Well, the Tribe couldn't finish the sweep of the Dodgers on Sunday, but still did manage to take two of three from LA after the disappointing series with the Rockies. At the end of the day though, Peeker says that while this team may continue to tease fans here and there with flashes, they are better served putting all their focus towards '09. In The Weekend Wrap, Brian also hits on Casey Blake's clutch season, what the Cavs may do in this Thursday's draft, and some worries he has about the Browns defense.

Boys of Bummer

Baseball is typically regarded as a summer game. Warm nights spent at the ballpark or on the couch with the windows open watching the Tribe on television. That is a bit odd when you consider that nearly 50% of the season is played before summer is officially welcomed to these parts and that the penultimate games of the season are played in the chilled air of October.

The good news is that the Indians are playing winning baseball since summer arrived on Friday. The bad news is that with a record of 33-40

before Friday they may have already rendered the summer months meaningless.

Coming off a trip to Colorado where they were swept by the Rockies the Indians teased us yet again by winning their series against the Dodgers in Los Angeles. They needed extra innings both Friday and Saturday against LA but they got the job done. They also did their part to cool down the fans who attended the first two ballgames in a scorching Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine by striking out a staggering 29 times. For those with basic math skills and a working knowledge of baseball, the Indians struck out a full game's worth of times in two ball games. It's tough to win one game, let alone two, when you're not putting the ball in play. But the Indians did win the first two games thanks to some timely hitting and some great starting pitching.

Paul Byrd allowed the first four men he faced to score then combined with the bullpen to shut down the Dodgers the rest of the way on Sunday. Unfortunately the Indians offense could only respond with three runs of their own in a 4-3 loss in the series finale.

A highlight of Saturday's 7-2 11-inning win was CC Sabathia. Not only did the soon-to-be-departing big lefthander give up just one run in 7 innings while striking out ten Dodgers, but he hit a tape measure home run his first time up off Chan Ho Park that they're still talking about across the major leagues. The cynics will say he has now overtaken Victor Martinez in their personal home run race. The hopefuls will argue the Indians may have solved their middle of the order issues if they consider using Sabathia as the DH on days he's not pitching and going without one altogether on the days he is.

Regardless, I gave up hoping each Indians win was the one that was going to turn this disappointing season around about two weeks ago. This is a flawed baseball team. While some individuals have shown signs of life recently there is just not enough overall talent to realistically expect them to compete all summer long. Add in the injuries to Travis Hafner, Martinez, Jake Westbrook and Fausto Carmona and you have a season that shapes up to be over before summer ever really began.

There are fans who point out that the Indians went on a major run in the second half of 2005 before yakking all over their shoes in the final week of that season. That's true. But after 75 games this season the Indians are 35-40 and are missing those vital cogs listed above, unsure of when and if any of them will be back and contributing. Even though the 2005 Tribe got hot in the second half of that season, they were 41-34 after the first 75 games and they were a healthier lot overall.

This 2008 version of the Indians will tease you with a game here, a little win streak there. But they are not currently built for a sustained run. And even in a division without a clearly dominant club running away, expectations need to be tempered by the reality that the 2008 Indians are better off not fooling themselves and are best served by making the moves they need to make to strengthen themselves for 2009 and beyond.

That Being Said...

Even in what appears to be a wasted season, and at the least a

disappointing one, there are guys meeting expectations and even exceeding them.

For all the crap Casey Blake takes in this town a look at his production should shut up all of those with Blake lined up squarely in their sights. A look at the current team stats indicates Blake is right where he always is: .270avg, on pace for about 16 HRs, 75-80 runs and headed toward 90 RBI. He's also hitting .353 with 2-outs and runners in scoring position and .429 overall with RISP. All while playing a serviceable 3rd base and having the capability to play just about anywhere on the field.

He's truly a mess and should be run out of town on a rail.

Jamey Carroll, another target of the people who read baseball statistics as opposed to actually watching games, is hitting just south of .280 and is playing excellent defense now that he's taken the position from Asdrubal Cabrera. Both Blake and Carroll also see more than 4 pitches per plate appearance, meaning they're working a count and running up an opposing pitcher's pitch count as well. Each is in the upper portion of the league in that category.

Those were just a few numbers for those unable to comprehend the game as it plays out as opposed to mining for measurables afterward.

