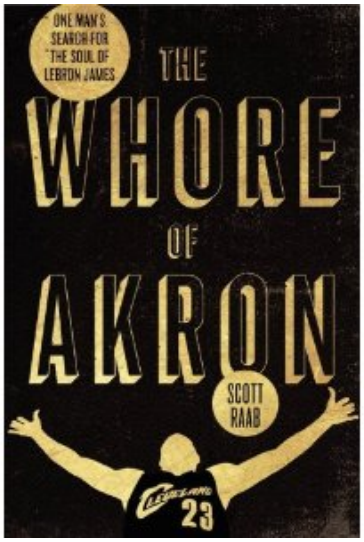

Early in Scot Raab's long awaited book, 'The Whore of Akron' you come across the following few paragraphs:

"Maybe the ones burning my jersey were never LeBron fans anyway."

Exactamente, you megalomaniacal shitheel. Those were- they are--Cleveland fans. They burned their jerseys right after your hour-longESPN smarm-fest, when the whole world saw you for the stunted, soul-dead bumpkin you are. Those Cleveland fans knew for the first time what utter fools they had been to believe that LeBron James ever gave a damn about anything but
LeBron James.

And because they were born and grew up and will die Cleveland fans, those fans also instantly grasped your legacy as a Cavalier: You will forever be the player who choked and quit against the Celtics in the 2009-2010 playoffs. You surrendered. You gave up. You and your team- while the clock still ran, with the coach urging you on- quit trying, laid down and died.

For that disgrace alone, those fans were right to burn the stinking jerseys they themselves had paid for. Add the disdain and the disrespect you showed for Cleveland fans as Jim Gray and Michael Wilbon fellated you on national TV- not a single question about your playoff tank job or the phantom elbow injury that floated in the same ether as the rumors of your mother's sexual dalliance with one of your teammates-hell, those fans should have torched your jerseys with you and your sycophant posse wearing them.

How's that for a succinct and accurate summation of Cleveland basketball and your feelings regarding May through July of 2010?

Raab's book is due to be released next Tuesday, November 15th and it's a sensational read, not only for Cavalier fans but for fans of the NBA and fans of wonderful writing. Raab is a gifted writer who alternates between gritty, vulgar, funny and poetic and who smartly shines the spotlight on his own demons while outing LeBron as a soulless, gutless and gifted athlete who fears big moments and always has.

James fans or fans who believe Raab has written a completely skewed and biased book will have to credit Raab for writing so honestly about his addiction to food and pain medications and his past history of petty theft and drug dealing. In doing that honestly they might also find that Raab hasn't created James's shortcomings and failures but rather he simply researched, catalogued and documented them.

From a Cleveland perspective the book is cathartic. As I mentioned above, Raab is vulgar, he's funny and he's at times poetic but he is every second a Cleveland guy, a Cleveland fan and a Cleveland-fan defender.

LeBron is a main theme for sure. But a parallel theme is Raab's addictions and his battles with those all issues while LeBron reveals himself to the world to be a truly empty uniform and while vacuous sycophants around him (including team presidents, friends, media heads, NBA execs) continue to reveal their emptiness and true colors as well.

LeBron's final two years and spectacular playoff flops, the quitting against the Celtics, 'The Decision', the first Heat season and all of the emotions those events caused in us? Raab captures it in the book. He defines it and he does it with **our** perspective using **our** history, **our** important sports landmarks and **our** shared experiences and disappointments and, most critical in all of this, he can do it because he feels it as we do as a Clevelander.

'The Whore of Akron' is not 300 pages of solely LeBron-hate. Raab uses those 300 pages to be critical of LeBron, himself and the entire 'support' structure the Cavs put in place to deal with LBJ. Mike Brown was neutered, Danny Ferry was ineffective, Mo Williams was impotent when the Cavs needed him most and owner Dan Gilbert made a critical error when he agreed to sign James for just three years after LeBron's rookie contract expired. Gilbert failed to utilize the only leverage he ever had in dealing with LBJ's contract situation when he failed to demand that James re-sign for six or seven years instead of the shorter deal. Gilbert rightly recognized that James wasn't ready to bolt at the time his rookie deal expired but he didn't take advantage of that fact and the uncertainty over whether James would stay or go in July 2010 hampered the Cavs effort to bring in talent with which to surround James.

But make no mistake, Raab's disdain for James is the major, overriding theme of the book. James becomes Raab's white whale and the author spends a ton of time and money following James and the Heat last season and relishing in the misery of the Heat's collapse to Dallas in the NBA Finals. With all due respect to William V. Levy, this is NOT 'Sam, Sipe & Company'. This is not a flowery oration of a team overcoming great odds and *almost* reaching the top of the mountain (or almost reaching the AFC Championship game in the case of the 1980 Browns). This is a book about failing on many levels and also a book about just how little you truly know about an athlete until he shows his true colors.

'The Whore of Akron' is more than a very entertaining, well-written and captivating read. It's also the definitive book of Cleveland sports and the definitive book on LeBron James.

So Close

It looks to me like the Browns are *this close* to really turning things around and turning on a playoff push, the likes of which the NFL hasn't seen in years.

If they could just turn around 18-20 pesky plays per game, on each side of the ball, they're right there. If they could just close up some of those pass protection issues so that Colt McCoy only gets the shit kicked out of him 10-15 times per game, they're right there.

