

What a weekend. Kelly Pavlik, in an absolutely incredible fight, comes back from the dead to knock out Jermain Taylor to become the world's undisputed middleweight champion. The Browns ball bat the despicable Ravens and their toad of a head coach. The Buckeyes rout their fifth straight opponent, and will be #4 in the rankings this morning. And the Indians finish the season and get set for the Yankees. I love this time of year.



Ghost Story

It's tough in this town under even normal circumstances to take the top billing away from the Browns and the Indians. Especially this weekend when you consider the Browns bounced the Baltimore Ravens all over the Cleveland lakefront and the Indians earned yet another series victory and are set to take on the NY Yankees in the ALDS starting this Thursday.

So no ordinary effort is going to get you to the top of The Wrap. But Kelly Pavlik gave no ordinary effort on Saturday night in Atlantic City. Pavlik survived a couple of Jermain Taylor shovels to the head in the 2nd round before completely dismantling Taylor in the 7th

round on his way to winning the Middle Weight World Championship and bringing one of boxing's most

prestigious titles back to his hometown of Youngstown.

Pavlik's TKO of Taylor in that 7th round was as stirring as it was stunning. A barrage of powerful right hands and a couple of thunderous uppercuts took away Taylor's senses, will and title.

And while Taylor may never forget that 7th round, he may live to forever regret the 2nd

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Taylor floored Pavlik with multiple shots with about 1 minute left in the 2nd round.

Obviously dazed, confused, hurt and stunned, Pavlik somehow scraped himself off the canvass and survived that final

minute despite Taylor doing everything he could to finish him off. Pavlik got out of that round without throwing any semblance of an effective punch back at Taylor, and when the round ended with Pavlik still standing, the challenger from Youngstown staggered into the ropes on his way back to his corner. He had taken the best Taylor had to offer.

Emanuel Steward, Taylor's trainer, was seemingly stunned that Pavlik was able to walk away from that knockdown "as if nothing had happened".

"When I saw that, I said, 'Wow,

we're in trouble," Steward said.

Steward knew his fighter was potentially in trouble long before that moment confirmed it. Typically unwilling to engage in the verbal sparring and trash talking that is as much a part of boxing as ring-card girls and unscrupulous managers, Steward was openly critical of Pavlik in days leading up to the fight. Steward stated to any media that would listen that Pavlik had fought no one of note and was overrated. It was clearly less of an attempt to demean Pavlik as opposed to trying to motivate his own enigmatic fighter who, despite entering the ring with a record of 27-0-1, wasn't always impressive and wasn't always

fully engaged in his fights.

But Pavlik steadfastly refused to engage in the rhetoric or to change his approach. And that approach, a huge heart and awesome punching power spoke volumes on Saturday in a classic battle of middleweights that was as entertaining as any fight you're ever likely to see.

For the Birds

There is nothing like having an egomaniacal 'genius' like Brian Billick bring his merry band of miscreants, marauders and former fugitives from the law

down to the lakefront and watching them leave with their mouths shut and their tails between their legs after wetting their collective bed.

The folks who sit on the Genius Board of Directors may have to call an emergency meeting on Monday after watching one of their own out-coached by Romeo Crennell and after watching the Browns thoroughly and utterly demolish the Ravens.

From the opening kick to the final gun the Browns dominated the Ravens despite being on the short side of nearly every statistical category. The 27-13 Browns victory was a clinic in offensive efficiency and in defensive flexibility. As odd as that is to read given some of the personnel the Browns have on the field, and given last Sunday's 'effort' in Oakland, it's entirely accurate.

The Browns took the opening kick and went 55 yards down the field in a 9 play, 5 minute drive that set the tone for the day. Instead of settling for field goals Joe Jurevicius put a TD on the board on a 2yd pass from Derek Anderson. Then, after an interception of Steve McNair by Leigh Bodden deep in Browns territory, Anderson started and finished a 78yd, one play drive when he hooked up with a wide open Braylon Edwards for a long TD.

That was really all the Browns would need all day. Because for at least one day it was the Browns' opponent who made critical mistakes, allowed receivers to run freely behind them and who settled for field goal attempts instead of touchdowns.

