It's time to whip out the thermometer and take the temperature of the three Cleveland sports teams. What type of hope should you, the valued fan, be investing in the Browns, Indians or Cavaliers that they will be the team to lift the 42-years-and-counting title drought hanging over Northeast Ohio? In Papa Cass's latest, he gives you the good, bad, and ugly aspects of Cleveland's Big Three, and how far he thinks they are from title contention.

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Below, I'll give you the good, bad and ugly aspects of Cleveland's Big Three, and how far I think they are from title contention.

Browns

Reasons to be happy

1. Romeo Crennel isn't in the habit of blowing smoke

Crennel, so far, has managed not to respond to a negative situation with relentless spin-doctoring and blatant distortions of the truth. That alone puts him miles ahead of Butch Davis in terms of creating a healthy team environment. He doesn't openly trash his players, but he is very reserved with his praise. His overall attitude toward his players seems to be "prove it to me," which is exactly the attitude the coach should have on a team that hasn't proven anything yet.

2. For the first time since the franchise's return, the front office is finally building on something

That, of course, is the defense. Crennel and GM Phil Savage both come from defensive backgrounds, the defense is where Savage spent most of the team's money this off-season, and the top two picks in this spring's draft were linebackers.

It finally looks like the infighting among Browns' higher-ups has subsided and everyone is working together instead of trying to usurp power from each other.

3. Randy Lerner is an involved owner

When Al Lerner died four years ago, I thought the Browns would be sold within six months. His son, Randy Lerner, was a jet-setter from Long Island, and I thought the last thing in the world he'd want to do is run an NFL franchise, certainly an NFL franchise as closely-scrutinized as the Browns.

But not only hasn't Lerner sold the team, he's embraced his role as the owner. He flies in for practices and games, he attends team functions, and he has gone out of his way to reach out to Browns alumni, making them an involved part of the organization again.

Lerner is involved and concerned without being meddlesome, and has become just what the doctor ordered for the Browns in the wake of his father's death. I'd go so far as to say he has become one of the best owners in the league.

Reasons to be cautious

1. Nobody really seems to have a grasp of offensive football

Nobody in the Browns organization is an offensive guru, and offensive coordinator Maurice Carthon's performance has been questionable at best. The first three preseason games have shown that the Browns have some ability to move the football, but are woefully inconsistent and prone to long dry spell.

Unless this team plans on winning a lot of 13-10 games, they have to get better on offense.

2. The quarterback situation

This plays into the first point. Charlie Frye is inexperienced, and the situation behind him is threadbare to say the least. Ken Dorsey is the most experience quarterback on the roster, and he's getting outplayed by Derek Anderson, a second-year player who was bound for Baltimore's practice squad last year.

The Browns are letting their quarterback situation flap perilously in the wind right now. If Frye goes down, it could be a knockout blow for the team.

3. A losing track record

The Browns haven't made the playoffs in four years. They haven't reached double digits in wins in 12 years. They haven't won a playoff game in 12 years. Until the team starts to play better ball in the regular season, it's always wise to maintain a safe distance.

Reason to be nauseous

1. Oh, it hurts

There is the omnipresent possibility that a catastrophic injury could befall a Browns player at any moment, and that his backup could retire, and the backup to the backup could get suspended for drug violations.

This team hasn't had the best luck since returning, you know.

Indians

Reasons to be happy

1. This team can develop young talent

Nobody need worry about a dearth of young talent coming out of the Indians' farm system anytime soon. The Indians identified the farm system as their lifeblood and have set about keeping it as nourished as possible, either through the draft or trades. For a midmarket team, that's a smart move.

2. Ownership is committing money to those young players

You can fault the Larry and Paul Dolan ownership group for some things, but when it comes to young players, they are putting their money where their mouth is.

Since last year, C.C. Sabathia, Travis Hafner, Victor Martinez, Grady Sizemore, Cliff Lee and Jhonny Peralta are among the players inked to extensions. Extending young players gives them a vote of organizational confidence and prevents rounds of contentious arbitration that can strain a player's relationship with his team.

3. GM Mark Shapiro can retool on the fly

Given the requisite cash, Shapiro can tighten the screws and have the Indians ready to win next spring. He's already proven he can sift for gold nuggets like Tom Mastny and wing a midseason trade for a multitalented player lost in the shuffle of another organization like Shin-Soo Choo.

