

FROM THE BEST OF TIMES TO THE WORST OF TIMES:
PROFESSIONAL SPORT AND URBAN DECLINE IN A TALE OF TWO
CLEVELANDS, 1945-1978

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Historical research has provided scholars with a strong foundation for understanding the sport-city nexus in American culture. These studies have focused primarily on two distinct eras. The first links the rise of modern sporting and leisure practices with the birth of the American metropolis from the early nineteenth century to the early-to-mid twentieth century. Sport and leisure shifted from traditional, agrarian styles and adapted to their modern, urban surroundings. They conversely influenced the development of the city. The works of Melvin Adelman, Stephen Hardy, Steven Riess, and Gerald Gems have enriched this area with studies on sports growth in some of the key American metropolises at the turn of the past century: New York, Boston, and Chicago. The second area of study reflects the evolution of American professional sport as a business following World War II. These studies tended to document cases of league expansion, franchise relocation, and stadium construction in a specific city, although the works of Charles Euchner and Michael Danielson offered broader analysis and commentary. Socio-cultural research addressing sport and the city has tended to look more at community-based issues for the aforementioned themes.

Missing from these scholarly treatments is an examination of the plight of the postwar American city undergoing urban decline and the place of professional sport within that context. This examination is a departure from the dominant body of sport-city

literature. Looking at Cleveland, this study revisits the questions used in the existing body of sport-city scholarship to see if and how they can be translated to the modern city in decline. The intersection of sport and city addresses issues of civic policy, local economics, and racial relations as found in scholarly works, city records, newspapers, and archived manuscript collections. This study also examines the creation of civic image through the presence of professional sports and the meanings extracted from that image, as seen in Cleveland's shift from "The City of Champions" to the "Mistake on the Lake." Furthermore, the Wirth-Hardy categories of the city—physical structure, social organization, and shared beliefs—and Isenberg's argument that human actors were at the core of downtown's decline frame visions of the city. These underlying notions balance the examination of tangible and intangible evidence to create a more complete understanding of professional sport's relationship to Cleveland.

Dedicated to Marlene Suchma,
and to Charles Suchma in memoriam
My loving parents

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Charles Suchma was born in Cleveland in 1938, during a point in the city's history that, like so many, was a social crossroads. The Great Depression, which had been so hard on the city's prior rapid growth, was approaching its end, while the start of World War II and the subsequent wartime boost to Cleveland's industry and economy was on the horizon. The next decade would produce a modest renewal of Cleveland's economy and image, both of which had been at their heights prior to the Depression. This is the Cleveland that was portrayed in the stories my father would tell me of his youth as we drove downtown on weekends. It was a city still tied to its ethnic past; yet simultaneously forced to come to grips with the emerging trends of suburban sprawl and white flight and lost identities. My father grew up in a Czech and Italian neighborhood—each group having its own parish and parochial school—that eventually gave way to new populations as the younger generation migrated outward. Cleveland was a city still dependant upon the strength of heavy industry as the base for its economy. As a result it failed to properly prepare for postwar changes to the national economy, a transition with which it continues to struggle. It was a city caught basking in nostalgia and the promise of the 20s, when rapid growth into a cosmopolitan center all but promised unlimited civic

potential. My father presented a city that was thriving, that was not plagued by high levels of crime or pollution, and that captured the melting pot vision of America in an almost idealistic and surely romanticized way. Beneath his nostalgic remembrances lay the critical elements of Cleveland's transformation from a city full of postwar hopes to one battered and worn by the effects of urban decline.¹

As a sports fan, he was always sure to tell me about his brushes with the athletes and teams of Cleveland. He told me how Bob Feller once came out of Cleveland Municipal Stadium to inform a small group of waiting children (my father being among them) that the day's game had been cancelled due to rain. Similarly he would talk about the time he stood next to an intimidating and awe-inspiring Jim Brown as they rode in a Municipal Stadium elevator together. In 1964 he sat in the bleachers of Cleveland Stadium as the Browns defeated the Baltimore Colts to claim the NFL Championship—rushing onto the field with the masses upon the game's completion. As a graduate student at SUNY-Buffalo, he would often drive back to Cleveland on weekends to catch the Browns or Indians at the old stadium, or to see the Barons play at the Cleveland Arena (complete with chicken wire encircling the rink in place of modern plexi-glass). The most poignant year, however, was 1948. My father turned ten the year Cleveland dubbed itself the "City of Champions." The Indian's won the World Series, the Browns won the AAFC title, and the Barons won the AHL Calder Cup. The years that followed

offered a smattering of professional sports highlights and championships, but they became scarcer with every passing year until they disappeared altogether.

I was born thirty-four years later in 1972 and grew up in an entirely different Cleveland, but one that was once again at a crossroads. Although I identify myself as a Clevelander, I was raised in a suburb connected to Cleveland by one of the interstates that had ripped apart the ethnic neighborhoods of a prior generation. The Cleveland I visited on weekends was a pale comparison to the image of my father's city. The ethnic neighborhoods that had dotted the Cleveland's landscape either shrunk or disappeared as younger generations fled to the suburbs and lower-income families took their place. The downtown of my childhood memories was a melancholy vision of gray winter skies, empty streets, and smoke stained buildings. I saw my share of sunny days, but they seemed out of place. The city was stigmatized by an increase in crime and pollution, especially in comparison to the suburbs, and possessed few entertainment options. Although I was too young to have seen the Cuyahoga River catch fire or remember the moment that Mayor Ralph Perk's hair caught fire, both events were etched in my consciousness through second-hand recollections and a bevy of national jokes at Cleveland's expense. The writers for television's "Laugh-In" provided the cruelest of all jokes; labeling the city I call home, the city my father taught me to love, the "Mistake on the Lake." To this day, Cleveland's detractors are quick to point out that the "mistake" is alive and well. Despite it all, it is my home.

My sports memories, put side by side those of my father, are almost a polar opposite. While Cleveland sports fans occasionally mention “The City of Champions” during the nostalgic lapses they are prone to have from time-to-time, they have not experienced the heights of a championship for over four decades. The Indians I grew up with were lucky to finish in sixth place in the American League Eastern Division, but mostly dwelt in the division cellar while playing in front of sparse crowds at mammoth Municipal Stadium. The Browns, with years of off-again-on-again success, were best characterized by “Red Right 88”, “The Drive,” and other heartbreaking failures that have been subsequently romanticized in the lore of Cleveland sports failings. That was until Art Modell moved the franchise to Baltimore after the 1995 season. The Cavaliers were better known as the “Cadavers” played in the countryside between Cleveland and Akron, and were league doormats best known for having an owner so inept that the league had to pass a rule to keep him from destroying any chance of respectability. My father grew up cheering for Feller, Al Rosen, Larry Doby and the beloved Rocky Colavito in baseball, Otto Graham and Jim Brown in football, and Freddy Glover and Johnny Bower in hockey. All were all-stars, and many of them are Hall of Famers in their respective sports. Names like Joe Charboneau and Miguel Dilone in baseball, Brian Sipe and Mike Junkin in football, and Foots Walker and “Dinner Bell” Mel Turpin in basketball made up my sporting heroes in my youth. If they are Hall of Fame bound, it will only be as tourists.

The father-son link to sports has been romanticized in American culture through games of catch in the front yard and shooting hoops in the driveway. This scenario has been used, and maybe overused, by various writers to explicate the meanings of sport. I bring up the disparity in our experiences not to lead to or reveal how sport represented a symbolic bond between my father and me. Rather, I offer it as a glimpse into two different eras of Cleveland's urban landscape and professional sports; a before-and-after that I contend is a factual part of Cleveland's story. My perceptions of Cleveland were additionally reinforced by regional and national interpretations of its sport-city link. As I grew older I could not escape the meaning professional sports conveyed onto the image of Cleveland. Whether it was a joke from a "Late Night with David Letterman" skit or the constant barrage of "good natured" ribbing I received from my Chicago friends during my undergraduate years, Cleveland was linked with losing and failure. The Indians, Browns, Cavaliers, and loss of hockey had much to do with this portrayal.²

This study analyzes the decline of Cleveland's three professional sports franchises within the context of the decline of the urban landscape between 1945 and 1978. Among the nuances explored in this study are the creation of civic images through sport and the meaning extrapolated through these images. Sport expressed and bore witness to a city making the descent from the "Best Location in the Nation" to the "Mistake by the Lake." The examination of the intersection of sport and the drastic demise of an American city—a demise caused by actions within the economic, political, and cultural infrastructures of

the city, and their impact on the creation and meanings of community image—provides a radical departure in how and where sport scholars have looked at the intersection of sport and the urban experience. Using Cleveland as an example, this study revisits the questions used in the existing body of sport-city scholarship to see if and how they can be translated to the modern city in decline; and it examines the creation of civic image through the city-sport nexus and extrapolates civic meaning from this image.

Understanding Sport in Cleveland

As has already been described, it would have been difficult to grow up in Cleveland during the 1970s and 1980s and not be aware of either the predominantly losing ways of the city's professional sports teams or the overall condition of downtown. Memories alone do not suffice in understanding and contextualizing the connections between the two themes. I arrived at this topic through three factors. First, I had an aforementioned familiarity with sport in Cleveland. The failures of the Browns, Indians, and Cavaliers were lived experiences that I shared with family, friends, and classmates. I later worked for the Cleveland Stadium Corporation at Municipal Stadium during the final four years of the facility's existence. Experiencing both the final Indians series and the last Browns game (before they were taken to Baltimore) revealed the emotion and image much of the community had invested into these teams. At this time, downtown Cleveland was often perceived as being corrupted by crime and pollution, especially for someone from the suburbs. The "renaissance" of the late 1980s and 1990s brought

nightlife back to downtown, but deeply imbedded problems persisted. Through it all, sport was a common factor that helped give the region its identity, thereby linking suburb to downtown.

Secondly, Cleveland was home to a variety of institutions that possessed research materials. I will discuss this in more detail in the literature review later in this chapter, but the availability of primary sources not only provided direct evidence of the relationship between the city and professional sport, often through the role of local politicians, but also gave a broader social context through which sport could be understood.

Finally, studying professional sport in Cleveland presented a new perspective to the scholarly treatment of the sport-city relationship because its approach was a departure from themes in previous studies. It provided a broader historical examination of the development of sport in postwar America, using a new city in the process. It was a serious historical study of sport in Cleveland, differing in many ways from the popular histories that mainly recapped season results or propagated journalists' anecdotes. Finally, it examined a period of urban decline rather than periods of intensive growth.

Developing the Themes

Professional sport in Cleveland from 1945 to 1978 possessed a wealth of events and actors that communicated changes within professional sport and American culture. Not every story could be told, but those that were chosen in this study represent major

trends in how sport—the business and the game—was conducted and perceived. Using Cleveland as the primary example was a departure from traditional sport-city studies that preferred to study America’s major metropolises such as New York, Chicago, and Boston. Cleveland represented a *mid-market* city from the Midwest; one that was neither the economic or cultural capital of the region. With these conditions in mind, three aims emerged in the unfolding of this examination: professional sport’s emblematic properties as its development coincided with a period of decline; the role of entrepreneurs in Cleveland; and the use of sport to construct civic image and convey meaning. These themes, in turn, touch on important economic and social issues that impacted Cleveland, but also countless other cities during the three decades following World War II (WWII).

For most of the thirty-three years that this study covers Cleveland was home to three professional sports: baseball, football, and hockey. Baseball had the longest tradition, with professional teams dating back to the nineteenth century, but had only one World Series appearance prior to this period. Football had strong ties in the scholastic and collegiate ranks, but professional football franchises had faltered. Hockey, while fielding arguably the most successful franchise in Cleveland, was mired in the minor leagues despite the local press and fans calling for a major league franchise. These three sports evolved over this period amidst the turmoil of suburbanization, the civil rights movement, deindustrialization, and the opening up of the country and region through developments in transportation and communication and residential trends. In this way,

professional sport possessed emblematic properties furthering the bond to the place, space, culture and community they represented.

The place of the sports entrepreneur within a broader historical context has often been explained through an understanding of the relevance of the business of sport. But entrepreneurs were the products of neither long-term social forces that shaped sport nor the social function of sport in that environment. Stephen Hardy contended that a fundamental element of understanding the larger sport industry was the role of the entrepreneur in developing the product. The examination of actions, arguments, and the alternatives, while always keeping sight of the entrepreneur's profit-seeking motives, provided a more nuanced comprehension of those individuals driving the sport industry. Entrepreneurs indeed drove the market just as much as they responded to it in their business decisions. Between 1945 and 1978 Cleveland's professional sports franchises were guided by men named Veeck, Sutphin, McBride, Brown, Modell, and Mileti among others. They fit the mold of the risk-taking profit-seeker, but would not have been able to accomplish their successes or failures without the market in which they asserted themselves. Historian Alison Isenberg argued that human factors played a vital role in the "rise and fall" of the American downtown. "Varied downtown investors," she stated, "endeavored to make their own markets and to chart Main Street's future in order to protect and enhance their stakes." The urban landscape has been a marriage between the stability of place with the variety of the market. Urban spaces responded to market

pressures, which themselves have been a marriage of public dreams and private development. The sports entrepreneur, like the industrialist and local merchant, was at the forefront of shaping and interpreting those market pressures.³

The final link between city and sport was the use of the latter to create a civic image. Whether this was a desire to be a champion or to simply belong to that elite group of *major league* cities dotting the American landscape, the perception existed that professional sports conveyed the dreams and values of a community. A winning sport franchise could diminish the passing of the industrial age and turn a Cleveland into an oasis of pleasure. This argument has been made over and over again for numerous cities by their politicians, the booster press, and entrepreneurs themselves in hopes of bringing in an expansion or relocated franchise, or pushing for public funding of new facilities. The affect of a losing franchise or one in decline on a city, and especially its downtown, has often been overlooked in the body of historical research. The juxtaposed view of sport as a representative of the community's dreams and values during a time of decline has been represented through various aspects of the local media and popular culture, but dismissed by scholars. Sport's emblematic properties remain equally as strong when team and town struggle in facets of the economy, structural integrity, and public confidence. Such sentiment was readily displayed in the musings of the local press. The transformation of Cleveland, a city fond of self-descriptive slogans, from the "Best

Location in the Nation” to the “Mistake on the Lake” was mirrored by sports’ slide from “The City of Champions” also to the “Mistake on the Lake.”

Sport-City Literature

Sport historians have long recognized the pivotal role the city has played in the transformation of sport in American culture. This study both incorporates and responds to three specific aspects of sport-city studies: historical examinations, economic/business studies, and research centering on socio-cultural issues. Each contributes a unique and essential aspect for understanding the relationship that professional sport has with the urban center, but each field has shortcomings that need to be expanded upon. This is not meant as a criticism of the existing scholarly works on the subject. Rather, this study seeks to address these neglected areas, while at the same time seeking to add to an emerging historical scholarship on sport in the second half of the twentieth century.

Historical studies of the sport-urban nexus have centered overwhelmingly on the years of urban and especially metropolitan growth in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stephen Hardy pointed out, “historians have focused especially on the period from roughly 1840 to 1920, when so many towns grew into cities...” The works of Melvin Adelman (New York City), Hardy (Boston), Gerald Gems (Chicago), Dale Sommers (New Orleans), and Steven Riess (multiple large American markets) provide a solid foundation of historical research on this period of American transition and development. They share in common their focus on major American metropolises,

periods of growth, and the time period Hardy referred to earlier. Scholarly explorations into the themes pertinent to post-WWII American cities and the boom of professional sports, however, do not exist in the same magnitude as their predecessors. The city on a broad level has been ignored or limited to the role of “place” in the vast majority of historical forays into sport in the latter half of the twentieth century. The use of modernization models that some of the earlier studies incorporated or referenced was no longer relevant for many metropolises, as their growth had stopped, slowed, or given way to decline. The sport-city nexus needed a new approach that integrated aspects of decline into established relationships. This study used the aforementioned studies as a starting point for understanding these relationships—how they developed and their meaning—and rephrased many of the same questions to best address the changed urban landscape and growth of the professional sport industry.⁴

Economic- or business-centered studies, the second area of scholarly literature, moved explorations of the sport-urban nexus into more contemporary times. The phenomenal growth of professional sport as an industry following WWII necessitated analysis of league expansions, rival league formations, franchise relocation, stadium politics, and free agency. A select few studies have added historical context into their understanding of the evolving sport market, but this has not often been the case. Instead, many studies maintain their focus on market theory and current industry issues. Mark Rosentraub’s *Major League Losers* and Michael Danielson’s *Home Team* delve into the

professional sports industry for these very purposes. Though valuable for sport management studies, the issues and trends they discuss fail to fully explain how present conditions have emerged. James Quirk and Rodney Fort's *Paydirt* and Charles Euchner's *Playing the Field* merge an understanding of the business of professional sport and a historical contextualization. Euchner's case studies of Chicago, Los Angeles, and Baltimore supplement his commentary on political and economic influences linking sport and the city. My study explores the historical development of professional sport, looking at the impact of political and economic trends on the business decisions entrepreneurs made.⁵

Finally, socio-cultural literature introduces another valuable interdisciplinary element into research on the sport-urban nexus. One of the key arguments made by city leaders is that having a professional sport franchise qualifies a place as *major league*. This places a city in elite company with other key markets and gives it a unique means of advertising. With a finite number of franchises and sports, *major league* designation is prized commodity in the construction of civic image. Sociologists and other socio-cultural scholars have investigated the creation of image through the use of sport, and subsequently the meaning it conveys onto a given community. In *Hockey Night in Canada*, Richard Gruneau and David Whitson argued how sport could reinforce a community's image. On a simpler level, sport was a vehicle for spreading a town's reputation. The presence of a professional team for a larger metropolitan area helped to

constitute “a modern urban culture” while also serving as an asset for attracting media attention and advertising the local economy. The larger body of inquiries into community identity and image are rooted in theoretical research that tends to stray from primary source research. These studies also have a penchant for addressing positive gains aspects of sport culture and image; that is, they look at situations where a city acquires a team, builds a stadium, or wins a championship, and is consequently glamorized by sport. One must ask, however, if it is possible for a sports franchise to positively impact community image through success and achievement, would it not also be possible for that franchise to have a negative impact if it is mired in losing. Brian Wilson and Philip White’s “Revive the Pride: Social Process, Political Economy, and a Fan-Based Grassroots Movement” is a rare examination that addresses the impact of loss, specifically the actions of a community following the loss of a football franchise. The representative qualities of sport need to be acknowledged in their every possible facet.⁶

