Sports have always been and will forever be the cruelest of mistresses. You can buy it dinner and drinks until you're bankrupt but it will never give you everything you think you deserve. The truth is, sports, like life, don't work that way. Nothing is predestined. You never get what you fully expect just because you think you deserve it. We recently saw this with our Cleveland Cavaliers. Gary talks about it in his latest column for us.

The ball sure does take some funny bounces. Talk about disappointment.

Last weekend I played two more rounds of golf and didn't have a hole-in-one, again. It's a pattern that has repeated itself over year after year over hundreds of rounds of golf on every kind of course imaginable, from some of the great courses of the world to some of the ugliest cow pastures around.

Ever hopeful despite this repeated failure, there isn't a round of golf where I haven't thought that today might be the day. Nor has there been a Par 3 that I didn't walk off of slightly disappointed that I wasn't able to enter a "1" on my score card or a Par 3 that I've approached that I thought I might conquer.

I've witnessed golfers of lesser ability achieve the kind of success I think my skill better deserves. I've seen my friend, Tim, a 20-handicapper get two holes-in one in the same season. Another friend, Andy, sporting a 25 or so handicap, just joined Firestone Country Club, where I've been a member the last several years. Two days into his tenure,

he had a hole-in-one.

If I was looking for signs, that probably would have been it. Either that or the many, many times I've watched my ball land within inches of the cup but not fall in. If it isn't fate, then I'm out of ways to describe it.

My repeated failures in the pursuit of the hack golfer's ultimate goal stands as my own personal metaphor for the repeated failures of the Cleveland sports fan's ultimate goal: a championship, any championship. Weighted down by getting close, I either accept the inevitability of it and find another pursuit or I find another reason to keep coming back in hopes that the God's of golf or pick-your-sport will be sleeping long enough to reach that goal.

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Luck, both good and bad, is a far bigger factor than skill in outcomes and it's always been that way.

I didn't tick off the golf gods any more than Frank Lane ticked off the baseball gods when he traded Rocky Colavito.

But for a few bounces that went that way instead of this way all this talk of failed destiny would have never taken place.

I'll get a hole-in-one someday and a Cleveland team sometime will win a championship. If not this season, then next. If not next, then someday. It will happen.

I

t's just that it won't be on your time table or mine and it won't be because it's a payback for previous failures we've been forced to endure.

The death of hope is not failure but indifference. Once the outcome doesn't matter, neither does the underlying endeavor.

Despite the name of my own website,
Wait ‘til Next Year, Again
, I'm not one of those guys that believe that Clevelanders will never experience sports ultimate thrill

What I am is one of those guys that thinks it just hasn't yet been Cleveland's moment where skill and great luck coalesce into that magic moment where the unthinkable actually happens.

When I contemplate the fact that I've not yet had a hole-in-one or experienced a championship in my life time (the '64 Browns don't count, I was only 5), it doesn't really occur to me that at some point in my life that it will never happen. It's just that my moment hasn't yet come.

It will.

I truly believe it.

Otherwise, what's the point?

What's the play in approaching every hole or every game and every season of every team with a sense of dread? If you lose faith that there will be success, if not now then sometime, you'll eventually lose faith in the sport.

More specifically, if you think this year was the Cavs only chance to with the NBA

Championship, then what would be the point in going through another season?

Especially when you think it will end up in disappointment anyway.

Fold the franchise.

The other thing is that as good as winning a championship is, it's probably the worst thing that can happen for those who live with perpetual dread. It just means another one will probably never happen.
When success is measured only in the ability to win that one final game or sink that one shot, then what do you do when that's accomplished? For many, what they do is fall right back in that sense of dread that the team will never win another.

That's depressing on just about every level imaginable.

See, the thing about sports of any stripe is that it's the intrigue of the moment that keeps us coming back for more. Every sport is a metaphor for life. Enough happens within a game or a season that applies with equal force to whatever other challenges you might face in life.

But the advantage sports have is that the stakes are far smaller.

When Ohio State beat Miami in 2002 for the National Championship, there wasn't anyone anywhere that was happier than I was. And when Ohio State was blistered by both Florida and LSU in subsequent national championship games, there wasn't anyone more disappointed.

I don't mean to be Little Gary Sunshine here and remind you that after every disappoint the sun still will come up tomorrow (to mix my Broadway metaphors a bit) but I do mean to be is that guy that tells you that having your team win it all or get blown out in that final game has a shelf life that lasts until the next great moment or major disappointment comes along, and it will come along.

Was there anything more glorious than LeBron James' last second shot in game 2

of the Orlando series?

Yet, it's kind of hard to remember it right now.

If your approach to watching sports is singular in its focus, you're going to miss all the fun in between. As much as I hated watching Ohio State get blown out by Florida (and I was there), keeping that in perspective helps me remember and, better yet, appreciate the glee I felt when they beat Michigan several weeks prior (and I was there, too). But even that is thinking too small. W hen I sit back now and think about those seasons, what I remember far more is that I got to witness a player like Troy Smith literally grow up in front of my eyes under head coach Jim Tressel.

I got to watch Ted Ginn, Jr. put fears in the eyes of opposing teams every time they had to punt or kick off.

The thrill of those overtime victories still lingers.

The same holds true for the Cavaliers this season. I'm as disappointed as the next person that they didn't get it done this season.

But I have a pretty easy time actually accepting that it didn't happen because in large measure they just weren't good enough.

Someone was better and when that happens, you tip your hat and move on.

More important than all of that, I got to witness the greatest Cavaliers team ever assembled, which is saying something despite a mostly inglorious history. A NBA Championship would have been nice, but the lack of one doesn't diminish the milestones they achieved and it certainly doesn't diminish the spectacular play that James provided the fans for the better part of 8 straight months. The singular moment of a championship is far more fleeting than the multiple moments of otherworldly play by the most otherworldly of player.

The same goes for the Indians. When Jose Mesa was on the mound in '97 against the Florida Marlins, I literally watched those final moments through a tiny crack between my fingers as I was mostly shielding myself from what seemed inevitable. And I was mightily pissed when that turned out to be the case. But that didn't stop me from watching in 1998 or in any year before or since.

Heck, I've been watching these guys since probably 1965 or so.

The lack of a World Series title hasn't kept me from enjoying the games anyway.

And as much as I like to bitch about the Browns and the ineptness of its organization, it's my favorite love/hate relationship. Winning the Super Bowl would be great. Far more important to me, though, is having the opportunity to have that relationship.

The worst time for me wasn't the Earnest Byner fumble or the Rich Karlis field goal, it was when a morally and financially bankrupt Art Modell ripped the team away from the town.

What this all really comes down to is that it isn't the transient players or there intermittent accomplishments that twang my buds in any particular sport, it's the games themselves. The pressure-filled successes and abject failures that happen on a daily basis will always remain the lure as will the intrigue behind the scenes. That's what keeps me coming back. And when that ultimately pays off in a championship somewhere, or, God forbid, a hole-in-one, I'll be as happy as the next person.

But as I wait for that to happen I'll continue tune in to the next game or tee it up again the next day anyway.

I don't want to miss the game.

My goals may be simpler, but they keep me saner.