

With interest in the Indians on life-support and the Cavaliers training camp still months away, the Browns season couldn't get here fast enough for Cleveland fans. More than 26,000 people went to Cleveland Browns Stadium on Friday night to watch a practice. I think we're ready Browns fans. In The Weekend Wrap, Peeks talks about preseason football, the massive tailgate party we're planning for the Steelers game week 2, and some trades the Indians still may be able to make in August.



## Dawg Days of Summer

With interest in the Indians on life-support and the Cavaliers training camp still months away, the Browns season couldn't get here fast enough for Cleveland fans.

More than 26,000 people went to Cleveland Browns Stadium on Friday night to watch a *practice*. No hitting, no tackling, nothing that truly resembled real football. Yet the Browns attracted a typical Indians-sized crowd to watch what amounted to glorified drills and special teams workouts on the first night in August.

Hungry for some football are we?

If you're chomping at the bit for something that also somewhat resembles NFL football then Thursday night is for you. That's the night the Browns face off against the NY Jets in another glorified practice. This time there will be some hitting and some actual football-like activity as the '08 exhibition season gets under way.

I'm going to pass on Thursday personally. I understand the hopes and expectations that last season's team created heading into this season, but I still can't bring myself to spend cash on real parking fees, real beer prices and real food charges to watch a bunch of future insurance agents, butchers and physical fitness teachers play pretend games on their way out of the league. I'll grudgingly pay the blood money on Sundays (and a Thursday or two this season) to watch the best the NFL has to offer square off. There's value in that for me. But not for what passes for football in August.

## **When it Really Matters**

TheClevelandFan.com has a deal for you. TCF, in conjunction with Chefs 4 Hire and the Lake Erie Browns Backers, is doing it up right for the September 14<sup>th</sup> Browns-Steelers clash. For the few of you who haven't yet memorized the schedule, that's an 8:30 PM start for 'Football Night in America' and a nationally televised game. It's a huge game regardless of anything else given it's the Steelers but it also has the potential to be a critical

game in the scope of the Browns and Steelers playoff chances.

That said, only a tailgate party of epic proportions is warranted. So that's what you'll get. How's this sound (From Rich Swerbinsky at TCF):

*Disclaimer - Still more details to come, including price, which will be somewhere between \$40 and \$50 a person, but it will be an all inclusive price.*

## **Browns/Steelers - Week Two - Sunday, September 14th - 8:30 PM Game Time**

The party starts at 8 AM in the Muni Lot. That's the 'B lot' or the lot closer to the Stadium. It's near the RTA waterfront line, on the side of the lot farthest from the freeway. It's right about halfway into that half of the Muni. Just get within 100 yards or so of us and you cannot miss it.

You need to bring nothing but yourself. Everything is provided including drinks and a staggering array of professionally catered food from Chefs 4 Hire.

Let's start with the food ...

*12pm - Pittsburgh Style Cheese steaks. They soak the meat in au jus, then grill it, and serve it on robust hoagie rolls with onions, mushrooms, and melted cheddar. ☐*

*2 PM - Wings, courtesy of The Wright Place in Willoughby. ☐*

*5:45 - Full clam bake. ☐*

- ~New England clam chowder ☐*
- ~One dozen middle neck clams per person ☐*
- ~For non-clam eaters, 8 oz sirloin steaks ☐*
- ~sweet corn on the cob ☐*
- ~redskin potatoes ☐*
- ~clam broth & drawn butter ☐*
- ~assorted dinner rolls and butter ☐*
- ~warm apple crisp for dessert*

What more could you want? How about a Corn-hole tournament? Live Band? Would you feel better with private security for the event?

Check, check and check. All of it is yours. And no, you didn't read that start time wrong. That's 8 AM.

TheClevelandFan.com and Chefs 4 Hire/Lake Erie Browns Backers can accommodate approximately 100 or so tail-gaters and half that number have already committed.

If you'd like to participate in a great day of food, fun and football you need to make your intentions known now. TCF writers, message board luminaries and other contributors will be in attendance as well. So leave your grill at home and come on down for what promises to be a great day on the lakefront. You don't even need tickets to the game. Enjoy the festivities and head out in plenty of time to get back home (responsibly please) for the kickoff.

Hit this [link](#) for more information and to register for an event that will likely be talked about for a long time after it's over.

