Well, LeBron returned to Cleveland last week and anyone reading this knows how that turned out. Bad for Cleveland, good for LeBron, and great for ESPN. It turned out pretty much the way most people expected it to, more or less. There isn't too much to say that hasn't already been written.

The fans brought their best hate and did what they could. Nothing foolish happened to the great relief of some people who care about things like Cleveland's image. Personally, I didn't really give much of a crap if all of the national writers who have been making fun of Cleveland (when not completely ignoring and writing us off) ended up with one more thing write about. Part of me, a big part actually, was hoping for something historic to happen. Exactly what, I couldn't say. Just...something, even if it was some drunk guy getting tasered at midcourt. Now that would have been worth tuning in for. That would have been something.

But nothing happened except a lot of booing and some chants. Like I said, the fans did what they could.

The team didn't bring their best, to put it mildly. You know about the team. The only thing that seemed to rival the Cavs astounding lack of talent was an equally astounding apathy. Hey, at least I could sleep a little better Friday night after it was revealed that Daniel Gibson thought James was a big meany during the game. He was only smiling at James due to some sort of terrible affliction where his facial expressions are in direct conflict with his actual thoughts and feelings.

In the craziest of coincidences, this exact same thing happened on last week's episode of House. Turns out that guy had a rare form of multiple sclerosis called Marburg MS. He was treated with some experimental stem cell therapy, so there is still hope for Boobie. You'll also be relived to know that Boobie and LeBron are still friends.

After the game, LeBron took the opportunity to once again not apologize for anything. He also referred to his "greatness", which was hilarious. Could you ever imagine talking to someone (let alone in front of a camera and on national TV) and refer to your own greatness? Good gravy, it takes a once in a generation douchebag to continually pull stuff like that. LeBron has proven himself to be a "once in a generation" a lot of things. Douchebag is definitely one of them.

But the worst part was knowing how the national media was going to spin it. I knew it was going to be used as validation for LeBron leaving Cleveland. When I finally got up the nerve to turn on the TV Friday, within 5 minutes Tony Kornheiser was basically saying that this was the reason that LeBron HAD to leave Cleveland. How could he be expected to play with such inferior talent.

In a vacuum, he might have a point. The talent in Cleveland is obviously low right now. There is little question about that after last week. But what he ignores; what just about everyone ignores, is LeBron's own complicity in that. That's the point that everyone misses. I never see it brought up. This team was built specifically for LeBron. And, he had one foot on their neck and a gun to their head while it was being built. There was a sense of urgency that got more and more frantic as the free agent clock ticked away. With one foot on their neck, the Cavs couldn't see that the other foot was already in Souff Beach.

It started the day LeBron was drafted and the nitrous kicked in when he signed that 3 year extension instead of a max deal. LeBron left the team created by him and for him. And now that team is being used as validation for his betrayal. That's what bothers me the most.

I'll always wonder what this team could have turned into without that urgency. To build a championship team patiently in way that makes sense. I guess we'll find out in a few years. Just watch Oklahoma City.

And, could somebody please punch Chris Bosh in the face?

Thank you.

**An Awkward Glance Ahead At The Cavs**

So the Cavs end the last week winless in 4 games. They start off the coming week Tuesday in Philadelphia. After embarrassing defeats against Boston, Miami, and hapless Minnesota, the Cavs roll into Philly with heads high and guns blazing knowing they did not go gentle into that good night. No, last night in Detroit the Cavs were out for redemption. They fought tooth and nail, buzzer to buzzer, and in the end they damn near pulled out a single digit loss that may well have silenced the doubters once and for all. Alas, they lost by 10. But they had to rally to get that close.

This team is on a precipice of sorts. It has the talent for 30 wins, but it has the heart and LeBron soaked endocardium for 15-20 wins. Things have the potential to get ugly and stay ugly for a quite a while. If they endure many more weeks like last week, there is really no turning back. It has become more and more apparent that this team must be gutted and start over. The stench of LeBron lingers over everything and it smells and tastes of vinegar. A full extermination is in order and I don't care if a single current Cavs player survives it.

