Well ... it's Cardinals/Steelers in two weeks for all the marbles. That's right, the Cardinals. Which shrinks the list of franchises never to make a Super Bowl to the Browns and four others. In The Weekend Wrap, Peeks hits on this weekend's championship games, Ben Wallace's importance to the Cavaliers, and the uncertainty in the Indians starting rotation behing Cliffie and Fausto.

Don't Mess with the Fro-han

It's not typically easy to overlook a 6'9" 240lb mountain of a man. It's even more difficult if that man has a perceived height of 7'2" when he busts out the afro for big games. But when one is caught up in the gaudy record that the Cavs have put up thus far in this NBA season, including a 20-0 home mark, and when one is magically drawn to the wizardry of LeBron James nearly each and every night, the contributions of Ben Wallace can go unnoticed or at least under appreciated.

That's a mistake. Because despite averaging just 3.4 points per game Wallace is a critical component in the Cavaliers ascension to NBA elite.

There's almost no flash and dazzle to Wallace's game. But what he brings to the Cavs every night is a physical presence and a nastiness that's been missing since the franchise was born almost 40 years ago.

Wallace is a banger. And his menacing presence does not appear to be contrived a la Boston's Kevin Garnett. Garnett is sound without fury. He'll scream, run his mouth, swat balls away from the goal after whistles and then shrivel down to the size of a small college point guard when confronted. We haven't seen that from Wallace. In fact, in nearly a year since being acquired from the Bulls in the deadline deal that also brought Delonte West, Joe Smith and Wally Szczerbiak we still don't know if Ben Wallace *can* talk.

About the most you get out of Wallace in terms of communication is a snarl, grimace or bone chilling stare. Sort of like the one he shot at Boston coach Doc Rivers near the end of last week's Cavs-Celtics game after Rivers unsuccessfully employed the ‘Hack-a-fro' tactic to force Wallace to the free throw line in a futile attempt to try and get back in that game.

What you do get is genuine intensity, effort and hustle every trip down the court from a guy with more than enough experience and gas in the tank to be a disruptive interior force.

To the Cavs he's like a junkyard dog that's loyal only to one cause. They can rest easier knowing their basket and their backs are guarded by a man who's willing and able to stand his ground.

That's an overlooked element to the trade Danny Ferry pulled off last February. Wallace and West are as tough and hard-nosed as they come. They absorb and mete out punishment without losing focus. For all their skills guys like Drew Gooden and Donyell Marshall, two of the

principles the Cavs sent packing on that deadline deal, didn't and don't give a team that element.

When you watch the Cavs stand up to the bluster and intimidation tactics of squads like Boston and not back down, look no further than #4 to see where their resolve originates.

Just don't expect Big Ben to talk much about it.

Youth Will be Served?

Imagine if you will a 2009 rotation with the 2007 version of Cliff Lee and the 2008 version of Fausto Carmona. Now imagine that the 3rd starter is the Carl Pavano who has spent more time being hurt and ineffective than he has being healthy and productive. That's a thought that should chill you to the bone regardless of whether or not you step outside.

Forget Jake Westbrook and his return from ulnar nerve surgery. Anything you get from Westbrook this season is pure gravy.

And that's the thought I can't get out of my head despite an off season that was as productive as one could hope.

The thought here is that the Indians are going to need one or more of their young starters to step up and make a big impact in 2009. Someone from the group of Anthony Reyes, Aaron Laffey, Jeremy Sowers, Adam Miller or a yet-to-be-determined pitcher is going to have to step up and have their breakout year if the Indians are going to be able to guard against injuries and potential ineffectiveness.

Pitchers and catchers report in about 4 weeks. The guy who will help carry a staff may not emerge from spring training with a job in the rotation, but pay close attention to that pool of pitchers not guaranteed a job. One of them may hold the key to the Tribe staying in the race later on this summer.

It Just Keeps Getting Better

Just when you thought the 2008 NFL season couldn't get any worse in Cleveland after the Browns went 4-12 and imploded like the Dunes Hotel & Casino, the Ravens and Steelers faced off for the right to represent the AFC against the Arizona Cardinals in Super Bowl XLIII.

Seriously, did the cat that controls karma fall asleep with his head holding down the throttle? That just seemed like an unnecessary final kick to the cookies to tell you the truth.

Let's go Cardinals.

An Update and an Offer

The Madison Mystics got together again after a 6 week layoff to play their first ever indoor game

this past weekend. The group of 8 year olds faced off against a team of ten year olds from Mentor and rolled up the older girls by a score of 6-0. The Mystics did recruit a couple of ten year-old older sisters themselves in order to round out their roster and add some depth for a game that requires frequent shift changes. But facing nerves and a more experienced Mentor squad still didn't slow them down.

Standing next to a Mentor parent before the game he couldn't stop commenting on how small the kids from Madison were. About three minutes into play, and with Mentor trailing 2-0, he couldn't stop speaking about quick and poised the 8 year-olds played.

Now for the offer; there's an email address below where you can contact me. If you have

the inclination and the time I will be happy to include at the end of each Wrap a paragraph or two on your local teams. You can include the team name, league and information you'd like to recognize as well as any adult coaches who you believe to be deserving of a little ink. There are so many coaches and teams around the area and around the country that pour their hearts and souls into coaching up these kids and working on their games that they should be recognized.

I won't publish names of the kids but team names and accomplishments will be reviewed and we'll run one when time allows. The kids get a kick out of seeing their team name and accomplishments highlighted. Give it a shot and TheClevelandFan.com will spread the word.

Mastering Another Media

Rich Swerbinsky and I will be live on internet radio every Wednesday night from 930pm to 1045pm talking Cleveland sports. "The Cleveland Experience" will feature news and talk revolving around local sports news and will also touch on the major national stories that come up each week. We'll also be lining up interviews with various experts and personalities as well as taking your calls. Check out the link on the front page for more details as well as directions for calling and tuning in.