The final year of the first decade of the 21st Century was, once again, devoid of world championships for Cleveland's teams. But even without trophies or rings, there was still plenty to remember from the sports year 2009 in Cleveland. From the good (anything involving LeBron James or Josh Cribbs) to the bad (another Tribe fire sale) to the ugly (Braylon Edwards slugging a friend of LeBron's, then getting traded) it was another eventful sports year on the North Coast. Erik Cassano has been counting down the top ten biggest Cleveland sports stories of 2009, and today, brings us his #1 moment.

The final year of the first decade of the 21st Century was, once again, devoid of world championships for Cleveland's teams. The Cavaliers mounted a serious charge, but didn't have the height or muscle to match up with the Orlando Magic, and were turned back in the conference finals.

On December 27, the anniversary of the Browns' victory in the 1964 NFL Championship Game, the title drought will officially reach 45 years.

But even without trophies or rings, there was still plenty to remember from the sports year 2009 in Cleveland. From the good (anything involving LeBron James or Josh Cribbs) to the bad (another Tribe fire sale) to the ugly (Braylon Edwards slugging a friend of LeBron's, then getting traded) it was another eventful sports year on the North Coast.

Between now and the end of December, we'll unveil our top 10 Cleveland sports moments from 2009. Sit back and re-live the year that was.

The Top 10 Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #10-#8

The Top 10 Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #7-#5

The Top 10 Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #4 Wedge Fired, Acta Hired

The Top Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #3 LeBron's Sweet Shot Stuns Magic

The Top Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #2 Shaq Enters The Building

1. The Mike Holmgren Era begins

December 21

It's the story that tops out our list because it's the story with the biggest long-term ramifications: Mike Holmgren is now on the

job as the president of the Browns.

After about a week of serious discussions, negotiating and role-defining, Holmgren accepted Randy Lerner's offer to become the football czar of his tattered team. It's a move that brings a strong football leader to the president's chair, after years of inadequate, piecemealed leadership that led the re-born Browns franchise down some dark paths.

Holmgren will now take over the role that Lerner had previously assumed on a default basis: the organizational tone-setter, the person responsible for hiring the general manager and coach, the lawmaker who establishes goals, standards and consequences.

In handing his franchise over to Holmgren, Lerner is still taking some risk. Holmgren has never had this degree of unchallenged authority in his career. Even when he assumed both the GM and coach's roles in Seattle, he was still answerable to organizational higher-ups.

Holmgren will still answer to Lerner, but if Lerner's previous semi-involved ownership is any indication, Holmgren will have free reign over the Browns on a level that few team presidents

ever have.

In short, Lerner has cast his lot with Holmgren, completely and utterly. If Holmgren doesn't turn the Browns around, Lerner's reputation as a judge of competency will be ruined beyond repair.

Holmgren's first order of business is to decide whether to move forward with Eric Mangini as a head coach, or hire someone else who comes from the Bill Walsh-West Coast offense coaching tree. Mangini is a leaf on the Bill Parcells tree.

After that, Holmgren will have to make decisions on hiring a GM, and how to proceed with the Browns' 11-pick draft this spring. There are some very important, rapid-fire decisions Holmgren will need to make, decisions that will impact other decisions down the road.

It's a story that is still developing, but it's a story in which the future direction of the Browns - and Randy Lerner's reputation as an NFL owner - hangs in the balance. Which is why it's the most important Cleveland sports story of 2009.