As an act to follow, 2007 was pretty tough. An NBA Finals appearance by the Cavs, an ALCS appearance by the Indians, a 10-6 Browns team that narrowly missed the playoffs and C.C. Sabathia winning the Indians' first Cy Young Award since 1972. The sports year 2008 was bound to pale by comparison for Cleveland fans. On many levels it did. Regardless, we are here to do our civic duty, assigning Erik Cassano to recap the top ten Cleveland sports moments of 2008.

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The sports year 2008 was bound to pale by comparison for Cleveland fans. On many levels it did. The Indians stumbled out of the gate in April. Injuries and a dud of a bullpen rendered the season a lost cause by midsummer, at which point Sabathia and Casey Blake were shipped off in a mini-fire sale reminiscent of 2006.

The Cavs followed up their Finals appearance with a season marred by holdouts, injuries and upheaval, as half the roster was reconstructed at the trading deadline. The '07-'08 season came to an end with a Game 7, second round loss to the Celtics.

The Browns were the most disappointing team of all. A season that began with so much promise will end with the entire organization on the fast track to another

smack of the reset button.

But 2008 did manage to make its own sports headlines in Cleveland, and believe it or not, a number of them were positive. Over the coming days, our top 10 Cleveland sports moments will be revealed here on the front page of The Cleveland Fan. We hope you enjoy reliving them.

10. Browns burn Giants on Monday Night Football

October 13

It was Cleveland's first appearance in the Monday Night spotlight since 2003. It was against the undefeated, defending Super Bowl champs, who were riding an 11-game road winning streak. The Browns were 1-3, coming off an extremely unimpressive win over the lowly Cincinnati Bengals two weeks previous.

We were readying ourselves for embarrassment, humiliation, a right-cross black eye in front of the entire country. What we got was a 35-14 trouncing of football's best team.

Giants QB Eli Manning wasn't on his game, throwing three picks, two of which short-circuited sure scoring drives, one of which was returned by Eric Wright 94 yards for a touchdown. But the biggest difference between this game and the rest of the '08 season was the offense. Despite numerous penalties, the offense moved the ball and scored points with efficiency.

For one night, Derek Anderson and Braylon Edwards took a time warp back to 2007, when they were among the most potent hookups in the NFL. Anderson threw for 310 yards and two touchdowns, one of them to Edwards, who snapped

up five catches for 154 yards. Anderson's other TD toss went to Darnell Dinkins.

The Giants clawed back to within 17-14 at the half, but in a rare show of fortitude, the Browns held their ground and rattled off 18 unanswered points in the second half. Wright interception score was the icing on the cake with just more than eight minutes to play in the game.

Punter Dave Zastudil did not see the field. It was the first time since 1995 that the Browns did not need to punt during a game.

It turned out to be a beautiful aberration, but at the time, the win improved the Browns to 2-3 and gave us a shred of hope that the season could be salvaged. Standing by itself, outside of the context of the rest of the season, this win ranks as one of the most impressive since the franchise's return. It was the Browns' first win on Monday Night Football since 1993.

9. The Shaun Rogers trade

February 29

If Phil Savage's days as the Browns general manager are numbered, last winter's trade for Shaun Rogers will be part of the legacy he leaves in Cleveland.

When a proposed trade that would have sent Rogers from the Lions to the Bengals fell through earlier in the day, Savage saw an opening and struck quickly. Before the clock hit midnight on March 1, Rogers was headed to Cleveland, Leigh Bodden and a third-round pick were headed to the Lions, and the Browns had a new franchise player on the defensive side of the ball.

But the thing is, Savage didn't set out to get a franchise player. The acquisition of Rogers wasn't even the highlight of the day. Savage had landed Corey Williams from the Packers for a second-rounder earlier that day.

The moves were meant to shore up a defensive line that had been exposed as old and slow during the '07 season. But Williams and Rogers have taken divergent paths since the season started.

