It was another volatile week of sports talk on the perpetually growing message forums here at The Cleveland Fan. The week got off to a tumultuous start when the Browns released popular wide reciever Joe Jurevicius. Then came the release of right tackle Kevin Shaffer. THEN came Jen Blanchard's column she penned this week on former Indian Brandon Phillips, which set of a firestorm of debate in our Indians forum. If you've yet to register, or have been just lurking and reading ... come on in and join us talking Cleveland sports.

Released

Thank you Coach Mangini and General Manager Kokinis. There has not been this type of spirited debate on the Browns boards since the discussion to draft Adrian Peterson or Joe Thomas a couple of seasons ago. While nobody can know, today, if releasing these guys is the right or wrong move, it sure has gone a long way to keeping the Browns in the news. What is the old saying? There is no bad publicity.

First, we got word of the release of the local hero, returning to his hometown to restore some pride in his Cleveland Browns, Joe Jurevicius. Joe has been forced to undergo seven different knee surgeries in the last twelve months. He is the front-runner for the 2009 LeCharles Bentley Local Hero Who Has Worked His Tail Off To Get Back On The Field Award. Joe embodies everything you want in your football players, but unfortunately is probably never going to make it back from the surgeries.

It was not the news of his release that spurred on the debate. It was the way it was handled that led to most of *the discussion*
. Did Joe deserve more from the organization than any of the other cuts? Is being a local guy enough of a reason for the organization to go a little further in breaking the news to a fan base that is already on edge? Or is this the NFL, and all players released should be handled the same way? That folks, is the debate.

Welcome to one of the new posters to make their way to The Cleveland Fan in the last couple of weeks, ilasch. Who brings this up as a very valid point early in the

thread:

"*Look, I'm a big Joe Jurevicius fan, and always have been. But let's be honest. The team went to him, in the last year of his deal, and asked him to restructure so that they wouldn't have to pay him almost two and a half million. He decided that he didn't owe the team anything, as is his right. But in the NFL, if it would save a team money to cut you, they ask you restructure, and you decline, there is only ever one outcome. With all the surgeries he's had, you knew he wasn't going to play. That they even gave him the option to restructure is a small miracle."*

CerebralDownTime isn't buying though:

"*Ok, but why is it expected of Joe to restructure his contract? Why not one of the under performing slugs? Stallworthless? Joe might not play again, I get that, but it's not his fault. Why should he pay when he already endured a horrid infection? He worked hard for this team,*

on and off the field. Pay the man and if he can play let him, god knows he can catch and be dangerous in the red zone."

Crash Davis thinks the Browns are playing a game of hide the hate:

"*This is a valid point. Whoever heard of a team restructuring a contract that only had one year remaining on it and minimal cap effect? If it's happened before in the last year of a deal I don't recall but if so has it happen with a guy that was only due a $500K bonus and with what little (2.9 mil) Joe was to make in '09 that counted towards the cap when we don't have another WR's but Scissorhands? They knew they didn't want him for whatever reason and knew he wouldn't except a contract that was no longer guaranteed. This was a witch hunt in disguise which is what I have problem with. Fine if Joe's not in your plans just say so and be upfront about it but don't go to him and dress it up as "we want to restructure that last year on your contract so you can remain a Brown" when you don't want him to start with."*

OrangeElf does not like the direction we are heading, feeling this is the beginning of the end for ManKok:

"*The Cleveland Browns think they can do whatever they want because they have an iron-clad grip on the Fans. But I think that the losing seasons, poorly-run organization, and total lack of class will begin to wear on the fans and we may begin to see the Browns slip in popularity. This move may be the start of that revolt. This organization is sorely in need of some good PR along with the obvious a good product on the field. If Mangini can deliver the later the PR situation will take care of itself but he does not deliver I am not sure these fans will take to kindly to another restructuring of the organization. My prediction is that Mangini will have three or four average years here and will have alienated the media and fans to the point that Randy has no choice but fire him."*

Another newbie, Jcoz, thinks OrangeElf's idea is a bit of a reach:

"*Do you really think that this is their mind-set? DO you actually think they act with the thought that they can do anything they want because the have fans' balls in a vice? Come on. Mangini and Kokonis have a job and someone to answer to. They can't make decisions based on the fact that they have a captive audience in C-town fans, they have to make decisions based on what they think is best for the team, and to clarify that, I mean they have to make whatever decisions they beilieve will help the Browns win games, because that's how they will keep thier jobs."*

Tribefaninsoutheroh drops into Browns Town and seems to think there is a tad bit of overreaction going on:

"*First of all, I think JJ is a great person and really liked having him on our team. He was a GREAT 3rd down receiver for us in '07. That being said.....Hiko makes some excellent points a couple of posts back. The NFL isn't PeeWee football where our feelings are hurt because our kids aren't playing enough. This is a business. Simple as that. As far as PR? Win some damn games. Amazing what that would do for the*

fanbase."

