This past Thursday night, our Cleveland Browns gave us a taste of the way things could and should be in this town. A feeling of pride, with fans proudly donning their Browns gear as they were out Christmas shopping over the weekend. Brian McPeek is still basking in the glow of the 13-6 win over the Steelers, and in the Weekend Wrap ... touches on the victory, a Cavs team that seems like its going through the motions, Adam Miller, and a couple of feel good stories from the past couple of days.

Still Basking in the Glow

My kids woke up Friday morning, asked for a Browns-Steelers final score, nearly fell over from surprise, and then actually asked to wear their Browns gear to school. They had scoreboard over their friends who were Steelers fans and they weren't about to let the infrequent opportunity to hold it over someone's head to go by.

Up until Thursday night my daughters' Browns gear had been hung on hangers and relegated to the far corners of their closets. Elementary school and middle school are fraught with enough social perils to avoid. Getting made fun of for wearing team colors wasn't always worth the risk. But they got to break it out and go on the offensive for one of the rare times in the past few years.

Friday was a really good day.

In fact, those good feelings carried many Browns fans through the weekend and have helped turn the season from one of gloom, despair and anger into something altogether different, at least for a few days. If one looked and listened closely enough they could almost taste a foreign dish known as pride.

If you were like me you kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. A 13-0 lead just minutes before half certainly didn't appear safe, especially when the Steelers drove for a field goal right before half to make it 13-3. And with every failed Browns drive in the second half (which, if you were counting, was all of them) you just had a feeling that Ben Roethlisberger (10-0 lifetime against the Browns entering the game) would rip the hearts out of the Browns and their fans once more.

But he didn't. He didn't because a defense that was decimated entering the game schemed and blitzed and covered and harassed Roethlisberger and shut down the Steelers time and again. Eight sacks on Big Ben repeatedly took the Steelers out of their rhythm and jump started the crowd. Career nights by unheard of players like Marcus Benard, Brian Schaefring and Kaluka Maiava resulted in a 13-6 win and sent Hines Ward, Roethlisberger and Steelers Head Coach Mike Tomlin to cry, lament and wonder aloud what's happened to the Steelers, losers of five in a row.

But to question what's wrong with the Steelers isn't completely fair. On one freezing, windy Thursday night in downtown Cleveland it was actually the Browns who simply outplayed and out coached their rivals from Pittsburgh.

A Cleveland guy and his Cleveland kids could get used to such things.

Now is a Good Time to Start

You can't help but look at the Cavaliers at times and wonder if they're not just going through the motions until May and the second season get here. Mid-week losses to Memphis and Houston before a Friday win against Portland didn't help that feeling.

The issue isn't with the Cavs' record but more so with their approach. After nearly 30% of the season the Cavs are at 16-7. That's currently good four fourth in the Eastern Conference behind Boston, Orlando and Atlanta and it remains to be seen whether the Hawks can maintain their pace. The issue is, with some exceptions, we don't really know much more about the team today than we did when they opened the season six weeks or so ago against Boston at ‘The Q'.

The biggest questions for the Cavs today are the same ones we had entering the season; what will Shaq, Tony Parker and Jamario add to the roster and will Delonte West be well enough to play at the level we've become accustomed to.

The answer is simply, ‘I don't know'. There have been stretches when Shaq has been dominant and seemed to fit in perfectly with what the Cavs are trying to do. On the other hand he's looking at career lows across the board statistically. The numbers are a concern in that they imply Shaq is either being babied to make sure he's healthy or he's slipped in what he's able to give you every night. I'd like to hope it's the former but the latter gnaws at me a bit.

I tend to divide the NBA season into four parts: the initial 25-30 games, the meat of the season, the push for playoff seeding and the playoffs. Phase one is always dicey because there's substantial turnover in the league each year and it takes time to implement new players into roles they may not initially be comfortable with. As the Cavaliers near the end of stage one it would have been nice to have a clearer picture of what Shaq, Parker and Moon project to going forward.

