



The Miami Heat are in town to play the Cavs. You don't even have to look at the schedule to know it.

All you have to do is click on a local sports website, turn on the TV, open the paper – and all the evidence is there.

LeBron is back in the news. People are talking about him. People are talking about him coming back to the Cavs. People are talking about him not coming back to the Cavs. People are printing t-shirts and handing them out. People are spending money on billboards outside of his old high school in Akron.

Maybe someone will jump out of the stands at tonight's game and beg LeBron to come back, as happened two seasons ago. Maybe that person won't get leveled and cuffed by security. Maybe they will.

Maybe the Goodyear blimp will hover overhead bearing a LeBron-themed message. Maybe someone will fork over the money for a plane banner, though it might be kind of hard to see against the typical gray November sky in Cleveland.

What is certain is that LeBron never comes back to these parts under cover of darkness. Every time his Heat play the Cavs, we undergo an intensive, self-funded feasibility study regarding the chances of him ever suiting up for the Cavs again. Usually, those studies end in tears as we talk ourselves out of the possibility – which is especially easy right now, with the Cavs off to another slow start – and the Heat seal the deal with a double-digit smackdown.

Invariably, the lead-up to Cavs-Heat games always serves, in the end, as an excuse for Clevelanders to feel sorry for themselves, which is a time-honored tradition around here.

We're not over LeBron. Heck, the Cavs organization isn't over LeBron. We want him back. If you say you don't, it's your defensive mechanism talking. The Cavs were fun when LeBron was here. They won. They played deep into May, every year. They won 60 games twice. They got to the Finals for the only time in franchise history.

These Cavs? They're not really all that fun. They lose all the time. They often get blown out when they do lose. They probably need some kind of earth-moving trade to save this rebuild attempt from the scrapyard. But they'll protect their 2014 cap space at all costs. Because LeBron can opt out of his contract after this season and become a free agent.

Call it desperate, call it anything you want, but the Cavs are going to make a run at LeBron next summer. Laugh all you want. If the best player on the planet decides to become a free agent, you'd be crazy not to make a run at him.

Will the billboards and banners and t-shirts and vocal love make any difference when LeBron looks at his options this summer? It certainly won't make his decision for him. But at least he knows there is a percentage of the local population here that doesn't hate his guts, that enthusiastically wants him to return. It's a far cry from what he probably ever expected again in 2010.

As fans, what more can we do beyond expressing our opinion? Richer and far more powerful people will chart the course of history.

Maybe the key to negotiating the LeBron maelstrom isn't to let LeBron himself go, but to let go of the rudder. Become a spectator. Be accepting of any outcome. Just expect entertainment.

If nothing else, that's why you tune in. That's why you pay for the ticket. To watch the sum total of what unfolds in and around a big sporting event. It's as much about the signs and the chanting and the sound and the colors and the emotional, visceral response as it is about the mathematical outcome of the game – and certainly when your team is hopelessly overmatched, as the Cavs almost certainly will be against Miami.

LeBron's latest return to Northeast Ohio, and the accompanying tidal wave, is some cayenne pepper mixed into what would otherwise be a bland, boring blowout of a game between the two-time defending NBA champions and a young, struggling team still trying to figure out how to tie the drawstrings on their shorts.

As long as you tune in with that mindset, and not perpetually cognizant of LeBron's rejection, you can derive satisfaction from the experience.

Just tune in, sit back and enjoy the show.