But he needs the money.

Reasons to be cautious

1. The Indians have yet to prove they can lure top free agents

Adding some impactful free agents, or doing the equivalent in a trade, are the only ways to get this team over the hump. Having a competitive initial offer is only half the battle. An organization

also needs to be able to sell a player on signing, which is usually accomplished through aggressive bargaining.

So far, the Indians seem to be easily dissuaded when it comes to contract negotiations. Once their planned limit is topped, they back out and pull their offer off the table.

It's a sad fact the Indians must learn: to get top players, you will have to overpay at times.

2. At times, it seems like this team has no idea how to translate talent into winning

Talent is a must when building a winner. But a team must also consistently empower and motivate that talent. So far, I'm not seeing that out of the Indians. Manager Eric Wedge deserves some of the blame, but I think it's an organizational thing.

There is no reason why the Indians, a team with a very capable offense and starting rotation, should be as bad as they are. It's all between the ears.

3. Wedge and Shapiro are vanilla and vanilla

No smoke, no fire. Heck, not even a palpable difference of opinion. The brain monster known as Wedgiro brings the same ideas, same philosophies, same leadership style and maybe even the same hair care products to the table. That's not a good recipe when things grow stagnant, as I think they have in the Indians' front office.

Reason to be nauseous

Shapiro might be on his way out

Shapiro's contract is up at the end of next season. Right now, the chance of him signing an extension to stay with the low-budget Indians seems like a 50-50 proposition at best.

Cavaliers

Reasons to be happy

1. LeBron James is a Cav through the spring of 2010, no questions asked

He is the heart, soul, mind and body of Cleveland sports. As long as the Cavs have him, they will continue to improve.

2. Dan Gilbert has vastly improved this team on and off the court

When he bought the team, he was branded a meddlesome fantasy-league owner who was going to foul everything up a la Daniel Snyder. Instead, he has approached owning an NBA franchise with the same analytical eye that made him a fortune in the business world. He's pumped money into the roster, upgrades to Quicken Loans Arena, and a

soon-to-be-constructed practice facility in Independence.

Best of all, he's hired basketball people who are confident and competent, but not arrogant, and let them run the show.

3. GM Danny Ferry has learned the most important lesson any NBA GM has to learn

In the NBA, it's about the money you don't spend. After last year's spending splurge, Ferry coaxed Drew Gooden to sign a contract that gives the team flexibility in several years and makes Gooden tradeable if need be. Instead if overpaying for Flip Murray, he drafted a rookie replacement in Shannon Brown.

Maintaining financial flexibility is paramount in the NBA, which has a dollar-for-dollar luxury tax for teams that broach the salary cap.

Reasons to be cautious

1. Larry Hughes and the injury bug

He's really important to what the Cavs are trying to build, but he can never stay healthy. Another season with Hughes riding the pine in a cast is another season of spackling a huge hole in the roster. It might not stop the Cavs' progress, but it could slow it.

2. The lack of a defensive tough guy

With Ben Wallace in Chicago, Rasheed Wallace in Detroit and Jermaine O'Neal in Indiana, the Cavs' division is full of sharp elbows in the low post. The Cavs have a couple of scrappers off the bench in Anderson Varejao and Scot Pollard, but no one who can really force the issue in the paint like the Wallaces and O'Neal can. Once you get past the swift legs of LeBron, the Cavs are a very finesse team. That's not to say they can't win being finesse, but they need an answer for the tough guys that roam the East's frontcourts.

3. Mike Brown doesn't bring the offense like he should

Having LeBron makes coaching offense much easier, but way too often, the offense devolved into LeBron and four guys standing around watching him. Brown, a defense-first coach, doesn't seem to have an antidote for that, and it makes the Cavs look very one-dimensional on offense at times.

Reason to be nauseous

Moondog

An NBA club should be able to employ the best and brightest marketing minds available. So what does it say about the Cavs that the best they could come up with is a stuffed puppy dog for a mascot?

I know mascots are supposed to be kid-friendly, but a dog? The Browns have four dogs as mascots already. At least come up with something that looks like an acid-tripped Sesame Street character, like Slider. Or a unique animal, like The Gorilla in Phoenix.

Thirty-six years of basketball, and the best mascots the Cavs have presented to the fans are Moondog and Whammer. Sad. Truly sad.