There are Finally Four

That's a pretty motley crew heading to Indianapolis next weekend for the Final Four.

A couple of number five seeds, number two seed West Virginia, and the lone number one seed to make it through, Duke, are set to fight it out starting Saturday night to see who gets the opportunity to cut down the nets on Monday night.

Butler will basically play a home game against Michigan State while Duke and West Virginia go at it in the other national semi-final.

You just have to shake your head in admiration as far as Tom Izzo and the Michigan State Spartans go. Their last three weeks of the regular season Big10 schedule were filled with losses, injuries and disappointment. Yet as the season winds down here they are still battling for a championship as the calendar flips from March to April.

Butler validated another huge regular season with their tournament run and they have a legit chance of getting to the championship game given they'll have a week to prepare for a Michigan State team that will be without Kalin Lucas. Let's not forget they're also just a talented and well-coached basketball team.

There probably weren't a lot of people who picked a Big Ten vs. Horizon League semi-final match up. And even fewer picked Michigan State to be that Big Ten representative.

I've waited all tournament long for West Virginia to have that patented Bob Huggins-coached team meltdown.

It simply hasn't come.

Despite missing all 16 of their shots from inside the three-point arc Saturday night against Kentucky the Mountaineers still led at half and cruised to an Elite Eight win. Pay no mind that Kentucky was simply terrible in nearly every facet of the game. WVU moves on and deservedly so.

And they'll get a Duke team that's had a cakewalk to the Final Four thus far. Baylor pushed the Blue Devils for a while Sunday but the moment got big and Duke was simply more poised, polished and precise down the stretch. How they'll handle the Mountaineers is anyone's guess. But this Duke team has all the elements of a title team and they have to be the clear cut favorite to be celebrating Monday night while 'One Shining Moment' is brought out of mothballs.

Speaking of One Shining Moment…

Zydrunas Ilgauskas returned to 'The Q' Sunday and received a conquering hero's welcome. Fans stood and cheered, holding up their 'Z' placards and 'The Q' was renamed 'The Z' for one day. Cleveland fans are nothing if not loyal to a fault and 'Z' represents all the city offers itself to be. He's an engaging man who overcame injuries and tragedy in his life and time and time again came back to be a big part of what the Cavaliers have become. His teammates love him as much or more as the fans and he's deserving of the attention he received Sunday at Quicken Loans Arena.

Hopefully how the Cavaliers treated him will help soothe the hurt feelings from earlier in the year

when Head Coach Mike Brown offended the big man and 'forgot' about his games played streak.

Hopefully 'Z' can also down the stretch and in the playoffs with 15-20 minutes per night of solid play. There's a lot to like about Ilgauskas in terms of his personality. But now that apologies and appreciation have been shown 'Z' needs to be more than just a 7'3" good luck charm. You can't teach his size and length and there will be wide open opportunities from 15-18 feet. 'Z' needs to knock those down.

Cleveland fans will appreciate that even more.

It's All on Fausto-

I get a big kick out of the callers to sports talk shows and the message board posters who are lauding new Indians pitching coach Tim Belcher for turning around the performance of Indians' right hander Fausto Carmona. Fans are quick to swallow the reports that Belcher has shown Carmona the importance of throwing first pitch strikes and getting ahead in the count.

I call shenanigans.

Yes, Belcher provides a different voice. And that is important. There are plenty of fathers of little league-age kids who repeatedly properly instruct their kids on how to approach the game or a given skill only to have it fall on deaf ears. That same kid gets in a cage or on the field with an instructor telling him the exact same thing and suddenly it sticks. Same message, different voice.

But don't think for a second that Belcher has shared some magical words of wisdom with Carmona. Fausto has been pitching for probably 15 years at least. He's heard "Get ahead, stay ahead, work ahead" a couple of thousand times. He heard it from Eric Wedge and Carl Willis a thousand times as well.

Carmona is excelling (in spring training mind you) because he's applying that message and because he has filthy stuff. The stuff was never a question. Getting his head out of his rear end was more the issue. Maybe Belcher has his ear right now. Maybe between Belcher and Carmona's personal catcher, Mike Redmond, there is enough pressure and instruction to hold his attention. But for those who believe this is some radical new approach by Belcher and that it's turned Carmona around, be aware that it took Fausto less than a season to applying what Wedge and Willis were preaching to completely losing the strike zone and the ability to get Major League hitters out.

Personally I think Redmond is critical as it pertains to Carmona. He's on the field with him and he's calling the game. Belcher has to sit back and wait for Fausto to get off the field before offering any sage advice while Redmond can walk out and rattle Fausto's cage during an inning or at-bat.

But ultimately it all comes down to whether Carmona himself can harness his immense potential and be the front of the rotation ace the Indians are craving.

Etcetera-

- I thought (hoped) as spring training wound down my excitement for the upcoming season would heat up.

Still nothing.

I hope the Indians prove my doubting ways erroneous but I'm still not feeling it from a wins and losses perspective. This rebuild was necessary, no doubt, but the Indians need too many miracles to contend this season, even with the Central up for grabs.

Hopefully there are enough young kids to follow that make this season look like 1992. I'll take a season of watching guys develop and blossom like we had in '92 with Kenny Lofton, Carlos Baerga, Albert Belle and Sandy Alomar Jr.

If guys like Matt LaPorta, Michael Brantley, Asdrubal Cabrera, et al are similar to that group we'll have some fun this season watching them grow up. If those guys are more Mark Whiten,

Thomas Howard, Reggie Jefferson and Glenallen Hill then we're in some big trouble not only this season but also for another few years to come.

The point is even with the kids there will be hits and misses. The Indians are compiling a number of prospects, some of whom will pan out and be the foundation for the franchise for the years to come. But some will fail miserably.

In 1992 the Indians finished at 76-86. That record this season would not disappoint me if there was development. It just doesn't excite me either.

- Your 2010 Browns will start to take even more shape three weeks from this coming Thursday. That's the night of the NFL Draft's first round and what the Browns do will go a long way toward shaping the future of the franchise. Maybe even more importantly, depending what the team does on that Thursday night, will be the Friday after when the 2nd and 3rd rounds go down.

By all accounts this draft is a deep one and the Browns have multiple late round picks that they can use or package to move up into earlier rounds. Enjoy that Thursday night, but don't fall asleep on Friday and Saturday action. It promises be equally important.