

The B-List: Contest Results

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Thursday, May 29 2008 7:00 PM -

About a month or so back, Buff started up a contest in the B-List one day, asking readers to tell a personal story about how their superstitious behavior influenced the outcome of a Cleveland sports team. Buff got some great responses and lays them out for us today, including the entry from this year's winner, a one Stuart Laybourne. I've strongly encouraged Buff to run more contests like this, so stay on the lookout for them in The B-List as we head into the summer months (and hopefully another pennant race).



I apologize for being so late with this: I normally wait until an off day to run the contest entry column, and I missed the last one due to illness. In any event, in case you don't remember (it was nearly a month ago, after all), the contest this time was to tell a personal story about how your superstitious behavior influenced the outcome of a Cleveland sports team.

Each entry below is exactly the kind of thing I was looking for, although I admit that I expected a lot more stories like this. It may be that it takes a certain kind of fan to practice such behavior, or it may be that people are afraid of upsetting the balance of the cosmos. In any event, here are the finalists:

*In the Honorable Mention Which Was A Good Story But By A Fellow Site Writer, we have our own **John Hnat**, who, oddly enough, does not write about the Cavaliers he covers, but instead a game most Browns fans remember with some small degree of vividness:*

Here's a recent one, which I will share more because "misery loves company" and less because "l'm hoping to win a prize even though I write for the site":

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It was last November (November 11th to be exact), for Browns-Steelers II. Some friends of mine made the nearly unpardonable sin of having their son's birthday party during the game. (Everybody in Northeast Ohio should know by now that if you schedule an event for a Sunday in the fall, make sure it is on the Browns' bye week; or failing that, have the affair at 8:00 AM.) Worse yet, the main floor TV was dedicated to kids' programming, to help babysit the many young children that were otherwise running around and screaming.

During the whole first half, as the party was going on (food being served, presents being opened, cake being passed out), every man - EVERY LAST MAN - in attendance was doing the same thing - pretending to hold polite conversations while having 99.8% of their brains wondering about the current score. I am sure that if you could have mapped by words versus my thoughts during that time, you would have seen a lot of dichotomies like this one:

WHAT I WAS SAYING: "Oh yes, I have been to that new restaurant in the Warehouse District; it's really good. If you go, try the sea bass."

WHAT I WAS THINKING: "WHO GIVES A FLYING F*#& ABOUT RESTAURANTS OR SEA BASS OR THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT RIGHT NOW??? THERE'S FOOTBALL BEING PLAYED RIGHT NOW! PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL! AND THE BROWNS ARE PART OF IT!! THIS IS A SLOW AND PAINFUL DEATH, LIKE BEING PECKED ENDLESSLY BY A THOUSAND DUCKS!"

It would have been a bit gauche to head to the basement (where the owners of the house have a theater room) so early into the party ... so

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even though that is precisely what every last Y chromosome in the room wanted to do, social graces dictated otherwise.

Fortunately, by the second half, the general tenor of the men in the audience was "hey, what can our [wives|girlfriends|nobody, in my case] do to us if we go downstairs to watch the rest of the game? It's not like we'd be getting any tonight anyway. And one by one, most of the men at the party (and a couple of football-appreciating wives; don't want to be too sexist here) trickled their way downstairs to the big screen.

If you remember that game, then you see where this is going. This is the game in which the Browns had a 21-6 halftime lead, only to cough up a second-half hairball that left them on the wrong end of a 31-28 score. Derek Anderson threw approximately 50 interceptions in the second half (in fairness to Mr. Anderson, I am counting all of the replays as well). For good measure, Phil Dawson missed a FG in the final moments.

(Not that it would have mattered; it would have merely sent the game to overtime, where the Steelers would have won anyway.) So the slow and painful death of *not watching the game* in the first half was replaced by the slow and painful death of *wat ching it* in the second.

I don't think I personally can claim credit for that loss. After all, there were 10 or so of us in the basement. But our combined gravitational

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force inevitably pulled in another L. Those poor Browns, they never stood a chance.

