It was a slow (but sweltering) week this past week, especially with me taking a few days to take the family to Cedar Point. But let's go around the franchises and see what's up as we wrap up another week in Cleveland sports.

And, suffice it to say, I'm moving past LeTravesty and concentrating on what still remains on the sports landscape here. It's not the scorched earth many are painting it to be.

In Flux

Now that What's His Name has fled south to the land of a bandwagoning fan base, the Cavaliers are left to put the pieces back together.

It would appear they have two choices: blow it up or rebuild on the fly.

The fan in me would love for the Cavs to be able to reload and remain competitive through a couple of trades and some free agent signings. Unfortunately that's easier said than done and it's hard to see any free agents coming to Cleveland right now. It has nothing to do with owner Dan Gilbert's scathing letter to the fans in which he tore James limb from limb over his decision, but rather due to the reality of the situation; Cleveland is not exactly a premier destination without a superstar anchoring the club and with less than ideal winter weather.

The Cavs do have a huge trade exception they can use to acquire talent and they also have a couple contracts that are desirable to other clubs, namely that of Delonte West. But the issue is determining how to best utilize those assets in order to solidify the roster.

I think the reloading efforts will be made. Gilbert has too much pride and too much at stake with his casino opening in the next year or two to tear it all down and start over. There is still some talent on this team in the persons of Mo Williams, Antawn Jamison, Anderson Varejao, West (for the time being), JJ Hickson and Daniel Gibson. Jamario Moon, Anthony Parker and Leon Powe are still under contract and will provide some depth and experience for the new-look Cavaliers.

And there is a very real possibility that some of those guys will step up with James gone. As you may recall, LeBron had a tendency to dominate the basketball and stagnate the offense occasionally here in Cleveland. You might be pleasantly surprised to see more movement and sharing of the ball and that could very well lead to increased production from the guys that do wear Cavs uniforms next season.

It isn't out of the question that the Cavaliers could secure a 6-8 seed in the Eastern Conference next season as presently constituted. They'll also need some luck and some breaks to fall their way. If Hickson continues to improve and if Sebastian Telfair can be a guy who can penetrate and distribute the ball with success the Cavs will battle for one of those last few playoff spots.

Still, it's a talent-based league and the Cavaliers clearly took a huge hit in that department with James taking his talents to South Beach. Ironically, the Cavaliers may have to play the game the Heat play in terms of talent acquisition in regard to basically eschewing the draft and attempting to build through trades and free agency. But they'll have to do it without the lure of a superstar anchoring the lineup and without the lure of sun, sand and a club scene.

Hey, as Tom Petty sang:

Under a big ol' sky
Out in a field of green
There's gotta be something left for us to believe
Oh, I await the day
Good fortune comes our way
And we ride down the Kings Highway.

Better than a Stick in the Eye

The Tribe's kiddie corps came out after the All-Star break and rolled to six straight wins against AL Central rivals Detroit and Minnesota. They also extended their strange mastery over the Tampa Bay Rays at Progressive Field to 18 straight games before seeing that streak broken Saturday night.

They're playing competitive baseball and that's saying something after watching them muddle through the first 75 games of the season.

Clearly it's all because Russell Branyan was like that Tiki necklace that the Brady kids found in Hawaii.

It also doesn't hurt that Asdrubal Cabrera and Shin-Soo Choo are back with the club giving the Indians a couple more legitimate major league players in their lineup.

Now it's time to go the rest of the way with this thing. People are quick to credit Manny Acta with motivating this team and infusing them with the proper attitude but it sure smells to me much like Eric Wedge's MO of poor starts followed by solid play when the horses were already out of the barn.

I'm not falling for it or getting too far ahead of myself, proclaiming this group is the one to come out of the gates next year and contend for the division, regardless of how dysfunctional the division actually is.

The Tribe needs to seriously consider getting whatever they can for Austin Kearns, Jhonny Peralta and Jake Westbrook. Cut ties with Andy Marte while you're at it. It's just time to go the whole nine yards with this rebuild and commit to the kids for the remainder of this season and all of next.