Those are six of the posts. Out of more than 100. This is one of the most entertaining threads in the TCF history. There are lots of valid points from both sides. If you want a quick overview of how a thread should go, you should use that that one as the blueprint. There are site writers, longtime forum members, and some newbies, all respecting the thread and the people.

Of course, Joe J. was not the only release to grab the attention of our posters. *Kevin Shaffer* was also given a pick slip this week. While most of the other thread centered on the Browns showing a lack of class and respect, this one has their brains being questioned.

I really thought this thread would be short and sweet. Once Noles1 posted this:

"Good move. Save some money and allow the

Browns to bring in someone that actually is worth what they are paid."

I thought we might all be on the same page. Until Erie Warrior began the questioning:

"Fine.... I'll ask it. Even if Shaffer is less than good, with whom will he be replaced? A rookie? A scrap heap Jet?"

Floodgates, they now be opened.

4thQuarterGlory is down with the path Kokinins is heading, or is at least willing to see where the path leads before deciding:

"*Dont blame ManKok for ridding of the waste on*

this team. They are doing what Savage and Crennel didnt have the balls to do. Instead of building a team properly and having homegrown talent, they tried to buy their way to the top, and put band aids on the rest when we ran out of money. For god sakes, nothing else has worked in 10 years....lets try it the ManKok way."

DrPoove doesn't mind the move as much as he minds the lack of transparency from the organization:

"There is a reason I have been calling Kevin Shaffer the Human Parking Cone for years. Because, in fact, if you put a parking cone at RT (or LT in the Charlie Frye years) it could do just as good of a job as Mr. Shaffer. That being said, I will miss my HPC jokes. Also, if he does restructure for less $ I will not be upset either. They obviously think he has some (be it little) value if they want him to restructure. In what capacity, who knows, but if it is for depth or a stop gap at the right price I won't complain. Erie W. I hear/feel your angst. If this organization would actually tell people what their plan is maybe we could make sense of some of these signings/trades/releases that have occured. But they

haven't and probably won't. All the secrecy is BS, just like the way they handled the JJ release. Right move, poor execution (no pun intended). I've said it in other threads, I really didn't expect much for 2009 no matter who took over. I know there are others that were more optimistic and that's cool. But I am not going to criticize Mangini and Kokinis until the free agency period is over, the draft unfolds and camp starts. I will call them to task on their lack of "personability" however. That stuff does mean something no matter what they think."

ErieWarrior felt some more explanation was needed about his original point:

"Alright Gents, let me try this again. I'm not saying Shaffer, JJ, K2 and Jones will lead the Browns to the Super Bowl. I'm not even saying that their departure was necessarily bad. What I am saying is where do the Browns go from here. Why were these men not resigned/ kept on the roster. Why did they not fit? The rudderless part of "rudderless suck" has always been a big issue with me. Just about everyone agrees the

Browns need an identity (tough D, smash mouth running, run n' gun) to build around. So my issue is, what's the plan. We've heard nothing. We have no idea. Don't tell me the draft will save this team. It may, but what would lead anyone to think that way? If you're a self deprecating Browns fan, history is not on our side. If you're on the ManKok bandwagon, Vernon Ghoulston (although his other picks have been pretty good, a total bust that early in the draft can kill a team). So someone tell me why I should be content with a team who has never drafted well, headed by a coach who has a huge hole in his draft resume. Include a few workout warrior types guys in this draft, and yes, I'm scared. People are saying this is a deep draft, but who the hell knows. I guess it comes down to are you willing to say the draft can save ***this*** *team. I'm not. Until someone tells me what the hell is going on I'm going to assume the worst, assuming the best pains my soul too much."*

Aoxo1 feels this single move is proof positive that ManKok is doomed:

"Shaffer wasn't great, but he certainly wasn't as bad

as you guys are making him out to be. This is Davis and Savage all over again. Jettison vets who may not have been stars, but were at least passable players, when you already have a bunch of holes to fill and don't need the extra cap space. Then spend the next 3 years trying to fill those holes by using draft picks to get guys that might be passable players 3 years down the line (this is what you are going to get in the 3rd round and later if you are lucky, and often in the 2nd). Then complain that the cupboard was bare. When your picks don't pan out because you aren't the absolute genius you thought you were, go on free agent spending sprees and start trading draft picks so that the next guy who comes in is hamstrung. Repeat the process every 3-5 years. This lunacy of saying, "Well, they will draft this guy in the 2nd round and he will be as good as Jones and this guy in the 4th and he will replace Shaffer" is fucking idiotic. That's not how it works, and I would think everyone here would know that by now. It's a crapshoot, and those guys aren't contributing at a high level for years if they ever do. When you factor in the opportunity cost of having to now replace a RT and SS and whoever else they decide to get rid of when we already have glaring needs at LB, RB, WR, and DL there just aren't enough resources or available players to fill them. Ask yourself this: would it really have been such a disaster to keep Shaffer around for another year and use our draft

picks on areas that are already unfilled? Even if they draft a RT in the 2nd round, the guy is not going to be as good as Shaffer. And then what the hell are they going to do about RB or WR or LB or DL? I look forward to all of your posts in 2013 when the next regime starts cutting all the players these guys drafted."

