Now this is where things really start to get interesting. The 64 Since '64 Tournament has reached the Sweet Sixteen, and those of you who've been voting in the online bracket will now get a chance to cast aside the novelty of it all and get serious. Here in Round 3, some classic Cleveland sports debates will get re-examined, and possibly some new, completely unneeded ones will get started. Just who had the better all-around quarterback in the '80s, the Kardiac Kids or the Dawgs? Could the Wizard of Oz lose to the one Brown selected before him in the 1978 draft? It all gets settled now!

Bracket Breakdown, Round THREE, Part 1

By Andrew Clayman & Jeff Ellis

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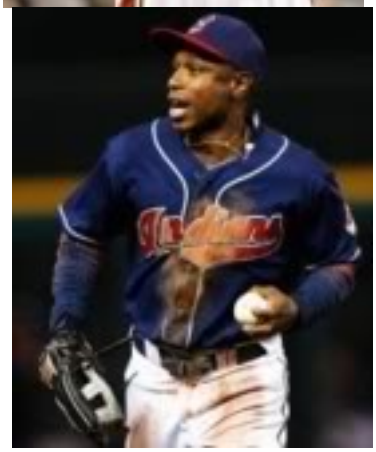
Click Here to Vote In Round 3 of the 64 Since '64 Bracket

RD 1 Archive: Brown & Orange Regional | Wine & Gold | Red & Blue | Scarlet & Gray
RD 2 Archive: Part I | Part II

Let's get going with the Sweet Sixteen, beginning today with the left half of the bracket.

Round 3, Brown & Orange Regional

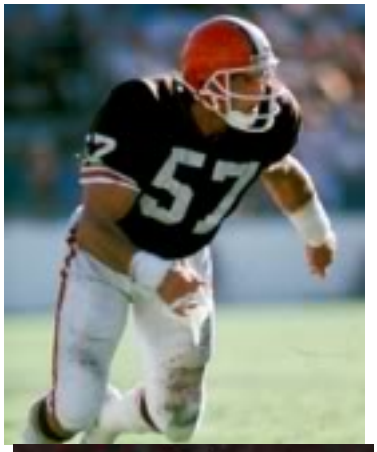


#1 LeBron James vs #5 Kenny Lofton

Round 2: James def. V. Martinez (92% of vote), Lofton def. Byner (81%)

JEFF ELLIS: When I saw this match up, I couldn't help but feel sorry for Kenny Lofton--unceremoniously getting fed to the lions. If you actually vote for Kenny, it's possible that you're using some complex backwards logic to presume that the basketball gap between LeBron and the former college basketball star Lofton isn't as great as their presumably massive gap in baseball skills, thus making Kenny the "greater" of the two. However, the odds are better that most Lofton voters are simply James haters or just anarchists looking to create chaos from a state of order. Fact is, an athlete like Lebron could have probably found a way to make it to the top of any sport he played. As for Lofton, I do want to give props to the man who was easily the best lead-off hitter the Indians have had in my lifetime. Hopefully he can take comfort knowing that this loss is far more acceptable than finishing second to Pat Listach in Rookie of the Year voting.

ANDREW CLAYMAN: I'm not so sure I buy the idea that Lebron would have automatically excelled at baseball if he'd gone that route. As Michael Jordan showed the world, baseball is not necessarily a sport that rewards the greatest athletes that choose to play it. Kenny Lofton, a former point guard on an Arizona basketball team that reached the Final Four, was quite possibly the finest pure athlete to ever don an Indians uniform. But it was really his underrated fundamental skills—working a count, bunting, baserunning, tracking fly balls—that made him a six-time all-star. During his three stints in Cleveland, covering 10 seasons, Lofton went from a pesky speedster to a dynamic, well-rounded, and consistently clutch performer. Any '90s Tribe fan will always remember #7 scaling the center field wall to bring a ball back from the Davey Tree Picnic Plaza, or his improbable sprint home from second base on a Randy Johnson wild pitch in the 1995 ALCS. Even his swan song as a 40 year-old in 2007 proved to be shockingly impressive, as he helped jumpstart the Indians offense down the stretch and into the postseason, up until a Joel Skinner stop sign derailed his efforts. All of this praise is a long-winded way of saying that LeBron James is going to bounce Kenny Lofton worse than a football thrown right at Robert Royal's mitts. It doesn't matter that K-Love was once a baller, or that LBJ's baseball skills end at straightening the bill of his Yankees cap (ironically, Kenny once famously called James a "backstabber" for donning said cap at Progressive Field). In this match, the Cavs all-time steals leader slides by the Indians all-time steals leader.



#6 Clay Matthews vs #2 Ozzie Newsome

Round 2: Matthews def. Ramirez (60%), Newsome def. G. Pruitt (88%)

AC: This might be the first matchup of the whole tournament that could have potentially been decided with actual on-field history—albeit of the practice variety. The Wizard of Oz, 6'2", 232 pounds, out of Alabama. Clay Matthews, 6'2", 245 pounds, out of USC. Newsome, a first round pick of the Cleveland Browns in the 1978 draft (#23). Matthews, ALSO a first round pick of the Browns in that same 1978 draft (#12)! Has any team *ever* struck gold with two mid first rounders any better than this? Newsome and Matthews went on to be teammates for the next 13 seasons—one as the rock of the defense, the other as the rock of the offense. Perhaps Brian Sipe or Bernie Kosar could offer some insight into how Ozzie and Clay matched up in

preseason scrimmages—the obligatory immovable object versus the unstoppable force. For the rest of us, though, we're left with a gut inclination. According the to Hall of Fame, Newsome was the superior football player. But when it comes down to a franchise's all-time leading receiver against its all-time leading tackler, how can it be cut and dry? Hell, Clay Matthews just stunned Manny Ramirez in round two. I say he takes that momentum all the way into the Elite 8!

JE: When I realized these two players were both taken in round 1 in 1978, I couldn't help but consider the fact that, across a full decade and 70 rounds of drafting, the new Browns haven't managed to find a single player anywhere near the level of these guys, let alone two within an hour of each other. If you want to be a great team, you need to have drafts like that—the kind that turn a franchise around. Ironically, Ozzie Newsome has gone on to have a couple of those drafts as a GM, which is part of the reason that even an underachieving Ravens team manages to look like a legitimate contender on a fairly regular basis. Clay Matthews was my favorite player on those '80s Browns teams, but I have to vote for Ozzie in this matchup. Even with his nauseating Modell loyalty, it doesn't change what he did as a player, particularly as an innovator at the tight end position. When Newsome retired, he was statistically the best pass-catching tight end ever. Clay was a great player, but he wasn't ever one of the best all-time at his position.

Round 3, Wine & Gold Regional

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