The Ravens were as stunned as Jermain Taylor when they looked up at the scoreboard with minutes remaining in the 1st

quarter and were down 14-0. They seemed even more perplexed when the score was 27-6 late in the game. Of course, that didn't stop them from whining and crying and acting like their leader. This was a team that talked all week long about making Jamal Lewis a non-factor and gave the Browns less respect than most high school teams are afforded. Hell, Bart Scott screamed at and gestured to the Browns bench repeatedly after making a stop or two of Lewis late in the game when

everyone in the house knew the Browns were trying to run out the clock. And the score at the time was 27-13 Browns.

I'm not sure to whom Scott was talking in the 2nd quarter when Lewis blew by him for a 39yd run, but it certainly was enjoyable to watch.

Ray Lewis was a non-factor as was Ed Reed. Chris McAlister was torched on the long Edwards TD and Matt Stover missed a couple field goal attempts. Good times on the Lakefront.

I've said it before in regard to the Browns: Give me some hope and a reason to stand up every once in a while and

applaud. Sunday was a day for both.

It's All the Same But Everything is Different

The good news is the Indians haven't lost a series since early August. They won another series this past weekend in Kansas City and also locked down the #2 seed in the American League

playoffs. They finished with 96 wins, tied with the Red Sox for the most wins in baseball this season. They have home field advantage in the Division Series starting Thursday at The Jake against the New York Yankees and the Indians ace, CC Sabathia, will be on the hill.

Impressive stuff.

The bad news is that the last series the Tribe actually did lose was to those Yankees. In fact, they were swept by the Yanks at The Jake just as they were swept by New York in the Bronx in April.

The next Tribe victory
against the Yankees will
be their first this season.

Scary stuff.

None of that matters
when Sabathia delivers

the first pitch Thursday night. The Yankees caught the Indians in April before the Indians had assembled the squad they'll send out for Game 1. Jeremy Sowers was beaten up back then, Jake Westbrook was soon to visit the DL and Joe Borowski simply melted down and handed

the Yankees a game in which Fausto Carmona had completely dominated them. So be it.

Then the Yanks had the good fortune to catch the Indians in August when they were going through

their worst stretch of baseball (specifically hitting one) all season. This is a different club than at either of those times. They're still getting terrific pitching and they've had time to allow guys like Asdrubal Cabrera, Franklin Gutierrez and Kenny Lofton to settle into their

respective roles. And while you have to go out and pitch, hit and play defense, I smell a little destiny cooking in Cleveland.

Either way, you're entering a week in which sleep can be fleeting.

Where anxiety becomes a constant companion.

Where you want to speak to nobody, read nothing and avoid television the day after a loss.

Enjoy every minute of it.

Buckeyes Rout 5th Straight Pre-Season Opponent

Ohio State apparently was still tired from all their long runs last week against Northwestern. But on a

day when Top 10 teams were being upset by unranked opponents all over the country, a 30-7 Big-10 road win will suffice.

The Buckeyes weren't sharp and they

appeared to have other things on their mind, namely Purdue, but they were still sufficiently stimulated to do what you should do to Minnesota. The Buckeyes rushed for over 200 yards while holding Minnesota well under 100 yards on the

ground.

QB Todd Boeckman
threw for 209 yards
and two TDs, including
another one to Brian
Robiskie. Robiskie is
quickly becoming the
next great receiver in a

long line of them. On his TD catch, a 52 yarder from Boeckman, Robiskie made a leaping, twisting one-handed grab of the football. The TD was Robiskie's 6th of the season to go along with his 530 receiving yards thus far.

The Buckeyes now head to West Lafayette to face their stiffest test of the season. The Boilermakers are also undefeated on the year and currently ranked 23rd in the country. The game is

also an 8pm start on
the road, a
combination that
hasn't always been
kind to OSU. When
the polls come out
Monday, it may be a 4
th

or 5
th

ranked Ohio State
squad that ventures to
Purdue. Win this one,
on the road against a
ranked, undefeated
opponent and the
Buckeyes set
themselves up for a
national title
opportunity if they can

run the Wisconsin,
Penn State and
Michigan gauntlet.

Not bad for a
rebuilding year.