*Also deserving Honorable Mention is **Mike**, and his lovely mother, "Towel Head:"*

This isn't about me, but my mother....I was born in 1966, the first "good" Cleveland teams that I could remember were the 1980'ish era Browns. (I was too young to remember the miracle at Richfield, though I do have vague recollections of my father moving the chair to the middle of the living room right in front of the TV to watch the games) ANYWAY...much like you having to leave the room, my mother was thoroughly convinced that if we needed a big play by the Browns, she'd have to go into the bathroom and put a Browns towel over her head. And I'll be damned if it didn't work more often than not!

I had an experience the other day....when.Mussina and (I cant remember who our pitcher was) (*editor's note: Laffey*) were both throwing good games...I got home and tuned in to see it 0-0, then Mussina was all crumbly and the Tribe somehow scored two. In between innings I saw that a no-no was being thrown by our guy....and of course...I decided to sit and watch. I APOLOGIZE for being the reason why we lost that game.

Tied for third place, a pair of essays about The Game:

Ellen Kratofil

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Warning: This is almost too painful to write about. Probably too painful to read.

I happened to be in Florida visiting my parents in October, 1997 the week of the World Series. It was kind of fun being able to stay up and watch the games without worrying about getting up and going to work the next morning.

I had this Indians t-shirt with me. Since I was on vacation, I only brought the one shirt, and they won every time I wore it. And I wore it pretty much all week. I didn't plan on washing it, because I'm basically as superstitious as anyone. But game 7 was held the day before I was scheduled to fly home. My Mom convinced me to wash it (it was getting kinda gamey). I won't blame her, but I knew deep down in my soul I shouldn't wash it. I really don't need to tell you what happened next.

So, it is at least partly my fault they lost game 7. Mesa doesn't get off the hook THAT easily.

BTW - I have not worn that shirt since as a "game shirt". I wear it a lot when I doing work around the house.

Dale Hlaves

I can't help it. I can watch the Indians on offense because unlike

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basketball or football, they can't give up a score to the other team while on offense. The worst that can happen is that they squander some chances but even then, at the end of the half inning they are no worse off than when it started. Now on defense, that's another story. When I was a smoker I would watch through the commercials leading up to the other team's at-bats. Then I would go outside and try to smoke a cigarette slowly, figuring the average time it takes to smoke a smoke (8 minutes) should be more than enough time to retire the side. Add in 2 minutes walking outside and 2 more coming in and sitting back down, that's 12 minutes, way more than enough time. Unfortunately, it rarely happened that way. It is not an exaggeration to say that from the beginning of the bottom of the 8th inning in Game 7 of the 1997 WS through the bottom of the 9th I smoked three quarters of a pack of Marlboro reds while sitting on the front porch, freezing my balls off and straining to see the television through the front window. I think of that game today and it still makes me sick to my stomach. My wife asks me why I take games so seriously yet can't 'enjoy' watching them. I tell her it's because I want them to win but there's nothing I can do to help in the outcome. She just doesn't get it, and sometimes, neither do I.

Tied for second, a pair of anecdotes that show that sometimes, hiding in the garage just isn't enough: these readers (or their sons, as the case may be) actually have to be UNCONSCIOUS:

Shelby

It was Game Five of the 2007 Eastern Conference Finals. Overwhelmed by the stress of the Cavs being down by two with about 20 seconds left, I declared that they had already lost. I ran to my room and buried myself under the covers, hoping the pain of another lost

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Cleveland opportunity would go away. In desperation, I tried to fall asleep. Little did I know LeBron and the Cavs were battling through double overtime after tying it up in regulation. I eventually did fall asleep only to be woken up by my parents' voices saying, "Wake up. They won!!" "They what?" "THEY WON!!" "That's impossible," was my repeated sleepy reply. After watching an hour of highlights and analysis, the realization came to me; I had slept through one of the greatest single game performances in sports history and it was, for once, my team that had won. This year I'm considering a medically induced coma for round two versus Boston.

Phil Barth

My superstition involves my son Kenny.

When the two of us watched a Cavs game together, he would usually have to go to bed before it was over. It never failed. If I put him to bed when the Cavs were behind, they came back to win. If I put him to bed when they were ahead, they blew it and lost.

