

Ray Fosse getting bowled over by Pete Rose in the All-Star game. Mark Price tearing his ACL on the scorers table. Jim Chones' broken foot in the '76 playoffs. Ray Chapman, Herb Score, Big Z breaking his foot twice, and the LeCharles Bentley injury. How do they rank in terms of effect? Erik Cassano runs them down, the ten worst injuries in CTown sports history. We're masochists here at TCF ...



If you are a Cleveland sports fan, "hurt" was probably the third word you learned to speak after "no" and "mama." Gruesome, slow-healing, career-threatening injuries are a fact of life in sports around the world, but in Cleveland, they are a part of the sporting fabric of the town.

We have learned to fear sports injuries, but they are really something to be awed by, certainly as the Browns are on pace to become the first pro sports team to have to forfeit a game due injury-induced attrition sometime in November.

Below, I rank the top 10 worst sports injuries ever to hit Cleveland.

10. Joe Charboneau's bad back, 1980

He was the greatest thing since sliced bread. He won the AL Rookie of the Year award in 1980. He was a sweet-swinging harbinger of better things to come for an Indians franchise that had seen way too many dark days in the 1960s and '70s. Then his back went out, and he was never more than a one-year wonder. The Indians had to wait another decade and a half for good baseball to return.

When pulling on an Indians uniform for an alumni event at Jacobs Field some years later, Charboneau told a former teammate, "I'm going to put this thing on and my back is going to tighten up."

9. Mark Price's torn ACL, 1990

The Cavs were to be an elite NBA team in the 1990-91 season. Armed with a potent lineup featuring Price, Brad Daugherty and Larry Nance, the Cavs were expected to rebound from a series of first-round playoff exits and become a title contender.

Then, one night in Atlanta, Price tripped over a sideline electrical cord and ripped up his knee. The Cavs were not the same without their floor leader and plummeted to a 33-49 record.

Reflecting on the mishap, Price said he felt his knee go in "two directions at once" as he fell. Well, isn't that just special?

8. LeCharles Bentley's torn patellar tendon, 2006

He was to be the anchor of a vastly improved offensive line. After one snap as a Brown, he was the anchor of a vastly improved injured list. What could have been the move that solidified the Browns' offense and given Charlie Frye the toe-hold he desperately needed at the quarterback position actually ended up forcing the Browns to make even bolder moves on the offensive line the following off-season. Moves that panned out.

7. Ray Fosse's run-in with Pete Rose, 1970

He could have been the American League's answer to Johnny Bench. Instead, the Indians catcher was done in by the much-celebrated hustle of Bench's Cincinnati teammate in the 1970 All-Star Game.

Rose didn't have to bowl Fosse over at home plate and injure his leg. But, dammit, the game was on the line. Rose won the game for the National League and set Fosse's career back in the process.

To this day, the injury that sidelined Fosse is viewed as simply a byproduct of Rose playing the game the right way. Rose gets the glory and Fosse, well, I guess it just sucks to be you.

6. Zydrunas Ilgauskas' broken foot, 2000

At the time of the injury, the Cavs were 16-9 and one of the surprise teams in the NBA. After, they plummeted to lottery standing. This was the latest in a long line of foot breaks for Ilgauskas, who seriously contemplated retirement rather than

withstand another round of grueling rehab.

After surgery that altered the bone structure of his left foot, Z elected to go through another round of rehab for one last try at making a career of it. He has succeeded with flying colors, reclaiming a spot as one of the elite centers in the NBA, no matter what his detractors say.

5. Courtney Brown's bum knee, 2000

It was only the tip of the iceberg for the No. 1 overall pick of the Browns. He played in only a handful of games that first year, and it never got much better for the stud defensive end who was supposed to be a sack machine, but was seldom healthy enough to dress for games.

Some said Brown didn't have the internal fire to be great. We'll likely never know. His knees are now ravaged and he'll never be able to be the player he could have been.

4. Herb Score's line drive to the face, 1957

He could have been Sandy Koufax. But an unfortunate run-in with a line drive off the bat of the Yankees' Gil McDougal robbed Score of a year of his career and probably much more. Score, of course, went on to call Indians games on the radio for many years. But we still wonder what might have been had Score been able to live up to his full fireballing potential as a pitcher.

3. John Smiley's broken arm, 1997

As he was snapping off a curveball during a bullpen session in Kansas City, the recently-acquired Indians pitcher suffered one of the most gruesome arm injuries in recent memory. His left arm didn't just break. The humerus bone corkscrewed open like a tube of Pillsbury crescent rolls. He never pitched again.

A healthy Smiley would have added much-needed depth to the Indians' rotation for the 1997 postseason. He could have beaten out a struggling Charles Nagy for a spot in the postseason rotation. Nagy had a miserable start in the 1997 World Series and forced Mike Hargrove to relegate him to the pen for the rest of the series. With Smiley, who knows what might have happened?

2. Jim Chones' broken foot, 1976

No other injury on this list was more cruelly-timed. Fresh off a dramatic seven-game win over the Bullets in the Eastern Conference semifinals, the Cavs looked primed to give the aging Celtics a run for their money in the East finals.

Then Chones went up for a rebound in practice, came down on a teammate's foot, and heard the snap. His season was done, and so were the Cavs.

A pre-retirement Nate Thurmond did an admirable job as a stand-in, but in the end, the loss of Chones meant the Cavs did not have a way to deal with the Celtics' low-post bangers like Paul Silas. The Celtics won the series in six games, and went on to win the NBA title.

1. Ray Chapman killed by a pitch, 1920

Ironically, this was the one time a Cleveland team actually won a championship in spite of a major loss.

On Aug. 16, 1920, Yankees sidearmer Carl Mays threw hard inside to Chapman, the Indians' star shortstop. Chapman couldn't get out of the way in time, and the ball struck him in the left temple, crushing the side of his skull. He died the next day, the only major-league player to die as a result of an on-field incident.

The loss was devastating, but Joe Sewell took over as the team's shortstop and the players rallied around skipper Tris Speaker, beating out the White Sox for the 1920 AL pennant, and then winning the franchise's first World Series title, beating Brooklyn five games to two.

Chapman's death spawned a wave of rule revisions across baseball. Dirty, misshapen balls were taken out of play and the yarn in the ball was wound tighter to prevent the ball from losing its shape too easily. The harder ball traveled farther, and helped usher in the era of the home run.