

Cleveland Sports teams New Years Resolutions

Written by {ga=kyleferrara}

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We're still close enough to the start of 2013 that a "New years Resolution" article is a worthwhile pursuit. So, without further delay, let's get started with just that as it pertains to our Cleveland sports teams.

The Cavs:

It wasn't long ago that the Cavs were the model organization in Cleveland. They were in a serious relationship with the girl of their dreams in LeBron James, and as fans we pointed to them, asking our other franchises "why can't you be more like your brother?"

We all know what happened. LeBron left. The team lost. A lot. But just as quickly as LeBron left, the Cavs found their new batman in Kyrie Irving, and a year later they found his robin in Dion Waiters. Their current 8-26 record doesn't reflect it, but they are only a few pieces away from becoming a legitimate NBA playoff team.

So here as 2013 rolls in, what is the state of the Cavaliers? What exactly should their resolution be as they build towards a return to relevance?

They've already assured a lottery pick, so don't bother playing the "we need to lose more games for a higher draft pick" card. Let the ping pong balls fall where they may, and use the rest of the season to build confidence in the young players already on the roster. If this team is ever going to win, they need to learn how to do it sometime. And if they are as close to being a contender as they believe, it may as well be now.

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So the Cavs New Year's resolution is build a winning atmosphere among their young players the rest of the season, before using the draft and free agency to acquire the final pieces needed to complete the puzzle. It would be a waste to coast through the end of the year. In the season after the decision, Byron Scott scrapped the regular season standings, and showed his players the standings based only on what happened after their long losing streak. A similar attitude could be used this season. They need to break the trend of bad teams calling it quits after the break. They'll be better for it in the long term.

As far as the 5 starters go, the Cavs already have 3 in place with Kyrie, Andy Varejao, and Tristan Thompson. Optimistically, CJ Miles could be the starting SG for this team. After a dreadful start to the season, he began to show his ability to score when he replaced a then injured Waiters in the starting lineup, and has averaged 16.2 PPG in games where he has played at least 15 minutes since the start of December. Waiters could be, and probably will be a good starting shooting guard, although it may suit the Cavs better to bring him off the bench so they can have him or Kyrie on the court at all times. Waiters can also be an explosive scorer off the bench, and bring some energy to a second unit that has miserably underperformed all season. This leaves 1 hole in the starting lineup that needs to be filled with a dominant 2 or 3: somebody who can score from the wing and can carry the offense if need be.

This covers the starters, the rest of the holes on this team can be found on the bench. Depth is a problem for this team; Coach Scott often has to spin a wheel to decide who to put in the game as part of the second unit, but the team may have some valuable bench pieces already. The two major reasons that lead to inconsistency in bench play have been injury and holes in the starting lineup. Starting Miles and finding somebody to start at the 3 spot puts Dion Waiters and Alonzo Gee on the bench, instantly making the second unit better. Varejao returning from injury puts Tyler Zeller on the bench, and Boobie Gibson returning from injury puts himself back on the bench. Waiters, Gee, Zeller, and Gibson are 4 quality bench players in the NBA (with Waiters and Gee having starting experience). The only thing this second group is lacking is another big. With Varejao's injury risk, the Cavs need one more big on the bench for depth purposes.

Most NBA teams use an 8-9 man rotation, and the Cavs already have 8 of those pieces in place. With a strong second half to the season and an offseason in which they bring in these final pieces, the Cavs can put themselves in a strong position to make a playoff run next season.

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The Indians:

Since the end of their dominance in the '90s, the Indians have played the middle child in the Cleveland sports family. They do not get the same trust the Cavs get while rebuilding, nor do they get the same unconditional support the Browns get while rebuilding. Cleveland fans are proclaimed as some of the best in sports, yet the Indians consistently are near the bottom in attendance in Major League Baseball. Among the fans, they have this image that they don't care about winning, only about turning a profit. They've clamored that as soon as fans start showing up they'll begin to spend money, but the fans always respond by saying they'll show up as soon as the team starts spending.

And since the end of the '90s the team and its fans have been in this gridlock. The team has tried to compete with low priced free agents and young talent with potential for stardom, but it has only seen 2 winning seasons in the last 10 years. Only one of those seasons, 2007, saw them reach the playoffs.

But as fans we're tired of the status quo this team has created for itself. We're tired of seeing them try the same retread players and same overused ideas that just haven't been working since 2003. So the Indians New Year's Resolution is to recreate their image among the fans. They need to bring in players warrant being on a major league team, rather than more of the same dollar general bargains who maybe just could have a shot at producing for the big league club if everything breaks their way in spring training. They need to build up their respect among local fans and national ones. They need to start running their team like they actually want to win someday. Obviously, they didn't have the means to sign a Josh Hamilton or Zack Greinke, but they may have done just enough with the signings they did make to implement their resolution early.

To their credit, the Indians started implementing changes before the New Year even rolled around. They started revamping the team all the way back in October in fact, when they hired Terry Francona as manager over fan favorite Sandy Alomar Jr.

The Indians have used the '90s as a way to keep interest in the team alive. We saw this in the widely unpopular "What if?" marketing campaign. It would have been easy for them to hire Alomar and continue to implement the same strategy, hoping that Sandy on his own could appease the fans.