Various primary sources, including manuscript collections from Cleveland’s mayors and several interviews, contributed to the overall framing of professional sport in Cleveland and the larger body of sport-urban literature. The information derived from these sources fleshed out aspects of the city’s development that directly and indirectly impacted its professional sports franchises. The Carl Stokes papers indicated the racial strife affecting Cleveland, its neighborhoods and its people, while the Browns were fraught with their own inner turmoil. The Ralph Perk papers contained communications

between the mayor's office and the Cleveland Browns organization leading up to the privatization of Municipal Stadium. Among primary sources, however, Cleveland's local press proved a most valuable asset. Four newspapers existed for all or part of 1945 to 1978: *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *The Cleveland Press*, *The Cleveland News*, and *The Call & Post*. This study relied heavily on newspapers while acknowledging their limitations, the biggest of which remains the question of how the text is interpreted. The author, especially when writing an op-ed piece or column, presents a point view that is created from his or her interpretation of the topic. In transition there remains a question of how the presented text will be interpreted by the reading audience. This does not even begin to address questions of the readership's numbers or demographic breakdown. Despite the validity of these concerns, this study used newspapers from the same perspective Michael Oriard presents in *Reading Football*. Oriard contends that football is a cultural text and that the newspapers and journals that have historically interpreted aspects of the game have the capacity to be a unique resource. These texts "bring us close the varied and changing meanings of an actual audience." On this assumption, this study researched newspapers to elicit information in five areas. First, they provided a linear narrative of events including names, dates, places, and direct quotes in most cases. Second, they imbedded professional sport within the broader framework of Cleveland's cultural text. Next, columns and articles presented arguments linking the place of sport in the creation and/or maintenance of civic image. Newspapers also were another resource

for viewing the emergence of individual entrepreneurs, complete with reactions from the media and public through readers' letters. Finally, the local press created and presented an image of sport and of Cleveland to its readership. The combination of these perspectives impacted every aim of this study.⁷

Support of the larger themes in this study came from a variety of secondary sources ranging from scholarly to non-academic, sport to non-sport. The greater part of these works cover topics related to Cleveland, being either local histories by scholars or popular histories written by journalists and local authors. In a similar vein to local newspapers, these works provide insight through detailed interpretations of events. There remains a need, subsequently, to be wary of a partisan bias in using these interpretations. A noticeable example came with the various books on the Cleveland Browns that were written and released following Art Modell's decision to move the franchise to Baltimore. While some books were tinted with an anti-Modell sentiment others instituted an apologetic reading as if to foreshadow the eventual franchise move. As with any historical work, this study tried to remain mindful of the motivations and affiliations of each author.

The Study: a City and a Reason

If it has not been made apparent from the introduction to this chapter, this study was a product of my own personal experiences and interests along with an opportunity to address a gap in the historical literature. Professional sport is an industry unlike any

other in America; one that connects to numerous issues of national culture. The development of this institution over the past century presented furthered a need to study these developments and their meanings. For this reason professional sport was made the primary focus, with the city serving as more than mere place but still a secondary subject. The research I conducted, the arguments presented, and the conclusions drawn had been done while making every attempt to avoid the same partisan bias in interpretation that I already mentioned. There were questions that need to be addressed and answered. First and foremost was the question upon which the value of this entire study rode: Why was Cleveland chosen and is it indeed qualified to be the focus of a study examining? Next, it was important to understand why professional sport was chosen and amateur, scholastic, and collegiate sports were excluded. In the wake of these questions lay others, essential to the overall argument, that looked beyond the established and prospering metropolis and shifted the focus instead to cities experiencing post-war urban crises. What happened to both city and sport once the modern city completed its development or began its decline? What was the new nature of the push-pull relationship (i.e. what did sport mean to the city and conversely what did the city mean to sport)? What was the importance of sport in the creation of image? What meanings were deciphered from the created image? At the center of all of these questions lay the very nature of the American city itself.

Cleveland, Ohio was the urban landscape chosen to extract the process and meaning of the negotiation of sport and the city. During the timeframe designated for

this study, Cleveland saw its economic and cultural growth come to screeching halts and soon regress. It went from the sixth largest city to the eleventh, with much of its population and industry fleeing to the suburbs and to the Sun Belt regions. While Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Detroit and several additional cities meet the criteria proposed in this study—an American metropolis, a home to several professional sport franchises, and a community embedded in Rust Belt culture—they do not possess all of the criteria that made Cleveland an ideal example. According to a local scholar, “Cleveland not only shared America’s urban crisis, it epitomized it.” The city’s long history of professional sports franchises is filled with individuals, events, and issues that convey different aspects of the sport-urban theme. Cleveland was home to three professional franchises in baseball, football, and hockey through almost all of the chosen timeline. There were both major league and minor league teams in this group. Sport was at the center of politician’s plans for downtown development, and the suburb’s plans to assert their growth and potential.⁸

Coinciding with the theme of urban decline, Cleveland sports underwent a decline of their own that I argue was unparalleled among its peers. Chicago Cubs fans and, until recently, Boston Red Sox fans formed identities from the respective failures of their beloved teams for almost a century. The cities of Chicago and Boston, however, experienced numerous championships in other sports during this drought, something Cleveland could not claim. This study chooses to focus on professional sports, and

primarily on the three that captured the attention and affections of the city's sports community: baseball, football, and ice hockey. Scholastic and collegiate athletics, as well as municipal recreation, also found themselves caught in the push-pull relationship between the city and sport. They were subject to shifts in population, questions of who was allowed to participate, and issues of recreational space and funding. However, they were omitted from this study because they lacked the cohesive elements transcended from the professional teams and did not affect the image of Cleveland on the same level. Within the city, the successes and supporters of the East Tech Scarabs, the St. Ignatius Wildcats, the Cleveland State University Vikings, or any of a number of municipal league teams may have created enthusiasm and pride, but this did not register much outside of these smaller communities. They did not possess thorough representational qualities that extended beyond neighborhood and parochial boundaries to impact Cleveland as a whole. Individuals and organizations with direct links to these teams took meaning from their accomplishments and therefore placed value on them. In a city fragmented by geography and race, however, the value of any such accomplishments was seldom appropriated on a city-wide level. Professional sports provide a more complete measuring stick in examining the impact of sport performance on the Cleveland.⁹

Sociologist Louis Wirth argued that the modern city could be viewed through three perspectives: physical structure, social organization, and state of mind. This approach was designed to give life to the concrete and steel mazes that had sprung up

across the American map. Each individual perspective defined a uniqueness that added to the overall image of what a city has come to represent. In later works by Melvin Adelman and especially Stephen Hardy, Wirth's three perspectives were elaborated upon to more conclusively present a city's wholeness and how it translated to studies of the sport-city nexus. Hardy interpreted the model from a physical education perspective that characterized the city as a living organism. Through the symbolic nature of its life forces, a city's communities and drives were more fully fleshed out. Hardy stated the following parallels: physical structure was the city's anatomy; social organization was its physiology; and shared beliefs acted as a soul. The development of this model for scholarly use enhanced past studies on the urban-sport nexus, especially those on the development of sport in nineteenth and early-twentieth century America. Its usefulness also extended into a possible study on city development during periods of urban decline. While the city underwent transformed, methods of observation and evaluation sustained their value.¹⁰

Scholarly treatment of the modern city—its development and image—continued to point towards an understanding beyond mere physical place. Kevin Lynch, in his classic study *The Image of the City*, stressed the importance of human action in defining the city. He argued that the city is an object which is perceived. The visual experience of the city combined public and environmental images to create familiarity and security from physical structures. Although different groups created their own memories through

different perspectives, the overlapping natures of these perspectives necessitated continuous negotiations. “A city is a multi-purpose, shifting organization, a text for many functions, raised by many hands and with relative speed,” he maintained. “Complete specialization, final meshing, is improbable and undesirable.”¹¹

More recent studies continued to stress the importance of human agency in defining the city, while also addressing issues of public perception and image creation. The decline of many American downtowns led to nostalgic recollections, but differences in power and authority dictated which visions became part of the dominant cultural vision. The city of the past became an idealized commodity for public consumption by some. The Roaring Twenties were among those eras in American history that fell into part of the Golden Era-label, yet those aspects that have been fondly recalled by numerous generations often overlook the racism of Jim Crow, the plight of poor immigrants, or women’s struggles for equality. The depiction of any era as an idealized vision of what American culture and the urban landscape should represent must be cautioned through a realization of broader social concerns and movements that fall outside of mainstream values. Reiterating the role of human agency, Isenberg believed that an interested public could critically engage the historical past to create alternative nostalgic visions. Nostalgia served a purpose for the many groups—neighborhoods, politicians, merchants—who had made an investment into it the city’s image. Larry Ford argued that a real decline of these downtowns in terms of their importance resulted in

romanticized and mythologized visions of the past city, and consequently led to the use of these visions as a blueprint for present development. The memories of the past and the reality of the present city met through the explosion of a mass-consumption society following WWII. Still, downtowns have a meaning the merges community with culture with consumption. Ford stated, "...downtowns represent who we are and who we have been and they represent massive investments over many decades."¹²

In this study, Wirth's perspectives were used as the framework for examination. Although some scholars argue that this model presents a romanticized picture of urban development, the division of these categories allowed for a nuanced exploration into the sport-city relationship. Physical structure comprised the city as place—the grid of buildings and streets and spaces where individuals work, live, and play. Social organization represented more than just the institutions and relationships that Wirth proposes. Instead, this perspective grasped the meaning of a community of diverse and interactive groups. Finally, the collective personality of a city came to represent, as was best possible, the shared norms and mores of the community that made a city unique. By overcoming the limitations of "place," scholarly examinations of the city expanded to redefine the city as a living organism complete with the possibilities of life, growth, sickness, and death. Referring back to Hardy once again, the ebb and flow of life forces that made up the city structure in all of its totality and complexity dictated the push-pull relationship that emerged between the city and the cultural institution of sport. The place

of sport within the means of community-building emerged from the many causes and effects of the living city.

Advancing the notion of the “total” city that Wirth proposed and Hardy expanded upon, the city as an organism was therefore viewed as an individual within a community of other cities. As an individual the city strove for recognition and prominence among its peers. Image, perhaps the most valuable commodity in a culture of consumption, rose to the forefront as a means to establishing value. Professional sport functioned as a commodity that ideally enhanced the image of a city, both for its own sake and in comparison to its peers in the community. A current scholarly trend in sport sociology and sport management has been to quantify and qualify the value of a sports franchise to a city. While these studies ascribe what it means to be a “major league” city, they fail to look at the possible damage caused by unsuccessful sport teams.¹³

The examination of Cleveland that follows covers three periods defined by both sport and the city’s post-war transformation: the good, 1945-1954; the bad, 1955-1967; and the ugly, 1968-1978. 1978 was chosen as the ending point because of its symbolic nature in the demise of Cleveland—the year the city went into default. Creatively borrowing from a classic spaghetti Western, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” was befitting not only of the study’s chronological aspects, but also of its thematic investigations. Coincidentally, the original intent to approach this study through a linear examination gave way to a thematic study that mirrored Wirth’s model. The “Good”

years told of the strengthening of the physical structure of Cleveland sports. The “Bad” revealed the weakening of the social organization of each franchise. Finally, the “Ugly” spoke of individual entrepreneurs whose actions immensely impacted Cleveland’s attitude.

The first section—“The Good”—looked at the years immediately following World War II, which witnessed a continuation of wartime prosperity and an unparalleled era of sporting success among Cleveland’s professional franchises. Conversely, it set the stage for the eventual hardships and decline Cleveland underwent over the following three decades. Players such as Bob Feller returned from service to strengthen old rosters while others stocked the Browns’ first roster. The most important individuals to these clubs, however, were their owners. Al Sutphin remained the driving force behind the powerful Barons hockey team until he left the sport in 1949. He was soon joined in Cleveland by the colorful Bill Veeck, who purchased the Indians, and Arthur McBride, who owned the city’s newest football team, the Browns. Veeck brought an innovative approach to stocking his team and marketing it to the public. McBride brought Coach Paul Brown to town, and the city’s only sporting dynasty was under way. Perhaps the most important developments during this time were the signings of Larry Doby by the Indians and Bill Willis and Marion Motley by the Browns. Respectively they integrated the American League and contributed to the reintegration of professional football. Cleveland dubbed itself the “City of Champions” following three championships in 1948,

and sport was at the center of civic pride and a symbol of Cleveland's image. The years that followed brought continued success and a few championships, but the magic of the era was never recaptured.

The second section—The Bad—covered each team separately as they traveled with Cleveland down differing paths of decline from the mid-1950s through most of the 1960s. The Indians underwent a rapid decline resulting from the turmoil of unstable ownership groups that revolved as much as management on the field and the players themselves. Even in periods of prosperity, this instability undermined the organization through infighting and poor decision making. Fan identity with the Indians was made worse in 1960 when local icon Rocky Colavito was traded in his prime. His departure meant initial anger and frustration, but has since been tied to the club's demise—the Curse of Colavito. The Barons failed to gain NHL status under Sutphin, but tried again under new general manager Jim Hendy in the early 1950s. Arguably the most dominant hockey franchise not in the NHL, and perhaps the most successful in Cleveland, the Barons highly publicized expansion application in 1952 met with a resounding “no.” A city that considered itself ‘major league’ in every aspect, and especially in professional sport, grew less and less fond of its ‘minor league’ hockey team. As the 1960s draw to a close, the Barons were dismissed by many sports fans who continued to hold out for a major league team. Finally, the intersection of racial tensions and football in the 1960s made its way into the fabric of the Cleveland Browns. Jim Brown's arrival to the team

marked an era of a new type of athlete in Cleveland. His outspoken nature and frankness upset many fans and members of the media who viewed him as a black radical. The city's racial tensions came to a head in two separate race riots in Cleveland neighborhoods during the mid-to-late 1960s, and two incidents on the Browns showed the levels of racial tension that were dividing the team. Although these incidents were resolved, albeit in somewhat controversial manners, racial disharmony continued to divide the city and haunt the Browns franchise.

The final section (The Ugly) looked at Cleveland's two dominant sports entrepreneurs in the 1970s: Nick Mileti and Art Modell. Concerns over their allegiance to Cleveland emerged through their business endeavors within and outside of professional sport, yet through it all they continued to posit themselves as champions of the city's image. Mileti came from the city's southeast side and epitomized local pride, but eventually moved his franchises from downtown to the suburbs. This further depleted Cleveland's ability to draw consumers downtown for entertainment. The methods through which he financed his empire drew initial public praise for stabilizing Cleveland sport, but later exposed an ill-managed system that put city's major league image in danger. Modell came to Cleveland in 1961 labeled as a carpetbagger. He overcame this image and became one of the most respected and popular civic leaders of the 1970s. Modell overcame firing the legendary Paul Brown by winning an NFL Championship, but sought to make his the image that dominated his football team. He

used his football connection and popularity to extend his business opportunities outside of the sports realm. The decisions he made then, I believe, paved the way for his financial collapse that resulted in moving the Browns to Baltimore.

