Tim Couch a sincere and respectful apology. No one deserves that many curses placed on his house.

#15 – Damon Jones

Guard, Cavaliers, 2005-2008

When it comes to the category of inexplicable egomania, this former Cavalier guard sets the gold standard. Even Greg Little thinks he's crap compared to the self-assessment of Damon Jones. A career journeyman, Jones had some nice moments during a three-year stint in Cleveland—including a game-winner in a 2006 playoff game against the Wizards. For the most part, though, he was a guy that barked a hell of a lot and rarely bit. Dubbing himself the "best shooter in the universe," Damon actually knocked 'em down at about 38% for the Cavs, usually coming off the bench to make one and a half three-pointers per game. In '07, he vowed to put on a clinic at the All-Star 3-Point Shootout, but didn't get out of the first round. Basically, he was a serviceable role player that fancied himself a super-star, and the act grew tired in a hurry.

#14 – Ubaldo Jimenez

Starting Pitcher, Indians, 2011-Present

In some ways, Ubaldo has been spared the full heel treatment thanks to the fans' focus on the men who brought him to Cleveland—Mark Shapiro and Chris Antonetti. Nonetheless, Jimenez has been so erratic, so frustrating, so painfully unreliable, that his mere presence on the hill now elicits mild feelings of nausea. Like Matt LaPorta, he also represents a promise of what might have been—a true #1 starter for a contending team, now reduced to a graceless train wreck; firing 90 MPH fastballs into the dirt while the merry-go-round continues behind him.