Spriiiiiiiiiing Traaaaaaaaaining

Wow. Is it just me, or does it seem like the Tribe has been practicing for a long time, yet there is a long time to go before anything starts to count? We are still three weeks away and when a team is pretty much set on 23 out of 25 roster spots the news is a bit slow.

Sure, we have killed some time with our Spring Training Game Thread. Which is fun. We have followed the World Baseball Classic a little bit. Way to step up Saturday by the way, Team USA.

When all else fails though, the gift to message boarders that keeps on giving makes an appearance. Yes, that big box all wrapped up under the tree at Christmas. Is it a bike? Could it be an X-Box 360? Maybe it is a Red Rider BB Gun?

Nope. It is, BRANDON PHILLIPS! The greatest second basemen to ever step onto a baseball diamond. So much power. So much speed. With a Golden Glove to boot. If nothing else big is going on? Let's debate Brandon Phillips, assign blame to someone for trading him, or convincing someone else to trade him, or destroying him because you hate him, so someone is forced to trade him.

Here is Eckersley's (no not that Eck.) version of what happened:

"It came down to a pissing match between BP & Wedge. Wedge won the battle, but did the Tribe & their fans win? Shapiro & his talent evaluators knew there was no middle infield talent thruout the Tribe's minor league system at the time of the trade. Wedge didn't realize this or he didn't care.

Shapiro made the ultimate mistake (& has admitted as much) as the final decision was his, but he clearly gave in to the wishes of his manager. The good thing is that Shapiro learned his lesson & hasn't allowed Wedge to dictate his roster moves since. IMO, a manager should never place his interests

over the best interests of the team. Wedge clearly did so in the case of BP. I hope he's been pleased with the output of our 2B over the past 3 seasons. Be careful what you wish for Wedgie. When push came to shove, had the Tribe gotten rid of Wedge & kept BP, would they have been better off? The answer is obvious to me. Guys like Wedge are a dime a dozen. Losing him would've been addition by subtraction IMO. BP may have some flaws, but he shines real bright when compared to the 2B that have worn a Tribe uniform the past 3 years. The Tribe is still looking for a decent 2B. Hopefully A-Cab will fill that void this year."

Nwizzle does not disagree:

"To this day I will never understand how, even with the whole Joe Inglett thing, you could take Ramon Vasquez over Brandon Phillips. It's ridiculous to think about. Vasquez, even with another option left, had no business being on a ML roster. He had a career OPS of .666 at the time.

I don't care how anyone spins the BP thing, I'm still not going to be happy about how the Indians handled it."

Redneckofsc thinks someone has some explaining to do, and it's not Lucy:

"Shapiro has said several time he made a mistake trading BP; I am still waiting for Wedge to admit it, but that will never happen."

Prosecuter reminds me of some of the influences (besides Eric Wedge hating him) that went into the decision:

"At the time, Peralta and Belliard were locked in as the starting SS and second baseman. The Tribe was planning on being a contender and there was no place to put Phillips, a .206 hitter in his previous ML appearances, except on the bench. You

make a convincing argument that he would not have been happy as a utility infielder and it's likely his attitude would have hurt the team. In addition, Inglett was a much better hitter, was more versatile in that he could also play third base, and was a left-handed hitter. And as a career minor leaguer he would have been thrilled just to be on a major league roster and his attitude would not have been an issue."

KiltedFool doesn't think Cincinnati Phillips would not have emerged, without the trade:

"BP's performance with the Reds cannot be transferred to the Indians if you magically go back and change history so

that Vazquez gets run down by Eck driving a hijacked city bus in Winter Haven that year. You can't claim the BP that played for the Reds would be the BP that played for the Tribe. In fact IMO you can guarantee nearly the opposite. With BP's "my crap doesn't stink and you can't tell me nothin' " attitude I doubt he'd have been a productive Indian."