CHAPTER 2

PRE-WWII CLEVELAND:

A CITY IN TRANSITION

On July 22, 1796 General Moses Cleaveland arrived with a surveying party at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, which fed into Lake Erie in the Northwest Territory. He had been commissioned by the Connecticut Land Company to survey the site, which was already determined to be the future capital of the Connecticut Western Reserve. With that the town of Cleaveland was born. Surveyors envisioned commercial potential for the site because of the navigability of the river for five to ten miles (depending on ship size), and felt that Lake Erie and the Ohio River would be easily connected through portage between the Cuyahoga and the Muskingum River to the south. But while the towns along the Ohio River grew and prospered, Cleveland¹ remained a rather quiet canal town. A century later, the situation was decidedly different. Cleveland had grown into the economic and cultural center of Ohio. The quiet canal town was a growing industrial and commercial power that epitomized the urban growth of the Industrial Revolution. Cleveland's population had also grown dramatically by this time. Census figures showed that it doubled from 1850 to 1860, and then again in 1870. At that time Cleveland was the fifteenth largest city in the United States with 92,829 residents. A good portion of this population growth was directly linked to the influx of immigrants

who were responsible for reshaping the city's culture from the Yankee model it was born into to a multi-ethnic metropolis.²

Cleveland continued its growth into the twentieth century. The early decades showed a dramatically rising population that propelled the city to the fifth largest city in America with just under 800,000 residents in 1920, over double the 381,768 Clevelanders recorded in the 1900 census. Over one third of Clevelanders were foreign born, with large numbers of Italians, Poles, and Hungarians arriving in the city during this time and adding to the multi-ethnic flavor that included large populations of Czechs, Germans, Russians, and Jews. The search for employment and better living conditions in accordance with the ideals of the American Dream held by so many immigrants was realized instead in hard labor and the residential limitations of cramped apartments and tenements. Immigrants were not simply resigned to settlement in toxic environs in foreign settings. Although some found a tremendous disassociation between the Old and New Worlds, many found hints of home in established or growing ethnic neighborhoods. Dirk Hoerder, in *Identity, Conflict, and Cooperation: Central Europeans in Cleveland, 1850-1930*, surmises that immigrants found, "the old world existing in the new yet different, the new world to be understood with the emotions, values, and experiences of the old."³

Cleveland's suburbs benefited to some extent from the central city's increasingly overcrowded living conditions. Bordering cities picked up some of the immigrant

overflow, but more distant suburbs attracted established families looking to escape from the chaos of the industrial city. The aftermath of World War I (WWI) revealed the first signs of rapid suburban growth and a decelerated rate for Cleveland. Advancements in transportation, namely the automobile, and communication in the twentieth century also encouraged the process along. Between 1910 and 1930 Cuyahoga County's population grew to 1,201,455, essentially doubling in the process. More important, and a foreshadowing of a much greater problem, was the decline of Cleveland's population as a percentage of the county as a whole. Although portions of several suburbs had been incorporated into Cleveland, many more were growing or setting the foundation for future growth. Cleveland's future attempts to annex outlying cities were rejected by the expanding suburbs. The 1932 annexation of Miles Heights Village was the last such venture and set Cleveland's size at 76 square miles.⁴

Cleveland's black population also grew during this period. A large migration of blacks left the South to escape both poverty and prejudice, and made their way north to the industrial hotbeds of the Midwest. For much of the nineteenth century, Cleveland's black population remained small; never exceeding two percent of the city's total population from 1850 to 1910, yet the actual number of residents grew from 224 to 8,488. The slow growth of the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth centuries exploded between 1910 and 1920, when the black population increased 308% to 34,451. The vast majority settled on Cleveland's east side. By 1930 there were 71,889 blacks residing in

Cleveland, making up eight percent of the total population. While the black population had integrated throughout Cleveland with little consequence when numbers were smaller in the nineteenth century, historians Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler point out that the increased population led to more centralized and concentrated patterns of settlement. For both immigrants and black migrants, their increased numbers brought additional awareness from the established population and more noticeable forms of discrimination. In the course of struggling for social legitimacy, these groups formed well-defined neighborhood settlements and cultural identities. Eventually, the continued increase in the black population and a necessary expansion of living space placed these groups in direct contact, and led to heated conflicts later in the century.⁵

The twentieth century also saw the continued growth of Cleveland's importance as a national power and Progressive urban model. Iron and steel continued to be the primary industries, followed by foundries and machine shops. Cleveland also moved to the forefront of national transportation technology with both aviation and the automobile industry. The diversified nature of the local economy was strong and increased the prospects of prosperity, despite keeping Cleveland from rising to the foreground of national attention in one field like Detroit (automobiles), Pittsburgh (steel), or even Akron (rubber). The wealth accrued through these industries enabled the city to give itself a needed facelift in various stages. The Group Plan of 1903, aspects of which will be discussed in greater detail later, infused Progressive Era ideology into the

redevelopment of Cleveland's downtown. By the mid-1920s, construction in accordance with that plan had produced a new city hall, court house, board of education headquarters, public library, post office, and public hall. Additional construction projects produced the Union Terminal (better known as the Terminal Tower), which remains the most recognizable icon of Cleveland architecture, and the Ohio Bell Telephone Building. The tradeoff from dilapidated buildings and slums in the heart of downtown to shiny, new skyscrapers symbolized an era of prosperity and vision, and gave Cleveland confidence that it was moving forward with no foreseeable end in sight. Yet one needed only look at Euclid Avenue, stretching east from Public Square in the heart of downtown to E. 105th Street, to be made aware of negative possibilities. Through the industrial boom of the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Euclid Avenue was considered to be one of the most beautiful streets in the world, let alone America. Mansions housing some of the wealthiest industrialists and entrepreneurs, including John D. Rockefeller, added to the picturesque visions of the tree-lined street. But following World War I many of these illustrious homes were abandoned as families moved to wealthy suburbs or to new cities altogether. Still, Cleveland was immersed in a new euphoria by the 1920s as it grew into a major American metropolis and saw no limit to its prospects. For many, the rising population and ever-present wealth were social "givens" that would pass from generation to generation.⁶

The Terminal Tower opened on October 23, 1929, and conveyed visions of a prosperous and grandiose future for Cleveland. Six days later, the stock market crashed and with it fell Cleveland's hopes. Former *Plain Dealer* editor Philip Porter argued that the Depression hit Cleveland harder than most cities. "The bottom dropped out," he said, "and there seemed to be not bottom to the bottom." Recalling bank failures, business closures, and lost jobs, he called the downward spin "sickening" and believed Cleveland, on a collective level, entered into a state of depression that was as low as the highs had been high a decade earlier. Almost 100,000 Cleveland workers were unemployed by January 1931 and relief efforts only slowed the downward spiral. County work relief, amounting to nearly \$200,000,000 between 1928 and 1937, was only one-sixth of the normal wages lost during that time. Cuyahoga County residents in need of aid or work relief escalated from 3,499 in 1928 to 77,565 in 1936. The economic hardships of the 1930s, while impacting those living throughout the county, were felt in different ways in and outside of Cleveland. Those living in the suburbs tended to be much less hard hit than those in the central city, where poorer economic areas felt the worst hardships. Subsequently, the appeal of suburban life drew more residents from Cleveland into the surrounding communities. The 1930 census showed the population at 900,429, but also indicated that residents moved away from the center of the city to the outskirts, if not to a new city completely. By 1940 Cleveland would experience its first recorded loss in population. The stage was being set for the city's black and ethnic communities and the

growing suburbs to come into conflict in more extensive manners. Indeed, civic leaders and city planners took note of these issues and knew they must be addressed in the post-war years.⁷

EARLY PROFESSIONAL SPORT IN CLEVELAND

Cleveland's rise as an industrial metropolis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was centered on a new and diverse population as well as the rise in industrial opportunities. As labor fell under the auspices of Progressive Era ideology and reform movements, Clevelanders found themselves with increased leisure and ability to turn to various forms of recreation to fill that time. Economic class invariably played a role in contouring an individual or group's choice of recreational activity. While ethnic groups turned to gymnastics and track activities in Turners and Sokols, and wealthier classes enjoyed status-inducing, country club sports such as horse and carriage racing, polo, golf and tennis, Cleveland was no different than other cities in a growing fondness for baseball. Amateur baseball was a popular pastime with many participants as well as spectators, including an incredible crowd of over 100,000 fans for an inter-city league championship at Brookside Park in 1915. Professional baseball became an acceptable activity after overcoming negative connotations that it was a working class game and an aberration of amateur ideals (because participants were paid for their participation). Other sports followed that pattern. In later years football, primarily at the high school and collegiate levels, and ice hockey would also find increasing popularity in Cleveland.

By the onset of World War II (WWII) ice hockey, football, and especially baseball emerged as the staples of Cleveland's professional sports scene.⁸

Baseball

Professional sport had called Cleveland home since 1869 when the 300 member Forest City Baseball Club hired three professionals in hopes of improving the team's performance. A 25 to 6 loss to the Cincinnati Red Stockings in their first professional game that same year suggested more improvement was needed. Baseball grew as an amateur sport, and its popularity then made way for a natural progression into a professional sport. Cleveland's shift from village to metropolis embraced the presence of professional sport as a sign of its growth. Entrepreneurs saw this growth as an opportunity to introduce new entertainment ventures to the city's residents with disposable income. Still, support and stability could not be presupposed for the teams themselves. This was evident in the constant shuffle of new franchises and new leagues, each with a limited lifespan. In all, there were three different incarnations of the Forest City Club. The first was the aforementioned amateur/professional team that played in the National Association of Professional Baseball Players and folded in 1872. The second incarnation joined the National League in 1879, but withdrew from the league in 1885 after only three winning seasons in six years. The final Forest City squad joined the American Association in 1887, but changed its name to the Cleveland Spiders when it switched to the National League in 1889. In 1899 the National League dropped the

Spiders and several other weaker franchises in an effort to strengthen itself. Professional baseball appeared to be dead in Cleveland.⁹

Ban Johnson's American League gave Cleveland another chance at hosting a professional team, and in 1901 the Bluebirds became a charter member of baseball's new major league. Charles Somers and John F. Kilfoyl were the new owners and they purchased League Park, the former home of the Spiders located on Cleveland's east side. Success was not immediate, despite Somers' deep pockets, which had bankrolled several American League franchises during the league's early years. Somers' financial support of the Philadelphia Athletics was repaid when they found themselves in a legal battle with their National League counterparts after signing former Phillies star Napoleon Lajoie. After it became clear the Phillies and the courts would not let Lajoie play for the Athletics, Connie Mack transferred the star second baseman to Cleveland. The addition of Lajoie to the roster during the 1902 season gave Cleveland a marquee player to follow, and the subsequent public interest guaranteed the team's survival during the early years. Prior to the 1908 season Cleveland had a chance to acquire another star player, but Somers shied away from the Detroit Tigers' offer of Ty Cobb fearing that the malcontent outfielder would disrupt the locker room. Cleveland passed on the offer and Cobb's Tigers went on to win the American League by a half game. Despite the failure to capture an American League pennant, Cleveland baseball grew in popularity and home attendance broke 400,000 for the first time. This justified Mayor Tom Johnson's

decision to post a bulletin board on Public Square in the heart of downtown so that citizens could get team updates. Professional baseball was cultivating a following among Clevelanders with leisure time and disposable income.¹⁰

Following the 1914 season Lajoie, who argued with the new Cleveland manager, requested and received a trade. The franchise subsequently needed to change its name (the Naps) and Somers formed a committee of local baseball writers to choose the new name. Suggestions proved to be moot, however, as Somers settled on the name he wanted all along: Indians. With a new nickname in place, Cleveland entered a new era, but more changes were on the horizon. Somers was going into debt and the banks informed him that the only way to salvage his coal companies and personal finances was to sell the Indians. In 1915 he traded “Shoeless” Joe Jackson to the Chicago White Sox for three players and a needed \$31,500, but his financial woes continued. By 1916 he was roughly \$1,750,000 in debt and sold the Indians to a group headed by Chicago businessman James Dunn. An immediate infusion of money helped revive the franchise. The acquisition of Tris Speaker from the Boston Red Sox brought new star power to the team, improving the performance on the field and attendance in the stands. Four years later Dunn’s Indians experienced the success they never achieved during Somers’ tenure. They captured their first American League pennant and went on to defeat the Brooklyn Dodgers, five games to two, in World Series championship. The achievement fit nicely with Cleveland’s growth into a major American metropolis and industrial center.¹¹

The Indians' march to the 1920 pennant was marked by a tragedy unparalleled in major league history. In an August game against the New York Yankees in the Polo Grounds, Indians' shortstop Ray Chapman was struck in the left temple by a Carl Mays pitch. The popular Chapman's skull was fractured on one side, he had a concussion on the other, and he had broken his neck. One day later Chapman died, becoming the first and only major league player to die from injuries sustained in the course of a game. Nine years earlier Cleveland pitching ace Addie Joss had been diagnosed with tubercular meningitis. Joss had developed into one of the American League's best pitchers, and along with Lajoie was an essential component to the Indians' success. Although Joss was present at spring training, despite a fainting spell during spring training, the disease had taken its toll. Joss died on April 11, 1911 at the age of 31. The loss of Joss and then Chapman foreshadowed future tragedy in the Indians organization that would again include the death of players.¹²

In the aftermath of the 1920 World Series the Indians returned to a middle-of-the-pack team. From 1921 to 1945, they found themselves over ten games back of the pennant winner all but three times. The Indians were a lower division team for much of the 1920s, and improved to almost constant third and fourth place finishes in the 1930s, but the elusive American League pennant that took them twenty years to capture still eluded them for over two decades following 1920's World Series team. Attendance dropped as well following the 1920 season, and occasional upward spikes were not

sustained. Their revenues were better than most of American League teams, but between 1920 and 1945 the Indians and White Sox were the only clubs outside of the New York Yankees and Tigers that earned \$100,000 in revenue as many as seven times. Changes in personnel also took the Indians in new directions. Tris Speaker was immersed in a gambling scandal following the 1926 season along with Ty Cobb. Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis cleared both, but made them resign from their respective player-manager situations, although Speaker played two more seasons before retiring. In June 1922, Jimmy Dunn passed away, and ownership of the team passed to his widow Edith, who held the majority of stock. E. S. Barnard, the Indians general manager, took over franchise operations for her and was under orders to find a new owner.¹³

In 1927 a group of wealthy Clevelanders, described as “The Millionaires” by *Press* writer Franklin Lewis, purchased the Indians from the Dunn estate for \$1,000,000. Local real estate tycoon Alva Bradley was made president, while his colleagues John Sherwin, Sr. (banking) and A.C. Ernst (accounting), as well as Bradley’s brother Chuck, formed the ownership syndicate. The deal was lauded by the Cleveland media, who spread a sense of relief that the Indians were again in the hands of local ownership. Bradley’s tenure as Indians’ boss was most assuredly impacted by the Great Depression. The vast crowds he envisioned flocking to newly built Cleveland Municipal Stadium no longer had the disposable income to attend baseball games. He moved games back to

League Park over concerns that he was losing money at the stadium, and even ceased radio broadcasting of games because he thought it kept fans out of the seats.¹⁴

In July 1935, Indians scout C.C. Slapnicka signed a teenage pitcher out of Van Meter, Iowa named Robert Feller. One year later Feller started his Major League career by striking out 15 batters against the St. Louis Browns. Although the manner of signing and assigning Feller to the Indians violated Major League rules and was taken to the commissioner following the 1936 season, Feller and his father, Bill, made it clear that Cleveland was where Bob would play. Landis feared the threat of a civil suit by Bill Feller so he allowed Robert to stay with Cleveland. Over the next five seasons, Feller led the American League in E.R.A. once, wins three times, and strikeouts four times. WWII and Feller's sense of duty took him from the Indians from 1942 until late in the 1945 season, but his return helped usher in a new era of Cleveland baseball.¹⁵

Football

Professional football's growth differed immensely from that of baseball. Unlike professional baseball, professional football did not gain widespread, public acceptance or surpass its college counterpart in popularity until after WWII. Although Northeast Ohio was a hotbed during professional football's formative years, high-school and collegiate games dominated Cleveland football in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. The amateur game, however, lacked organization and was hurt by the presence of individuals who were paid for their play. The eventual formation of the Ohio High School Athletic

Association and National Collegiate Athletic Association in the early twentieth century brought structure and rules, and cleaned up the images of scholastic and collegiate football. Professional football, however, still faced these problems and the accompanying public perceptions. Also, losing records, poor fan attendance, and financial woes plagued professional football in Cleveland from its inception in 1916 through the presence of the Cleveland Rams, the last professional team before the inception of the Cleveland Browns. These teams attempted to gain local favor through a variety of methods, but the presence of an individual with Cleveland roots seemed to be foremost. The Cleveland Indians football club used the local ties of co-owner Gene Parratt, who was a former Case Institute football star. The Cleveland Bulldogs (1923-1928) banked on the presence of quarterback Benny Friedman, a former prep star from Glenville High School, to draw local support. As historian John Grabowski argued, entrepreneurs who tried to capitalize on the city's economic prosperity and the booming consumer culture of the 1920s found that professional football could not compete with the high school and college games, as well as professional baseball. The onset of the Great Depression further impeded any entrepreneurial efforts to bring a stable pro franchise to Cleveland.¹⁶

In 1936 former Ohio State University football player Damon Wetzel led a group of investors including Cleveland attorney Homer Marshman in purchasing a Cleveland franchise in the second incarnation of the American Football League. Wetzel's first

ownership group collapsed when financial backing fell through. Believing that a half-hearted attempt to bring professional football back to Cleveland would not only fail but also kill future prospects for a successful franchise, he was determined to wait a year and then seek entry into the National Football League. Marshman's financial backing allowed Wetzel to follow through on his plans for a professional team. Reportedly, the team was to be named "Indians" for the sake of local sport's familiarity, and don scarlet and gray uniforms in honor of Ohio State. Wetzel, however, was rumored to have been a fan of the Fordham University Rams while growing up, and he changed the name with Marshman's approval. The Cleveland Rams were successful on the gridiron in their first season, finishing second, but struggled financially. The following year the Rams paid \$10,000 to the National Football League and became an expansion franchise. They also put together additional funding to bankroll the team, but success did not follow. The Rams won 14, lost 28, and tied 2 games in their first four seasons, and played some games at 10,000 seat Shaw High School stadium.¹⁷

On June 11, 1941 the team was purchased by Daniel R. Reeves, a 30 year old executive of the Telenews Theater chain and scion of Safeway Supermarket, and Frederick Levy, Jr, president of the Photo Developing Co. of Cincinnati and Camden, N.J. purchased the Rams for a reputed \$140,000, with Reeves holding two-thirds of the stock and Levy purchasing the remaining one-third. This was the first sports venture for either man. Prior to the purchase there was concern that Reeves, from New York City,

and Levy, from Kentucky, would move the franchise out of Cleveland. Reeves put those concerns to rest upon completing the purchase. “Originally we contemplated taking the Rams to Boston,” Reeves acknowledged, citing the advantages of placing the team on the East Coast where football crowds and financing had more stability. He went on to admit that negotiations stalled and some of the Boston-based financial backing pulled out. Reeves reassured the Cleveland media of his commitment to the city, saying, “As long as Cleveland wants pro football, it shall have it and I am confident that the fans here are happy the team is staying in Cleveland.” But the Rams reportedly struggled through the war years, even suspending play for the 1943 season, and Reeves always kept an eye on new cities for his team. In 1942 Reeves was presented with an offer that hinted at Cleveland’s football future. Arthur “Mickey” McBride, a local taxi cab magnate who also had connections to a wire syndicate, offered to purchase the Rams from Reeves, who had bought out Levy by that time. Reeves refused, but this was only the beginning of McBride’s activity in Cleveland football. The future of professional football in Cleveland remained cloudy during the war years, much like it had been the previous four decades. The best, however, was yet to come.¹⁸

Ice Hockey

Ice hockey first arrived in Cleveland in the late nineteenth century, and soon became a popular amateur sport. Along with that of ice skating, hockey’s popularity warranted the construction of the Elysium ice house. The first organized game was

played on December 3, 1907 in front of approximately 1,200 “doubting Thomases” according to *News* sports editor Ed Bang. In the 1920 s Cleveland fielded a team in the United States Amateur Hockey League, the Cleveland Blues, but the team folded in 1925. Reports claimed that the team’s and league’s downfalls resulted from player salaries becoming “too professional” and stars jumping to the National Hockey League (NHL). While Bang refers to these early teams as “professional,” all other accounts note that Cleveland teams were always part of amateur leagues. This changed in November 1929.¹⁹

