



Pay attention folks. I know many sports fans are fatalists and many sports fans also have Attention Deficit issues. At least many of the ones I know do.

Some are just plain crazy, dumb or so emotionally dependent on the pain that Cleveland sports teams give them that they crave it like the freaks who get off by paying a 'professional' to be beat them with women's shoes.

I get all that. Whatever puts air in your sail is fine with me. Just shut up with it when I'm around because if you're going to get bent in the first three quarters about what you're seeing with the Cleveland Cavaliers then you really haven't been paying attention to this team this season. Here is the deal in a nutshell:

**IT'S BEEN THIS WAY ALL EFFING YEAR** (for the most part).

They've coasted for stretches, they've toyed with teams and carried teams they should have buried and occasionally been dragged down by some teams on a given night while implementing that approach. But had they not taken the last four games of the season off they'd have been looking at a similar record as last season.

That's how they play it. They are deeper, they are more talented and they are managing games and series at this point. I told friends Saturday night in the first half that this was a Cavs win and

cover (Cavs were giving 7 ½ points in Game 1 and were down 11 at the half). You could see it coming. Not because I profess to be any smarter than anyone else but because there were about nine Celtics who were either in foul trouble or who had zero interest in playing full-contact basketball.

This is how they do it y'all. I ain't asking you to like it, agree with it or teach it to the kids you coach. I'm asking you to recognize and understand that the first 82 games weren't a fluke and that this is the development that began immediately after last year's loss to Orlando when they learned sweeping teams out of the playoffs with the pedal to the metal has a price.

Also understand they will lose again this season. Hell, they are going to lose at least a game or two this series. That doesn't mean the approach is for shit. The Celtics are freaking talented. Orlando is freaking talented. Any team remaining in the tournament today is freaking talented and can beat you on a given night.

### **Lest I Forget**

Kevin Garnett is a bitch. What a gutless and useless performance Saturday night in Game 1. The only difference between Garnett and a deer in the headlights Saturday night was that Garnett was able to regularly avoid the contact that often results in pieces of fur and venison being stuck in the grill of cars that hit them.

Garnett wants no part of LeBron James driving the lane. Garnett may actually mangle more ligaments and what's left of his cartilage by spinning, twisting and running to get out of the way. If Garnett is going to need 20 shots to score 18 points while running out of the lane for anything other than uncontested rebounds I want my six game prediction back for the series so I can knock it back to five.

Stay out there at 16-18 feet with Antawn Jamison you gutless, phony, faux-hardass. Go ahead and run your massive pie-hole when you sprinkle in 40% of your shots from that range rather than risking losing a couple of your teeth playing inside where 6'11" and 260lbs belongs at least on occasion. You're not Dirk Nowitzki dude. You can't shoot like Dirk and I think he may be tougher too. Go ahead and glare at the smaller guys and scream like a banshee when you affect a shot from some guard. It's all you got. Because when the fit hits the shan you run like a little girl.

Just to be clear I'm not a big Kevin Garnett fan. And if Paul Pierce offers up a cross-eyed look he's next.

### **White Flag?**

Are we close to the MLB All-Star break yet? Is it almost time for the rosters to be expanded? I ask because this Indians team is truly pathetic and sad at this point and I'm more accustomed to that being the case later in the season and not in the first week of May.

How pathetic and how sad? Well, early season joke Lou Marson, the catcher the Indians received as part of the Cliff Lee trade, had a couple hits on Sunday against the Twins. He had been booed mercilessly for his horrific, anemic approach and success at the plate, and rightfully so. Lou Marson, after 16 games and 49 at-bats, still has as many RBI as you do. His batting average is .224 and his OPS is a horrendous and comical .582.

But you know what? Lou Marson has better numbers than Grady Sizemore in both those two key offensive measures. He's also ahead of Matt LaPorta in both categories and he's outthit both Travis Hafner and the perpetually pathetic Andy Marte in regard to batting average. Granted, he can't catch a lick (or hasn't shown that ability in his 16 games anyway). And that's always a problem when you can't do what the root word in your position requires. But on a team full of guys flailing at offerings and struggling to make bat meet ball he's not even the worst offender. He's not even in the top three or four worst offenders.

I know some people remain optimistic that the Indians could conceivably contend in a weak division this summer. Hell, even I think they'll eventually hit. But I honestly don't know where the optimism comes from. I honestly don't understand how it's not clear as day that the Minnesota Twins will win the AL Central and probably do so quite comfortably. The same people who wrote off the Twins because they lost closer Joe Nathan to elbow surgery before the season are the same folks who were arguing that the Indians would be just fine with Kerry Wood missing the first couple months of the season because Chris Perez was on the scene.

The same people who argued that the Indians could, if everything went perfectly, get bounce back years from Sizemore and Travis Hafner, see the kids develop at a break-neck pace and get top of the rotation quality pitching from Fausto Carmona and Jake Westbrook refuse to recognize that a team like the Twins, who everything right and who have a better staff and lineup than the Indians, don't need to hit every on miracle to be in the thick of things.

Are we ready to call this team what it is yet? Are we ready to recognize that Hafner is pretty much done and that even a guy like Jim Thome in Minnesota is a more viable player right now? Is anybody willing to say that a non-roster spring invitee like Austin Kearns is this team's best or second best player right now?

This is a bad baseball team today and although I don't think it's as bad as it's playing, it's not in any way a contender this season. And that doesn't even take into the pitching. Sitting down at Progressive Field on Sunday was brutal. It was brutal because I had to watch Raffy Perez throw his typical 15 pitches, six of which were strikes, to get one out in relief of a battered David Huff. It was brutal because I then had to watch Jamey Wright give up two runs on three hits and two walks in just 1 1/3 innings. Look, Jamey Wright has been a mediocre pitcher on mediocre teams for years. He thrives on finding mediocre teams who are short on quality pitching and securing

the last spot in the bullpen. Bully for Jamey Wright and his family that someone keeps giving him a spot and allowing him to secure a wonderful Major League pension when he's finally run out of the game. But he's brutal to watch.

Apparently more and more people are agreeing with that take because on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, against a division leader and with no Cavs game scheduled, there couldn't have been more than 10,000 people watching the brutality. I don't care what the announced attendance was because I could have counted the people during Perez's 1/3 of an inning.

Just brutal.

### **Closed and Shut**

A word of advice to Tribe interim-closer Chris Perez: if you want to run your mouth like Boston's Jonathan Papelbon then at least give us his results as well. Throwing teammates under the bus like you did with Marson earlier in the season and then bitching about being beaten by a bunt single to lose another game doesn't help your case boss.

How about just trying to shut up and throw strikes?