The most extreme example of this was in 2003, when they had a 20 some point lead against Memphis. I figured the curse was broken... so I sent him to bed. You probably remember what happened - Pau Gasol happened. After that game, he got to stay up until the Cavs fell behind, or the game was over, OR... if the game started out 2-0 for the bad guys, he went to bed early. We haven't watched a Cavs game together lately...

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*But really, the clear winner has to be the man who nearly sacrificed his own ability to sire children for his beloved Tribe ... until the universe decided that losing AND testicular pain was really a lot more "Cleveland" after all. Help me congratulate Mr. **Stuart Laybourne**, this year's contest winner:*

Let me preface this by saying that I am in no way an obsessive compulsive person, except for some reason when it came to big games in '07. It started in July against the Tigers as a harmless little superstition and turned in to full blown Amy Winehouse crazy by the ALCS.

It started in a particularly close game when I was so anxious that I couldn't just lay on the couch so I was sitting on the top edge watching and walking around during breaks to calm down. By the time the playoffs had rolled around it had turned into a winning ritual. Whenever the Tribe was up to bat I was able to lay on the couch relax and scoring ensued. But when we were pitching it was up on the top of the couch and after every out recorded it was down, turn to the right and one walk around then back up top. However after the end of a defensive inning it was a walk back to the bedroom and then back down relaxing for the offense. Repeat 9 times.

During the ALDS I was at my house and pulling my freaky ritual for 3 of the games.... yes 1, 2 and 4. And there for 2, 3, and 4 of the ALCS. And then, unfortunately, after game 5 my ability to control the world seemed to disappear. So as if blowing a 3-1 lead wasn't painful enough, let's just say that sitting on top of my couch wasn't exactly healthy for me in a "manly" area and a month after I was still feeling the

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effects of what turned out to be a pinched nerve in a really bad place. I guess it's probably a good thing we didn't advance to the World Series because I would have been in a freaking coma from 4 more games of junk abuse.

Here are the rest of the entries, each lovable in their own way, but none involving as much ... er ... "dedication." Thanks to everyone who entered!

Jason Gromek

(author's note: this reminds me very much of the passage at the end of my "The Cleveland Experience" piece from several years ago)

This past year, Browns at Pittspuke, Wife and I are over her brother's house for a b-day party. Sitting on the couch with my other 2 brother-in-laws, Browns up 21-6 coming out of half. I'm sitting on the couch, wife comes in the room, looks at the score and says "So this is just about over, huh?" Mind you the second half just started. Me and her brothers give her hell saying she just jinxed the game and the Browns were now destined to lose. She said she didn't have that kind of power over the outcome of sporting events and I said every one in Cleveland has that power over Cleveland sporting events. Well the Browns went on to play one of the most uninspired halves of the year highlighted by Big Ben completely juking McGinnest as though he had concrete shoes on and the Browns lose 31-28. So of course we blamed the loss on her, she got mad at no one else in the room except

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me because I was her husband!

Sam Dewick

I'm sure I have many better ones cuz I'm always very superstitious, but currently as we speak the Cavs are 4-0 in the playoffs when I don't watch, 0-2 when I do. Not a chance in hell I'm watching Game 1 against Boston. Coupled with my lucky Cavs wristband (also 4-0 when I wear, 0-2 when I don't), the Boston series should be real smooth.

I may have to enlist his help on Thursday. Gotta believe there will be an opportunity to send him to bed with a Celtics lead...

Tony Johnson

I hate to admit it, but without fail this year, the Cleveland Indians have lost when I wore Indian's team clothing. I have 3 Indians polo shirts, 6 different T-shirts and a couple sweatshirts. Being the avid fan I am I try to wear those quite often. Unfortunately, I have become so frustrated with their record lately that I have paid attention to what I'm wearing. I can honestly say that in all 17 losses, those were days I was geared up. The others happened to be days I was disappointed and didn't care to wear tribe apparel. Would you call this superstition or really bad timing? Today, like yesterday, I'm wearing non-team clothing just to test the point. I'll have to bench it all if it holds up much longer.