Not to be a downer, as I really hate being that guy, but even the Browns' wins are less thrilling than they are grueling and gut-wrenching. Don't get me wrong, despite the fact that wins might be counter-productive to the ultimate goal of fielding a decent football team because of their effect on draft position, I certainly can't watch on Sundays and root against this team.

Maybe it's knowing there are no sure things out there in terms of potential draftees or maybe it's knowing that with this many holes on the roster it doesn't matter where the Browns draft because they can't help but to upgrade almost everywhere.

But I think it's just deeper than that.

I recently read this blog post and the follow up to it. Both written by Cleveland ex-pats and people I respect.

The article and its follow-up lay out two viewpoints on fandom nicely, and got me to thinking about Cleveland fans who pay stupid money to watch bad football (as well as bad basketball and baseball at times).

I think the ‘problem’ is that the desire for the Browns, Indians, Cavs and Tribe to win is primal. It’s something that was born into us and that’s cultivated by our old men and those who form us for adulthood.

My dad died when he was 49 years old, 18 years ago. Long before he died he took me to my first Browns game, my first Cavs game and my first Tribe game. Those days are indelibly notched in my memory and can’t be purged. My old man was a blue collar dude who would likely be stunned by the technological advancements in the world since he died. What he knew was what was around him and what he lived, and he lived (and died) a Cleveland sports fan. You, me and our kids have far more ability to transport themselves, if not physically at least technologically, to other cities and other parts of the world.

We and our kids can follow Manchester United and live every match they play in basically every way except for realistically attending the matches themselves. But still, those of us not growing up right now or who are somewhat caught in between technology and old-school loyalties can’t be severed from what we were taught growing up. It’s what we know and what we’ve lived since we were old enough to know any better.

Hell, my mom refuses to use a debit card or an ATM. You think she's suddenly developing a rooting interest for the Steelers or Cowboys based on her internet surfing? Nope. She doesn't even own a computer. We, those who took Pascal or Cobalt in high school computer class, are our parents' children to a large extent.

That's a big part of why I continue to support and follow and invest in these teams. It's not because I don't realize that during many years the product they put on the field or court is inferior. I see that as well as anyone. I think a lot of it is genetics and that a lot of it is a devotion to the people who preceded us and had the rooting interests that we adopted as our own.

I can no more wish those loyalties away than I can my eye color or my predisposition to high cholesterol.

That's why even ugly wins against shitty opponents makes food taste a bit better and the work week seem a bit shorter.

That's also why on Sunday it was nice to see the Browns defense bow their backs and shut the door on Jacksonville when the Jaguars were on the verge of scoring the game winning touchdown in the final few plays. Even in a bad year a goal-line stand with the football game on the line is something to behold.

And, with a bit of help from the Jags, the Browns held them out of the end zone on the final few plays from inside the Browns 10-yard line. Never mind that the offense was again offensive and that the game was nowhere close to aesthetically pleasing.

It was a freaking win and those aren't easy to come by on Sundays. It would have been good enough for my old man. Sure, we would have disgustingly laughed about the team's ineptitude for the next week, but we would have done so with a win in our pocket and the promise that maybe something better might be coming.

It's in our blood. And the fact that my 11-year old daughter refused to get out of the truck for soccer practice until the outcome was determined made me feel even better about the win. At least I won't have to worry about her ability to process disaster and failure or her ability to take a hit.

Only One Thing Matters

Being the genius I am, I figured the boys from Penn State (and, to be clear, I mean the boys playing football for Penn State and not any other boys from Penn State that may come to mind) would have been mentally gassed and emotionally drained when they headed to the Horseshoe to play the Buckeyes Saturday.

This is why I don't bet these games.

Penn State may have been mentally gassed and emotionally drained but I apparently failed to consider how bad Ohio State is. Again. The one, true blessing in the game is the fact I'll never have to watch a Jim Bollman-called Buckeye offensive play again.

So before Urban Meyer announces he's taking the Ohio State job (and he will in about ten days) there is still the Michigan game that takes place next Saturday. And this whole, horrible season can be salvaged if the Buckeyes can hang a loss on the 9-2 Wolverines.

That's what this whole nightmare season comes down to for many of us. We all knew it was going to be ugly and that this was likely to be a rough season for Ohio State, but even a season as bad as this can be saved if the Buckeyes go into Michigan and knock off those shit heels from Ann Arbor.

Now, I have absolutely no idea how Ohio State will do that and I have no confidence that they actually will. Ohio State is offensively challenged and their linebackers make me ill. I don't know whether, short of a couple defensive or special teams touchdowns, the Buckeyes can score enough to keep up with the Wolverines. And I'm not convinced they won't have to score about 30 points to win.

But strange things happen in this rivalry and that's what I'm hoping for Saturday.

The Buckeyes need to do more than contain Denard Robinson. They need to disrupt the Michigan QB and take the football away from the Michigan offense more than once and probably more than twice. They need Braxton Miller to come of age and make plays with his arm and his feet to the extent he immediately and forever is exalted in Columbus for what he did in 'The Game'.

Otherwise I fear that for the first time in years those arrogant Michigan fans who have felt nothing but shame and disgust against Ohio State will finally have a reason to crawl out from under their rocks and crow about finally not being completely outclassed.

I think Buckeye fans should hope for the best and be very, very well prepared for the worst. Because to me this one has all the feel of a 42-10 beat down.

Yay! (Snore)

A lot of people are stunned that Grady Sizemore appears on the verge of re-signing with the Indians. I'm not. If this had been CC Sabathia or Cliff Lee that the Indians had re-signed I'd have been stunned and thrilled.

But it's isn't. It's not a free agent in their prime coming to Cleveland. This isn't Albert Pujols, Prince Fielder or Matt Kemp deciding to spend the productive part of their glorious careers in Cleveland.

In fact, it's pretty much the Kevin Millwood signing all over again.

It's taking a one year flyer on a guy who hasn't been healthy in two or three years. It's getting John Rocker ***after*** his homophobic blow-up. It's bringing Charlie Nagy and Doug Jones and Carlos Baerga back to Cleveland after their usefulness had been depleted.

And, no, Grady never actually left like Nagy, Baerga and Jones. Not physically anyway. *But the Grady we knew and the Grady we needed left years ago.*

The Indians don't need the Grady that's left. They don't need the threat of his knees turning to pudding every time he tries to break up a double play. They don't need the Grady that can't put the baseball in play unless they get the Grady that is healthy and young and dynamic and who can carry a team for two week stretches if he is putting the ball in play.

But there's nothing for us to go on that says *tha*t Grady, the dynamic All-Star, is still alive. Maybe the dollars are just so right that the Indians can't lose. Maybe even the imminent threat of the sword of Damocles that we know hangs over Sizemore is worth the plebeian amount this is costing the Tribe.

Maybe the some of the ladies who follow Sizemore more closely than they follow the team (you know, the ones who wouldn't have been aware that Grady actually left at all until he was missing from the Opening Day lineup) will storm the turnstiles and increase the Tribe's revenues

with ticket and souvenir purchases.

Maybe.

All I know is Sizemore's health and production have been trending downward on a similar path as the national economy and the local population. Maybe he'll have a bounce back year under this one year deal. Maybe he'll show he's healthy and that he's still that star burning brightly in the game.

That way he can get the really big bucks from someone else next off season.

FYI

'The Weekend Wrap' is off next weekend. I'll be in hot pursuit of white-tailed deer starting Monday and unless I'm feeling extremely ambitious (fat chance) it's going to be tough to get a column done. Weep now and then try and enjoy Thanksgiving the best you can.

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