Even the mopes who criticize players like Carroll and Blake should hope their production continues to climb. Baseball people, if not number crunchers, appreciate players like Blake and Carroll for their versatility and their production. If this death spiral of a season continues Blake and Carroll, along with Sabathia, Paul Byrd and David Dellucci are likely headed out of town in trades designed to infuse this team with some younger talent.

No Rest for the Weary

There's a big day looming for the Cavaliers on Thursday.

The 2008 NBA draft takes place Thursday in Madison Square Garden. After watching the Celtics

completely take apart the Los Angeles Lakers in 5 games one has to wonder just how good this Cavaliers team actually is. More to the point, one wonders just how much help LeBron James really needs to elevate the Cavs to the top of the Eastern Conference.

It was the Cavs who pushed the Celtics to the final minute of their 7-game series nearly a month ago and who played the eventual champs tougher than any other team in the playoffs, including the best the Western Conference had to offer.

The next four days will be an interesting look at just how close the Cavs deem themselves to be to challenging for a title in 2009. Clearly they need some help and they have the pieces to offer up to get it. The Cavs have some options. They can make moves leading up to the draft and then again on draft day or they can play it straight, make their selection and then get creative afterward. They

need to improve their point guard situation as well as, ideally, obtain a low-post scoring presence to give LBJ a couple more options on the floor.

One can foresee the Cavs potentially starting the '08-'09 season without Anderson Varejao, Sasha Pavlovic, Eric Snow, Wally Szczerbiak, Joe Smith and Devin Brown, all contributors to one extent or another from this past season. The Cavs are heavy in expiring contracts, a true value in today's NBA. One thing to note is that some minor deals may be made before any larger moves come down the pike. Don't be disappointed if some of those ancillary moves are made prior to actual needs being filled. Rosters need to be adjusted and pieces put in place for bigger moves that are likely to follow.

With the Indians floundering Danny Ferry and the Cavs will be in the spotlight this week as well as beyond.

All Hands on Deck

How's your backpedal?

Do you have any type of burst, nose for the ball or tackling ability?

If so, you may want to submit an application and a resume, a well as a high school highlight tape, to the Cleveland Browns. The Browns are in need of defensive backs and they'll likely be scouring the unemployment lines and waiver wires for guys who can run and jump with Terrell Owens, Chad Johnson, Hines Ward and Plaxico Burress.

It's likely to be a revolving door of has beens, hopefuls and never-weres in Berea all summer long given the injuries and transactions that have occurred since last we left the Cleveland Browns. Leigh Bodden is now an injury waiting to happen in Detroit and Daven Holly is an injury being rehabbed here in Cleveland. That leaves precious little talent remaining to play against on Sundays against the most athletic offensive players in the league.

One thing you or whomever the Browns actually end up with on their roster have going for you is the front seven should be vastly improved if they remain healthy and motivated. Shaun Rogers and Corey Williams are proven veterans who should help shore up the defensive line and free up Kamerion Wimbley and D'Qwell Jackson to make some plays. They should also, ideally, reduce the time the DBs are required to run with receivers across

and down the field.

Still, when you look at a roster and see Mil'von James and Damon Jenkins at the DB position, you are forgiven if you are just a bit jumpy.

Four weeks and counting until the Browns get together for training camp and start separating the wheat from the chaff in Berea.

Etcetera

- Great opportunity to get together and play one of the finest public golf courses in the state, much less the area, when theclevelandfan.com hosts its inaugural golf outing August 23

rd

at Little Mountain Country Club in Concord, OH. Great course, open bar, lunch and dinner as well as tons of door prizes and giveaways. You can form your foursome or be placed into one depending on your wishes. The link above tells you how to go about registering.

- Be sure to check out the Three Strikes column that TCF resident handicapper Mike 'Lead Pipe' Piper and I combined on earlier in the week. Weigh in on which side of the fence you fall regarding the questions posed. Feel free to email Mike or me with suggestions for future Three Strikes topics.

- Hey die-hards. There's a TCF store that now offers Flex-Fit hats and knit golf shirts embroidered with the TCF logo. Nice stuff. I got myself one of the heavy sweatshirts and its high quality merchandise. Check it out for a variety of clothes, hats and mugs too. What's nice is there is no additional shipping cost. There's your ‘Help out the site' commercial for the week. And you can look good doing it.