

Hope Springs Eternal

Written by {ga=jerryroche}

Sunday, February 08 2009 7:00 PM -

We've had a nuclear meltdown in our Cavaliers message forum since yesterday's disappointing loss to the Lakers. One game where the Cavs simply couldn't buy a second half bucket, and many of the same people previously convinced this team could win it all ... now feel we are outclassed by the elite teams and need to make a major deadline move. In Jerry Roche's latest, he is mindful of the reasons why fans are distraught, but hopes that this Cavaliers team is different from the other Cleveland teams that have wrought this negativity.



Every year, when the Browns, Indians and Cavaliers go into the tank, fans have a tendency to start muttering "woe is me" in unison. And they do, and we do, year in and year out. You could look it up.

(Hope springs eternal.)

The most notable and vocal critic of the "woe-is-me" attitude was Phil Savage, starting on the day four years ago that he became general manager of the Browns. Yet, on his watch, the team had three miserable seasons wrapped around an inexplicable 10-6 season that falsely buoyed everyone's hopes and then forced us to suffer through an early and protracted thud. You know, typical Cleveland stuff.

Poor Phil could never come to terms with some fans' glass-half-empty attitude. He

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was a total "woe-is-me" denier, even after LeCharles Bentley collapsed under his own weight, Gary Baxter blew patella tendons in both knees, and KW2 flew off his Suzuki.

But his team's malfeasance finally got to him. His stay was punctuated by that disgusting e-mail that he wrote to a disgusted fan two-thirds of the way through last season. Today, he's the one doing the "woe-is-me" thing while looking for another job.

And now that the Browns' fugly season is mercifully over, we fans are focusing all our fondest hopes and dreams on the NBA's ascendant Cavaliers, who feature one of the two best players in the world, the best home record in the league, and the second-best overall record.

(Hope springs eternal.)

Despite Sunday's loss to the Jack Nicholson West-Coasters, no Cleveland pro team has been as much fun to watch as the Cavs since the 1997 Indians, who got a game-winning home run from Tony Fernandez in the sixth and final game of the ALCS. But -- true to our luck -- a mere 11 days later, the Marlins' Edgar Renteria dribbled a single up the middle to score the winning run in the bottom of the 11th inning of the seventh game of the World Series. And you know what? We knew it was coming, even before Charlie Nagy hung that slider. After all, this is Cleveland, and woe is us. Sigh.

Therein lies the rub. For our own psychological well-being, can we afford to actually place our trust in any of our local teams, whose consistent failures over the past 45 years have built a de facto barrier to any optimistic spirit floating around out there? Shouldn't we temper our enthusiasm so we don't hanker to jump out a 10th-story window when Lamar Odom goes 28-17 in the paint?

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(Hope springs eternal.)

I really don't mean to be a nattering nabob of negativity. But the 60-year Curse of Rocky Colavito here in Cleveland is as real as the 100-year Curse of the Billy Goat in Chicago and the 86-year Curse of the Bambino in Boston. You simply can't argue with history or fate, as much as you might want to. All you can do is hope that there's justice in the world; that the pendulum will swing back the other way; that we Cleveland dawgs eventually will have our day.

(Hope springs eternal.)

The '48 World Series champion Indians had Bob Feller. The '63 NFL champion Browns had Jim Brown. The '08-09 Cavaliers have that guy from Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary High School who's been Player of the Month twice already this season and, over his career, has been Player of the Week at least 500 or 600 times.

So we try to convince ourselves that this Cavs team -- the star, the top-rated defense, the perfect mix of role players -- is different. That it will recover from Sunday's second-half embarrassment and become the team of destiny that we long for it to be -- just like the '80 Browns and the '95 Indians. Oops -- sorry. That just sorta slipped out.

(Hope springs eternal.)

As the All-Star break draws near, it's already a foregone conclusion that the Cavs will qualify for the playoffs. And from there, the sky's the limit, isn't it? That is,

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unless Z collapses under his own weight, The King blows patella tendons in both knees, and Mo Williams flies off his Suzuki. Oops -- sorry again.

Back and forth we go. In our mind's eye, one moment we picture Pau Gasol swishing a baby hook as the buzzer sounds to sweep the Cavs in the playoffs ... and we throw up. The next moment, we picture Dan Gilbert, Danny Ferry, Mike Brown and LeBron James hoisting the Larry O'Brien Trophy over their heads ... and our heart flutters with joy.

Hope really does spring eternal. Even after Sunday. Even in Cleveland.