Spring has sprung,
the Cavs are done,
the Tribe's on the warpath,
and the Browns need a ton.

Alfred Lord Tennyson once famously wrote, "In the spring, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." But that was before Major League Baseball, the NFL and the NBA.

As the crocus blooms and the mighty oak blossoms, we sportsaholics likely turn to the beat of tom-toms emanating from Carnegie and Ontario, or wistfully imagine what the Cleveland Browns will be doing with their top draft choices; or we're cultivating a new love affair with the young Cavaliers, who won five of their last 10 games.

Fast from the Gate

The Indians, gratefully awakening from a long winter's nap that has lasted more than three years, are leading the American League's Central Division, to the surprise of practically everyone who bothered to handicap the pennant races a month ago.

Now that the 35-degree weather is but a chilly memory and the rain hopefully begins to subside, fans will be flocking to Progressive Field by the thousands -- maybe not the crowds that those cherished teams of the mid-90s drew, but somewhat better than last season's meager attendance.

The Tribe is out of the gate like Secretariat at Churchill Downs. Everything that can be written about the first month's games has been written here at TheClevelandFan.com and elsewhere. Suffice it to say that there appears to be more young talent on this team than anyone ever imagined. The pitchers -- Fausto Carmona, Carlos Carrasco, Josh Tomlin, Justin Masterson, Mitch Talbot, Tony Sipp, Chris Perez and more -- have knocked the socks off opposing batters. The team, for the most part, is playing good fundamental baseball at the plate and in the field.

But the season is long. The Indians will have their share of losing streaks. Winning the division or even making the playoffs may be too much to hope for. However, if they can finish the season at .500, we can spend this coming winter looking forward to the 2012 season with more optimism and relish than we've had in many moons.

(Maybe it's time to take a moment and actually thank former general manager Mark Shapiro for the miracles he performed in the trade department. Though his drafting skills stunk to high heaven, the young players he captured in trades for Casey Blake, CC Sabathia, Cliff Lee, Victor Martinez and others appear to have the potential to make up for his disastrous drafts. Way to go, Mark!)

A Cautionary Note?

With the exception of *Plain Dealer* beat writer Tony Grossi, there's near unanimous agreement among knowledgable fans and sports wags that Patrick Peterson would be the perfect first-round pick for the Cleveland Browns in the upcoming NFL draft.

The one red flag is Peterson's Wonderlic score: 9 of 50. That's fairly dismal, even for defensive backs. Your average high-school graduate can score 20 or better -- which means that Louisiana State University somehow drew at least 11 Wonderlic points out of Peterson's brain over the course of three years. (LSU is an SEC team, so that's no surprise.)

However, given Peterson's tremendous athletic ability, his general intelligence level should have little bearing on his success in the NFL. Thankfully, it doesn't take too many smarts to read a run or follow a receiver around for four seconds.

And if the labor impasse postpones or cancels the NFL season, Peterson has a bright future. He can always audition for a recurring role on *Jersey Shore*.

If It Weren't for Bad Luck…

The Cavaliers will be drafting no lower than fourth when the college studs are drawn to New York City for the annual NBA draft this summer. Problem is, with each passing day, another studly stud withdraws his name from the eligibility list, opting rather for another year in college than for testing the uncharted waters of a league facing a complete shutdown before camps even open this fall.

The Cavs picked a terrible year to be terrible. With the exception of Duke's Kyrie Irving, the draft looks to be inhabited, top to bottom, with 50 or 60 iterations of Darko Milicic, not many of whom will offer Byron Scott's team capable replacements for some of the lighter weights who now inhabit the bench.

Whether or not they turn a good deal of the roster over, the way the Cavs ended the season and the prospect of regaining their health are two good reasons to be "guardedly optimistic." As we've opined before, a starting lineup of Baron Davis, Anthony Parker, Andy Varejao, J.J. Hickson or Antawn Jamison, and a small forward to-be-named ain't half bad.

For the Cavs to win a great many more games than 19, three things need to happen:

1) Scott must keep his key players relatively healthy over the course of 82 games, because the roster depth is suspect.

2) General manager Chris Grant must find a viable small forward who can pop in at least 15 points per game, through free agency, trade or draft.

3) The five rookies on this year's roster must grow their games.

"You put Andy and Jamison on this team, and you won't be a pushover," says eternal optimist Austin Carr. "These guys are going to make huge jumps between their rookie and their sophomore season. In your rookie year, every game is a new experience."

The good news is that a total wipeout of the season might not be all that bad for the Cavs. It certainly wouldn't be the same knife in the gut that it would've been two or three years ago.

So there's that.