Harry “Hap” Holmes, a former NHL goaltender, brought professional hockey to Cleveland in 1929 when he moved the International League’s Hamilton, Ontario franchise to the city. Despite the economic hardships brought on by the Great Depression, Holmes believed he could sell Clevelanders on the popular amusement of ice hockey. The presence of 50,000 Canadians living in the city also boosted hope for a fervent fan base. On November 16, 1929 the Cleveland Indians (Holmes named the franchise after the baseball club to capitalize on local name recognition) played the first professional hockey game in the city’s history. The presence of the International League team was welcomed, but the local sports media was quick to note that Cleveland would not be satisfied staying in the minor leagues. “Cleveland is going to have professional hockey this winter,” wrote the *Press*’s Stuart Bell. “It isn’t going to get the kind of hockey it had dreamed about, but it is getting hockey and that is something.” Noting that

a suitable arena was the only factor keeping Cleveland out of the NHL, Bell all but promised that ascension to the major league was coming in the future. An editorial in the *Plain Dealer* avoided discussions of the future, and instead set its sights on the present importance of professional hockey as a community asset to Cleveland.²⁰

The Indians found immediate success on the ice, winning the championship in each of its first two seasons. The Depression's impact, however, made such success short-lived. Teddy Oke, one of Holmes' primary financial backers, went bankrupt along with the bank holding the Indians' operating capital. After three years of financial losses and an inability to sell Cleveland sports fans on professional hockey, Holmes looked to sell the franchise as financial losses continued to mount. Franklin "Whitey" Lewis, sports editor for the *Cleveland Press*, was one of several local individuals Holmes turned to in his efforts to locate a buyer. Lewis was a huge ice hockey fan, and hoped to secure someone with enough business sense and knowledge of the Cleveland sports scene to keep hockey in the city. He recommended Al Sutphin, vice president of the Braden-Sutphin Ink Company. Sutphin's sports background and business acumen led Lewis to believe that he was an ideal choice to take over ownership of the struggling team. At Cleveland's Central High School, Sutphin played varsity baseball and football and was a sports correspondent to the *Cleveland News*. In 1932 Mayor Ray T. Miller named him Cleveland's Boxing and Wrestling Commissioner. Sutphin even had hockey ties dating back to high school where he played goaltender and as a child when he engaged in games

of shinny on the pond. Lewis convinced Sutphin to resign his commissioner's post and pursue the ownership of a minor league hockey franchise. Holmes and Sutphin entered into several lengthy negotiating sessions and on October 26, 1934 the sale of the Indians and Elysium was completed. Holmes stayed on as a team official, Sutphin renamed the franchise the Falcons, and Cleveland hockey was given a new life.²¹

Past predictions that Cleveland was a modern arena short of getting an NHL franchise seemed to gain validation with Sutphin's new ice palace. On the eve of the groundbreaking, the *Plain Dealer* reported that the NHL had offered Sutphin the chance to purchase the Montreal Maroons and relocate them to Cleveland. The NHL liked the Cleveland market, and saw it as a natural connection between New York and Chicago. The report did not offer a specific sales price, but called the figure "very attractive." Sutphin announced that he would not make a decision immediately, instead choosing to take a few months to weigh the pros and cons. While he believed it was a rare opportunity to get a major league team intact, thus avoiding the turmoil of building up a team, Sutphin also wanted to concentrate on the Arena and stabilize business there after its opening. Based on later flirtations with the NHL, it is reasonable to assume the he was also leery of paying major league salaries, especially during the Depression. One report over a decade later indicated that NHL moguls, responding to Sutphin's concerns for acquiring players, offered to sell him only their worst talent. Sutphin eventually

declined the NHL's offer, but this was the first in a string of flirtation involving the NHL, Sutphin, and Cleveland.²²

A newspaper contest to rename the franchise took place in the summer of 1937 as the franchise looked to christen its new arena with a new name. The Cleveland Hockey Club formally offered \$1,000 in cash prizes to the winners of the contest, with a \$500 grand prize. "Barons" was chosen, a symbol of Cleveland's aristocratic place (or perhaps more appropriately its desire) in the hockey world. Along with a new name and new arena, Sutphin also brought in a new coach. Bill Cook, one of the most dominant wingers in the NHL during his 12 years with the New York Rangers, retired after the 1936-37 season. Sutphin consulted Rangers general manager Lester Patrick about Cook's coaching potential. With a strong endorsement from Patrick, Sutphin made a handshake deal with Cook. Sutphin acquired the players and Cook shaped them into a quality hockey team. Between 1937 and 1944 the Barons qualified for the playoffs all but one season, and twice won championships (the 1938-39 and 1940-41 seasons). While the teams that Sutphin put on the ice during these early years were truly successful, it was that ice itself that marked Sutphin's greatest contribution to hockey and Cleveland.

EARLY PROFESSIONAL SPORTS IN CLEVELAND: FACILITIES

A city's architectural design is an essential component of not only its physical destiny, but also of its social organization and image. Cleveland's pattern of architectural development, dating back to its nineteenth century industrial development, illustrates a

paradox in ideology and practice, of community and industry, and to some extent in tradition and progress. Edmund Chapman cited a pervading conservatism in architectural development through much of the nineteenth century, and felt that its influence retarded Cleveland's growth. He argued more specifically that land usage was caught between public interest and economic policy. As a result, land downtown and along the lakefront was designated for industrial and retail use rather than being set aside for residential and recreational usage. The Group Plan of 1903, commissioned by Mayor Tom Johnson and designed by urban planner Daniel Burnham, took a bold first step towards reordering downtown Cleveland. Steeped in Progressive Era ideology, the Group Plan sought to combine function and beauty in a series of new public buildings and open spaces. A new city hall, court house, public library, post office, and convention hall were built and several pedestrian malls set aside by 1920. A renewal of construction and development hit Cleveland over the next decade, the pinnacle of Cleveland's wealth. As the tower of the Terminal Union Complex rose above the existing skyline, the timing seemed perfect for a sports related construction project.²³

League Park/Dunn Field

The escalation in Cleveland's fondness for professional baseball in the nineteenth century culminated in the need for permanent structures to house the game. Pro teams had been playing on fields in city parks and local amusement parks, but in 1891 Cleveland Spiders' owner Charles De Haas Robison gave his team a home of its own. In

the previous year the Payne Avenue ballpark where Cleveland played was struck by lightning during a game, leaving the grandstand splintered. Robison quickly searched for an alternate location for a new facility. On May 1, National League Park (later shortened to League Park) opened to a sellout crowd of 9,000 fans who saw Cy Young and the Spiders beat Cincinnati on the corner of E. 66th Street (formerly Dunham) and Lexington Avenue in Cleveland's east side. The new park aided not only Robison's baseball team, but also the Payne and Superior streetcar lines he co-owned with his brother. League Park had a stop located on two of Robison's trolley lines, and fans were a twenty foot walk away from the ballpark. Robison was not alone in having his hands in both baseball and the trolley business. The traditional link between the amusement industry and baseball was mirrored by transportation firms and baseball in the nineteenth century. Approximately fifteen percent of businessmen involved in baseball also possessed ties to transportation. League Park served Robison well as his Spiders who won the Temple Cup in 1895 after finishing second during the regular season. Robison purchased a franchise in St. Louis following the 1898 season, and sought to sell his Cleveland franchise. Unable to do so, he moved the most talented players on the Spiders to St. Louis in 1899. The Spiders, depleted of stars Cy Young and Jesse Burkett, went on to lose 134 games that year. Clevelanders stayed away from League Park in droves, forcing Robison to move many home games to the away team's park. In total, an estimated 6,000 people attended games at League Park through the entire season. The National

League subsequently eliminated its Cleveland franchise along with several others following the season, leaving League Park without a tenant. Charles Somers and his new American League franchise purchased the ballpark from Robison and the National League as part of a territorial compromise between the two leagues for the Chicago market, and in 1901 baseball returned.²⁴

Within the first decade of the new century, architects began to develop improvements in ballpark safety and design through the use of steel and concrete. The use of these materials not only modernized ballparks to new include new fireproof standards, but also commented on the acceptance of baseball as a more permanent part of American culture. Ballparks were no longer temporary structures, but instead were built into neighborhoods with long-term ambitions in mind. League Park fell victim to baseball's popularity in Cleveland in 1903 according to one *Plain Dealer* article. Commenting on the huge crowds attending games in April, the article noted that temporary bleachers constructed to meet this excessive demand had collapsed, injuring two in the process. With crowds of 20,000 attempting to fit into the 9,000 to 12,000 seat League Park, an upsizing was in the near future. In 1909 Somers addressed both baseball's increased popularity and new construction technology and had League Park renovated. The seating capacity was increased from 9,000 to 21,000, and a concrete and steel foundation replaced the wooden grandstands and pavilion in order to avoid the problems of fire plaguing other parks around this time. Individual box seats were added

to go along with the benches used for general admission, and new bleachers in left field, where the old wooden fence was replaced with a new one made of twenty feet of concrete topped with twenty feet of screen. Under the direction of Architect Frank B. Meade and the Cleveland-based Osborn Engineering Company, construction began shortly after the 1908 season ended. Winter storms and the delays they caused made the renovation a rush job, but construction was completed by the start of the following season, at a final cost approximately \$325,000. Over the next three decades, League Park was the unquestioned home of professional baseball in Cleveland. The Negro American League's Cleveland Buckeyes began play at League Park in 1942, although barnstorming games with Negro League players first played there in 1931. Football also called League Park home at various points, with the Cleveland Bulldogs and Rams of the professional ranks, and the Baldwin Wallace, Case, Western Reserve, and John Carroll collegiate teams all playing home games there. The Ram's departure to Los Angeles following the 1945 season relegated League Park to being only a practice field for the Cleveland Browns of the All America Football Conference who played its home games in Municipal Stadium. When the Indians moved their home games to the new stadium on a full-time basis in 1947, League Park was consigned to a life without major league tenants. Cleveland purchased League Park in 1951, and demolished all but the right field grandstand and ticket booth shortly thereafter.²⁵

The Elysium & Arena

The respective popularities of ice hockey and skating also brought about the need for a new facility for residents to either take part in recreational versions or watch others participate in games. “Popcorn king” Dudley S. Humphrey, a local entrepreneur who owned Euclid Beach Park, answered this need in 1907 when he built an ice house on the city’s east side. Located at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East 107th Street, the Elysium cost \$150,000 and was the third largest indoor ice rink in America at the time of its construction. When Holmes moved his hockey team to Cleveland from Hamilton, Ontario in 1929, the Elysium automatically became its new home. Stuart Bell of the *Cleveland Press* noted upon Holmes’ arrival that local sports promoters had long wanted to build a new arena for hockey, boxing, wrestling, and other indoor activities, but feared the city’s reaction. Cleveland’s Public Hall was the primary location for boxing, and any new arena would become immediate competition. Promoters felt that the city would be quick to ban boxing if it started to lose bouts to a private facility. Although a new arena did not accompany the arrival of professional hockey, the Elysium received a facelift to update it with the modern needs of the game. 2,000 seats were added, pushing the overall capacity closer to 3,000, and the ice surface was cut down from “prairie size” to more closely match that found in Madison Square Garden. Hockey attendance at the Elysium between 1929 and 1932 averaged approximately 1,000 per game. When Al Sutphin purchased the franchise from Holmes, he envisioned an increased following of the sport

and the need, therefore, of a larger auditorium and ice rink. Sutphin felt that the future of professional hockey in Cleveland depended upon a new facility that could accommodate larger crowds than the 1,900 the Elysium held. According to one author, Sutphin's new team faced three problems: it was a minor league team, it possessed ordinary talent, and it played in an outdated rink. A new arena was the first step in fixing those problems.²⁶

Al Sutphin's vision of a new facility ran counter to the economic realities of Depression Era construction. It put a halt to the architectural renovation and building Cleveland underwent much of the previous decade. Still, Sutphin counted on a new arena to turn hockey from a minor sports attraction into money making venture. After conducting a study of the ownership and operations at national arenas, he decided to go forward on the project. Local financial institutions refused to finance the construction of an arena for a struggling sport during the depression. Sutphin in turn decide to privately finance the construction, and began the process of finding additional investors. He found investors through business and personal contacts, he convinced local corporations to purchase advertising space and become year-round tenants, and he sold 13,000 shares of common stock. This enabled him to get a loan with a Cincinnati bank. Sutphin even contacted an Akron-based tire company and proposed building the entrance in the shape of a tire bearing the corporation's name—an early form of naming rights—but no contract was ever signed. Estimations put construction costs at \$1,500,000.²⁷

Euclid Avenue, lined with the mansions of Cleveland's elite, was one of the wealthiest streets in America during boom the city's years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the mid-to-late 1930s Euclid Avenue's millionaires had moved away and the mansions had fallen into disrepair. It was here that Sutphin found a large plot of land to locate his arena and a new building for his Braden-Sutphin Ink Company. Like League Park, the arena was built on the city's east side, bordering Euclid and Chester Avenues near East 40th Street. The site was only a short distance away from John D. Rockefeller's former estate. The property value was estimated at one million dollars, but plummeting tax values allowed Sutphin to purchase it for \$75,000. Construction was quick, with ground being broken on May 16, 1937, and the official opening on November 11th. The completed Cleveland Arena, modeled after Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens and the Montreal Forum, had 9,847 seats for hockey. The local press called it the finest ice rink in the world, while the sports media from other cities praised Sutphin's initiative and believed a National Hockey League franchise was imminent.²⁸

Cleveland Municipal Stadium

The construction of the Cleveland Arena during the Depression was an extraordinary achievement for ice hockey, Al Sutphin, and Cleveland. But it was the construction of the facility that completed the Group Plan of 1903 that seemed destined as the punctuation mark for Cleveland's statement on its present and future. Cleveland

Municipal Stadium, among the first publicly funded stadiums in the nation, was planned in the tradition of Progressive architecture, but made possible by the thriving consumer culture of the 1920s. With the lakefront property at the northern edge of the group plan land inhabited only by numerous railroad tracks, City Manager William Hopkins looked for new options. Following the 1926 season, Indians General Manager E. S. Barnard brought *Cleveland News* sports editor Ed Bang his plans for a new ballpark for baseball. League Park's seating capacity gradually became outdated, and Barnard felt a facility with a capacity numbering roughly 60,000 was needed. He was also aware of efforts to sell the franchise, and believed that a new facility would make it easier to sell it to local ownership. Conversely he believed that local ownership would increase the probability that the city would move forward with plans for a municipally funded stadium. The 1927 sale of the Indians to a group of local millionaires headed by Alva Bradley completed one portion of Barnard's plans. Bradley supported the facility, believing that a downtown stadium would entice local businessmen to make the short walk to a game after work. Hopkins and the Indians enlisted the Osborn Engineering Company to draw up plans for the stadium, which would eventually replace their previous creation—League Park. It was decided that the facility would be municipally owned to incorporate it more fully into the Group Plan. The next step, therefore, was to gain public approval and funding.²⁹

One year later, Cleveland officials placed a stadium bond issue on the local ballot. If passed, \$2,500,000 in bonds would be issued to Cleveland for the stadium's

construction. The public campaign to entice voters to support the issue was not without opposition, and each side painted their own optimal picture in the months leading up the November election. Stadium supporters, consisting of civic leaders, the local sports media, and the Indians organization, looked to instill a sense of civic pride, if not responsibility, in Cleveland voters. They advertised five benefits for having a municipally owned stadium: the city owned the land, the city would be certain the facility would benefit the people and city, the city could loan money at lower rates, the Group Plan would benefit from the construction, and that the stadium would pay for itself. The stadium, they argued, would bring a new appearance and attitude to Cleveland, besides being a necessary component of the modern city as seen elsewhere in America. To entice all residents—male and female—stadium supporters promised a facility would host concerts, festivals, conventions, and non-professional sports besides Indians' baseball games. Opponents painted an entirely bleaker picture of funding the stadium. The all-encompassing and civic-friendly stadium was contrasted with one that would remain a financial drain (called a “white elephant”) on the lakefront and that was merely a palace being built for the Indians. Any validity of their arguments was perhaps lost by a lack of publicity, since Cleveland's newspapers and radio stations were firmly supporting the bond issue. When the results came in, the bond issue received 60% of the vote and set the construction of Municipal Stadium in motion.³⁰

Actual construction was delayed by over a year due to both the Great Depression and a lawsuit against Cleveland and the stadium. In the latter, a resident contended that the city did not automatically have legal authority over the reclaimed land upon which it planned to build the stadium. He also argued that the construction was not a legal municipal act because it was being built solely for the Indians. The case made its way to the Ohio Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of Cleveland in January 1930. The delays in construction took their toll, for when the completed stadium opened in July 1931, it was nearly half a million dollars over budget. Still, Cleveland celebrated the opening of Municipal Stadium with a civic celebration likening the facility to the coliseum in Rome. The opening culminated in a heavyweight championship boxing match, the first sporting event at the new stadium, between German Max Schmeling and American Willie Stribling. The city and the Indians had been working on a lease prior to the bond issue, but still had not reached an agreement by construction's completion. Negotiations were further hampered by Cleveland's switch back to a mayoral form of government (from the city manager system). In May 1932, with the baseball season already started, Bradley and Mayor Ray Miller reached an agreement for a 25-year lease. The Indians finally played its first game there one year later, losing a pitcher's duel to Lefty Grove and the Philadelphia Athletics in front of over 80,000 fans. Attempts to move into Municipal Stadium on a full time basis were met with less-than-enthusiastic attendance numbers. Bradley, discouraged by these showings, moved the Indians back to League Park on a

full-time basis for all of 1934 and 1935, and all but one game in 1936. Public pressure persuaded Bradley to return a limited number of games each season to the lakefront stadium beginning in 1937. These games were often weekend and night time games (lights were installed in 1939) and series that anticipated big draws such as doubleheaders. From 1932 to 1946, Municipal Stadium remained one of two homes for the Indians under the best circumstances. It would take new ownership and a revamped team to move the Indians back on a full-time basis and excite Clevelanders into filling the cavernous stadium.³¹

