On the same weekend that LeBron James was trying to re-polish his image with his annual Bike-a-thon in Akron, Tiger Woods was in the same city trying to recapture a bit of his old image as well on the one course where redemption seemed most likely.

If you're keeping score, James had a slightly better weekend than Woods, but in this case it's like saying that the Kansas City Royals had a better weekend than the Cleveland Indians. In truth, both brands are forever sullied and while some redemption is possible, no one will ever look at James or Woods the same way again.

At his event, James seemed mostly relaxed if not a bit nervous when he took to the microphone to thank, sincerely but awkwardly, his fans in Cleveland.

Ultimately, though, it isn't going to matter much for James because his decision to leave the Cavaliers wasn't just seen as abandonment. It was a decision that unloosened the underpinnings of an image that James had been carefully cultivating.

James is simply not the leader that everyone thought. There were, of course, so many obvious signs for so many years that it seems silly to have missed them all. James has always been praised for his passing game and willingness to get everyone on the team involved but in retrospect that was the most obvious marker of a player that never wanted to be the leader.

Go over it in your mind. It wasn't just his approach to the game itself but how he conducted himself on the court. James always accepted the hard fouls that came his way but was never an enforcer himself. There were so many times that James was criticized for not hitting the winning shot in a game but it never much seemed to phase him either way. He actually seemed more

comfortable being the decoy. It's not that he shied away from his responsibilities; it's just that he always seemed more driven by the need to fit in than stand out.

For reasons that are probably as much our fault as his, we all thought that James saw himself as "the man," a successor to Michael Jordan not just in talent but in demeanor. We now know that James simply doesn't have the gene to lead. That's not a sin, certainly, but it's been an earth shaking realization nonetheless.

In that context, James' migration to Miami makes perfect sense. Dwyane Wade is a lesser talent with a far meaner streak. Having someone to lead him on the court is likely to make James an even better player but it will simultaneously reinforce the image that has since arisen that James isn't good enough on his own to get the job done.

I have a feeling that isn't going to change no matter how many bicycles he gives away in the summer or how many bags of groceries he gives away at Thanksgiving. James is a man-child for now and ever more.

Woods may never have been a man-child in that sense, but in other ways he did his level best as well to remain as far under the radar as the best golfer in the world possibly can. As public as his occupation can be, Woods was always near paranoid about maintaining his privacy, although in retrospect it's easy to see why.

While it's really not credible that no one in Woods' inner circle was privy to his alley cat ways, it is credible when the rest of his fellow pros claim that ignorance. Woods was never a hale fellow well met and never will be.

It's hard to know exactly where in the deconstruction phase Woods is at right now. He certainly was a mess, though, this past weekend in about every way a golfer can be a mess. His drives were as erratic as his personal life, sprayed randomly over Firestone's tree-lined grounds. His chipping was about on the level of a 10-handicapper and he never once seemed to figure out the greens en route to shooting a stunning 18 over par.

To say that Woods was playing distracted doesn't do justice to how completely unhinged he really is at the moment. Absent physical injury, his talent level is just too superior to ever shoot 18 over par for four tournaments cumulative let alone for four days in one tournament.

Just as there were with James at his event, Woods found plenty of fans alive and well at Firestone, too. Irrespective of what any unscientific popularity poll may tell you it's very clear that Woods is trending in the wrong direction when it comes to appeal.

Like James, Woods just isn't the leader. And like James, there were just so many obvious signs along the way that it's embarrassing to have missed them all.

Woods never signed more than a few perfunctory autographs following a round was always one of the worst interviews, never offering the least little bit of insight into what he may have been thinking on the course. In team competitions like the Ryder Cup and the Presidents' cup, Woods never seized the reigns and made any of those teams his own and his record in those events is a mediocre reflection of his indifference.

For reasons that are as much our fault as his, we all thought of Woods as the likely successor to Jack Nicklaus in both talent and demeanor. Woods has the talent, certainly, and he has a killer instinct on the course. But he never has had Nicklaus' grace or humility. Those aren't sins, but in a game that values honor more than any other, it is a stunning realization.

Woods' meltdown didn't start in Akron and James didn't reveal itself in Akron. And yet on this one weekend, in an honest town with a straight up sensibility, their worlds collided in ways they probably never imagined. That seems far more like karma than coincidence.

In that context, their comeuppance makes sense. These are the guys Woods and James have been all along. We were just too busy wishing they were someone else to notice.