



What's in a name? According to Bill Shakespeare, a rose by any other name would still smell as sweet. But then again, that's easy to say if you're a guy with an awesome name like Shakespeare. In the world of sports, a name can be the difference between a century of cult status and an eternity of obscurity. It's the key to carving out a nostalgic little corner of the public consciousness—whether or not your talent actually warranted it. Why else would people still remember the likes of Ruben Boumtje-Boumtje or God Shammgod? Or take such delight in the Browns drafting a guy named Barkevious Mingo? The truth is, a name can take you a long way.

So, in honor of Mr. Mingo's arrival in Cleveland this past week, it seems a fitting time to revisit and re-align one of TCF's sillier "all-time lists": **The 100 Greatest Names in Cleveland Sports History**. As sports towns go, Cleveland may not be among the most prestigious these days. But what we lack in world championships, we more than make up for in fantastically bizarre and unforgettable player names. You can probably rattle off a dozen all-time classics right off the top of your head. Some of them are recent members of the Indians, Cavs, or Browns, and others retired some time in the 1920s. The point is, we remember them. And we envy their mighty monikers.

The Top 100 Cleveland Sports Names covers well over a century of pro sports in the city, including representatives from the ill-fated Cleveland Barons and Crunch. The players included are ranked on the objective greatness of their names alone, with on-field performance relegated to “fun factoid” status. Will Barkevious Mingo crack the Top Ten before ever playing a down for the Browns? Let the names begin...

100 Best Names in Cleveland Sports History: [#100-76](#) | [#75-51](#) | [#50-26](#) | [#25-1](#) | [#1-10](#)



#100 – Eric Plunk

Relief Pitcher, Cleveland Indians, 1992-1998

Sports fans always love a little old school onomatopoeia. To his credit, Eric Plunk spent seven years as a solid set-up man in the Indians bullpen. More important to this conversation, however, he also plunked 12 batters during those seven seasons.

#99 – Pepper Johnson

Linebacker, Cleveland Browns, 1993-1995

His given name was Thomas, but nobody has called this Ohio State grad anything but Pepper for the past 30 years. In the early '90s, Johnson was one of a stable of ex-Giants that Bill Belichick brought to Cleveland, and he made the Pro Bowl in the original Browns' final playoff season back in 1994.

#98 – Scooter McCray

Forward, Cleveland Cavaliers, 1986-87

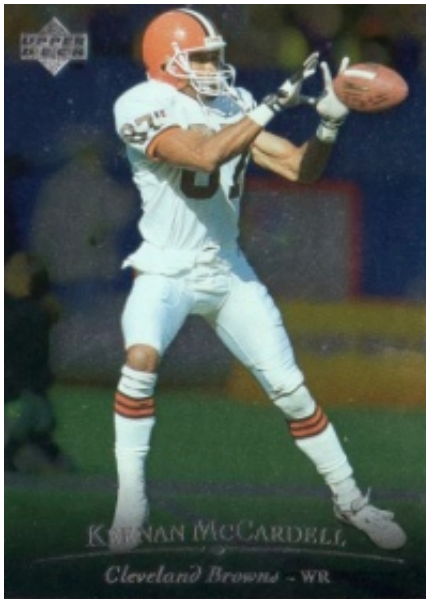
You wouldn't expect a guy with the nickname "Scooter" to stand 6'9", but the Cavs found just such a man when they picked up the Louisville product for half of the '86-87 season. He was out of the league shortly thereafter.

#97 – Bill Knickerbocker

Shortstop, Cleveland Indians, 1933-1936

Not merely a blip on the funny name radar, William Hart Knickerbocker finished 19th in MVP voting for the Tribe in 1934. He predictably wound up in New York, however, and won a couple

titles with the Yankees in 1938 and 1939.



#96 – Keenan McCardell

Wide Receiver, Cleveland Browns, 1992-1995

After barely sniffing the field his first three years in Cleveland, Keenan McCardell (not to be confused with the '90s Nickelodeon program *Keenan & Kel*) started showing what he could do in 1995, catching 56 passes for 709 yards. Then the Browns ceased to exist. But at least the notoriously football savvy fans of Jacksonville got to enjoy Keenan and his musical, nursery rhymish name as he established himself as a Pro Bowler.

#95 – Elmer Flick

Right Fielder, Cleveland Bronchos / Naps, 1902-1910

Born and raised in Bedford, Ohio, this speedy outfielder went on to a Hall of Fame career with the earliest incarnation of the Cleveland Indians franchise. He is also our first of many deadball era players with kooky, old-timey, badass names.

