This is one instalment in a team effort by The Cleveland Fan, highlighting the top local sports figures by jersey number. Please weigh in with your thoughts, in the Forum. As David Letterman would say, "For entertainment purposes only; please, no wagering."

Ten. That's the number of League Championships that our three major franchises have brought home for the city of Cleveland. Though we might consider the Force, the Barons, the Thunderbolts, Crunch, Gladiators, Monsters, and Lumberjacks in our "By the Numbers" series, I have to be real about which Championships actually matter more than a couple of square blocks away from the Wolstein Center.

Having said that, in 218 seasons of mainstream professional sports, and we have to count the All-American Football Conference, which the Browns dominated, there have been a grand total of ten championships won. About half of those 218 seasons have been played in my 34 years on this planet, but not a single one of those ten were played in my lifetime.

So, it should come as little surprise to me that the talent at #10, at least from my lifetime, was so few and far between.

I was resigned to settling for someone a little too mediocre for a list like this when I found my obvious winner.

Not everyone with a .228 career batting average and a World Series ring should be recognized and, in turn, honored for their accomplishments in a Cleveland uniform, but we're willing to

make an exception for Jim Hegan. He is our winner at #10, and it really isn't all that close. The disclaimer is that Hegan also wore 30, 40, 14, and later 4 for the Indians, but the glory of Jim Hegan exists in the form of #10, so we'll emphasize the great things for Cleveland and Hegan in they years he wore that number.

If you're looking for numbers, try this one on for size. He hit .319 in his rookie season, and even homered in his Major League debut at Shibe Park against Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics, but like Hegan's entire stat sheet, there's more than meets the eye there.

That game was played on September 9, 1941 and was one of just 16 that the Lynn, Massachusetts native would play in that year.

The man on the mound that day was none other than Bob Feller, who also hit a triple batting one spot behind his 21 year-old battery mate.

The 13-7 win gave Feller 23 on the year.

To understand just how misleading that his debut and his rookie season truly were for Hegan, he hit .194 while appearing in 68 games in 1942. Also, his second career home run came on June 6, 1947; ironically, the Tribe's opponent that day was also the Athletics of Philadelphia.

The Indians won 7-4 that day, and the pitcher of record was Mel Harder, who spent all of his 20 Major League seasons with the Indians.

It was Harder's 219th victory; he'd notch just four more before hanging up the spikes for good after the '47 season.

There's a bit of a catch to the time elapsed between home runs #1 and #2 for Hegan, and it's a pretty remarkable thing. He missed three full seasons, from 1943-1945, serving in the United States Coast Guard during World War II. Granted, he still played in 199 games between his first and second home run, but you really have to let the home run thing and the whole batting thing go, to really appreciate Hegan as a ballplayer.

He was hitting just .192 when he went deep off Bob Savage that day.

Hegan heated up a bit at the plate after that, and was hitting .278 at the end of play on July 6th, the final game before the All-Star break. Lo and behold, Hegan was an All-Star, though he didn't play in the Mid-Summer Classic. He'd miss the cut for the 1948 All-Star Game, but the consolation was that he got to be a World Champion.

Maybe guys like Alomar, Martinez, and Santana are more fun to watch at the plate, but they all have fewer World Championship rings than (Indians broadcaster) Mike Hegan's old man.

For the elder Hegan, 1948 was about more than just the hardware.

He matched or eclipsed career highs in Runs (60), Hits (117), Doubles (21), HR (14), RBI (61), Stolen Bases (6), OBP (.317), and Slugging (.407).

In the World Series against the Boston Braves, he had a HR and 5 RBI, but more importantly, he caught every inning of all six games in the series, including the clincher on October 11, 1948.

Honorable Mentions

Without boring you with the behind-the-scenes details, many of you will never know just how close this was to being a feature on **Pat Tabler**. According to Baseball-Reference, Tabler was known as Mr. Clutch, but there are too many stats out there to confirm that validity of that nickname in any way, shape, or form. Still, Tabler gave some good memories to the 20 or 30 of us that were regulars down at Municipal Stadium in the 1980s.

One of my favorite moments came in a back and forth game in the middle of a rare winning streak.

Greg Popelka
delivers the details in a
2011 column
:

Pat Tabler played for four major league teams, mostly in the 1980s. He'd been drafted by the New York Yankees in the first round in 1977, and played sparingly as an infielder for the Chicago Cubs in 1981 and 1982. Once acquired by the Indians in 1983, he was installed as a line drive-hitting first baseman. By 1986, Tabler took over for in the outfield for Cory Snyder, who'd suffered an ankle injury. His batting average soared to .326- fourth highest in the American League.

You know how every so often, the emotional nature of Cleveland fans catches fire and the entire region erupts? Gabe Paul is known for calling the city a sleeping giant, but that wasn't particularly insightful to any of us. We always knew. Well, it happened with the Indians in 1986. They ripped off a nine-game winning streak - on the road- and the old stadium was the place to be when the team flew home to face Kansas City. 50,000 fans arrived, and the starting time was delayed around a half hour while they filed in. With the game tied in the bottom of the ninth inning, Tabler stepped up to the plate. Already known as a premier hitter with the bases loaded, he stroked a single off of star Royals closer Dan Quisenberry to win the game.

On the hardwood, we looked at every player to don the number, from **Joe Cooke** to **Wally Szczerbiak**
, for the Cavaliers.

John Battle
was notable to me, from the Blue and Orange era, but it's
Dick Snyder
who takes the honors for the Cavs.

Snyder was a product of North Canton's Hoover High School, who arrived in Cleveland in 1974, already on the Back 9 of his career at the age of 30.

He appeared in all 82 games during his first three seasons with the Cavs.

He averaged 14.2 points per game in 1974-75, but regressed every year.

The Shooting Guard from Davidson appeared in 17 playoff games, highlighted by a 12 point per game average in the '75-'76 season.

He spent most of his career with Seattle, and returned in 1978, where he was a member of Seattle's only Championship team ever.

If we're talking about the Browns, we can probably skip the **Tom Flick**s, **Eric Zeier**s, and **Mike Pagel**
s of Mediocre Backup Quarterbacks' Past.

We can even skip the entire original Browns franchise.

Kelly Holcomb
, the short-lived hero, picked up where Tim Couch left off in 2002, and started at QB in a playoff game…the new Browns only playoff game.

Sure, that whole thing went south in January 2003, and more so during the 2003 season, but Browns…Playoffs…Holcomb.

Anyway, Jim Hegan was an easy choice.