



Plenty of Tribe, plenty of Browns and plenty of sociological discussion this week in The Weekend Wrap.

Starting to Come Together, Pepper

Team Streak got on a heater this past week, didn't they?

The Tribe got a huge week offensively from Ryan Raburn and Drew Stubbs and saw Jason Kipnis and Asdrubal Cabrera play like the non-zombie versions of those guys as they won six of their last seven games to get back to .500 on the season.

You know what else they got? They got a terrific outing from Ubaldo Jimenez mixed in there too. I know, I know. You could also knock me down with that same feather.

Like I've said a thousand times, if you can just get Raburn and Stubbs to hit a combined .600 with 6HRs each week and get shutouts from Ubaldo each time out, things will be just swell!

We talked about how streaky this team can and will be this season and this week was a good

one. It followed a week in which you wanted to pull out all of your hair and scream at the TV and it may precede another week where you'll want to do the same.

But you take it, enjoy it and move on. The AL Central isn't going to see a team pull away by a wide margin any time soon. Each team has holes and weaknesses and question marks too. The Tigers could put you, me and five of our friends in their bullpen and have as good a shot to shut down an MLB team as the guys they have in that pen now. Chicago stinks, Minnesota is mediocre and is overachieving to be that, the Indians have their rotational issues and KC needs to show me their pitching isn't just a one month mirage too.

So if you can hover around .500 and maybe get to 8-10 games over that over the course of the next couple months then it could be a fun second half of the summer.

And seriously, on the Stubbs, Raburn front, it really is nice to see quality MLB players taking up the final spots on this roster this season. Stubbs is a starter and a viable everyday player and he's a terrific guy in the lineup if he's your 9th hitter. But guys like Raburn and Mike Aviles are also excellent roster guys who have been productive in the roles they're playing this season and, in the case of Raburn, someone who's taken every advantage of the playing time he's getting due to the Michael Bourn injury.

You have got to have these guys like Aviles and Raburn on a good team.

And all of that said, I was down there Tuesday night for the seven HR, 14-2 Tribe win over Doc Halladay and the Phillies and [this was still the best part of the night](#) .

That's a 42-year old man busting it down the line in the 8th inning of a 14-2 game and diving into 1B for an infield single. So if Raburn, Aviles and Giambi are the guys #23, #24 and #25 on your roster, you're getting great value.

All You Can Ask

The more I look at the Browns the more I see a defense that's going to struggle (especially at the LB/DB level of the field) and an offense that is very intriguing to me.

No, I have not become a Brandon Weeden fan. I think he's dim, old, not at all athletic and destined to fail. But I do think he will be the best that he can possibly be under OC Norv Turner.

Look at the offense that Weeden will get to run this fall. I mean, if Tim Couch had an offense like this one he might just be wrapping up a hell of a career. Weeden has one of the League's best offensive lines protecting him in the pocket. And don't bother me with talk of that OL lacking depth. Name one in the NFL that doesn't. Weeden has a running back who was the 3rd pick in the 2012 draft in Trent Richardson. He also has a young, athletic, TE in Jordan Cameron who can work the seams and who can stretch defenses by being faster than LBs and bigger and stronger than DBs, and he has a stable of receivers now that's far closer to being among the better receiving corps in the NFL than they are the worst.

How did that receiver thing happen?

Well, 2013 2nd round pick Josh Gordon is a legitimate play-making threat. Gordon is big, strong, runs decent routes and has good hands. Gordon caught 60 balls last season, five of them for TDs, and he got the attention of opposing DBs and defensive coordinators. He'll be even better this season.

Another reason the WRS are better is Greg Little grew up last year. I think Little matured some naturally but also was pushed and helped on and off the field by Gordon emerging as a 'true' #1 wide receiver in the Browns offense. Little was exceptional in terms of effort, route running and catching the ball in the second half of last season. He's also likely to be better in 2013.

Davone Bess was just acquired a week or so ago in a draft day deal with Miami and he's another weapon that Weeden didn't have last season. Bess is a slot guy who actually stays healthy and who actually works the inside of the defense effectively. He's a 60 balls per season receiver himself who will serve as a safety blanket for Weeden all season and he's an upgrade over Mohamed Massaquoi.

But I think a guy most Browns fans are still sleeping on is David Nelson. Nelson was signed a month ago or so after injuries wiped out almost all of his 2012 season in Buffalo. But the year before that Nelson caught more balls (61) for the same number of TDs as Gordon did last season. He's another big, fast receiver and the Browns are collecting those like they can't get enough.