From this point forward I care only what will get me talented young players and more ping pong balls.

The first chance to get off the schneid comes Tuesday against a 76er team that the Cavs are 2-0 against this year. Philly, however, are winners of 3 of their last 4 and seem to be playing better basketball than they were earlier in the season. The Cavs are battered mentally right now. This game is winnable and could be important if the Cavs have any hope of salvaging what is left of the season. The longer this losing streak gets, the harder it will be for this team to look into the mirror without despairing.

The schedule the rest of the month has very few soft spots and the Cavs need to take advantage before this runaway train turns into a Denzel Washington size disaster.

On Wednesday, the Cavs return home to face the Chicago Bulls before heading off again for a 4 game road trip. Chicago (the team that LeBron would have chosen if his main concern actually was only winning) will be at full strength with Taj Gibson and Carlos Boozer in the lineup. The Bulls will roll into town with at least the 5 best players on the court, possibly more. From a talent standpoint, we just don't match up. From a heart standpoint, well, we know where the evidence lies. From a "any given day" standpoint...yeah, I guess there's that.

The weekend features another back to back at Houston and Oklahoma City respectively. Houston is struggling right now at 7-13. They, like the Cavs, are still trying to recover from the loss of their superstar, Yao Ming. It's another winnable game.

In Oklahoma City, they are fielding a team that could have been the Cavs, had the Cavs only taken a more measured and long term approach. At 13-7 they have the look of a dynasty in the making. Building for the last 3 years around current and future superstar Kevin Durant, the Thunder will be annual championship contenders for the foreseeable future What you will see is what the Cavs should have been, if only LeBron had allowed it to happen, or someone on the Cavs had made it happen despite LeBron.

However, what happened is what happened, and what Cleveland is left with is a surrogate team in Oklahoma city that can hopefully pick up the torch from Kobe and prevent any Championship trophies from reaching Souff Beach.

Who knows, maybe the ping pong balls will bounce our way once again. With the benefit of experience, maybe Danny Gilbert and the Cavs will do it the right way this time and things will

come together for the Cavs to grab that torch from Kevin.

But that is all theoretical and down the road.

For this week I envision 1-3 if I'm an optimist. 0-4 if I'm honest.

For the winter, I see cold.

**An Awkward Glance Ahead At The Browns**

The Browns, the one remaining relevant team in Cleveland, took their own (not inconsiderable) talents to Souff Beach to face off with the Miami Dolphins, a 6-5 team clinging to a chance at the playoffs. It was an important game for the Browns if only because the local media* keeps insisting that Mangini is on the hot seat, despite coaching one of the toughest, most improved teams in the NFL.

**I was watching The Point After last week and the last question to the panel was "how many of the remaining 5 games do the Browns have to win to save Mangini's job?" The lowest number given was 3, which I could see, given the Browns next 2 opponents are both games they should definitely win. Tony Grossi said 5. So basically Tony thinks for Mangini to keep his job, the Browns would have to finish the season on a 6 game winning streak and have a 9-7 record.*

*Maybe Tony thought the question was "how many of the next 5 games do you HOPE the Browns have to win for Mangini to keep his job?" If that's the case I'm surprised he didn't say 6*.

With help from Brown's game MVP Chad Henne, a victory was assured when Phil Dawson split the uprights on a game winning field goal as time expired. Mike Adams set up the field goal by intercepting a tipped ball, Chad's 3rd interception of the game, and returning it to the 2 yard line. A winning field goal virtually assured, thousands of Peyton Hillis's fantasy owners watched helplessly as Jake Delhomme took 3 straight knees to kill the clock.

And that was that.

You knew it was a bigger game than the Browns are used to when you heard Greg Gumbel and Dan Deirdorf's voices instead of the superbly ridiculous partial ramblings of Torry Holt. The only explanation I could come up with for such a formidable announcing team was the historic return to Souff Beach of Matt Roth, the former Dolphin linebacker who was cast aside last year only to re-emerge as one of the Browns best linebackers.

