

As an act to follow, 2007 was pretty tough. An NBA Finals appearance by the Cavs, an ALCS appearance by the Indians, a 10-6 Browns team that narrowly missed the playoffs and C.C. Sabathia winning the Indians' first Cy Young Award since 1972. The sports year 2008 was bound to pale by comparison for Cleveland fans. On many levels it did. But there were still some great moments, and Erik Cassano continues to count the ten best down for our readers.



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The sports year 2008 was bound to pale by comparison for Cleveland fans. On many levels it did. The Indians stumbled out of the gate in April. Injuries and a dud of a bullpen rendered the season a lost cause by midsummer, at which point Sabathia and Casey Blake were shipped off in a mini-fire sale reminiscent of 2006.

The Cavs followed up their Finals appearance with a season marred by holdouts, injuries and upheaval, as half the roster was reconstructed at the trading deadline. The '07-'08 season came to an end with a Game 7, second round loss to the Celtics.

The Browns were the most disappointing team of all. A season that began with so much promise will end with the entire organization on the fast track to another smack of the reset button.

But 2008 did manage to make its own sports headlines in Cleveland, and believe it or not, a number of them were positive. Over the coming days, our top 10 Cleveland sports moments will be revealed here on the front page of The Cleveland Fan. We hope you enjoy reliving them.

[The Top Ten 2008 Cleveland Sports Moments: #10-#7](#)

6. Quinn takes the reins

November 6

As Derek Anderson continued to struggle with the game on the line, Brady Quinn's coronation became the worst-kept secret in Cleveland.

Later became sooner, and with the Browns season heading south in a hurry following a fourth-quarter meltdown against Baltimore, Quinn was named the starter for the Week 10 showdown with the Broncos.

Whether you are an Anderson fan or a Quinn fan, there is no arguing that this was a pivotal moment for the Browns -- not just for this season, but potentially for seasons to come.

This was Phil Savage and Romeo Crennel performing the act of taking the franchise's fortunes out of the hands of Anderson and placing them with Quinn. Even if Savage and Crennel are both gone by the start of 2009 training camp, chances are Quinn will be the starting quarterback for whoever is coaching and whoever is overseeing the roster.

His debut was solid: 23-for-35, 239 yards and two touchdowns. But it was overshadowed by another defensive meltdown as the Broncos rallied to win 34-30.

Quinn broke a finger on his throwing hand the next week against Buffalo. After a two-interception performance versus the Texans, he was shelved for the rest of the season.

The sample size was small, but mostly encouraging. Quinn as a building block will be a major selling point when the Browns go shopping for a new coach (and possible a GM) in the coming months.

5. The Mo Williams trade

August 13

LeBron James has had a long list of sidekicks in his relatively-short NBA career. Most of them failed to jell with LeBron for one reason or another.

Carlos Boozer didn't want to play in LeBron's shadow. Ricky Davis was too selfish. Larry Hughes felt he was misutilized in the Cavs' system. Drew Gooden's basketball IQ left something to be desired.

It all added up to a seemingly-endless parade of players in and out of town, as Jim Paxson -- and after him Danny Ferry -- tried to solve the riddle of how to build a championship team around LeBron.

Then came Mo Williams. And things suddenly became a lot clearer.

Williams was traded to the Cavs from the Bucks as part of a three-way deal that included the then-unnamed Oklahoma City Thunder. To get Williams, Ferry had to part ways with Joe Smith (to Oklahoma City) and Damon Jones (to Milwaukee). Only Smith has really been missed. Jones never reported to the Bucks as part of a mutual agreement, and his career remains stuck in suspended animation.

The Cavs' animation, however, has been anything but suspended since Williams arrived. In training camp, it quickly became apparent that we had a point guard with skills not seen in these parts since Mark Price. Williams is a lightning-quick dribble penetrator with the ability to pull up on a dime and nail an assortment of jumpers. His passing ability is not on par with Steve Nash or Chris Paul, but suffice it to say that he can

create scoring opportunities for other players.

Defensively, Williams has been a pleasant surprise. He came to the Cavs with a reputation as a lax defender, but that appears to have been the product of playing in a Bucks system that didn't emphasize defense. The Cavs' defense is spearheaded by Williams' ball pressure, to the point that Mike Brown refers to him as the "head of the snake" on defense.

Williams' addition has given the Cavs a legitimate point guard who ignites the team on offense and defense. It's a dimension the Cavs haven't had since the start of the LeBron Era, a dimension that has vaulted the Cavs from gritty playoff underdog to legitimate championship contender.

4. The C.C. Sabathia trade

July 7

Few in the Indians clubhouse would have admitted it, but by midsummer, the impending free agency of C.C. Sabathia had become an ongoing sideshow as the team's season drifted downstream.

By July, Sabathia had rebounded from an abysmal April to regain his Cy Young Award form from the previous season. But with contention becoming less and less of a possibility, the more obvious question was "Where is C.C. going, and when?"

Just before the all-star break, the sideshow ended as Mark Shapiro pulled the trigger, sending Sabathia to the Brewers for minor-league prospects Matt LaPorta, Rob Bryson, Zach Jackson and Michael Brantley - who was acquired after the season to complete the deal.

LaPorta gives the Indians a possible heart-of-the-order, right-handed power and RBI bat, something the Tribe's system hasn't produced since arguably Manny Ramirez. Bryson is a right-hander who pitched in relief at Lake County after the trade. Left-hander Jackson made a handful of starts for the Indians after the deal, pitching well in spurts. Brantley is a speedy outfielder who appears to have leadoff hitter pedigree.

The trade signaled the waving of the white flag for the Indians in '08, but a funny thing happened after the deal: the Indians started to play better.

The trade was made while the club was on the road, in the midst of a 10-game losing streak. But once the streak ended, the Indians came back to Cleveland and swept the eventual American League champion Tampa Bay Rays in a four-game set. The sweep, just before the all-star break, set a different tone for the remainder of the season and the Indians rebounded to finish with an 81-81 record.

Did the end of the C.C. free agency circus have something to do with the improvement in play? Only those on the inside know for sure. But the fact that the team's play spiked after July 7 seems to be more than a coincidence.