If you look at the receiving corps the Browns have put together you'll see Turner's fingerprints all over it. Think back to Norv's best days in San Diego and his wide receivers were Malcolm Floyd and Vincent Jackson. Those guys were huge receivers, both in the 6'4" or 6'5" tall range. Even Michael Westbrook in Washington when Turner was there was a 6'3", 220lb WR. Turner loves big receivers and he's got a trio of them in Gordon, Little (both 6'3", 225lb or so) and in Nelson (6'5", 220lbs). That's a Turner preference but it also will give Weeden a bit more margin for error with his throws. Missing high most likely means the ball is in the second or third row of stands. But Weeden now has guys out there who can and will win the vertical wars, high point some footballs and make his life a bit easier in that he doesn't have to be perfect with every throw.

So the Browns, despite the smoke being blown about Jason Campbell's starting chances, are going all out this season to see if Weeden can be salvaged to some degree. Stable of big, fast and strong WRs, legitimate and pedigreed RB, athletic TE in a game that's evolved into needing one (if not two) of those, a very good OL and an upgrade in slot receivers with Bess.

If Weeden fails this season, it's all on him. Keep in mind he's 30 (or will be a week or so into the season). Bernie Kosar was actually younger when his 'skills diminished" and I'm still of the opinion that Weeden does not have the processing speed to recognize and manipulate NFL defenses. That doesn't mean I don't think he can't be better than the blundering fool he was last season under Pat Shurmur and his suffocating offense. I do believe he can and will be better this season under this head coach and this offensive coordinator.

It won't be nearly enough to make him the guy for the next five to ten years here, but it will provide all of us the opportunity to see Weeden in a system where his strengths are accentuated and he has every opportunity to succeed.

We, nor Weeden, can really complain at all about that.

Who Cares?

Here was my first thought when I heard last Monday that Washington Wizards C Jason Collins came out as gay: So what?

My second thought: this will be a much better world when this story is no longer a story worth people's time and attention.

Maybe it's just me. I just could not care less if Jason marries Jody or Jason marries Joey. Life's just too damn short for secrets and too damn short to spend it being unhappy and too damn short to judge others about their choices and lifestyles. Let me be sure to mention that I am not a religious man. I guess if you shake me hard enough I'd say I do believe in a higher power or at least *something*, I guess, but, hell, I'd have a hard time being talked out of it if you wanted to argue or theorize.

What I truly don't understand are the people who espouse to be religious and Godly and holier than thou but who can't embrace another person for who and what they are and who use religion as an excuse for their closed minded views.

I kind of got the idea through CCD classes and all that the Christ was pretty accepting of all people. Whores, thieves, liars, and the whole lot of sinners out there. I can't help but think they are literally thousands of people out there who use religion as a reason they believe in the lifestyle Jason Collins lives. And I can't help but think that there is a percentage of those people who are adulterers, fornicators, pedophiles and people who otherwise vocalize their disagreement with the homosexual lifestyle while living in sin themselves.

Maybe it's a blood and guts Old Testament thing or maybe it's just shaping whatever passages and messages they like to craft their own version of 'the truth', but I just don't recall all the parts with a vengeful God and with Christ accepting everyone into his fold except the old, gay couple down the road.

Maybe my own views have softened as I've gotten older. In fact, I know they have. One of the big reasons is sports and, specifically, my kids' involvement in them. I have a 12-year old daughter who worships the US Women's Soccer National Team. And I mean worships. She has posters, soccer balls, t-shirts, etc. She set up a Twitter account for USWNT follows and we've bought pay-per-view purchases of tournaments in Portugal where there is no one in the stands.

There are women on that team who are gay. Some are vocal and some are not but there are definitely gay players on that team and yet I can think of no greater positive influence on my 12 year old from an athletic standpoint than those girls. They nurture the next generation of soccer players in this country and they ball out on the field when they're playing. They care for each other and the game and they have a great time on and off the pitch. They are physical, talented, graceful, bright, goofy and highly skilled. You couldn't ask for better role models for pre-teen girls and for teen agers too.

So I guess instead of just being a positive influence athletically, those USWNT players are also a very positive influence in general. So why would I have an issue with what makes them....them? Whatever it may be?

I don't know what's going to happen down the road with my kids. I hope they go on to grow up, be happy, be successful and provide me with grandchildren one day. But if one of my kids is gay I'll still be hoping they grow up, be happy, be successful and live in a world that doesn't stop whatever it's doing on a Monday afternoon to take note of a professional athlete who happens to be gay.

I guess that's the power of what Jason Collins did last week. He cracked the 'first' egg, so to speak, regarding active (barely) gay athletes in the 'major' sports (and my God, did the youngest laugh her ass off when told hockey was one those and soccer was not). People notice the first egg. They won't notice the 64th egg nearly as much and twenty years down the road no one will give a damn about who goes home to whom when the game is over.

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