#94 – Cameron Cairncross

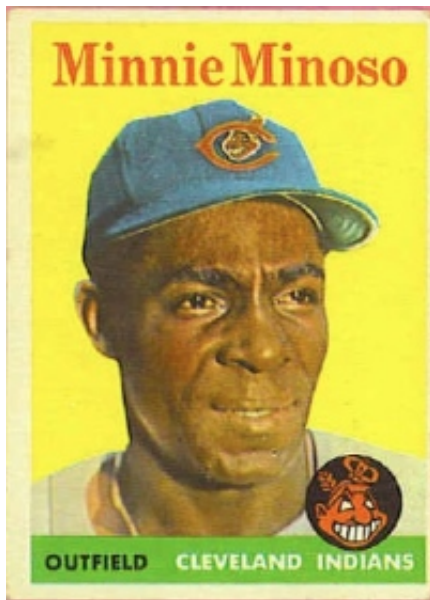
Relief Pitcher, Cleveland Indians, 2000

If you're a true Indians fan, you certainly remember this alliteration-rich Australian southpaw. As a typical matchup lefty, good old CamCair (a terrible nickname I just now bestowed upon him) pitched reasonably well in 15 games in 2000. Unfortunately, they would be the only 15 games of his career.

#93 – Orlando Bobo

Guard, Cleveland Browns, 1999

Mr. Bobo was one of the unlucky gentlemen hired to create the illusion of a real NFL team when the Browns returned to the league in 1999. Sadly, he was out of football by 2002 and passed away from heart failure in 2007 at just 33 years of age.



#92 – Minnie Minoso

Left Fielder, Cleveland Indians, 1949, 1951, 1958-1959

The Spanish word for mouse is "raton," not "minoso." That sad fact aside, it was hard not to love uttering the name of this nine-time All-Star from Cuba. The Indians and White Sox went as far as to trade Minnie back and forth three times in the '50s, jockeying for that PA announcement dollar.

#91 – Errict Rhett

Running Back, Cleveland Browns, 2000

Here's a personal favorite. While he had some solid years for Tampa Bay in the '90s, most people in Cleveland probably didn't realize Rhett's name wasn't "Eric" until 2000, when Dwight Clark signed him as one of a long string of halfback reclamation projects. It didn't work out: five games, 258 yards, retirement. He really errict things up.

#90 – Oddibe McDowell

Left Fielder, Cleveland Indians, 1989

Here's another guy's whose name legacy has made his surprisingly brief tenure in Cleveland seem much longer. A former first-round draft pick of the Rangers, Odd-Ball (nickname unsubstantiated) famously came to Cleveland with Pete O'Brien and "The Governor" Jerry

Browne for another member of our Top 100, Julio Franco. After hitting just .222 in half a season with the Tribe, however, McDowell was shipped to Atlanta in July of 1989, and predictably hit .304 the rest of the way.

#89 – Jack Armstrong

Starting Pitcher, Cleveland Indians, 1992

Back in the 1930s, there was a radio adventure serial called “Jack Armstrong: All-American Boy,” but that’s not the main reason this admittedly not-very-unusual name is here. It’s because sometimes a name is just ridiculously well-suited to a person’s profession; in this case, pitching (though Jack would have to take a backseat in this category to Oakland’s ever-doomed Grant Balfour). As a side note, Jack Armstrong was not a good pitcher.



#88 – Bimbo Coles

Point Guard, Cleveland Cavaliers, 2000-2003

Did you know that Bimbo Coles played parts of three seasons with the Cavs? Yes, probably better to be forgotten. In the 2002-03 season, the well-traveled Bimbo (real name: Vernell Eufaye Coles) did his part to help Cleveland suck bad enough to get the #1 pick. So if you have lingering LeBron angst, blame Bimbo.

#87 – Otto Graham

Quarterback, Cleveland Browns, 1946-1955

Just because this list includes only name-based honorees doesn’t mean a legit Cleveland sports legend can’t sneak his way on here. “Automatic Otto” has one of the great names among NFL Hall of Famers, and it also could have been a fine alternative for the word e-mail: “Did you get my autogram about the meeting?”

#86 – Tinsley Ginn

Outfielder, Cleveland Naps, 1914

Speaking of Grahams, meet the Indians' version of Moonlight Graham. Georgia boy Tinsley Ginn (a name with supreme Southern assonance) made his Major League debut for Nap Lajoie's club on June 27, 1914. It was the start of a three-day career in which he recorded only one plate appearance (0-1). By June 30, Tinsley Ginn's moment in the sun was over.