CONCLUSION

Cleveland's professional sports experienced varying degrees of success, along with examples of failure, during the decades preceding WWII. Dating back to the nineteenth century, sport had been a popular recreational activity. But along with other aspects of conspicuous consumption in the ever-emerging consumer culture, the leisure class used sport as a means of deviating from life's more serious happenings. As spectators, they invested their moral and financial support into popular sentiment, and professional sport benefited. The Indians exhibited staying power to start the new century in the wake of the collapse of the Spiders. Crowds at League Park increased with the presence of star players and winning seasons. Al Sutphin purchased into a struggling sport with marginal fan support, and in turn established a hockey dynasty with a new arena and rabid fan base. Professional football alone had yet to gain a solid foothold in

Cleveland. Of those three sports, only football continued to fight against the stigma of working class values and scholastic and collegiate competition. Yet the importance of professional sport to Cleveland developed over time. Even during the dying years of the Cleveland Spiders, the developing importance of professional sport to the emerging city was evident. A *Sporting News* article looking at the eventual loss of the Spiders commented, “It is worthy of note that the Cleveland base ball club of the past two or three years has been a standing advertisement for the city. In all sections of the United States there has been more talk concerning Cleveland, owing to its base ball club, than from any other one source.” Civic image and its links to sport were established, and would twist and turn throughout the next century. By WWII’s end Cleveland sport, like the city itself, set its sights on regaining stability and pursuing brighter prospects. The individuals and issues that emerged in the post-war years in professional baseball, football, and ice hockey greatly impacted both the short- and long-term futures of all three of these teams.³²

CHAPTER 3

THE BEST LOCATION IN THE NATION: 1945-1947

The industrial city in postwar, Midwestern American faced multiple new challenges as the nation braced for a return to peacetime existence. The threat of fascism that had unified Americans through the overall war effort was symbolically replaced, to some extent, in aging central cities such as Cleveland by threats regionally from growing suburbs and nationally from other emerging markets. In the face of these challenges, Cleveland looked towards urban revival as it transitioned to a peacetime economy and a new America. The transition for the postwar city faced decisions regarding not only shifts in the economy, but also those on issues of the suburbs and race relations. Similarly, professional football, baseball, and hockey experienced both a return to normalcy in 1945, but also were faced with transitioning into a new era in American history. They sought to revive their fortunes in conjunction with the relative stability of the city's economy and cultural scene. Football in Cleveland bid farewell to a champion and the National Football League, but prepared for an entry in the upstart All-America Football Conference. The Indians welcomed back Bob Feller from his naval service, and also welcomed a new owner—one who would elevate the franchise and the sport to never before seen heights—into the fold. Cleveland's football and baseball franchises also helped to usher in a new era of integrated sport in America. In hockey, the rivalry

between the American Hockey League and the National Hockey League shifted to the point where the Barons no longer held a power position. On-ice success continued, but hockey remained a minor league sport. Both city and sport embraced the postwar period with anticipated prosperity, and indeed the early years offered hope for the future. Each team became a signifier of Cleveland's perceived return to glory as it developed into a champion or a contender. But while their combined performances rang in an era of unprecedented sporting prowess along the shores of Lake Erie, these teams would eventually succumb to the harsh economic, political, and social realities of suburbanization and urban decline as Cleveland moved closer to its Rustbelt status. Between 1945 and 1947, however, Cleveland looked to return to the national prominence it held prior to the Great Depression, and professional sport was an important element in reviving a positive civic image.

A SLOGAN AND AN IMAGE

In *The Rough Road to Renaissance*, historian Jon Teaforde wrote of the problems facing the American city in the postwar period and the recognition of those problems by city leaders and planner. Using a 1940 *Plain Dealer* article, Teaforde wrote that one Cleveland planner argued that "the beginning of an era when Cleveland will have to compete with all other major cities in a race for 'the survival of the fittest' is at hand." Attempts to revive Cleveland to the glory of the bustling and prosperous 1920s needed to be rooted in an awareness not only of conditions in Cleveland, but in the developing

communities outside the city and outside the region. Traditionally, the central city “formed the core of a larger metropolitan region and also greatly influenced and shaped the region’s potential and possibilities.” Trends had emerged prior to World War II, however, that foreshadowed the decline of these urban centers, the full effects of which would not often be recognized until the 1960s and 1970s. Central city imperialism, as scholar Robert Lewis argued, took form in the annexation of outlying cities by their more dominant partners. Between World War I and World War II, the practice dissipated among traditional metropolitan centers. Lewis contended that the postwar absence of territorial annexation by these cities in part led to their weakening. This, he wrote, was “linked to the ability of suburbanites to use judicial boundaries to separate themselves from the central city, growing metropolitan fragmentation, the development of a large number of socially homogenous areas, and greater disparities between the areas making up metropolitan areas.”¹

World War II (WWII) provided a temporary elixir to the hardships the industrial city first encountered during the Great Depression. Ironically, the reprieve these cities received through wartime industrial need was countered with the realization that the diversion of goods, labor, and capital towards war needs kept them from urban renewal. The fact remained that the industrial city was showing the dangers of aging. Some in Cleveland and other industrial centers indeed felt that postwar revival was inevitable. Yet the conditions of local economies and the modern needs of the nation left Cleveland,

Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, and elsewhere in need of change. The age of heavy industry would no longer sustain the heart of a local economy, thus making it imperative that new industry was courted to the city. Many city leaders recognized that dreams of growth needed to be replaced with plans for stability for the industrial city to survive. Cleveland needed to cater to current residents and industry to avoid the pitfalls of their exodus. While the popularity of labeling the industrial Midwest the ‘Rustbelt’ did not reach its peak until the 1970s, the factors in this decline (both for Rustbelt cities and those that made up the more prosperous Sunbelt) had their foundation in postwar America. In the aftermath of WWII, Cleveland was a city looking for a new beginning.²

In the early 1940s, with America on the verge of entering the war, civic leaders in Cleveland began to ponder questions about the city’s future. The Regional Association of Cleveland put together a report in 1941 addressing the next stage of city growth. The report, looking back upon the rapid growth of the 1920s, commented, “One of the results [of the growth] was the setting up of scores of independent municipalities, each with its own complete government, complicating the administration of governmental functions, duplicating services, and thus wasting tax money. This may have seemed expedient at the time, but in the long run it is an inefficient type of governmental organization for a community as much a social and economic unit as Greater Cleveland.” It deemed Cleveland a disorderly and unplanned city that was inconvenient for those who lived and worked there. It especially noted that the city was in great need of better adapting its

street systems to accommodate automobiles. The report concluded that by 1960 Cleveland would no longer experience population growth, and therefore needed to concentrate on renewal of its land to meet the needs and the living conditions of its citizenry. The quest for order and understanding in planning for Cleveland's future continued in 1943, when the Postwar Planning Commission laid out specific areas of need. Mayor Frank Lausche set up the commission "...not only to build the bridge from war to peacetime production but also to lay plans for making Cleveland's industrial advantages so patent that we can keep all of the industries we have and attract new ones..." Politicians, business leaders, and other civic promoters realized that the days of rapid growth were over and had been replaced by a time of direct competition between all industrial cities. Lausche's commission listed five areas that deserved individual panels for evaluation: transportation, public works, interracial relations, the needs of returning servicemen, and public finance. These steps towards addressing Cleveland's urban planning needs were a positive first step, and echoed the hopes of a *Plain Dealer* writer who in 1940 proclaimed that Cleveland, if it could not be a bigger city, could become a far better one.³

Postwar Cleveland did indeed act on the recommendations of the panels formed through Lausche's commission. The urban renewal movement was laced with elements of social reform. New Mayor Thomas A. Burke addressed some of the city's transportation needs through the construction of a downtown airport and also pushed for

the development of a rapid-transit system. Old transit lines, complete with overhead wires, were replaced by busses with routes that included some of the outlying suburbs. The need to connect Cleveland's residents to the central city went beyond the rapid-transit system and beyond the city limits. Major freeway development connected the outlying suburbs to the central city, although it fragmented existing communities in its search for land. Cleveland's neighborhoods remained an issue with the panel's recommendations for interracial relations. The panel focused on key issues impacting the quality of life for Cleveland's black residents and the interaction with the white population, which included housing, health, recreation, and working conditions (including hiring practices). This culminated in the 1954 formation of the Cleveland Community Relations Board. Cleveland's overall racial acceptance, although perceived as being rather liberal, was not all-encompassing. This was most evident in the city's housing patterns. Black residents were often limited to certain areas on Cleveland's east side. Few new homes were being built, and only a small portion was made available to black families. Those families that sought new housing away from traditional neighborhoods were often steered away by real estate brokers or denied mortgages from local banks and the Federal Housing Administration. Public housing projects resulting from the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Act of 1949 and initiated through the Cleveland Plan were hindered by the opposition's successful efforts to play off of citizens' emotions. Cleveland's failure was rooted in the inability to overcome class- and race-based

stereotypes and bigotry. The concern for quality housing further impacted the commission's plans for returning servicemen. Philip Porter, a former executive editor of the *Plain Dealer*, argued that veterans searching for housing found inflated prices and few available apartments in Cleveland. Small homes in small communities began dotting the suburban landscape, and provided veterans with a viable housing option. Census figures showed that veterans were joined by native- and foreign-born whites in the move to the suburbs, while Appalachian whites, migrant workers, Puerto Ricans, and Southern blacks moved into the Cleveland. Although growing according to 1950 figures, Cleveland was becoming a markedly different city. In 1953 Mayor Anthony J. Celebrezze condemned the city's social intolerance, saying, "[Cleveland] as a whole will prosper together, live together in harmony or we will become a second-class city." His statement proved to be a prophetic warning of a key element in Cleveland's urban decline.⁴

The full impact of the successes and failures associated with Cleveland's efforts to act upon defined areas of need were not immediately recognizable in the first few years after WWII's end. On the surface, Cleveland gave off the appearance of being a healthy city full of exuberance. Wartime discussions about the city's future inspired Frank Ryan of the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company to initiate the advertising campaign: "Cleveland, the best location in the nation for your business." While the campaign encouraged businesses to look at Cleveland's geographical proximity to the

majority of America's population (i.e. 500 miles from the likes of St. Louis, New York City, Detroit, and Chicago), civic leaders and promoters shortened the slogan to give it a universal meaning: "Cleveland, the best location in the nation." But even as the city boasted of the perceived amenities it offered businesses and residents, reasons to be cautious were present. A 1946 *PD* editorial on proposed bond issues reminded readers of the dangers of resting too easily on the prosperity of the present and not being forward thinking. "The time has come for Clevelanders to recognize that their city is seriously threatened with hardening of the arteries, the most observable symptom of which is a widespread fear of doing anything for the community on a big scale," it wrote. "If it is not quickly dissipated, this fear is going to block the best efforts of those who have faith in the future of Cleveland and who have been doing their part to help Cleveland realize that future." At the heart of this statement were concerns over the lackadaisical manner in which civic leaders were addressing modern transportation needs and the city's beneficial involvement in the creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway, as well as opposition for the Chamber of Commerce on bond issues for public rehabilitation and improvement projects. Cleveland faced the immense challenge of not being lulled into a false sense of security and satisfaction through its prosperity and overall appearance. Signs of decay were present, and "heroic action" was needed by civic leaders if Cleveland was to avoid "the doom of the city, with all of the economic loss and the human suffering involved in the virtual abandonment of institutions which men have labored for years to build."

Cleveland needed positive actions to replace booster rhetoric and boasts if the perception of the city's bright future was to become a reality.⁵

FOOTBALL: CONGRATULATIONS, GOODBYE, AND HELLO

Football experienced the most interesting action and reaction pertaining to the sport's growth within postwar Cleveland. The Rams had represented Cleveland in the NFL since 1938, but had never been an overly successful franchise. The established Rams, however, would soon be challenged by another professional football squad in Cleveland. The upstart All-America Football Conference (AAFC) announced that it would place a franchise in Cleveland under the ownership of Arthur "Mickey" McBride. In February 1945 Paul Brown, the former Ohio State University football coach, agreed to coach the new AAFC team. The city suddenly found itself on the verge of having two professional football teams. The local sports press wondered aloud if there would be a victor in Cleveland's gridiron war. The Browns, as the AAFC team was eventually named, waited until 1946 to start play. Meanwhile, the Rams won the NFL's western division and claimed the NFL championship behind the play of rookie quarterback Bob Waterfield. In the aftermath of the championship, amid the celebration of Cleveland's football fans, Dan Reeves moved the Rams to Los Angeles. The Browns, without ever facing off against their in-town rivals, won the gridiron war. For Cleveland, somewhat embarrassed in losing the NFL champions to another city, the success of the Browns and the AAFC provided a chance for redemption. Before agreeing to coach Cleveland, Paul

Brown had questioned the city's support of professional sports teams and its status as sports town. Now he would be responsible for fielding a team with the unenviable duty of restoring Cleveland's football prowess and overall image as a sports town.

Dan Reeves told the Cleveland media at the time he purchased the Rams in 1941 that he had originally intended to move the team to Boston. He believed football had a stronger foothold on the East Coast, and consequently could increase his profits away from Cleveland. The Rams continued to lose, however, compiling seven wins and sixteen losses in its first two seasons under the new ownership group. Despite this fact, Reeves bought out partner, Frederick Levy, to become sole owner of the team in 1942. Concerns over the Rams' financial stability continued, and in 1943 Reeves received permission to suspend team operations. Reeves was drafted into military service prior to the season, adding another hardship to running the franchise. This was not uncommon during WWII. The Pittsburgh Steelers combined with the Philadelphia Eagles in 1943 (the Steagles) and the Chicago Cardinals the following year (the Car-pitts). In September 1944 Arch Ward formally announced the formation of the AAFC and that a Cleveland franchise had been awarded to Arthur "Mickey" McBride. News of a professional football rival in Cleveland did not dampen the Rams' play in 1945. They won nine of ten games and captured the NFL's Western Division crown. On December 16, 1945 the Rams faced the Washington Redskins for the NFL Championship, on a bitterly cold day, and 32,178 fans braved the elements at Cleveland Municipal Stadium to witness the

Rams claim the triumph behind a 15-14 victory. The victory, according to one Cleveland columnist, sparked a massive awareness of professional football in the city. The talented Rams, led by rookie quarterback Bob Waterfield, had endeared themselves to Cleveland fans. Given the euphoria of the moment, the Rams' and professional football's futures appeared more promising and profitable than in the past. Reeves, however, had different ideas and was ready to act upon them.⁶

In January 1946, Cleveland's three daily newspapers—*The News*, *The Plain Dealer*, and *The Press*—experienced a strike that stopped circulation. With the city's main news sources muted, Reeves moved his Rams out of town. The strike provided the perfect time for Reeves to depart Cleveland without exposing himself to immense criticism. In the championship season Reeves' Rams reportedly lost \$50,000 and had combined losses of \$82,000 during his ownership. The untapped Los Angeles and Southern California market was an oasis of economic possibility compared to the financial struggles in Cleveland. With the NFL's reluctant permission, Reeves moved the Rams to Los Angeles. It is commonly agreed that the move was given final approval only after Reeves agreed to pay the additional travel costs for teams going out west. Historian Melvin Adelman argues that, while Reeves' merely was thinking of dropping out of football, the NFL was concerned that he might follow the lead of Dan Topping (owner of Yankee Stadium) and join the AAFC if he did not get permission to relocate. The NFL also did not want the public relations nightmare of seeing the defending

champions either move to a new league or fold. If the Rams had folded, the NFL would have faced the difficult task of finding a new owner in Cleveland. By mid-January the Rams were on their way to Los Angeles. Regardless of the manner in which Reeves gained approval, with the NFL Champions gone so soon after their victory, Cleveland was left a city scorned.⁷

“As humiliating as this development clearly was,” wrote columnist George Condon, the Rams’ departure proved to be for the best as it cleared the playing field for the debut of a new football club. In 1944 Mickey McBride became the official owner of Cleveland’s AAFC team. He originally came to Cleveland from Chicago in 1913 at the request of Daniel R. Hanna, Sr. of the *Cleveland News*. McBride was put in charge of that paper’s circulation department during the circulation wars pitting the Hanna-owned *News* and *Leader* against the *Plain Dealer* and *Press*. McBride had previous experience from Chicago’s own newspaper wars and hired “toughs” to protect corner newsboys. He left the *News* and since 1931 headed the Zone Cab Company in Cleveland. Turned on to football by his son who was attending Notre Dame, McBride attempted to buy the Rams from Reeves in 1941. Reeves turned down his \$105,000 offer, but the Cleveland taxi cab magnate was not deterred. Arch Ward, founder and commissioner of the AAFC and a former newspaperman with the *Chicago Tribune*, wanted a team in Cleveland and sought out an owner, eventually leading him to McBride. McBride convinced Ward that he

possessed the resources and backing to finance and promote the team successfully, and a week later received official approval for a franchise.⁸

Cleveland's AAFC entry (eventually named the Browns), despite having not yet played a game, quickly captured the fancy of the city's sports press. It had easily received more publicity than the Rams, despite the latter's drive to the NFL crown. While the Browns were the subject of numerous articles, the Rams were able to draw only 73,000 fans to its four home games during the regular season. The lack of support shown to the Rams in its championship campaign and Cleveland's history of failed pro football franchises (and the accompanying lack of fan support) led many to wonder if Cleveland could support one, let alone two, football teams. Before the Rams moved, the *Press's* Franklin Lewis wondered if college talent and current pro players would venture into the new league, which was a necessity for the new league to survive against the proven product of the NFL. He believed McBride would spend the money, but knew that Reeves also had deep pockets. A 1945 *Press* editorial noted that, "In view of the previous [football] record, even before the Rams, it might look doubtful whether two professional teams could succeed in Cleveland where none has been able to make money before." Part of the reason, the editorial argued, was that the NFL never gave the Rams many home games on the schedule. *PD* columnist John Dietrich concurred a year later, stating that the Rams never had a chance to succeed in the football rich territory on Northeastern Ohio. Local fans were treated only to a few home games a season and never had the

chance to see the Eastern Conference powers such as the New York Giants and only twice since 1937 had seen the Redskins. Dietrich also faulted Rams ownership for moving home games from Municipal Stadium to League Park prior to the 1944 season. Several sportswriters believed that the AAFC team, in making Municipal Stadium its home field, would capitalize on its roughly 80,000 seat capacity and a proper promotional campaign. McBride promised to give the Cleveland football fan the best of everything, and he wanted that to start with the best coach.⁹

