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When the accolades fade and the commemorative newspaper sections have long since made their way to the recycling bin, when the team has dispersed for the offseason, players' attention gravitates toward one general area.

Themselves. More specifically, their wallets.

When teams are losing, players usually are less apt to go to management for raises, for fear of looking like a selfish, teammate-alienating oaf. But when teams win and everyone is happy and productive, players usually want the spoils that go along with it.

Cleveland might be a rust-belt Mayberry when compared to the fast living in New

York and Los Angeles, but the same rules apply to players for the Browns, Indians and Cavs as to players for the Lakers and Yankees. They're multi-millionaires, just like their mega-market counterparts. They want the Italian suits, fast cars and big houses that fat contracts can buy -- and above all, the status of being paid like a star.

So when the Halley's Comet-esque confluence of all three Cleveland teams actually having success at the same time occurred this past year, we should have seen this coming.

The clouds started to gather in late summer, when it became apparent that Sasha Pavlovic and Anderson Varejao weren't going to make it into camp on time for the Cavs. The pair of restricted free agents were making contract demands that GM Danny Ferry didn't want, and didn't have, to act on.

Varejao's holdout became famously contentious, with Ferry making an unannounced trip to Brazil to negotiate with Varejao because he felt he couldn't reach Varejao any other way. Varejao countered by saying Ferry wasn't acting in good faith, and telling a Brazilian publication that he didn't want to play in Cleveland anymore.

Pavlovic didn't sign a three-year deal until the eve of the regular season, forcing him to use the early part of the season as his training camp. Varejao didn't sign until December. All told, the Cavs' roster wasn't whole until more than a month into the season, and it showed in the standings, as the Cavs lugged around a sub-.500 record for most of the 2007 portion of the season.

The Cavs have done a good job of bouncing back since the new year started, compiling an 11-3 January record, but the early-season mess will probably prevent the Cavs from seriously challenging Detroit for the Eastern Conference's second seed.

On the heels of the Cavs' contract holdout mess, the Browns might be entering one of their own. This past week, as he prepared for his first-ever Pro Bowl, Kellen Winslow made it known that he would like a new, more lucrative contract after producing two seasons as one of the NFL's elite tight ends.

The Browns stuck by Winslow as he severely damaged a knee in his now-infamous 2005 motorcycle crash. They took back some bonus money, but re-worked his contract around incentives when they could have torn up his deal on the basis that Winslow violated his contract language by participating in a dangerous off-the-field activity.

Winslow repaid the Browns' loyalty by bouncing back to become at least some form of the stunning athlete Butch Davis thought he had drafted in 2004. With the goodwill paid in full by both sides, the Browns winning and Winslow excelling, apparently the man they call "K2" feels now is the time to start dropping some not-so-subtle hints that he wants a raise.

Last June, Winslow fired the agents that negotiated his rookie deal, the Poston brothers, and hired mega-shark Drew Rosenhaus. When a player hires Rosenhaus, it's the equivalent of throwing down the gauntlet. Winslow was probably planning to pursue a new deal for almost a year. Making the Pro Bowl simply solidified the fact, in his own mind, that the time is right.

Phil Savage is under no obligation to even listen to Winslow's contract demands. With everything that Winslow has been through, largely due to his own immature foolishness, Savage would have every right to tell K2 "You're lucky you're still playing, or even alive for that matter. Suck it up and play out your deal."

Not that Savage would say exactly that. But the sentiment might be there, and if so, Winslow's attempt to force new contract negotiations might have "impasse" written all over it.

The last thing the Browns need to follow the fleeting, fragile success of the '07 season with is a contentious holdout by one of the pillars of their offense. But in the NFL, where the player holdout is a time-honored method of bargaining-table protest, things can head in that direction very quickly. Stay tuned as the spring and summer unfolds.

As if Varejao, Pavlovic and Winslow weren't enough, the Indians are heading toward their own contract Armageddon.

Watching C.C. Sabathia secure the Tribe's first Cy Young Award since 1972 was a point of pride for any Cleveland baseball fan. But it's not going to help Mark Shapiro cut any deals with his lefty ace at the bargaining table.

C.C. is less than eight months removed from his first foray into free agency. He now has half the Cy Young Award total of Johan Santana, who was recently traded to the Mets and inked to a six-year, \$137.5 million extension.

Santana's trade and subsequent extension are significant for Sabathia in two ways:

One, it sets the bar for Sabathia's forthcoming new deal extremely high. If Santana, who is widely regarded as the best pitcher in baseball, can nab more than \$137 million, then Sabathia, who might very well be the second-best pitcher in baseball at the moment, should be able to secure at least \$120 million in his next deal.

Two, it means Sabathia could be the undisputed prized pony of the 2008 free agent pitching class, should he decide to shun all Cleveland offers and test the open market. A.J. Burnett has an opt-out clause after the '08 season, and John Lackey and Brad Penny have club options that you would have to assume their teams will almost certainly pick up.

The Sabathia contract saga is the most painful to watch for a Cleveland fan because, unlike the Cavs' and Browns' situations, the Indians aren't in the driver's seat.

C.C. is free to walk after the upcoming season. The Indians, coming off a season in which they clawed to within a win of the World Series, can't in good conscience trade the ace of their staff unless they tank early and thoroughly. Meanwhile, the likelihood that Shapiro will be able to piece together a competitive offer for C.C. -- let alone convince him to sign an extension before he tests the market as a free agent -- just grew even slimmer with the news of Santana's massive extension.

Winning is the bottom line in professional sports, and all three Cleveland teams are tasting the sometimes-bitter side effects of that fact to greater and lesser degrees. Players that win want to be paid like winners. And they will, sooner or later. It's just a matter of whether a Cleveland team, or a team in another town, will sign the paychecks.