



Someone asked me last week what my favorite month was from a sporting perspective. I love and look forward to the end of August and beginning of September because I love college football and the onset of the NFL season too. I like the fact that football means some moderate temperatures and the prettiest season of all in NE Ohio is just about upon us. Fall means deer hunting and great perch fishing on the lake and I just enjoy it immensely.

But it's just not the best month of my sporting year.

That honor has to go to the period of time between mid March and right now. There's just absolutely nothing better to me than the excitement of the NCAA tournament and all of its trappings (a couple days off work, the hustle and electricity of running a couple of pools, that first Thursday afternoon in some dive bar with good buddies watching games, etc.) plus the birth of another baseball season following right on its heels.

Not enough to overtake football? Well how about we add the NBA playoffs into the mix? After weeks of jostling for playoff seeding position and resting starters down the stretch the NBA's second and real season begins in that same month long time frame. You get the playoff games all day long and there's actually something on the line for teams once again. Are we getting closer to pulling even with the fall football season?

Okay, how about including some football then? The NFL draft is always this time of the year as well and it produces a ton of talk and interest. So I can give you something from pretty much every major sport in this sports calendar month to float your boat. I didn't hit them all yet.

How about throwing NHL playoff hockey on top? I watched a Montreal-Washington game Saturday night that was an instant classic. I should say I watched the last six minutes of the third period, saw three goals that changed the lead and then watched a Capitals game winner in OT that saw the Verizon Center nearly torn apart from the noise. It's not too often I'll watch regular season hockey. I have no hometown rooting interest and there are just too many meaningless games. I'm not enough of a hockey buff to watch it solely for the unreal display of skills that the players exhibit and, truth be told, I have no clue what channel Versus is on my cable system.

But when April rolls around the intensity of NHL hockey goes, like it nearly did in Washington on Saturday, through the roof. It's dramatic, it's unbelievably intense and it's just great fun to watch.

My sporting day yesterday: Cavs-Bulls followed by Indians baseball (joined already in progress). Milwaukee-Atlanta NBA action followed by Miami-Boston playoff basketball, Washington-Montreal NHL action, Kelly Pavlik losing his title fight on HBO and wrapped up by Utah-Denver until about 130am.

That's a solid day right there. And yes, I'm still married.

But the variety is what makes this last 30 day period my favorite on the sports calendar. The playoffs lift the intensity in hoops and hockey, there's still hope as a Tribe fan and you also know some warm weather is heading your way.

You can't ask for much more than that.

### **Cavs in Control**

I don't if, as Neil Young would have you believe, that rust never sleeps. I do know that for a couple weeks prior to the start of the Cavs-Bulls series that the talk about rust never slept. We heard a lot about it after Mike Brown rested his key guys down the stretch.

Typically if that plan is going to bite you in the ass it's going to do so in the first game back when real bullets are flying.

Well, the Cavs answered the questions that were posed pretty convincingly Saturday afternoon. They may have fallen asleep for a ten minute period in the third and fourth quarters but they sure weren't rusty in building a 22-point lead against a Chicago team that's too small and not talented enough to muster much more than they did Saturday afternoon.

The Bulls might be ballsy or plucky or whatever term you want to use for willing to play hard, but they're more likely to get worn down in this series than Cleveland is and winning Game 1 was probably their best and only shot to "shock the world" as Joakim Noah implored his Bulls teammates to do.

I still hate the way the Cavs will piss away leads with uninspired and, frankly, awful periods of stagnant basketball. But they've done it all year as what seems to be an attempt to pace themselves for the long season. It would be really nice and really good for the psyche to see them hang a 30 point ass kicking on some unlucky team real soon. And it wouldn't suck if that team was the Noah-led Bulls.

In fact, let's plan on that for Monday night to make Monday somewhat bearable.

### **Credit Where it's Due**

Good to see the Tribe bounce back from a brutal and god-awful weekend in Detroit last week to rally for a few wins this week. It didn't start well when the Rangers came in and took the Indians' lunch money but the Tribe used a couple Ranger errors and few Shin-Soo Choo homeruns this week to rally back to nearly .500 on the season.

I like the fact this team, for the most part, is young enough for crappy games and efforts to bounce off them. The stink doesn't stick and fester like it would with a team that's older like, hmm, let's say the White Sox. The Indians have some kids up at the big league level who are too wide-eyed to care about yesterday and they have some younger veterans who have been given a chance to draw major league checks for the foreseeable future and who don't want to jeopardize that good money and some days that count toward a MLB pension.

I like that, for the most part, they are accepting responsibility for errors and misplays or poor production as individuals and without being chased down. It's good to see and it's good to see guys come out publicly and credit Manager Manny Acta for establishing that environment. There is, right now (and it's earlier than hell), a freshness to how this team goes about things. Bottom line is wins will fill the seats and still are the best deodorant but right now you have to be pretty pleased with the approach.

### **With the 7<sup>th</sup> Pick in the 2010 NFL Draft....**

Damn. That got here quickly didn't it. Doesn't seem like long ago that Mike Holmgren was hired, Brady Quinn and Derek Anderson were fired and we talked about what would happen in 8 weeks with the draft.

Well, three days left before we find out.

I have no clue what the Browns are doing folks. None. I still think when the BS machine is

unplugged and all the maneuvering is complete they'd love to have Eric Berry or trade down. There's so much misinformation now between what teams are saying, what they're pretending to say and what they're asking others to pretend to say that it's probably easiest to clear the decks of all of that crap and go back to basics.

Determine for yourself the Browns biggest need and ask whether they can solve that need and get value where they pick.

Just pick a need. The Browns have so many that regardless of what position they pick they're going to hit a need. I still believe locking down that secondary with an impact player is where they need to look right away.

Either way, only a few more days until we get to see the 2010 team take shape. I'm looking forward to seeing what happens starting Thursday. Tell me who they're taking if you have any thoughts.

### **Rededicate or Retire**

Youngstown middleweight Kelly Pavlik is at a career crossroads after his disappointing and thorough beat down at the hands of Sergio Martinez. Pavlik fans and apologists can argue otherwise but Pavlik was dominated Saturday night in Atlantic City, again by a much quicker and more active fighter.

Martinez beat Pavlik up in the first three rounds and then again in the last few rounds after Pavlik had rallied to re-take control of the fight. But fight fans will be left with image of a beaten and discouraged Pavlik bleeding from cuts on each eye and seemingly searching for the will to finish the fight.

It might be time for Pavlik to either move on with his life or seriously consider another corner man with more experience and more willingness to fix or address the deficiencies in Pavlik's approach. Anyone with any quickness and lateral movement frustrates the Ghost. If you're crazy or bold enough to stand in the middle of the ring and trade blows with Pavlik you'll leave the ring a loser. But if Pavlik is to regain and retain his spot amongst boxing's elite he's going to need to work hard to at least be able to hang with the guys who present a more difficult style.

Pavlik's success is good for NE Ohio so many here are obviously rooting for him to return to prominence. I'll take that as well but if he decides he just doesn't have the desire to make the changes necessary to compete I'd rather he not tarnish what's left of his reputation.