A big reason for the fanfare surrounding the Browns was the February 1945 announcement that former Ohio State University and Massillon High School (in Northeast Ohio) football coach Paul Brown had agreed to become the franchise's first head coach. McBride had originally sought out Notre Dame's Frank Leahy, and reached an agreement with the college coach for a \$35,000 salary, \$1,000 monthly retainer as long as Leahy remained in military service, and 15% of the team. Notre Dame's Father John Cavanaugh, chairman of the athletic board, soon learned of the deal and chastised both Ward and Leahy, after which the latter backed out of his agreement with McBride. With Leahy out of the picture, McBride sought the opinion of *PD* columnist John Dietrich, who suggested only one man: Paul Brown. At that time, Brown was a lieutenant in the navy where he was coaching the Great Lakes Naval Station football team based out of Chicago. Ward and McBride met with him to discuss the Cleveland job, and in February 1945 he agreed to a deal somewhat similar to the one offered to

Leahy: a \$25,000 salary, a \$1,500 monthly retainer as long as Brown was in military service, and 5% of the franchise. He also had complete freedom in naming his coaching staff and filling out the roster. Brown told the local media, “You know me—I’m going to try to build a football dynasty in Cleveland.” At the time, he relayed that he accepted the position instead of returning to Ohio State because of the financial opportunity it presented for him and his family and because he believed Cleveland was a fine sports town. He contradicted himself thirty-three years later in his autobiography, saying that he made a rash decision, in no way based on a belief that the Cleveland job would better him professionally or financially, and that he was going to a town that had never supported football and was reputed to be a bad sports town. Brown implied that Ohio State did not pamper him enough to welcome him back to his old coaching job, so he entertained the Cleveland offer. In Cleveland, he received the pomp and circumstance he sought, especially when it came to naming the franchise. The original name of “Panthers,” chosen through a newspaper contest, was scrapped because of its association with a former semi-pro team that played in Cleveland in the 1920s. In a new contest fans chose the Browns—in honor of the coach—as the name. The Browns, aside from the signature on the paychecks, were now overwhelmingly the product of their head coach who made decisions on and off the field and was its namesake.¹⁰

Speculation that Cleveland was a bad sports town, whether or not Brown actually felt that way when he accepted McBride’s offer, served as motivation for the new coach

and new team. Such claims reportedly irritated Brown, as well as local reporters who adamantly believed that, given time, the Browns would make crowds of 50,000 look just average. In March 1945 Brown visited Cleveland to discuss postwar plans for the Browns with McBride. A few days after his arrival, the franchise's first two player signings were announced. Former Notre Dame center Herb Coleman mattered little in the team's history, but former Northwestern quarterback Otto Graham became the lynchpin of Brown's teams during his first decade in Cleveland. Graham's signing was significant not only in that it gave Brown arguably the greatest quarterback of his generation to run the offense, but also that it symbolized a key method Brown used to recruit players, as he continually sought out players he had either coached or coached against. Graham had been impressive when Northwestern played Ohio State, and Brown remembered the young passer. From Ohio State, Brown snagged Lou Groza, Dante Lavelli, Gene Fekete, and Lin Houston, much to the chagrin of his former employers who accused the Browns of raiding their campus. Brown also went after four members of the Rams, although not until Reeves had officially moved the franchise to Los Angeles.¹¹

Perhaps the most significant of all of Brown's player signings prior to the inaugural season was that of Bill Willis. Professional football had maintained a color-line since 1933, when Joe Lillard left the Chicago Cardinals and Ray Kemp left the Pittsburgh Pirates. Despite the presence of many qualified black athletes, NFL teams did not make opportunities available. In the aftermath of WWII and the presence of

thousands of black veterans who fought against intolerance, the continued segregation of professional football was read for challenge. In 1946 the Los Angeles Rams signed former UCLA stars Woody Strode and Kenny Washington, reintegrating the NFL. At a Los Angeles Coliseum Commission meeting, black sportswriters objected to letting any group practicing racial discrimination use the Coliseum, including the Rams and the AAFC's Los Angeles Dons. To avoid any legal trouble, the Rams signed Strode and Washington. In the AAFC, Brown took the initiative. At Ohio State he coached an all-Big Ten defensive tackle named Bill Willis. After college Willis accepted the football head coaching job at Kentucky State College, but never got to his first game. In August 1946 Brown announced that he was bringing Willis to training camp, reuniting himself with the former Columbus prep star. Willis told reporters, "I realize what it takes to make a team coached by Paul Brown. I am confident I still can go fast enough and hard enough to satisfy him." Brown, in turn, described Willis as having everything one could want in a football player. Fifteen days later, Brown brought fullback Marion Motley into camp. Brown had coached Motley at the Great Lakes Station and against him in high school, and recalled that he was one of the most feared rival players in the Massillon-Canton McKinley rivalry. The *Call & Post* reported that Motley was brought in after fullback Ted Fritsch left the Browns' camp to return to the Green Bay Packers. It was later rumored that he was brought in to provide a black roommate for Willis, thereby preventing the Browns from integrating roommates. This, in no way, undermined the

talent Willis and Motley possessed. As the season approached, talent became a secondary issue to the mental toughness each player needed to exhibit against opposition that could be expected to taunt and cheap-shot the black stars. The answer came in the Browns' first game, played against the Miami Seahawks in Cleveland. The *C&P* wondered if the Southerners would "take the opportunity to give the two Negro favorites thorough tests complete with Dixie enthusiasm." In front of 60,135 fans, the Browns defeated the Seahawks 44-0. The *C&P* fondly recalled the significance of the game, saying, "It was thrilling to see the giant Negro [Willis] trot out of the dugout and take his place along side then other teammates in the Browns starting team." No incidents took place, although one Browns player overheard one of the Seahawks tell a teammate to get the "black so-and-so" next time after Motley ripped off a long run.¹²

An important offshoot of the presence of Willis and Motley was the attention the Browns received from black fans in Northeastern Ohio. Following a preseason game against the Brooklyn Dodgers played in Akron (approximately an hour southeast of Cleveland), the *C&P* noted that black fans had "turned out enmasse" to cheer on Willis and Motley. Within the report lay the fact that the *C&P* was actually reporting on the game. Before the arrival of the two players, the Browns received no in-depth coverage from the *C&P*. The Rams before this were also a "white" team that did not garner attention from the community based paper. The affinity the black community had for the Browns, especially how it viewed the team and Paul Brown as pioneers in the fight

against discrimination, was strong enough for *C&P* sports editor Cleveland Jackson to challenge Brown to boldly defy “Southern Democracy” and play Willis and Motley in a December game in Miami. With the opening of opportunities for black athletes in professional sports in the postwar Cleveland, the historic black paper expanded its coverage beyond the Rams and baseball’s Brooklyn Dodgers. By the end of 1946, the *C&P* recalled the year as one of athletic renaissance for the black athlete.¹³

Brown’s meticulous preparations for assembling the Cleveland Roster paid off immediately. The Browns won the AAFC’s Western Division with a 12-2 record, and hosted the New York Yankees in the first AAFC championship game. In front of 40,469 fans the Browns captured the AAFC title. Crowds of over 50,000 attended five of the seven home games played at Municipal Stadium, and a total of 399,962 attended overall. In spite of the fact that it was common for both NFL and AAFC teams to pad their attendance figures, the AAFC took pride in averaging approximately 57,000 per game in a city the NFL abandoned because of poor fan support. Adelman argues that a favorable stadium lease and substantial advertising dollars, along with the attendance figures, netted McBride and the Browns a \$241,450 profit, well above the \$3,000-\$5,000 the local press estimated at the time. The Browns finished the 1947 season with a 12-1-1 record and drew 392,760 fans on their way to a second straight AAFC championship. Brown was well on his way to building the dynasty he promised when he agreed to come to Cleveland, and as a result professional football was stronger than ever in the city. The

rivalry between the AAFC and NFL continued and speculation persisted that the two leagues would merge in some manner. But in Cleveland, the Browns emerged as a point of civic pride.¹⁴

BASEBALL: NEW FACES, NEW GROUND

The war years were lean ones for the Indians. From 1942 to 1945 they twice managed to finish above .500, but never finished closer than eleven games back of first place. Attendance dropped to below 500,000 from 1942-1944, during which time reported profits were less than \$100,000. These trends were not unique to Cleveland, as all AL teams witnessed drops in attendance and only the Detroit Tigers and New York Yankees experienced relative financial success given the economic restraints of the war era. Feller's decision to enlist in the Navy undoubtedly dealt the Indians their biggest loss on the field during WWII, and it could be argued that his absence contributed to the hardships the franchise felt at the gate. With rumors floating around that baseball might be cancelled for the 1945 season, the recently decommissioned Feller wrote to the *Cleveland News*' Ed McAuley in January 1945. He relayed the concerns of servicemen who wanted baseball and all competitive athletics to continue, giving them something to look forward to upon their return. While Feller, who returned stateside by the start of 1945, lobbied for baseball's continuance, the Indians were hit by additional player losses to the military. Third baseman Ken Keltner enlisted in the Navy and second baseman Ray Mack was drafted by the Army. Japan's surrender ended WWII in mid-August

1945. Feller had stayed in baseball shape much of the year while managing the Great Lakes Naval Training Station team, and on August 21 was discharged. The next day he and his wife were in Cleveland and soon signed a prorated contract for the remainder of the season. Feller's return sparked excitement and renewed interest in baseball among Cleveland's business and civic leaders and members of its sporting community, many of whom welcomed the pitcher back at a special reception held at Cleveland's Hotel Carter on August 24. The next day he made his first start in almost four years, defeating Hal Newhouser and the Tigers, 4-2, in front of over 42,000 fans. By all appearances, Cleveland was ready to embrace baseball once again.¹⁵

The 1946 season posed several questions for the Indians. The roster was strengthened through the returns of Keltner and Mack, but several veterans had been replaced since 1941 with youngsters who had no experience against the opposing lineups recently replenished with "real" major leaguers—those who had gone to war. Much of America readily greeted baseball's return to normalcy, but Cleveland, as noted by author John Sickels, lagged behind in terms of support for its team. "Attendance was mediocre," Sickels wrote. "The local economy was sluggish, dragged down by the transition from wartime to peacetime production, and this seemed to be reflected in the lethargy of both the fans and players." The Indians' ownership group, millionaires who purchased the team prior to the Great Depression and Cleveland's economic hardships, was no longer enamored with their sporting hobby. John and Francis Sherwin, two of the

ten stockholders, were tired of being associated with a venture that was so frequently in the public eye, and that needed to be defended. Also, five of the original stockholders had passed away leaving their widows as owners of the Indians, which the other stockholders found awkward. At WWII's end John Sherwin and team president Alva Bradley began discussions about the possibility of selling the team. Bradley reportedly told Sherwin, "...we might have some good years coming up after the war. I'd like to take one stand if there is to be a sale. I don't want to know too much about it. I want to be able to say that I'm still the president of the team and let it go at that." By 1946 Sherwin wanted out. As his attorney fielded inquiries on the Indians' availability behind the scenes, Bradley publicly dismissed speculation that the team was for sale. In June 1946 Bill Veeck came to Cleveland and Bradley's denials became meaningless.¹⁶

Veeck, whose father had been president of the Chicago Cubs, had previously been the Cubs' treasurer and then the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association. In 1946 he headed up a syndicate that looked to purchase a major league baseball franchise, and targeted Pittsburgh and Cleveland as his best options. He visited Pittsburgh and turned down the chance to purchase the Pirates for \$1,600,000. He believed Pittsburgh simply wasn't a good baseball town. Setting his sights solely on Cleveland, Veeck toured the city in anonymity for four days, talking with locals to get their thoughts on the Indians and baseball, as well as their feelings toward current ownership. Talking to cab drivers, bartenders, and the average fan, Veeck came away

from his Cleveland visit with two understandings. First, fans received little information on the Indians and many were uninformed. Veeck linked much of this to Bradley's insistence that Indians' games not be broadcast for fear that it would encourage fans to listen to games rather than attend them. Second, Veeck found that fans viewed the team with a bit of disgust. While complaints outnumbered the compliments directed at players, it was the ownership group that received the brunt of the of fan anger. Veeck saw potential in Cleveland. Turning fans back onto baseball, and pulling baseball "out of the Harding Era," presented a challenge, but one that he was willing to take.¹⁷

Representatives of the current ownership group quoted Veeck a \$2,200,000 sales price, to which he quickly agreed. He was prepared to take out a \$1 million loan towards the purchase price, and then contribute \$250,000 in standing cash towards the remaining \$1,200,000. He put up \$30,000 and was given a 30 day option to arrange the rest of the financing. Cleveland's City National Bank provided the \$1,000,000 loan. Aside from the importance of the money itself, Veeck wanted it to come from a Cleveland institution to give the syndicate some local ties. Veeck also received \$18,000, equal to 10% of the available stock, as a finder's fee for putting together the additional investors. In total Veeck wound up with \$268,000 worth of stock, equaling a bit more than 30%. The next highest stockholder owned 6%. Bob Goldstein, the vice president of Universal-International Pictures and a member of Veeck's syndicate, was scheduled to fly from New York to Cleveland by 11 AM on June 22 to deliver the final \$50,000 needed to

make the deal official. Failure to meet the deadline meant Bradley, who had put together a new syndicate, would be able to purchase the team. Bradley was less than fond of Veeck despite the fact that the two men did not know each other, and he had not intentions of staying on with a new owner. He reportedly did not want the Indians sold to Veeck. On one hand, Bradley wanted an ownership group with ties to Cleveland, and on the other he believed Veeck's promotional tactics would undermine baseball in Cleveland, and the game in general. He did not agree with Veeck's penchant for "minor league" promotion. Veeck waited with representatives sent by Bradley as the eleven o'clock hour approach. Goldstein finally arrived and the sale became official. On June 22, 1946 Bill Veeck and his group of financial backers became the new owners of the Cleveland Indians.¹⁸

Veeck celebrated by taking in that day's Indians game at League Park, and his new team responded with a 4-3 victory over the Boston Red Sox. Rather than join Bradley in the owner's box, Veeck spent the game mingling with fans in various parts of the park. Bradley sat in his box seat until the seventh inning; for the final time as team owner. He never approached Veeck, nor did Veeck approach him. Bradley's departure elicited excitement among fans who welcomed change and the possibilities that accompanied it. The same complaints Veeck heard during his scouting trips to Cleveland earlier in the year were uttered once again. Most noticeable in the coverage of the sale was the different ways in which Bradley and Veeck were portrayed. Bradley emerged as

a tragic figure according to *Press* sports editor Franklin Lewis, who argued that sport and high society didn't mix. Bradley represented wealth and social affluence, but he was not a baseball man by all accounts. Conversely, Veeck was noted for being in touch with the common fan and having baseball savvy. Amid his mingling with fans, he promised changes that would make the spectator experience all the more enjoyable, both to the park (he planned on moving all home games back to Municipal Stadium) and to the team. An editorial in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* celebrated the arrival of Veeck whom they believed, although not a Cleveland native, would most certainly make more of an effort than the previous owners to spend money in building winning team. A *Press* editorial concurred, saying that the new ownership would look to make a baseball team while also making a profit. Little could these writers have expected the overall changes in operations and players that Veeck would bring to the Indians and Cleveland's baseball fans. In his anecdotal history of Cleveland, Condon reminisced that, "The postwar era in Cleveland baseball will be remembered always in the city's sports annals as the time when Bill Veeck limped onto the scene and took over control of the Indians."¹⁹

Two weeks after Veeck purchased the Indians, team business manager Frank Kohlbecker resigned unexpectedly, apparently disapproving of some of the new business practices Veeck had initiated. Veeck then told the *Plain Dealer's* Gordon Cobbledick, "He hasn't seen anything yet." His reputation as a showman from his days as owner of the Milwaukee Brewers was well known by those in the baseball business, and would

become equally well known in his new home. He believed that it was the team's duty to make itself attractive to its fans, rather than being the city's obligation to blindly support a team. Veeck followed a three-pronged plan of attack to promote baseball in Cleveland. First, he needed to ensure that time spent at Municipal Stadium was entertaining and fun. Second, he hit the "Chautauqua trail" and made speeches at every school, church, business, and bar that would listen to him. Third, Veeck needed to put a winning team on the field. With the Indians' season half over at the time of the purchase, he went right to work promoting a sixth place team to the entire community. Veeck reinstated Ladies Day and invited radio stations to renew game broadcasts since there was no contract under the previous administration. He also held multiple fireworks displays after a night games. One display was so loud that members of city council wanted the Cleveland to terminate the Indians' stadium lease and arrest Veeck. Mayor Thomas A. Burke dismissed the council's charges. His promotional efforts succeeded, and in celebration he offered free admission to the final home game in a gesture of thanks to Cleveland. When the 1946 season ended, the Indians had drawn 1,052,289 fans. This was phenomenal given that Cleveland had never drawn over one million fans before, but it was even more of a feat considering that only 289,000 fans had attended Indians' games prior to Veeck purchasing the team. Veeck accomplished this feat by moving many remaining home games to spacious Municipal Stadium, and reviving interest in the Indians around Cleveland and northeast Ohio worked. Later promotions like Good Neighbor Night and

Good Old Joe Early Day (a tribute to the average fan) continued to add outside excitement into a day at the stadium. In Veeck's own words, every day in Cleveland was like Mardi Gras and every fan was a king.²⁰

Veeck was pleased with the rise in attendance in 1946, but was unhappy with the team's performance. The Indians finished in sixth place and boasted one of the AL's worst offenses. One of Bradley's criticisms of Veeck was that the gimmicks would only hold the fans interests for so long. "I believe sincerely," he wrote, "that you have to have a winning team to hold the fans." Veeck recognized this fact. In his autobiography, he stated that, "There is no known substitute for winning, and no known cure for losing. It has always been my belief that you have three years to produce a winning team after you come to town. If after that time you haven't come through, I suspect that the value of entertainment and publicity and promotion will fall off very substantially." Along with the economic benefits that accompanied a winning team, Veeck also felt that the team could give psychic benefits back to the city. He believed a pennant winning team contributed to a city's morale like few things; that a championship produced a feeling of reflected glory. Armed with his theory of pleasure and pain and personal identification Veeck set out to revamp the roster before the 1947 season in his quest to build a winner. The most significant signing of the season, however, came in the shadows of Jackie Robinson.²¹

The collapse of the racial barriers that had kept professional football segregated for over a decade was equaled in professional baseball following WWII. Jackie Robinson's Major League debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 captured the attention of baseball fans everywhere, including Cleveland. The *C&P* sports section and editorial page marked the occasion in prose and poetry. An editorial praised Robinson's debut as an important first step in the struggles of black Americans to gain in economic and social life. It longingly ended, "The tree of progress that now grows in Brooklyn will inevitably spread its roots to other cities...maybe even to such cities as Cleveland and Cincinnati." Chas H. Loeb, in this "Editorial in Rhyme" column, more colorfully captured the feelings of hope that the integration of baseball gave to the black community. He wrote:

It's things like Jackie's big debut
That give a man a feelin',
That many of the nation's wounds
Will soon be fast a'healing'.