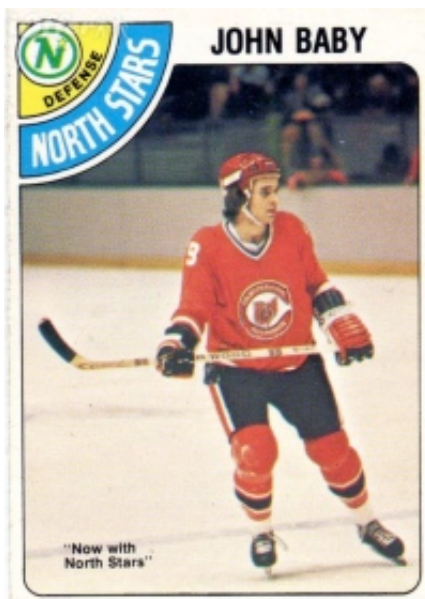
#85 – Al “Bubba” Baker

Defensive End, Cleveland Browns, 1987, 1989-1990

As an unwritten rule of the Top 100, nicknames only count if you can't help but use the nickname virtually any time you mention the player. Thus, Travis Hafner is *not* included, despite the obvious awesomeness of “Pronk.” While Al Baker

is

included, because everybody stills knows him better as “Bubba.”



#84 – John Baby

Defenseman, Cleveland Barons, 1977-78

NHL hockey didn't exactly thrive in Cleveland, but the Barons still managed to find themselves a worthy representative on the name list in the form of Ontario native John Baby—not exactly a super intimidating moniker for a hockey defenseman. But at least his opponents knew, nobody puts Baby in a corner-- unless he got called for cross-checking or something.

Honorable Mention: **Baby Doll Jacobson** - *Outfielder, Cleveland Indians, 1927*

#83 – David Justice

Outfielder/DH, Cleveland Indians, 1997-2000

A true superhero name. Not quirky or funny sounding at all—just sounds like a member of The Avengers. If David had truly been a force for justice, he would have made up for beating the Indians in the '95 World Series by leading them to the title in '97. Close but no cigar. Bonus Weird Stat: Justice put up exactly 21 homers and 88 RBI in 1998 AND 1999.

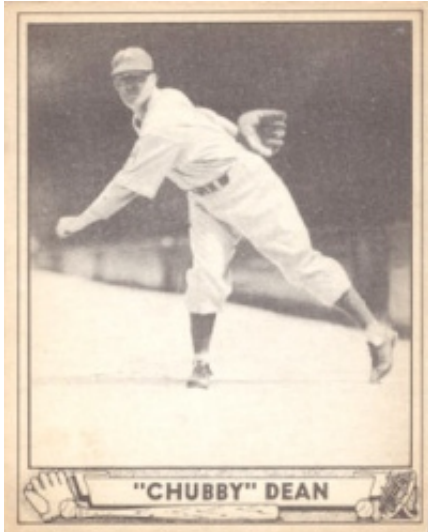
#82 – Najee Mustafaa

Cornerback, Cleveland Browns, 1993

Picking up former Vikings defensive back Reggie Rutland seemed like a pretty solid move for the Browns in 1993. But the newly converted Muslim wouldn't be bringing his name with him--trading the quality alliteration of his given title for the pre-Lion King nobility of "Najee Mustafaa." The word Mustafaa means "chosen," while Najee is (not actually) Arabic for "Reggie." Honorable Mention: **Michael Jackson (Dyson)**, WR, Cleveland Browns, 1991-95 Name-changing was apparently a trend of sorts for the '90s Browns, though Michael's King-of-Pop-avoiding switch to "Dyson" was short-lived.

#81 – Litterial Green

Point Guard, Cleveland Cavaliers, 1999



On February 5, 1999, Mike Fratello inserted journeyman guard and Georgia product Litterial Green (birthname: Litterial Green) into a game against Atlanta. LG was on the court for two minutes, missed his only field goal attempt, and never appeared in another NBA game. But some say we're still living in a litterial world. Sorry.

#80 – Chubby Dean

Pitcher, Cleveland Indians, 1941-1943

He certainly wasn't Dizzy or Daffy, but Chubby was the Dean Cleveland loved best. Ole Chubbs (born, Alfred Lovell Dean) came to the Tribe from Philadelphia in 1941 and was a decent lefty for the wartime Indians for three seasons.

#79 – Paul Warfield

Wide Receiver, Cleveland Browns, 1964-1969, 1976-1977

Hey, it's another Football Hall of Famer! The legendary receiver and Warren, OH, native clearly fits on the list under the "Badass" category. When you're playing a tough, militaristic, gridiron sport and your name is Warfield, good things are bound to happen.

#78 – Spec Harkness

Pitcher, Cleveland Naps, 1910-1911

Roughly 100 years ago, Cleveland baseball fans were much as they are today—frustrated and disappointed. A year after rookie hurler Spec Harkness (born as the equally enjoyable Frederick Harvey Harkness) sparkled with a 10-7 record and 3.04 ERA, he took a Jeremy Sowers nosedive in 1911, eventually falling out of favor and out of the league entirely at just 23, never to return.



#77 – John Rocker

Relief Pitcher, Cleveland Indians, 2001

For a week or two in the summer of 2001, the city of Cleveland decided to forgive John Rocker