The game went pretty much as you would expect. Peyton Hillis, Ronnie Brown, and Ricky Williams ran a lot for little gain. Jake Delhomme completed a lot of short passes and moved around in the pocket with as much grace as Derek Anderson works a post game presser. Chad Henne mostly threw picks and continued to ridiculously owe his employment to the fact that he went to the same school as Tom Brady. John St. Clair only occasionally even attempted to block Cameron Wake, impersonating a festive 320 lb bowl of figgy pudding in honor of the holiday season. I guess he figured he wasn't going to be able to block him anyway, so why even bother?

This led me to wonder if John St Claire's name is actually supposed to be John Ts Claire. The TS stands for turnstile! After a few minutes of rolling around laughing I picked myself up off of the floor and wrote it down. "Turnstile! That's gold man, that's gold. I have to put that in the column. That's good shit." I thought.

So there it is.

Sabby Piscitelli continued to insist on being called that ridiculous name.

One of the things I thought was interesting was the initial reaction. Early in the season when the Brown's lost some close games, there was much gnashing of teeth because "good teams win those games." Well, guess what, for the last two weeks, we've won those games. So what is the reaction to these wins?

"Damn, that was an ugly win." There is a lot of lamentation over Jake Delhomme being the QB right now. It was even suggested that the Browns might want to consider dumping Jake in the off season so that we could sign up Miami's one armed, broken down backup QB. All of this while Jake is actually winning his second straight game while throwing no interceptions (not that he didn't try) with a 98 QB rating.

In Cleveland, especially this week, it's hard to look on the bright side.

Next week, the Browns travel to Buffalo to face a Bills team coming off a 38-14 thrashing at the hands of a Farveless Minnesota Vikings team. The Bills record stands at 2-10, their 2 wins coming against competition with a combined record of 4-20. Although, they have been playing better football as of late, this is not a good Bills team. This is a game the Browns should win, and win decisively.

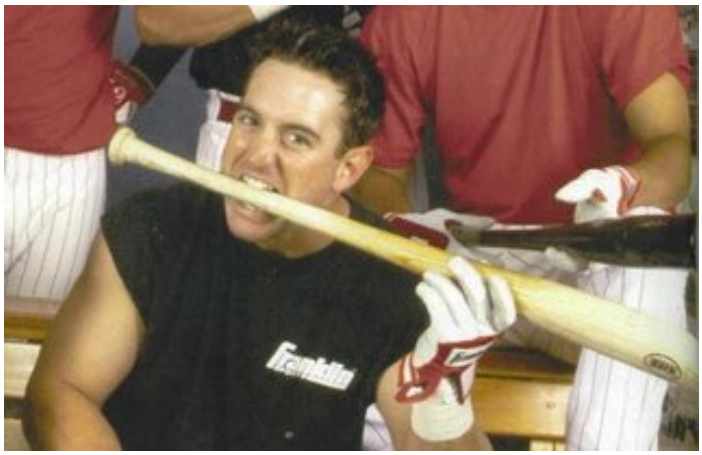
The Bills highest ranked unit is their pass defense, which ranks 11th in the league, no doubt because teams have little reason to pass against them for most of the second half of their games. Their rushing defense ranks last in the league giving up 168 yards per game on the ground. This is good news for the Browns and their fans who love nothing more than watching Peyton Hillis bullying his way over cowering defenders on his way to the end zone.

The Bills Offense, however, is not without weapons. Ryan Fitzpatrick has shown that he is a capable QB with better receivers in Lee Evans and Steve Johnson than anything the Browns can boast at the moment.

Kickoff is at 1:00 in what promises to be a very snowy Buffalo. The conditions should play right

into the Browns hands. The game will likely be played on the ground and that's just where they want it. Unfortunately, It almost surely means at least another week on the sidelines for Colt McCoy.

**An awkward Glance Ahead At The Indians**




Finally, there's something to talk about this week with Chris Antonetti making his first big splash on the free agent scene by signing that pederast Jack Hannahan to a minor league contract. He's been buckin' for a promotion lately. Jack is a 30 year old third baseman who spent last year in the minors and has spent time in the majors with the A's.