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But they went and got their man in Francona, and as an added bonus kept Alomar aboard as bench coach. And this was just the beginning. The Indians entered the off season with needs in the starting rotation, outfield, at first base, and the utility infield spot. And of course they needed right handed hitters. They've since addressed all of these needs.

First they brought in Mike Aviles, who played with Francona in Boston. He'll provide a solid right handed bat off the bench and can play shortstop when Asdrubal Cabrera needs a day off. If the last 2 seasons have taught as anything, it's that those days will occur.

Then they signed Mark Reynolds, the right handed power hitter this team has sorely lacked over the past 2 seasons. He provides a huge upgrade over Casey Kotchman at first, even if his defense may be suspect at times.

Then came the Shin-Soo Choo trade. Choo was the Tribe's best player last year, but the return they got for him, along with Jason Donald, Tony Sipp, and Lars Anderson, is more than enough to justify trading him, especially since he was not resigning here. Trevor Bauer is the stud pitching prospect the team lost when they sent Alex White and Drew Pomeranz to Colorado and after another half season or so of development should turn into the ace the team's been looking for. He himself was more than enough in exchange for Choo. They also acquired center fielder Drew Stubbs, essentially for Jason Donald. Another right handed hitter with power, he is an upgrade over the cavalry of left fielders we have seen since the trade of Coco Crisp in 2005. This goes without mentioning Mat Albers and Bryan Shaw, who have proven to be effective relievers in their careers and will both be in the 'pen come April.

And next they brought in Nick Swisher. He is the face of this makeover the Indians are applying to themselves. When was the last time a Yankee came to Cleveland in free agency? Never. He is everything we as fans could have hoped for this offseason (reasonably hope for that is). Without taking the Choo trade into effect, Swisher is a clear upgrade. Not to mention he is a switch hitter who can hit lefties, and his excitement and charisma will draw fans to the team, especially if they can win some games early.

The Indians look to have ended the excitement by signing Brett Myers to a one year contract. He fills a hole in the rotation, and should be a consistent innings-eater all season for the club.

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The offseason hasn't been perfect. They could still use another bat, another starting pitcher, and possibly even a lefty out of the 'pen, but we all have to credit them for revamping their image, and beginning the process way back in October, rather than waiting for the New Year to make their resolution.

The Browns:

Ah, the Browns. It seems as if they can do no wrong in this city. They make bad decision after bad decision, yet we continue to give them are full, undying support. If the Indians are the middle child, then the Browns are the baby of the family, whom we let get away with whatever they want and continue to love regardless. It has been this way since their return in 1999.

That hypothetical child will grow up to make poor choices, and probably jump from relationship to relationship, just as the Browns have jumped from coach to coach.

So let's cut right to the chase. The Browns New Year's resolution is simple: find a coach that is truly a good fit for them, and stick with him. No more bouncing around; no more flings. It's time for some commitment, for something a little more serious.

We can argue until the Browns actually win a super bowl about whether or not it was the right decision to fire Pat Shurmur and Tom Heckert, but the time for such articles has passed.

It appears that new owner Jimmy Haslam and Joe Banner are looking for something serious, but they've already been spurned by Chip Kelly, who was believed to be their top candidate. They also lost out on Doug Marrone and Bill O'Brien, so 3 top options are already off the board.

They could still make a run at Nick Saban after the BCS Championship game. But at 61 Saban isn't a coach who the team should plan on having around for 5-10 years or more, as they've stated is their goal. He appears unwilling to come to the NFL, and even if he did it doesn't seem that it would be more than a fling.

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What about Brian Kelly? They could make a run at him after the Championship game as well. Kelly doesn't inspire a lot of confidence with me. He's done a great job at Notre Dame, but doesn't seem to be anything more than the flavor of the week for NFL jobs.

So who does this leave? There's been little to no talk about Lovie Smith or Greg Roman, two men who should be strongly considered for the job. Smith just came off a 10 win season with the Bears, and consistently had them in the playoff conversation. Meanwhile Roman is leading a strong offensive scheme in San Francisco, and seems to be exactly the kind of coach Haslam and Banner are looking for. If the Browns have not found the coach by the time San Francisco is finished with the playoffs, then hopefully he will be talked about more.

The team has been linked to Ken Whisenhunt. He did take the Cardinals to the Super Bowl, and he's coached in the AFC North before. However many will argue that the Cardinals Super Bowl run was set up by former coach Denny Green, not Whisenhunt, and that he is responsible for the team's downfall. He also appears to be unable to settle on a quarterback, not that the Cardinals have many viable options, but even going back to Kurt Warner and Matt Leinart. It took Leinart getting into some bad publicity for him to finally settle on Warner, who then carried the team to the Super Bowl. If Whisenhunt couldn't settle on quarterback in Arizona, do we really want him in Cleveland where the quarterback carousel revolves at high speed.

It appears the team has also reached out to Marc Trestman of the CFL. He's worked with many quarterbacks throughout his career, ranging from Steve Young to Tim Tebow to Brandon Weeden, so he could be a good fit here. But the point is that there are question marks surrounding every option at this point. Haslam and Banner will have to do their due diligence on all candidates in order to find the right fit. It is time to bring a coach in who will be around long term. It's time to stop dating around and settle down. We can only hope that the New Year will bring us the coach with whom the Browns are ready for commitment.