

Losers of back to back series to the Giants and the Reds, things have hit a new low this season for the Tribe ... and Peeks resorted first to soccer, then to cleaning the gutters to get away from his TV on Sunday. In the Weekend Wrap, Peeks saves his energy for a couple of topics a little more exciting. The Cavs selection of J.J. Hickson and the arrival of his Browns season tickets. Just three weeks 'till training camp ...



## Desperate Times

I hate soccer with a passion.

So it should be somewhat telling when I tell you I turned off the Indians game following Adam Dunn's 860 foot home run in Sunday's ball game and turned on Spain-Germany in the Euro 2008 finals.

Realizing that was like pulling my leg out of bear trap only to turn around and find a boring pack of snarling wolves, I turned that off and settled for cleaning leaves out of the gutter.

This is what it's like to be a fan of a bad baseball team.

Just when we'd thought the Indians could sink no lower they went and lost a series to both the San Francisco Giants and the Cincinnati Reds this past week. They are now at 8 games under .500 and 9 games behind the league leading White Sox in the AL Central.

They done went and sunk a whole lot lower.

Manager Eric Wedge (apparently whistling past the graveyard the past month or so) says the upcoming 8 game road trip that takes the Indians to Chicago, Minnesota and Detroit is the biggest trip of the season. After the trip the Indians will basically determine whether they are buyers or sellers, pretenders or contenders.

No disrespect to Mr. Wedge, but I'd be selling everything not nailed down.

First of all, there is absolutely no indication that this team is capable of pulling its collective head out of its collective ass and suddenly catching fire. The middle of the order this weekend against the Reds was Ben Francisco, Jhonny Peralta and Shin-Soo Choo. That will likely be the middle of the order for the next few weeks. There is not a name among the three that should be hitting in the middle of the order on any playoff-caliber team.

Good Lord, only one of them was on your opening day roster.

So not only do you have that Murderer's Row doing the heavy lifting but you also have your utility infielder playing every day and your backup catcher from a month ago now donning the catcher's gear every night with Sal Fasano as his backup.

Did I mention your second and third pitchers in the rotation are gone? One of them may pitch again a year from now if things go really well and the cadaver ligament holds tight and the other, Fausto Carmona, is having trouble merely walking without pain much less pitching without pain in his now worrisome hip.

But hey, if the skipper wants to delude himself into believing this upcoming trip is where the rubber meets the road well, that's terrific. But for me it brings back memories of 'Monty Python & The Holy Grail' where King Arthur systematically dismembers the Black Knight:

King Arthur- "Look you stupid bastard, you have no arms left."

Black Knight- "Yes I have."

King Arthur- "Look!"

Black Knight- "It's just a flesh wound."

Keep fighting Eric. Your club, despite having no arms, legs, bats or weapons of any kind, well, they could still occasionally bite somebody.

We know this to be true because we've all watched them bite for the better part of three months now.

## **Cavs Go Big**

J.J Hickson was the name called in New York Thursday night when the Cavaliers' 19<sup>th</sup> pick rolled around.

That brought a lot of rolling eyes and angry responses at draft parties from Mentor to Avon Lake but it also brought a grade of A- from people who actually have a working knowledge of college players.

Chad Ford of ESPN attached the following analysis to his grade:

*Hickson has been one of my sleepers in the draft. He has an NBA body and great athleticism, and he can play inside and out. His game needs to develop, but the raw tools are impressive. He could be a nice long-term replacement for Joe Smith. At No. 19, he was one of the few players left on the board with a chance of being a great player.*

*And according to [John Hollinger's statistical formula](#), Jackson is one the biggest sleepers in the draft.*

Look, I'm not necessarily telling you Chad Ford is the end all-be all in regard to judging the draft. There were also numerous other publications and 'experts' that liked the pick while noting that Hickson is still a work in progress. But I tend to put more stock in what people who have seen and followed Hickson for a living think as opposed to the opinions of Darryl from Broadview Heights who's 6 beers deep and still praying for an Eric Snow and Damon Jones plus that 19<sup>th</sup> pick to New Orleans for Chris Paul deal.

Hickson will come into camp with the ability to rebound and be a presence in the paint. He's 6' 9" and 245lbs and should be able to absorb the pounding that an 82 game NBA schedule will bring. The NBA draft usually has about 3-5 players who can be drafted and immediately impact a basketball game. To get a guy at #19 who can potentially be a viable player is no small task. As for those screaming for the Cavs to take Chris Douglas-Roberts or Mario Chalmers, well, those guys were passed over 40 times. I understand people may be more familiar with them from having watched one game last April, but the professionals in the Cavaliers organization targeted a guy and got a guy they believe will be more valuable.

That being said, the Cavs didn't really do much to get better today. Hickson will eventually help but this team still has work to do to improve its chances of advancing deep into the playoffs next season. The free agent season opens Tuesday and here's hoping the Cavs get creative with bringing in some help for LBJ sooner rather than later.

## Calm Before the Storm

Football season officially kicked off this past Friday when I got my season tickets. Sure, the price went up 25% this season, but the tickets came in a slickly packaged shoe box that contained the tickets, the Browns mission statement and a nice, orange Browns hat with my section number and 'Cleveland Browns' embroidered on the back and front of the hat respectively. So while that \$12 value (including the shipping and the hat) didn't exactly make up for the cash out of pocket, the effort was appreciated.

Oh, for kicks and giggles, here's the mission statement:

"To build a championship-caliber football organization on and off the field that will make a positive impact on the city of Cleveland and the communities of Northeast Ohio."

So we have that going for us. Which is nice, if not Shapiro-esque.

Four weeks and counting until Romeo puts Phil's newest toys onto the field and through their first drills. I haven't looked forward to a season with this much anticipation since...umm...this Indians season.

## **Etcetera**

- The inaugural TCF Golf Outing at Little

Mountain Country Club is filling up fast. 80 golfers are already registered for the August 23<sup>rd</sup> event. You still have time to get yourself and/or a foursome into the mix by going [here](#).

Non-golfers are welcome to come out for dinner, drinks and door prizes for a reduced price and can also declare their intent to do so by hitting the link above. It's going to be a great time at a great course. Eyebrows will likely be raised when my group takes home the winner's trophy but you still have time to load up and give it your best shot.

- The Wrap is likely taking a two week

sabbatical. I'm packing up the chicks and heading to Disney World. I believe that the Disney corporation attaches a Goofy vacuum hose to your wallet and starts sucking the second you walk through the gates. I'm used to it though. Take away the vacuum hose and the Indians pretty much do the same thing.

- Embroidered visors and youth sized T-Shirts are this week's addition to the [TCF Store](#). Check them out and support the site.