Maybe it's just me, but if the question is "who should e get to play 3rd base in Cleveland this year?" it sure doesn't seem like this guy is the answer. But, that's just a wild guess. I don't know a damn thing about the guy. Since he's 30, maybe that, in and of itself, is a problem.

With the winter meetings set to start, the Hannahan signing may be just the beginning. The rumors are swirling about and the country is abuzz with rumors that the Tribe may, just maybe, bring the one and only Nick Punto into the fold.

KaPOW!!! Take that Washington with your ridiculous Jason Werth contract. Take that New York. Have fun trying to decide between Cliff Lee and Carl Crawford. While you guys were wasting your time thinking about those chumps, the Indians snuck in there and are a thin red curly away from signing the real prize of the offseason.

Nick Punto is a good defender who would certainly upgrade the infield defense. Playing behind a staff of alleged ground ball pitchers, that can only help. While many of the current and former 2nd and 3rd basemen for the Indians have taken the field with a frying pan, Punto uses an actual glove.

That's right, Punto saves his flying pan for the batters box, al least when he's not hitting with is fly swatter.

When I think about Nick Punto, I have to wonder. Is it really so much to ask that the Cleveland Indians, an alleged major league baseball team, attempt to field a team of players who are, at the very least (and I don't feel like I'm asking for a lot here) above replacement level both offensively AND defensively? Not even average. Average is harder to come by than you'd think. No, I'd like them to be better than the 6 different schmucks that are already in the organization. That's all I ask.

Thank you.

Of course, this Punto thing isn't a done deal yet. The suspense is killing me.

**An Awkward Glance Ahead At The Buckeyes**

The Buckeyes will be traveling to the Big Easy on January 4th to take of the Arkansas Razorbacks in the Sugar Bowl.

Get your tickets and hotel rooms.

Be sure to print this handy reference for your stay.

More about the game at a future date

**An Awkward Glance Ahead At TV**

Lawnmower Man – HBOZ Tuesday 12:00 pm

Who doesn't love the Lawnmower Man? Jeff Fahey turning from Derek Anderson into Albert Einstein level intelligence in a few short months due to some special "brain serum" and the magic of 1992 virtual reality? And, of course he's seduced by his power and turns evil. Look at those sweet effects. What's not to love?

If you haven't seen it, it's ridiculous and great. I haven't seen it for a long long time. I will be setting my DVR with one goal in mind. To finally answer the question..."Why didn't that scientist give the brain potion to himself?"

If Lawnmower Man ain't your thing:

Species – Cinemax Tuesday 6:00 pm

Natasha Henstridge naked...a lot.

If that ain't your think I can no longer be of service.

**Actor Who Will Be In My Movie**

Arthur Bridges

He was there for the climax of one of my favorite scenes in any movie. The Hudsucker Proxy had Tim Robbins put in charge of a company for the express purpose of running it directly into the ground. His big idea the hula-hoop, you know, for kids!.

Millions get made and shipped to the toy store. The advertisement goes up in the window. $2.99 Nobody buys any. The price drops. $1.99 It drops again. $.99, $.25, free with purchase. Nobody buys any.

The shop owner chucks the lot of them out back into the alley. One lone hula-hoop rolls all the

way out of the alley, around the corner, across the street, and finally falls over and comes to a rest the way that only a hula-hoop can, right at the feet of young Arthur Bridges.

Arthur looks down curiously, steps into the center of it, lifts it up, and does the only thing that can be done with a hula-hoop (and what I've never been able to do myself in my entire life), he hula-hoops it. And for some reason he looks strangely hilarious doing it, with one foot slightly in front of the other.

Well, a bunch of other kids walk around the corner and stop dead in their tracks, their faces filled with wonder. As a group they tear off for the store to get their own. Madness ensues.

Arthur Bridges, the hula-hoop kid, is in my movie.

**YouTube Clip Of The Week**

In honor of the holiday season, this weeks clip comes from a scene at the beginning of Emmet Otter's Jugband Christmas
. It's the best Christmas special ever made. Enjoy.