Williams has had trouble adjusting to the Browns' 3-4 defensive alignment and hasn't had much of an impact in his inaugural Browns campaign. Rogers, however, moved from a 4-3 defensive tackle to a 3-4 nose tackle and has actually improved his game. The concerns over his conditioning and work ethic that followed him from Detroit have been much ado about nothing so far in his Browns career.

His season stats through Week 15: 67 tackles, 55 solo tackles, four sacks, and a bevy of deflected and/or redirected passes from opposing quarterbacks. He is tied for the team lead in sacks with Kamerion Wimbley. The big difference being that Wimbley is a pass rusher and is supposed to get to the quarterback. Rogers is a 350-pound gap-stuffing interior lineman who often has to shed two blockers to get to the quarterback.

If Rogers continues to play like this, whoever is the coach and GM of the Browns next year knows they will at least have a cornerstone around which to build a dominant defense.

8. Kerry Wood becomes the Tribe's new closer

December 13

Pretty much since Mark Shapiro took the reins as Indians GM in late 2001, the team has been living hand-to-mouth with its closers. Bob Wickman had to miss almost two full seasons recovering from Tommy John surgery in 2002. Wickman's departure brought about a terrifying experiment with Fausto Carmona in 2006. For the '07 season and first part of '08, it was the guile, resolve and upper-80s fastball of Joe Borowski. Interspersed with all of that was a sprinkling of Jose Jimenez, Tom Mastny, Rafael Betancourt and Jensen Lewis.

For six years, nailing down a closer seemed like an annual roll of the dice. But now, just this month, that might have finally all changed. The Indians have committed real money to landing a real closer with real closer stuff, and his name is Kerry Wood.

Wood comes with the caveat of a career-long battle with arm injuries. But when a pitcher throws a fastball in the upper 90s and saved 34 games for a playoff team the year before, a team like the Indians can justify throwing two years and more than $20 million - with an $11 million option for a third year - at him.

For the first time since the heyday of Jose Mesa, the Indians have a closer who can rear back and throw his heater past the batter. Combine that with starter-quality off-speed stuff, and strikeouts might become the norm for Tribe save situations, as opposed to heart-in-mouth flyouts to the warning track.

A health Kerry Wood, with Lewis, Betancourt and Rafael Perez in front of him, gives the Indians a chance to have one of baseball's best bullpens in 2009. If history is a teacher, an Indians team with a good bullpen is an Indians team that will find itself in the thick of the playoff race.

7. DeShawn Who? Cavs take out Wizards for the third straight year

May 2

If Cavs-Wizards Part 3 taught us anything, it's that LeBron James sees himself as Jay-Z to DeShawn Stevenson's Soulja Boy.

After Stevenson called LeBron "overrated" prior to the series, LeBron refused to escalate the war of words. Dissing Stevenson is beneath LeBron. It would be like hip-hop mogul and friend Jay-Z responding to smack from just-another-rapper Soulja Boy, he asserted.

LeBron put his body where his mouth is, spending six games fighting through flailing elbows and knees from the suddenly-physical Wizards, who were understandably sick of losing to Cleveland in the playoffs.

After the Cavs took a comfortable 2-0 series lead, the Wizards answered back with a 108-72 drubbing in Game 3, with Soulja Boy (known legally as DeAndre Way) on hand as the personal guest of Stevenson. But the Wizards comeback was short-lived.

The pivotal shot of the series came not from the hand of LeBron, but Delonte West. Acquired just two months earlier from Seattle, West took a kickout pass from LeBron in the waning seconds of Game 4 in Washington and drained a thee-point to win the game, 100-97, and put the Cavs up 3-1 in the series.

The Cavs were edged by Washington in Game 5, 88-87, but closed the series out in Game 6 as LeBron went for a triple-double (27 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists) in a 105-88 series-clinching spanking.

Afterward, on the matter of Stevenson, LeBron had just a few parting words:

"Cleveland is advancing. That's all that matters."

For the third straight year, not much more needed to be said.