There's nothing you can do with Travis Hafner. Paul Cousineau details what a mess the Hafner situation is here but you're stuck with Pronk until his contract expires a couple years down the road. He's not going to go for a buyout with $29million owed to him and you can't collect on any type of insurance when the malady is acute suck.

Still, the Tribe needs to deal any veteran that can bring something in return and simply rid themselves of those who have demonstrated they can't play like Marte.

I'm intrigued by Jason Donald's offensive potential, I love Carlos Santana, I think Matt LaPorta is showing signs of life and I'm hopeful that Michael Brantley will one day not look like I could knock the bat out of his hands. Add those guys to Cabrera and Choo and a returning Grady Sizemore next season and it could be interesting given there are also signs of hope with the pitching staff.

The Indians are still a long way from contention, but they look to be closer today than they did at the beginning of June.

For Better or Worse

That rumble in your stomach is due to the fact that the Browns are clearly the Cleveland team closest to a championship as it stands to day.

That's hard to digest but it's a fact not based on the typical training camp optimism but more so on where the other franchises currently sit.

To put it quite simply, the Browns have given us more in the way of front office and on field upgrades in the past six months than either the Cavaliers or the Indians. There is a team president you have faith and confidence in and a head coach who seems to have weathered the stormy waters of last season and emerged a bit more humble and far more comfortable in his role. The quarterback position has been upgraded (to what level remains to be seen but, sad as it may be, Jake Delhomme is an upgrade over Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn), the running back position has been upgraded with Montario Hardesty and the Browns spent significant resources in upgrading their defensive backfield with TJ Ward, Joe Haden, Sheldon Brown and Larry Asante.

There are still holes on the defensive side, especially in the linebacker position. But Scott Fujita and Matt Roth will suffice until more help can be acquired, D'Qwell Jackson is still small but is at least healthy and the unit should be better than it was last year.

I'm mildly excited by what the Browns have done. Hardesty and Peyton Hillis are both guys who can run the football effectively and also catch the ball out of the backfield and Jerome Harrison showed what he is capable of in the last quarter of the 2009 season. You're going to enjoy watching the offense, especially if the Browns are effective at utilizing Josh Cribbs and Seneca Wallace in the wildcat formation.

If Delhomme can (and here it comes) manage the game and minimize mistakes the offense will be fine. The receivers are mostly young and inexperienced but I think Carlton Mitchell has the potential to be a terrific player and that bringing in a guy like Bobby Engram to tutor kids like Mitchell, Brian Robiskie, Mo Massaquoi and Evan Moore is a very good move.

And keep an eye on Ben Watson. With the Browns likely looking to play a ball control offense the tight end acquired as a free agent after 6 years with the New England Patriots may ultimately be the most important acquisition the Browns made in the offseason. At least he may be in 2010. Watson can catch, he can run and he can hit . Hell, that video shows one more impactful hit than I can remember D'Qwell making in five years.

This will be an improved football team over the team you watched last season. They're not a division-winning football team and likely not a playoff team in 2010. But they're going to sneak up on some teams and some experts and they are building a solid foundation.

Finally.

Lastly

I made the trip back to the homeland of Eucid Sunday evening to watch the 24th annual CABA High School World Series behind Euclid City Hall. There's a terrific caliber of baseball on display. I watched a 14-year old kid that the Brooklyn, NY team brought with them who must have been about 6'2" tall and 140 lbs throwing 88mph fastballs and 78mph sliders to a talented team from Cincinnati. With the bases loaded and no outs he proceeded to strike out the side to escape trouble on pitches that touched 90mph and had scouts in the stands checking each others' radar guns.

The talent level at the CABA is off the charts good. Guys like Alex Rodriguez and Jayson Werth along with Todd Helton and Alex Cora have passed through the CABA tournaments.

If you live in the area you can check out games all week long. Check http://www.cabahsws.com/ for information or head into Euclid after work.