CDAV6 authors a nice piece, and raises another question about another "mistake":

"There is no regret from me on the trade of Phillips. Looking at this team now, their attitudes, chemistry, and their work

ethic make me proud to be an Indians fan. I personally like Wedge and Shapiro but know they bleed red just like any other human. That being said, they are going to screw up at times and I myself live in a glass house. So there will be no stone throwing from here, but I do reserve the right to disagree. The only move that I strongly urged against and still don't understand is not keeping Guthrie. Great attitude, work ethic, coachability, not to mention physical ability. They praised his makeup and everything about the kid. My point being, why do so many folks get worked up about Phillips when Guthrie is in the same league and plays a position of greater need? Sometimes things just don't go the way you would like."

If Brandon Phillips does not get the blood boiling, there is always the backup plan, David Delucci. In a thread to discuss how the Tribe's outfield situation would play out this spring, you can bet there will be some posts that remind everyone (like we need it) that David Delucci is not one of the better free agent acquisitions in Cleveland Indians history.

Like this one, by Toxicadam:

"There is absolutely zero reason for Dellucci to be on this team. He is limited in the field, at BEST will OPS 800 against RHP (something Francisco is perfectly capable of by himself) and offers no other

kind of depth from the bench. I would like to see Crowe on the bench as a late inning option for a pinch runner or someone to occasionally spell Sizemore. I would rather have him than Barfield. But Barfield will probably get the nod. Everybody should be rooting for Ben Francisco to have a good year. It would be great to flip him in the off-season coming off of a career year."

Jamesboy appears to be pretty excited for the future of our outfield:

"DeLucci isnt really an issue...whether they cut him now or keep him around as fill in outfielder he will definitely be gone after

this year. Having five guys that appear to have a lot of talent for two outfield spots, and if Choo is the real deal, four for one is...Brantly Crow LaPorta and Franscisco."

Even Slegend has some positives to bring to the table"

"I read a blog from a reporter that was really shocked about how "improved" Garko looks running, throwing, fielding 10 to 15 pounds off his weight from last year, and he was 10 pounds in 08 under his 07 number. I wonder how many other players might show night and day improvement with the athletic

ability if they lost the gut. I think Garko will get full-time ABs and that means a scenario with Shoppach/Garko/Martinez at C/LF/1B. So Francisco will either shift to RF and bench Choo, or miss some regular ABs to start the season. I also would like to have Barfield on the roster and playing some 2B and CF as a utility player. We need him to find a stick and compete for the 2B job, if Cabrera fails to hit. Craplucci might "earn" a bench job only because we want LaPorta, Brantley, Crowe to play everyday at AAA and fight for that starting job, when a Choo-Francisco fail or a player is injured. In the end, I am not going to bash Wedge on this, as these are great problems to have! Hell, we started to win a lot of games last season and we could barely field a 25 man roster with the trades and injuries. This team might be scary elite with a relatively healthy core of talent."

And put Noles1 in the camp of "Yes on Crowe, Because Delucci Blows":

"Personally I feel like Crowe needs to make this team. Cut bait with Dave D. now and give yourself a guy off the bench that can add something and maybe even more importantly is someone you can plug into LF and add defense and late inning speed. He's the perfect 4th outfielder. Dellucci, well he's useless on our roster. Any notion of trading him is a pipe dream unless we pick up a portion of that salary."

Don't Look Now

Shhhhhhhh. Don't tell anyone, but the Cleveland Cavaliers are a pretty

good basketball team. Sure, they needed some miraculous comebacks on the West Coast. Their interior defense has been, ummmmm, suspect of late. Neither of those things changes the fact that they have set themselves up in some pretty good shape to secure home court advantage through the Eastern Conference Finals.

Probably out of fear of screwing things up, the Cavs board has become mostly a place for game threads. Of course, there is CP's fantastic Magic Number Tracker thread. JamesownsDetroit is taking

game threads one-step further, with his
Race for Home Court
thread to track the games of Boston and Los Angeles.

Then there is this fun little poll. Who is your favorite Cav, besides LeBron?
Early returns have it as DelonteWest, followed not all the closely with Mo Williams and "Z".

CharacterIV, wishing he had three votes to split up amongst those three, breaks it down in a way that I think most of the voters have agreed with. It just depended on if they voted with their heart, head, or the combo platter that is Delonte West:

"Mo gets my intellectual vote because his contributions have likely been the greatest single reason that the Cavs have improved so dramatically this

season. Z gets my sentinmental vote because he's still the same stalwart, hard-working, floor-burning Z that we've loved for over a decade. Bro Redz gets my actual vote though, because he's producing solid numbers (especially with his recent theft-o-rama) while evolving into a potent scoring force and hustling 24/7 on the floor. From the opening tip of the season, Delonte has been the glue guy and soul for this team, representative of their defensive mindset and desire to do the little things to win."

Akron, CSU and The Buckeyes

All are going to the dance. Akron and CSU will both be making their second appearances and ironically both made their only previous appearance in that magical 1986 tourney. Congrats to both teams. Special high-fives going out to resident Akron Homer, Spin.