## **But in the Meantime**

Despite rumors to the contrary the Indians are still grinding out the remainder of their season. One of the few bright spots in an otherwise gloomy and depressing week of baseball was veteran right-hander Paul Byrd. Byrd went 2-0 during the week and pitched deep into both of those games. The crafty veteran not only changed his windup but he also got a couple pointers from Twins broadcaster Bert Blyleven that improved his slider.

In his last two starts Byrd is not only 2-0 but he has gone through the 7<sup>th</sup> inning in both outings while averaging 103 pitches. He's scattered only 10 hits in those two starts. That's staggering when you consider Byrd is capable of giving up 10 hits in any five inning stretch.

Only Byrd's timing could have been a bit better. Had Byrd made his adjustments a month earlier there is a good chance he would have joined Casey Blake and CC Sabathia as ex-Indians.

The Indians could have turned his strong outings into a viable prospect before the July 31<sup>st</sup> trade deadline.

That can still happen before rosters are locked on August 31<sup>st</sup>. But that is made a bit more difficult in that Byrd would be required to pass through waivers before being dealt. He'll also have to continue pitching well in his next few starts to convince potential trade partners that he is past his season-long struggles and is able to fortify the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> spot in a contender's rotation.

Still, there is hope. Veteran back of the

rotation guys have more value this time of year and you never know when the injury bug is going to jump up and put a dent in a contender's hopes. It's good to see Byrd out there throwing reasonably well because it's still nice to win ballgames even when the season has been dashed and you could actually get another building block for the future if a playoff team comes calling.

As to the remainder of the weekend, well, the Matt Ginter carriage has officially turned back into a pumpkin that looks conspicuously like a Triple-A travel bus and Jeremy Sowers needs to find a league where they play just 5 innings. Ginter was beaten up pretty good on

Sunday and Sowers threw 5 perfect innings (again) before the Twins rallied to beat him and the Indians to take two of three in the weekend series.

## **Etcetera**

- It's also encouraging to see Asdrubal Cabrera swinging the bat reasonably well and stringing together some major league-quality at bats over the past couple weeks.

I'm not sure if a parade has been scheduled, but Cabrera is finally over

.200 for the season.

In the past two weeks (and since being recalled from Triple-A Buffalo) Cabrera has hit .280 with an OBP of .380 and OPS of .800.

The Indians desperately need Cabrera and Ryan Garko to step up their production next season. Cabrera, unlike the enigmatic Garko, seems to have adjusted and used his Buffalo time to his benefit.

- I'd really like one of the Wrap's readers to tell me how Eric Metcalf deserved a spot in the Browns Hall of Fame. I understand the special teams contribution, but man, I just don't see Metcalf in the same light I see other honorees.

- Is it too much to ask that Paul Byrd and David Dellucci each have a huge month of August? Wouldn't it be next to miraculous to see some team with the need for a veteran starter and a veteran bat off the bench take these guys off the Indians hands? No offense intended to either of these

guys. For the most part they're solid contributors and decent citizens. But they have no future here in Cleveland from an impact status and it'd be nice to get a prospect for Byrd and get out from under Dellucci's 2009 contract.

- I'm not buying the "Josh Cribbs is too valuable on special teams to consider in the 3<sup>rd</sup> receiver competition" argument I've been hearing lately. When you have a talent like Cribbs you're best served getting him the football in space and letting him do what he does. As often as possible.

It will not be too long into this season that Cribbs is denied the football on kickoffs and punts. That's not to say having him back there to receive those kicks and punts is not valuable. Teams kicking away from Cribbs will be sacrificing yards and field position in order to negate his return ability.

Rather, it means the yards and field position benefit you get from Cribbs will not require him to endure 4-6 hit per game on returns that he otherwise would have. Why not use

those 4-6 hits you saved on the kicking game in the flow of the offense? Joe Jurevicius caught 50 balls from Browns QBs last season. That's slightly more than 3 per game. Surely Cribbs could endure that increased workload if his return workload is being reduced.

- Last call to be part of the inaugural TCF golf outing at Little Mountain Country Club. The event is Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. There are precious few spots remaining but you can get one for yourself or your foursome by going

[here](#)

▪

*Any opinions or thoughts on the subjects we touched on here in the Wrap? Feel free to email me at the link provided below.*