The *C&P* had never followed the Cleveland Indians or MLB in any depth prior to news that the Dodgers had signed Robinson. Baseball coverage, as was all coverage, was primarily devoted to community based sporting activities and contests. The only exception was the Negro League's Cleveland Buckeyes. With their appetites now whetted for further integration, the Indians and Bill Veeck were encouraged to make the next move in baseball's advancement.²²

In 1942, Bradley received a letter from Parnell Woods, manager of the Buckeyes, requesting tryouts for three players: third baseman Woods, pitcher Eugene Bremer, and outfielder Sam Jethroe. The tryouts never occurred and the Indians and MLB remained segregated for four more seasons. Integrated baseball, ironically, first came to Cleveland in March 1946 when Eddie Klep, a white pitcher, joined the Buckeyes. Three months later Veeck informed the media that he would not hesitate in signing a black ballplayer if a qualified candidate emerged. He listed two guidelines for any signing. First, Veeck stated he would purchase the player rather than “raid” the Negro Leagues without compensation, which he found unscrupulous. Branch Rickey was widely criticized by Negro League owners and administrators for signing Robinson without compensating the Kansas City Monarchs, and Veeck felt similarly. Second, he wanted a player with the highest all-around qualifications. Veeck argued that such an individual was needed because, “The pressure is too great to take a chance on a fellow who couldn’t take it.” He took no action towards signing a player that year, but soon had scouts looking in the Negro Leagues for a player to bring to the Indians and break the AL color line. In preparation he hired Lou Jones, a black public relations man, to eventually serve as a traveling companion and mentor for the player. Veeck also informed Cleveland’s black leaders of his intent so they would be able to prepare the city’s black population for any and all situations. He was concerned just as much about possible overzealous behavior from black fans as he was ignorant behavior from white fans. Realizing the limited

opportunity in making such a move and the intense scrutiny it would be under, Veeck wanted to sign someone who could develop into a solid of star player. He told his scouts to look for the best young player with long-term potential. If the player performed strongly, criticism would be relegated to race. Veeck could discount the legitimacy of any criticism rooted in prejudice, but he did not want the player's poor performance to create a more legitimate criticism. Although the Cleveland Browns had already helped pioneer the reintegration of black athletes into professional football with the signings of Marion Motley and Bill Willis, Veeck was unsure of the reaction of Cleveland baseball fans. Unlike New York with Robinson, Veeck believed Cleveland was not as ethnically diverse and therefore questionable. Based on his criteria, Veeck's scouts recommended the Newark Eagles' talented second baseman Larry Doby.²³

Indians' scout Bill Killefer sent Veeck a positive report on Doby after seeing the Newark Eagles' star in a game in Brooklyn in June 1947. The *C&P* called news of this report the "most sensational news" for baseball that year. Reporter Cleveland Jackson hinted that where there was smoke, there was fire. Jackson had a personal reason for being excited as well, for three days earlier he had written Veeck to recommend Doby, whom he felt fit Veeck's criteria for the type of player the Indians would sign. It became a question of whom the Indians would sign, not if the Indians would sign someone. In actuality the Indians had scouted Doby for two months, and on July 3rd Veeck purchased Doby from Newark, integrating the AL in the process. He offered Effa Manley,

Newark's owner, \$10,000 for Doby's contract with an additional \$5,000 if he made the team. Manley felt that Veeck's offer was too low but she also knew that she was in no position to deny the opportunity to further integrate the major leagues, so she accepted the offer. Doby made his debut with the Indians on July 5, striking out as a pinch hitter but breaking the AL's color barrier in the process. Advice for Doby came from many arenas. The *C&P's* Charles Loeb again put advice to lyric:

Jus' be yourself, an' loosen up
The barrier is down,
Jus' play the game you've always played
Before a friendly town.
Lou Boudreaux an' a guy named Veeck
Are in your corner too,
An' hopin' with the rest of us
That you'll come flying through.

Indians' management made a point of stressing talent over race. Veeck proclaimed that "I don't think any man who has ability should be barred from major league baseball on account of his color." Manager Lou Boudreau released an official statement that avowed, "Creed, race or color are not factors in baseball success..." Still, Doby was not readily accepted by all of his teammates. While some teammates welcomed him, others refused to shake his hand. Despite requests, Doby never named those players.²⁴

Doby batted .156 in 29 games while coming off the bench during his first season. Doby's struggles on the field coincided with problems he faced while traveling with the team because many hotels were segregated. The separation from his teammates was

made worse by opposing fans' race-based hostility. In hindsight, Veeck believed that Doby was probably too sensitive (or not hardened enough) to integrate the AL and follow Jackie Robinson into the Major Leagues. Still, Doby emerged as a star in Cleveland. In his first full season he batted .301, hit 14 home runs, and had 66 RBIs in 121 games. His success that year enabled Veeck to further integrate the team, including the signing of Satchel Paige in 1948. Like Veeck, Paige was a noted showman because of the antics he had performed on barnstorming tours and his colorful sayings. His signing directed much criticism at Veeck and the Indians. But Paige had also been regarded as one of baseball's most dominant pitchers regardless of race. He played a pivotal role in the Indians' drive to the World Series in 1948, compiling a 6-1 record and 2.48 ERA in 21 games as a spot starter and in relief.²⁵

The addition of Doby along with other pre-season transactions did not result in a pennant in 1947, but helped the Indians improve by twelve games and finish in fourth place. Veeck's acquisitions in his first two years combined with holdovers from the Indians' roster to produce a well-rounded team that, with a little luck, could challenge for the AL pennant. Bob Lemon had been a third baseman in the Indians' farm system, but could not unseat Ken Keltner. After showing a strong arm while pitching batting practice, he was converted to a pitcher in 1946, joined the starting rotation the following year, and won 11 games. Gene Bearden was acquired from the Yankees after the 1946 season and proved to be an invaluable asset during the 1948 pennant race. On offense,

Doby continued to develop as a batter and was joined by fellow outfielder Dale Mitchell. A rookie in 1946, Mitchell became a consistent .300 hitter for most of his eleven seasons in Cleveland. The infield was anchored by star player-manager Lou Boudreau, a holdover from the Bradley Era, who played a solid shortstop and developed into a quality hitter from 1938 to 1950. He was joined by second baseman Joe Gordon. Veeck acquired the former Yankee after the 1946 season to solidify the middle infield and provide a powerful bat in the lineup. These were cornerstone moves that thrust the Indians to monumental achievements in 1948.²⁶

HOCKEY: A HOLDING PATTERN OF SUCCESS

The Cleveland Barons, unlike the Browns and Indians, did not usher in the postwar era with changes in ownership or player signings that impacted established color-lines in their respective sports. Rather, the Barons greeted 1945 with a very special hat trick. The Barons captured the AHL West Division title, the AHL regular season title, and the Calder Cup championship. From 1940 until the end of the war, Cleveland qualified for the AHL playoffs with regularity. While football and baseball struggled through lean times during WWII, hockey remained a bright spot in Cleveland. At the heart of this stability lay Al Sutphin, owner of the Barons and the Cleveland Arena. He had the deep pockets of McBride and the charm of Veeck, with the added bonus of being a Cleveland native and an established figure in the city's sporting scene. But the Barons remained 'minor league,' a label that the Browns and AAFC eventually eclipsed and that

the Indians never worried over. The story of the Barons in postwar Cleveland is rather simple. The team continued to win and Sutphin continued to turn a profit, but the gap between the NHL and AHL as 'major league' and 'minor league' was widening. It was clear that the AHL had not recovered from its wartime struggles to maintain franchises and fan bases in smaller cities. Dreams of challenging the NHL as a second major league in hockey never were fulfilled. Like other AHL teams, the Barons transitioned along with the new demands of postwar hockey.²⁷

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cleveland and the NHL had flirted with each other since Hap Holmes brought professional hockey to the city in 1929. Under Sutphin's ownership the flirtations got stronger, but no actions were ever taken. Some have suggested that Sutphin resented the NHL's secondary draft, which allowed NHL teams to claim players off any minor league roster for \$4,000 in compensation. Minor league teams could only lose one player. The Barons were run as an independent franchise, having no NHL affiliation, but were still subject to this draft. Sutphin reportedly hated being in a position where control wrested in someone else's hands. During the 1938-39 season, Barons' forward Phil Hergesheimer was considered the best prospect in the NHL. Sutphin knew he would lose Hergesheimer at season's end with only minor financial compensation unless he traded him beforehand. After entertaining several offers, he traded Hergesheimer to the Chicago Blackhawks for three players and Chicago's agreement to draft a designated Baron in the secondary draft. To make matters

worse, when the NHL courted Sutphin and the Barons in 1942, they made it nearly impossible for Cleveland to acquire talented players from NHL rosters. Sutphin declined the NHL's invitation. He argued that the loss of Cleveland would kill the AHL, and he could not do that to his fellow owners. Whether or not the prestige of being in the NHL was worth increased expenses or loyalty became a non-factor as Sutphin settled on the prosperity of the moment.²⁸

Sutphin was an entrepreneur, and financial implications of joining the NHL versus staying in the AHL played an important role in his decisions on the Baron's future. Cleveland's hockey fans were described as being rabid. During the war they continued to travel to the Arena in support of the Barons while their counterparts in other AHL cities dwindled, even setting a season attendance record in 1943-44 in 27 games. During the 1945-1946 season the Barons set a new home attendance record with 314,538 for 31 home games, an average of 10,146 per game for a team that finished third in its division. Still able to make healthy profits given Cleveland's support of the Barons, Sutphin had little reason to join the NHL and pay NHL prices on players. Prior to the 1946-47 season he traded star center Tommy Burlington because he reasoned that Burlington would be asking for an NHL-sized salary soon. Burlington had NHL talent, but could not play in the league because he had only one eye. Sutphin arguably feared the repercussions that would run through the Barons if he refused to pay Burlington a higher salary or if he gave in and paid the salary. The Barons' payroll was the highest in the AHL, but could have

been thrown into chaos if NHL prices were instituted. After the trade, Burlington guessed that money was the reason despite never being told why he was dealt. He also never made any demands for a new contract, yet the following season he held out for a new contract before retiring.²⁹

The NHL still lingered in the minds of sportswriters and hockey fans, but the Barons juggernaut rambled on in the AHL. A future star also made his debut in Cleveland's net beginning in 1945. Rookie goaltender Johnny Kiszkan began what would prove to be one of the most storied careers in Barons' history. Prior to the 1946-47 season he changed his name to Johnny Bower, and went on to guide the Barons, Providence Reds, and finally the NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs to championships. New talent like Bower was joined by veteran talent returning from military service during WWII. The AHL was changing, as many franchises developed partnerships with NHL teams to strengthen their rosters and their wallets. Sutphin continued to make changes as the team needed them, and was not afraid to spend to bring the necessary talent to Cleveland. Fans supported the team, players liked playing in Cleveland, and success on the ice followed. Sutphin, characterized by the trademark red tie he donned so often, was in a good place in Cleveland. The city's sports future seemed bright with Sutphin, McBride, and Veeck at the helm of their teams. Little could anyone expect just how successful these teams would be in 1948.³⁰

CHAPTER 4

THE CITY OF CHAMPIONS: 1948

Scholars and authors portray the general attitude of postwar Cleveland in differing terms. To some it was a city full of hope that the boost received from the wartime economy would incite cultural and economic revivals along the shore of Lake Erie. To others, Cleveland was in need of encouragement to overcome the community's overall melancholia, a byproduct of war, economic depression, and the hardships that accompanied those times. Nearly unanimously, however, this group points to 1948 as a special time that both captured the spirit of hope and provided encouragement that better times were possible. Cleveland's professional sports franchises brought the city three separate championships. The Barons', Browns', and Indians' respective titles marked the culmination in each franchise's efforts to build a champion as Cleveland and the nation returned to some degree of postwar normalcy. The combination of new teams, new owners, and new players with the holdovers and individuals returning from the war produced an era of unparalleled success. More importantly, the success of professional sports captured the attention of the public and civic leaders. Everyone wanted their name attached with one or all of the teams in hopes that the "champion" image would transfer over in the process. The Indians' World Series title, its first in twenty eight years, was by

far the most significant of these championships for those very reasons. By the end of 1948, civic boosters were still making the case for Cleveland as “The Best Location in the Nation” to anyone and everyone, but also added the “City of Champions” to their arsenal of civic-minded slogans. Each franchise continued to thrive in the years that followed yet the feats of 1948 were never again duplicated by Cleveland’s professional teams. Changes within each franchise initiated new directions that again paralleled Cleveland’s own path. Teams experienced at least one change in ownership over the next seven years, sparking the question of whether each franchise had reached its pinnacle and was destined to fall. The same could be said for Cleveland at large. The success of 1948 fostered a stronger link to social, economic, and political components in the city through the excitement it created and the events that would fall under its shadow for decades to come.¹

THE BARONS

Al Sutphin’s deep pockets and willingness to make necessary transactions made the Cleveland Barons the ideal franchise in the American Hockey League (AHL). Yet the end of the 1946-1947 season produced bitter memories that Sutphin vehemently wanted to avoid in the following season. The Barons finished atop the AHL’s Western Division and also claimed the league’s regular season title with a league record 38 wins. Cleveland faced the Eastern Division champion Hershey Bears in the first round, and was promptly swept in four games. The 9-0 defeat in game four of the series was an

embarrassment to the franchise and produced a reality check for ownership and the coaching staff. If the Barons had hopes of winning the Calder Cup in 1947-1948, they would need to get bigger and more aggressive. As in the past, Sutphin did not sit still with his team.²

In 1947-1948, the AHL was made up of eleven franchises in markets varying in size from Philadelphia and St. Louis to Hershey and New Haven. Many of these teams had working arrangements with National Hockey League (NHL) franchises and benefited when it came to acquiring players. The Barons remained an independent franchise and Sutphin signed players to one-way contracts (no obligations to a major league/NHL team). The roster stability the Barons' offered gave players peace of mind and fans a familiarity with their ice heroes. Prior to the start of the AHL season, Sutphin opened his wallet and purchased defenseman Babe Pratt from those same Hershey Bears who demolished the Barons the previous year. He then went out and acquired defenseman Joe Cooper from the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks. The two players cost an estimated \$30,000 in combined salary. The acquisitions were hailed in the preseason, but proved futile as the two players and Barons struggled in the first few months of the season. Recognizing that more changes were in order, Sutphin rectified the situation by trading Pratt and Cooper to Hershey for defensemen Hy Buller and then purchased left winger Bobby Carse, a former Baron, from the NHL's Montreal Canadiens. Sutphin and coach Bun Cook were compared to a couple of bartenders who mixed age and experience with

youth and willingness to create something potent. The Barons were struggling to rise above third and fourth place in the standings, but the moves put in motion a streak that was unparalleled in professional hockey at any level.³

On January 26, 1948 the Barons fell 6-1 to Hershey, snapping a seven game winning streak in the process. With twenty-seven games left in the regular season, the Barons were nestled into fourth place behind Indianapolis, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh. Slowly the Barons climbed their way up to the top of the Western Division in remarkable fashion. In their next eight games they won four and tied four games, moving into their place in the process. The Barons finished their regular season schedule winning seventeen and tying two games, giving them an incredible twenty-seven game unbeaten streak heading into the playoffs. Their 43 regular season wins broke the record they had set the previous season, but unlike their predecessors, this team did not limp into the playoffs. The Barons proceeded to win their first three playoff games against the Providence Reds. Despite losing game four, they won the series in game five and then swept Buffalo in the finals. Barons' management rushed the ice upon the final game's completion and began a celebration that lasted well into the night. Sutphin's Barons went undefeated in thirty games, and only lost three of their final forty-eight games that year. They immediately ranked as the greatest individual hockey team in Cleveland's history and their owner concurred. According to his son, Sutphin's confidence in the Barons led

him to have championship rings made ahead of time. He was then able to present the rings to the team in the dressing room after the game.⁴