Either way the games continue and the next phase is about to begin. The meat of the schedule is the time for good teams to hammer out some wins and build their resume. It's at this time that Mike Brown needs to, for the most part, put away the test tubes and beakers and get down to playing the rotations he's going to rely on later. With the trade deadline approaching in late February the Cavs need to have an idea of what, if anything, they need to seek for the stretch run.

It's time to get into a rhythm and rack up some wins while fine tuning all areas of the team. You still have the best player on the planet to bail you out some nights. But we've seen that when the competition gets increasingly more difficult in late May and June that LeBron on Five doesn't cut it.

No one in Cleveland really cares about anything other than winning a title. Given all that's on the line this year and in the upcoming off season Brown and GM Danny Ferry need to make sure everything that can be done to realize that goal is done.

The introductory period is over. Time to get down to business.

Etcetera

- A little follow up on the Tim Tebow blurb from last weekend's 'Wrap'. Check out this link and tell me what kind of whining, selfish, petulant baby we were talking about. For those without the time or ability to link to the article, here's the crux (courtesy of The Gainesville Sun):

University of Florida quarterback Tim Tebow didn't take home an award from the The Home Depot ESPNU College Football Awards Thursday night, but he made national news from the red carpet with his date, the young woman he brought on his

arm.

She was Kelly Faughnan, 20, whom he met the day before. Faughnan had been diagnosed with a brain tumor just before Thanksgiving last year. Before surgery last year, her wish was to go to Disney World during the awards show to get a glimpse of Tebow.

Faughnan is from Clifton, Va., according to several news reports.

Fox News reported that Faughnan had asked her family to make the trip from the Washington, D.C., area and was wearing an "I Love Timmy" button at an event Wednesday night.

"I got to meet her and she was a fan," Tebow said in a Fox News video from the red carpet. "We just became good friends last night, and I asked if she wanted to walk the red carpet with me tonight. And she said yes and went out and got a nice dress today, and we're having a good time."

"It's the best thing ever," she said.

What a loser that guy is.

- You want another story that provides some holiday spirit and some faith in your fellow man? How about this one provided by Dan Wismar in the TCF message boards. Dan is an outstanding writer who does a ton of Ohio State Buckeye work right:

By now most local area sports fans are aware of the story of Kory Witta, the (Medina) Highland H.S. player who was paralyzed from the neck down in a game this season.

http://bit.ly/5wknYz (background info)

There have been a lot of benefits (events) *and such as the season has gone along, and the Highland players were guests at the Browns-Steelers game the other night. The kids from Glenville were also there to be honored as State runners-up in Division I.*

This story was told to me by my neighbor, a friend of the father of one of Witta's Highland teammates.

The Highland team and the Glenville team were lining the two opposite walls of the tunnel at Browns Stadium the other night

waiting for the halftime recognition ceremony. At some point the Glenville kids locked arms and started to rock side to side, as is the fashion these days.

Some of the smaller Highland kids were starting to wonder what the bigger D-1 kids opposite them in the tunnel were up to...some of them said later they were a little bit intimidated and even a little freaked out by the whole thing...

...and then it started...the Glenville players started to chant in rhythm with their rocking motion...

"Ko-ry...Ko-ry...Ko-ry...Ko-ry"

Gave me chills just hearing about it.

I have no idea if it was planned or spontaneous...or whose idea it was...but it sure was a classy gesture, and indicative of the kind of kids and the kind of program run up there by Ted Ginn Sr.

Just thought I'd share.

Thanks again to Dan for putting that out there.

Now go ahead and print those out and have them at the ready this week when 12 more women claim to have slept with Tiger Woods.

- Looks like the Adam Miller ship has sunk before it ever left port. The talented and hard throwing Tribe farmhand was destined for greatness (if not at least the top of the rotation) when he took the Indians farm system by storm a few years back. Since then it's been nothing but injuries and frustration for the 25-year old Miller. And it looks like it will be a chronic injury to a tendon on the middle finger of his pitching hand rather than elbow or shoulder problems that will derail his career. Miller felt pain in what has to be his umpteenth rehab program last week and underwent yet another surgery.

You have to feel for a kid with all that talent and all that rotten luck.