



It has mostly been a year of non-surprises in Cleveland professional sports. The Browns' season still consists of 12 months of looking forward to the college draft. The Cavaliers have so much potential and so little to show for it.

But the Tribe. Ahh, the Tribe. The one pleasant surprise was the performance of the Terry Francona-led Indians, who made the playoffs before bowing to the clarion call of Cleveland sports history by fizzling out in one game.

For the third year in a row, I made predictions for our three teams last December (just as I'll make some for 2014 in a few days). Not to blow my own horn (honk, honk), those predictions turned out better than things did for the Cavs, Browns and even Indians.

Of course, the case can be made that predicting how our teams will do is fairly easy, given their recent shameful history. Nevertheless, posted herewith is a recap. My historical comments from last Dec. 30th are in italics, followed by the actual answers to the questions posed back then.

1) *Where do the Browns go from here?*

"Joe Banner's ultimate choices will be surprises...which rules out Mike Lombardi, Josh McDaniels, Nick Saban and Jon Gruden."

>> Banner's choice of general manager was not a surprise: Mike Lombardi--although why he was chosen still has many of us shaking our heads in disbelief. However, the choice of Rob Chudzinski as head coach WAS a surprise. Give me 5 points out of a possible 10 for this answer.

2) What about inconsistent rookie QB Brandon Weeden?

"I give him three chances in four of starting the season opener in September."

>> Weeden did indeed start the season opener, although his future with the team is bleak. Since my prediction didn't extend beyond the opener, I'm not giving any penalty to myself for Weeden losing the job almost immediately: 10 points out of 10.

3) How will all the new Tribesmen do?

"Swisher will be good for a .250 BA and .775-.790 OPS. With a bevy of new hurlers, the staff will be improved."

>> Swisher batted .246 with an OPS of .763. The Indians were much improved, mostly on the backs of their pitchers, who were also much improved. 10 points out of 10.

4) Who will be the Indians' Opening Day starter on the mound?

"Justin Masterson has the inside track. Give Masterson two chances in three and Trevor Bauer the remaining one in three."

>> It was Masterson, who pitched the Tribe to a 4-1 victory over the Blue Jays, a precursor of things to come. 10 points out of 10.

5) Which of the Cavs will not return?

"It appears that Jon Leuer and Kevin Jones will likely be outta here. Samardo Samuels, Jeremy Pargo, Omri Casspi and Luke Walton might be in jeopardy. C.J. Miles is likely to stay. Alonzo Gee, Daniel Gibson and Tristan Thompson are almost certain to return, although Booby may be trade bait. Kyrie Irving, Dion Waiters and Tyler Zeller are rock-solid keepers."

>> Give that man a cee-gar! The only misdiagnosis is that Booby is unlamentably gone. 9 out of 10.

6) Will the Cavs trade [Andy] Varejao before the end of the current season?

"Barring injury, if Wild Thang isn't gone before the end of the season, he will be gone before or during the college draft."

>> Oops. Boner. Andy's still with the team, and still up to his old tricks--thank goodness! 0 points.

7) Will Varejao be named to the NBA All-Star team?

"If he isn't, there's something very, very wrong with the league."

>> Andy was not named to the NBA All-Star team, but it wasn't because of his performance. By the time the game rolled around, he was on the injured list and unable to play even if he had been selected. I should get a big fat zero on this question, but I'm giving myself leeway here because of the unpredictable injury. 5 points out of 10.

8) What kind of impact will new manager Terry Francona have on the Indians?

"It will be substantial."

>> The Indians went from a 68-94 team under Manny Acta in 2012 to a record of 92-70 in Francona's first year at the helm. Francona was named A.L. Manager of the Year to boot. If that isn't substantial, I don't know what is. 10 out of 10.

9) Are the Browns' Josh Cribbs and Phil Dawson going to survive the purge and be back next season?

"Cribbs is gone. So, unfortunately, is the kicker who's been the face of the franchise during the past 13 sorry seasons."

>> Another perfect prognostication. 10 points out of 10. Sometimes I amaze even myself.

10) How many games will the Indians win this coming season?

"A season of 76 to 78 victories (8 to 10 more than last summer) is not out of the question. But one decent starting pitcher could net them an extra four to six games to get them to 82-82."

>> The final tally of 92 victories was a far cry from my guess of from 76 to 82, but at least I gave them a chance of climbing to .500--and who among us had ventured to predict that the pitching staff would perform so well? Let's award 3 points out of 10 for my 2012 answer.

11) What will become of Asdrubal Cabrera and Chris Perez?

"I'm not sure the team can afford to keep [Cabrera] much longer. Perez is gone a year from now."

>> Apparently, the Indians CAN afford to keep AsCab longer, as he's still with the team and still the starting shortstop. Meanwhile, the Perez prediction was spot-on. 5 points out of 10.

12) Can Tristan Thompson become the power forward monster that the Cavaliers' front office envisioned when it drafted him No. 4 in 2011?

"He might some day be a bit more than adequate, but never a monster."

>> Actually, the case can be made that he's much more than adequate. After switching from shooting left-handed to right-handed, he's averaging 11.9 points and 9.6 rebounds per game. However, he has not become a monster--yet. 7 points for this answer.

13) Will any of the Cleveland teams make the playoffs in calendar 2013?

"Cavs: no way. Indians: if by some miracle, they can creep up to the .500 mark, in the wide-open A.L. Central Division, who knows? But I have a hunch that the Browns could be near a playoff spot by one year from now."

>> Bingo. Except for that statement about the Browns. Remembering back a year ago, I unfortunately let my long-standing optimism for the Browns get in the way of objectivity. (But I'll not let it happen again in a few days when I tackle "14 Questions for 2014.") Rounding 6.67 out of 10 up to 7 out of 10 for this response.

Hurray and huzzah! For the 13 questions, I averaged scoring 7.0 out of 10--which is a whole lot better than last year's average of 5.7. How did you do?