If they quit being stubborn and spending their 2nd and 3rd round picks like a sailor on leave on guys like Mo Massaquoi, Brian Robiskie and David Veikune they could draft a kicker with 75-85

yard range. That way, all those drives that stall on their own 35 yard line after two off tackle runs and a near sack could potentially lead to points. They get that kind of kicker, they're right there.

So it's really not as bad as you might think, Browns fans. They're that close.

Obviously a few things went wrong Sunday when they were waxed 30-12 by the Houston Texans. The plane reached Houston, Tony Pashos was healthy enough to start, the Texans refused to fall for the 'Peyton Hillis is pouting' pity party thing and no one was able to hide Pat Shurmur's super-secret 20-play script without him finding it.

That was brutal. The only good thing about the game was I didn't watch it. I recorded it and went and watched my 11-year old play soccer with her club team's U-12 squad. Best choice I've made all season aside from the one where I sold my seats for next week at face value. Try and turn that trick in the next 8 weeks.

I'm not sure, but I have to believe the Browns have also set some sort of record by having more first-play turnovers to start games than first quarter touchdowns. If you get your name in the record book that at least beats sucking razor blades anonymously.

Some Browns fans might also be buoyed by the fact they likely won't have to worry about the team drafting a QB to replace McCoy. McCoy's imminent death at the hands of a blitzing linebacker or safety will create a roster spot and the need to get someone else under center. If there's any justice the Browns will bury McCoy with Pashos (whether or not Pashos is actually dead) in either San Francisco or in Houston where those teams buried him in back to back weeks.

I feel bad for the kid. McCoy is a lot of things but anyone who questions his toughness or willingness to compete is an idiot. We're talking about getting laid the hell out on *three-step drops* .
Prisoners don't treat each other the way the Browns let McCoy get handled week in and week out and, while he may or (increasingly more likely) may not be the guy to run this show, you're never going to know. He doesn't pass my eye-test eight games in, but with this toilet paper-thin offensive line, these brick-handed, inexperienced and slow receivers and stable of running backs who weren't in the league two weeks ago, how the hell do you really know what the kid

can do?

We’re likely to find out when he goes elsewhere, and my guess is he’ll end up a decent backup and spot starter, but for anyone to say they can accurately gauge McCoy with this offense and with these play calls, well, that’s simply disingenuous. In my opinion it’s ignorant. The team around him blows and his coaching staff is doing him no favors. What an optimal environment to find out about anything other than how quickly his bruises heal. Like I said, even at best McCoy isn’t likely to be an elite QB, a commodity you need in this day’s NFL. Those guys, even when surrounded by crap, show you more than what McCoy has and they still somehow make some plays. But if you’ve actually made up your mind about Colt McCoy then you really don’t have the credibility to comment on it.

Opening Salvo

The Indians traded a low minor leaguer for Braves pitcher Derek Lowe early last week. I like Derek Lowe (more so ten years ago but still…) and I like the fact the 2012 rotation is basically set a week after the World Series ended and that the young guys bumped out of the rotation by Lowe know they’re slotted for Columbus when the season starts, but to me the move presents more questions than it answers.

The Indians don’t really expect this ground ball staff they’ve put together to throw those ground balls at Matt LaPorta and Lonnie Chisenhall, do they? I mean, you have to live with Chisenhall because he’s a promising bat on a team begging for those, but LaPorta? I don’t see it. I think the Tribe will look to upgrade their first base defense during the offseason. LaPorta doesn’t and hasn’t hit enough to outweigh his mediocrity defensively and you can’t get those ground balls you’ve bought and have your infield give teams four or more outs an inning.

The Indians aren’t finished. They might not be shopping for high end products with high end price tags to fill their infield needs and their gaping outfield needs, but they’re not finished shopping. Or bartering.

The Rest of It

Dear Northwestern and Iowa,

Thanks so much for making the last few weeks of the BIG10 season relevant for us again.

Sincerely,

Ohio State

Now we need to see continued growth from the Buckeyes and we also need to hear from the suits in the NCAA office as to whether it even matters. The Buckeyes haven't heard about their penalty from Tattoo-gate yet and it would be just vindictive enough of the NCAA to throw cold water on Ohio State by banning from them bowl games now that the Buckeyes look competent enough to reach one and potentially play well in one.

****

I'm waiting for all the ESPN headlines and 'Outside the Lines' shows characterizing Penn State's Joe Paterno as a despicable villain now that it has come out that retired defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky has been indicted on charges he molested at least eight boys over the course of 15 years.

Making this story even more heart-warming is the allegation Sandusky got to these kids through a charity he established for at-risk kids.

I just want to make sure the sanctimonious assholes who were so concerned over tattoos are equally concerned about a Penn State athletic program that harbored an alleged child molester for years. And while it may be true that Joe Paterno's senility may have legitimately caused him to forget any and all pertinent information regarding Sandusky, the powers that be better damn well show the same vigor in investigating and reporting on the matter that they exhibited with Ohio State.

If these allegations prove to be true then Sandusky should burn as should anyone affiliated with Penn State who had any idea what he was doing and/or tried to cover it up. This is why coaches and schools typically refrain from commenting on allegations at other schools in the NCAA's crosshairs: they're all guilty of something and there but for the grace of God go all of them.

But molesting children out of a charitable organization you set up to assist them? That's sick and disgusting.