A mixed weekend for Cleveland sports. We're seeing a changing of the guard taking place in the NBA's Eastern Conference. Despite shooting nearly 50% from the floor and committing very few turnovers, the Cavaliers handled the Pistons in game one on Saturday. And Peeker has seen enough to know the demise of the Pistons is complete. The Indians on the other hand .... had a very up and down series this weekend out in New York. That did nothing to calm our fears about the pitching staff.

Obligated vs. Motivated

The cycle of sports life is as vicious and uncaring as the cycle of real life. In real life you're created, you grow and learn, you become all you can and then you physically decline and eventually die. So it is in the sports world. If you need a specific example, I present to you the Detroit Pistons.

The Pistons compiled some talent, rose to dominance, reigned at or near the top of the NBA for a few years and are now near death as a viable championship contender in the NBA.

Hell, the case could be made that they're actually watching their own funeral as this first round series against the Cavs progresses.

One look at the Pistons bench in the late stages of Saturday's game 1 blowout loss to the Cavs suggests that the key players for Detroit are acutely aware that the end is near. Rasheed Wallace, Antonio McDyess and Richard Hamilton all wore the faces of men who had come to the realization that what they once had was now someone else's and that no amount of pride or effort was going to restore the status that they once enjoyed.

The demise of the Pistons is inevitable. It's clearly time for a controlled burn in Detroit to see if something rises from the ashes that's worthy of nurturing.

The Cavs are on a far different arc. They're the young bucks who are clearly bigger, faster and stronger than the old dogs they face. More importantly, Cleveland recognizes this fact and is perfectly content to dispatch the past champions with little or no sympathy. There's no more stealing a win here or there and forcing the better team to a sixth or seventh game where anything can happen. Rather, the Cavs ran the old men off the floor on Saturday and will look to do so again on Tuesday night at ‘The Q'.

It's almost a shock to the systems of Cleveland sports fans to go into a series or a playoff season as the prohibitive favorite. We should be lifted by the fact that the basketball team that represents this city has no such confidence issues. This is simply a confident, dominant basketball team

that is ready to ascend to elite status. How far that confidence takes them (and us) is still to be determined. But what's clear is it's not a matter of hope and things breaking just right. Instead it's a matter of executing on both ends of the court and letting effort and execution determine the final results.

One win in the books, 15 left to go.

The Other Side of the Coin

It sure is a different dynamic in play when you talk about the Indians start to the 2009 season. To put it simply; I'm just not feeling it.

And, no, I'm not going to be like the toolboxes on talk radio or on assorted message boards who whine and complain and place blame on various players, coaches and front office personnel a dozen games into the season. I'm not going to go uber-negative and look ahead to what 2010 might bring while officially closing the books on 2009.

That's reactionary, short sighted and flat-out ridiculous to do.

But I am going to voice concerns about this club after just a couple weeks. The starting pitching still scares the crap out of me. There's way too much of that hope and a prayer thing going on regardless of who takes the ball to start a game. Will Cliff Lee revert to the 2008 Cliff Lee or will he scuffle and struggle like he did in his first couple starts? Will Fausto Carmona be the guy who almost won 20 games in 2007 or the guy who walks as many (or more) hitters as he strikes out? Is the Carl Pavano who got thrashed in Texas the guy we're going to see the majority of the time or will we be treated to the Carl Pavano who held the Yankees to just a single run in six innings on Sunday in the Bronx?

People want to blame the bullpen and surely they have some responsibility for a rotten start to the season. But when your starters aren't getting you into the 6th inning on many nights and aren't getting you through the 6th inning on many more, your bullpen is already running on fumes before the race is a lap or two old.

Track records would indicate that the Indians will score enough runs to win games. And track records indicate that guys like Jensen Lewis, Rafael Perez, Rafael Betancourt and Joe Smith will eventually settle in and pitch effectively. But what about the track records of Lee,

Carmona, Pavano, Anthony Reyes and Aaron Laffey/Scott Lewis? There are some serious mixed messages you get if you try and read those tea leaves. And nothing we've seen thus far helps alleviate those concerns. Not from where I'm sitting.

Etcetera

- One game does not a post season make. But you have to find it interesting that both Orlando and Boston lost their playoff openers at home. For all the talk about the Cavs failures against those teams over the course of the season the importance of Cleveland's #1 seed sure does hit hard when you consider that both the Celtics and Magic have much more difficult first round matchups than the Cavaliers do. That shouldn't be underestimated when you consider potential future playoff matchups. Every extra game those teams play is potentially dangerous and damaging (and no, I'm not ready to call the Cavs-Pistons officially over).

While the Cavs feast on the carcass of what used to be the Detroit Pistons, Boston and Orlando are in it deep already. And it takes a lot more energy to claw your way out of a hole than it does to not fall into one to begin with.

- The Mother of All Draft Parties goes down Saturday at noon. It'll be at The Winking Lizard in Lakewood and all are invited. And one has to wonder just what's going to take place regarding the Browns by the time it's their turn to pick. There's a chance that the Browns could end Saturday with multiple players selected, more picks coming and without both Braylon Edwards and Brady Quinn, both of whom are reported to be on the block as draft day approaches.

The more you think about it, the more it makes sense that both these guys could be gonzo by this time next week. With Braylon it's obvious; the drops, the whining, the contract status, the clubhouse cancer rep he's developing, a new regime coming in and looking to clean house and the fact that he has some value to a team hurting at WR but looking to win now all adds up to BE playing elsewhere in the fall.

Quinn is a bit of a different story. He's basically unproven and he will still be exactly that regardless of where (if anywhere) he goes. But it is interesting to note that the other NFL GM's are not falling for the Browns

propaganda blitz in regard to talking up Derek Anderson. Teams looking to the Browns for a QB apparently desire Quinn over DA. From a Browns perspective I'm not sure it matters who is under center in the foreseeable future. I can't see it mattering from a win-loss perspective right away. And while I still would like to see Quinn given the keys to the offense to see what he's all about, I can understand Eric Mangini and George Kokinis looking to accrue picks and put an end to an untenable QB situation that they inherited.

Regardless, it could be an interesting day in Berea and in Lakewood at The Winking Lizard next Saturday.