The Barons' triumph completed the first leg of Cleveland's pros sports triumvirate in 1948, but was not viewed with the same excitement that the Indians and Browns would bring later that year. Hockey fans in the media appreciated the special season but also recognized that the Barons had not won an NHL championship. Cleveland was, as a 1949 article in *Sport Life* contended, a very good team but still a minor league team. Sutphin had passed on each of the NHL's overtures to bring Cleveland into its fold, and had produced a franchise likened to the New York Yankees (of minor league hockey). But fans and the media viewed Cleveland as a major league city, especially in regards to professional sports. The Barons had more championships and playoff appearances in their history than the Indians or the combination of pro football teams that played in Cleveland, but they were placed on a lower tier through public perception. Even during the Calder Cup finals they were reminded of the Barons place in the lower league through an NHL presence. In between Stanley Cup games, members of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings and NHL President Clarence Campbell attended a game in Buffalo. Campbell commented that the Barons had the talent to finish as high as second in the NHL that season, further whetting Clevelanders' appetites for major league hockey. Sutphin, however, stayed true to his past decisions and did not pursue NHL entry following the season.⁵

One year later the Barons, largely made up of the same players that had dominated the 1948-1949 season, again qualified for the playoffs. This time they did not breeze to the Calder Cup championship. Instead Hershey eliminated the Barons from the playoffs in the second round. Change was in order, but everyone believed it would come through another round of trades and player acquisitions. On April 25, 1949 Sutphin announced to Cleveland that he had sold the Barons after earlier hinting at his actions in telling one of the players, "I think the bloom is off the rose." Some argued that Sutphin determined sometime during the 1948-1949 season that he wanted to go out on top and sensed that the moment was at hand. Others felt that years of making sure that the Arena and the Barons turned profits had taken an emotional and physical toll on Sutphin, who would be able to return to family life. The timing of his departure, based on similar moves by Bill Veeck and Mickey McBride, could also infer a belief that Cleveland's postwar economic and cultural highs would soon be over. The shift toward decline would not support the evolving needs of professional sport whether minor or major league. To ensure a clean break from those business ventures, he sold his shares in the Barons, the Arena, and a small share in the Ice Capades. The man responsible for hockey's success in Cleveland retired from the local sporting scene with four Calder Cup championships and a new Arena, but without an NHL franchise. Cleveland's hockey faithful loved the Barons' titles and overall successes, but Cleveland loved being a major

league city even more. The future of hockey in the city was henceforth tied to the pursuit of an NHL franchise.⁶

THE BROWNS

Cleveland began the year with a Barons title and ended with the Browns winning its third straight All-America Football Conference (AAFC) championship. Coach Paul Brown's promise to create a football dynasty in Cleveland was coming to fruition, and Cleveland's football fans threw their support behind the Browns in a manner never before shown to a professional football team in the city. The Browns drew over 390,000 fans to their seven home games each of the first two seasons. Crowds exceeding 60,000 were expected while big games drew upwards of 70,000 to Municipal Stadium. The 1948 season, however, presented multiple challenges to the Browns. These came less from opponents on the field and more from its fan base and the AAFC. Professional football was in the throws of a war between the AAFC and the National Football League (NFL). Many saw a merger between the two leagues as inevitable, but the financial problems confronting many of the AAFC teams made them unattractive partners. NFL owners targeted Cleveland and the San Francisco 49ers as the best possible teams to bring into their league, but even they were not unanimous in this opinion and the merger waited. As attendance dropped for both leagues as well, it was perceived that profits fell and made the ongoing football war more problematic to the overall health of the leagues. Even Paul Brown, for all his success, pondered his coaching future in Cleveland at the season's

end. A resolved Browns team emerged from these problems to continue the winning ways that gave them a nine game unbeaten streak going into the 1948 season (eight wins and one tie to finish the 1947 season). The talented roster Paul Brown assembled continued to dominate the AAFC and provided a bookend for Cleveland's "City of Champions" year.⁷

The two-time defending AAFC champs entered the 1948 season poised once again for a strong showing, but no one outside of Paul Brown predicted that his squad would so utterly dominate the league in its third year. This was not to say that the Browns waltzed through the season, for they did not. But close games always ended with the Browns as the victor. To that end, Cleveland completed an undefeated regular season with fourteen straight victories. They punctuated the season with a 49-7 thrashing of an upstart Buffalo Bills team. Paul Brown later recalled this as the most dominant football team he ever coached, and pointed out this club's ability to win three regular season victories over an eight-day stretch as evidence of the team's dedication and talent. He also professed that the undefeated season did not signify a "weak" AAFC; an argument the NFL continued to promote in football circles. Brown claimed that the Browns, 49ers, and Yankees (even though they finished 6-8 in 1948) were the three best pro football teams that year regardless of league. The Browns continued their dominance into the 1949 season, winning their first five games to take their unbeaten streak to 29, and captured its fourth straight AAFC Championship at season's end. Following that season,

the Browns, 49ers, and Baltimore Colts merged with the NFL, and Ted Collins, owner of the NFL's New York Bulldogs, purchased the AAFC's Yankees and folded his Bulldogs franchise. The AAFC ceased operations the Browns began life anew in the NFL.⁸

The Browns' success during the franchises four years in the AAFC extended off of the field. They drew large crowds and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, their profits placed them among football's elite franchises. Problems, however, presented challenges to the Browns on both short- and long-term levels. At the start of the 1948 season the Browns found themselves overshadowed by the Indians' World Series pursuits. 1948 belonged to the Cleveland Indians. Just as the Barons' Calder Cup title earlier in 1948 was plagued by the team's "minor league" status, it could be argued that the Browns' title was not fully appreciated. The NFL remained the predominant professional football circuit despite the AAFC's challenge and large-market franchises. Major League Baseball (MLB) did not face either of these problems. It was the only pro baseball circuit that mattered. The Indians captured Cleveland's attention and imagination as they battled their way to the American League (AL) pennant and World Series. The Indians and Bill Veeck had arguably pushed every other sporting venture in the city to the background that year. In mid-October, less than a week after the Indians clinched the city's first World Series title in almost three decades, a *Press* cartoon depicted a generic member from both the Browns and Barons meekly peeking out of a storm cellar to check on the whereabouts of a large gathering of Indians fans. With the

crowd in the distance, and the ground littered with confetti and flyers naming Indians' players, the Barons player tells the Browns player that it was now safe to come out. The *News* shared a similar sentiment, urging fans to remember the Browns and attend their games.⁹

Attendance proved to be a problem for the Browns in 1948 and 1949, as it was for all professional football teams. Cleveland, with the luxuries of a massive stadium and a winning franchise, had the highest per game attendance average among pro football teams between 1946 and 1949 (47,500 per game), but saw a considerable drop-off in the final two years. Home attendance went from 399,962 over seven games in 1946 to 189,604 over six games in 1949. Championship games at Municipal Stadium in 1948 and 1949 each drew crowds of roughly 22,000, almost half of the championship game crowd in 1946. The low numbers again came despite the urging of the local press for fans to give the Browns "the support they deserve." The Browns' home attendance did not surpass 300,000 for a season again until 1957. The attendance drop has often been linked to the Browns' overall dominance in the AAFC. The lack of competition reportedly diminished interest locally and nationally, as the Browns' road attendance figures also dropped.¹⁰

The demise of the AAFC, although linked to the Browns' domination on the field, was rooted in larger issues. Primary among them were the financial problems of many AAFC franchise owners and the football war with the NFL. Starting with the Browns'

first game against the Miami Seahawks, the financial stability of individual franchises came into question. Harvey Hester, principal owner of the poorly-financed team, left Cleveland without paying his bills. Paul Brown stated in his autobiography that the Browns, stunned as they were by Hester's actions, paid for the Seahawks to prevent the AAFC from looking like a second-class organization. Despite the presence of some millionaire owners, franchises continued to struggle. Brown called it a symptom of non-football people trying to succeed in the football business. Miami folded after only one season and the Brooklyn Dodgers Folded after 1948. The Chicago Hornets were continually on the verge of bankruptcy. Competition for players and rising operating costs resulting from the war between the NFL and AAFC were at the heart of many of the financial problems. Unable to cooperate on such items as a common draft to keep rookie salaries down, the two leagues turned to the possibility of a merger by 1948, and were finally able to pull it off after the following season. Had television been along as a mainstay in American culture, perhaps a large television contract could have given the AAFC the working capital it needed to stay afloat. As it was, millionaires like McBride, New York's Dan Topping, and Los Angeles's Ben Lindheimer were credited with keeping the league going for as long as they could assist the other franchises.¹¹

One final point of uncertainty faced the Browns towards the end of the 1948 season. Paul Brown was rumored to be considering a move to new pastures in the football world. This coincided with reports that McBride was fed up with the

competition between the NFL and AAFC and diminished profits, and was prepared to sell the team. Stories existed that Brown, upset with the cutthroat practices resulting from the football war and uncertainty over the Browns' future, reportedly wanted to leave professional football and return to the college game. Both Ohio State and the University of Southern California were mentioned as possible coaching destinations. The Cleveland media reported that "persons close to him" predicted he would leave the Browns before the 1949 season, which the *Plain Dealer* called an irreplaceable loss for Cleveland's sports picture. Brown stayed in Cleveland—well beyond 1949—and coached the Browns into their NFL years. He eventually visited both Ohio State and USC after the 1950 season, but only for public relations purposes and not without first informing McBride. The threat was based entirely on speculation and never on reality.¹²

In conjunction with the Browns' move to the NFL for the 1950 season, *Sport* magazine had *Press* editor Franklin Lewis examine the challenges and meanings Cleveland faced. In an article titled, "The Browns Are On The Spot," Lewis wrote that the reputation Paul Brown's teams had built in the AAFC would stand or fall depending on their performance against the established powers of the NFL. "If the Browns can keep it up against the old National League titans," he argued, "they'll be universally accepted as one of the great teams of all time. If they flop, their glittering AAFC record will be discounted as so much trash." In many ways, the transition of the Browns to the NFL symbolically paralleled Cleveland's desire to return a position of strength among New

York, Chicago, and other American cities, and indeed Paul Brown received his greatest satisfaction in defeating New York teams (the Yankees in the AAFC and the Giants in the NFL). It was believed that a successful sports team and demonstrations of civic support would equate to a healthy local economy and culture for onlookers from outside Northeast Ohio. The reality of the equation was that the Browns' success could not provide a definitive cure for the economic and cultural ills that sent Cleveland drifting towards urban decline in the postwar era. Football did take on some symbolic measures despite this argument. The Browns first game that year was against the Philadelphia Eagles, the NFL's 1949 champions. The game was a proving ground for a new era of Cleveland football and a justification of past accomplishments. In front of 85,000 fans at Philadelphia's Municipal Stadium, the Browns defeated the Eagles 35-10, and gained a large measure of respect from an NFL community that had often belittled their success beforehand. The Browns finished the regular season with a 10-2 record and tied with the New York Giants atop the NFL's Eastern Conference. Although both of the Browns' regular season losses came at the hands of the Giants, they defeated New York to earn a berth in the NFL Championship game. Cleveland's continued use of New York as a measuring stick for its own progress and value accentuated the rivalry that grew between these two teams. The Browns game against the Eagles to start the seasons was a proving ground, but the championship possessed a meaning rooted in civic pride to go along with the right to claim being the NFL's best team. The Browns faced the Los Angeles Rams

at Cleveland Stadium—Cleveland’s old team at the site of the Rams’ 1945 NFL Championship. In what Paul Brown described as a “fiction writer’s delight,” the Browns had a chance to vindicate Cleveland’s value as a football town to the team and owner who had departed unceremoniously in January 1946. A Lou Groza field goal near game’s end gave the Browns a 30-28 victory, their first NFL Championship, and five league championships in five years of existence.¹³

Between 1950 and 1955 the Browns appeared in six straight NFL Championship games, winning three of them. Paul Brown’s squads had developed into a star-studded dynasty without any doubt. These successes and accolades somewhat masked changes inside the franchise that could perhaps lead to a statement on football’s future in Cleveland. Just as Sutphin left a successful Barons franchise, McBride too decided that he no longer wanted to own the Browns. Early in 1953 Cleveland industrialist Dave R. Jones approached McBride about selling the Browns to Jones’ syndicate. The Browns had lost two straight NFL Championship games, and some believed that McBride had soured on football without the accustomed league titles. Indeed, McBride exploded after the Browns’ 1952 title game loss to the Detroit Lions. He told the *Press* that he hated losing. “This town deserves a winner and we’re going to get the players who want to win instead of folding in the clutch.” he later promised after assuring the media that he had no plans of selling the team. Others believed his relationship with Paul Brown had soured to such a degree that he wanted out of the organization. Brown was not in Cleveland when

McBride announced the sale, leading to further speculation of a growing rift between the two men. Brown himself stated that he was furious at McBride for not being informed of the sale beforehand. He also believed that McBride's son had convinced his father that the Browns was an aging team that would not be able to return to its previous achievements. After McBride's departure a *Sport* article also wondered if the Browns were over the hill. On June 9, 1953, McBride finalized the sale to Jones' syndicate for \$600,000. The sale was contingent upon two factors: one, McBride and his partners were to receive no less than the money they invested into the team, and two, that the new ownership group be committed to producing winning football for Cleveland.¹⁴

The Browns did win again, claiming NFL titles in 1954 and 1955. After the 1955 title game, Otto Graham retired and ended an era of Cleveland football in the process. With Graham at quarterback, Paul Brown's teams had risen to the forefront of Cleveland's sporting scene. Their seven league championships over ten years connected Cleveland with a major league sports franchise that epitomized winning. Unfortunately the Browns could not win forever, and in the seasons that followed their dominance waned. The talented ensemble of gridiron stars dwindled through retirements over the years. The generosity of the postwar years shifted towards more troubling times that echoed growing racial tensions and the changing cultural values of a new generation of owners and athletes. The Browns continued to represent Cleveland on a symbolic level,

but it was apparent that elements of decline would be equal partners with spoils of winning.¹⁵

THE INDIANS

Bill Veeck spent the early portion of 1948 taking his “One Man Chautauqua Circuit” across Ohio. Speaking to almost any group in a multitude of different locations (from auditoriums and offices to taverns and shops), Veeck asked his listeners, “Now why don’t you come up to the ball park and see me this season?” His efforts to bring the Indians to the people during Ohio’s gray winter months carried with them the hopes of the coming Spring, renewed every year for baseball fans on opening day. Baseball did that which every man and woman could only hope for in life, claimed a local editorial—it wiped the slate clean. On April 20 the Indians welcomed in the 1948 season with a 4-0 victory over the St. Louis Browns. The win, according to the *Plain Dealer*, helped the 73,163 on hand to forget the Iron Curtain, the draft, and other ills of the world for at least a couple of hours. Unlike most opening days, especially those played on the shores of Lake Erie in April, fans enjoyed the game in 70 degree weather, the appropriate amount of sun, and little opposition from the opponent. For all intensive purposes, these almost ideal circumstances foreshadowed the season to come.¹⁶

Manager Lou Boudreau questioned the Indians’ pitching depth in spring training, but was openly hopeful that Cleveland would challenge for the AL pennant. Veeck supplemented his marketing strategies with a belief that you build a team to win in the

present and not become infatuated with the future, and brought in additional pitching (including Satchel Paige towards the end of the season) in his efforts to produce a winner on the field as well as at the gates. Bob Feller, Bob Lemon, and Gene Bearden combined for 59 victories in 1948. Almost every regular had a good year on offense. Ken Keltner and Joe Gordon each hit over 30 home runs, Boudreau batted .355 on his way to winning the AL Most Valuable Player award, and young outfielders Larry Doby and Dale Mitchell flourished. By September, the Indians were embroiled in a pennant race with the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees that again had Clevelanders looking past the upcoming presidential election and continued tensions between America and the Soviet Union over Berlin. The Indians playoff run was eventually listed as a primary factor for the 25,000 to 30,000 residents in Cuyahoga County (which contained Cleveland) who did not register for November elections. On October 3rd, the Indians and Bob Feller faced the Detroit Tigers with a chance to win the AL outright, but the Indians' star pitcher was defeated 7-1. A Red Sox victory over New York created a tie with the Indians for first in the AL, forcing Clevelanders to anxiously await the outcome of a one-game playoff in Boston. Rather than pitch his ace (Feller), Boudreau surprised the baseball world and chose Bearden to start against the Red Sox. Bearden rewarded his manager and capped his remarkable season with an 8-3 victory the following day. The Indians clinched the AL pennant and sent Cleveland fans into a frenzy throughout downtown. The *Press* commented that, "any Clevelander who didn't get the thrill of his life out of that game is

a dried-up, soulless, bloodless, desiccated, heartless, passionless, pitiful representative of some form of life..." Pedestrians and motorists were reported wandering aimlessly through the streets, basking in the reflected glory of the team and making as much noise as possible. Perhaps the only unhappy person found in the city was a lone Boston fan, who muttered to reporters and anyone else who would listen, "You...you and your god dam Indians."¹⁷

World Series preparations were as important to Cleveland as they were to the Indians. The baseball spotlight presented the city with the opportunity to justify its claim of being the "best location in the nation." Mayor Thomas A. Burke also wanted out-of-town visitors, visiting baseball's dignitaries, celebrities, and members of the media to come away with the belief that Cleveland was also the friendliest and cleanest city. He called upon the entire community to help the city "present its cleanest, brightest, and most pleasant face" for visitors. Almost immediately city streets were washed and asphalt crews were sent out to repair the stadium parking lot. The Cleveland Police, aware of the immense ticket demands following the pennant winning game in Boston, issued warnings to scalpers who were rumored to want as much as \$50 for one seat. Burke also warned local business not to inflate prices in an attempt to take advantage of visitors. Cleveland needed to be "big league." A *Plain Dealer* editorial prompted the city to support the Indians in every respect by making Cleveland the best World Series city a baseball fan had ever experienced. Cleveland reveled in its moment in the national

spotlight, and hoped that one weekend of civic goodwill would create future convention and tourist opportunities. The 1948 World Series was presented by civic leaders not only as a chance for the Indians to prove themselves to be the best, but also a chance for Cleveland to showcase itself as one of America's premier metropolises.¹⁸

After fighting past the Red Sox and Yankees to win the AL pennant, the Indians faced a Braves team with five .300 hitters and the pitching combination of Warren Spahn and Johnny Sain who won 39 games combined in the regular season. The Braves organization and its fans were also hungry for a World Series title, having not won a pennant since 1914. Boudreau's decision to pitch Bearden against the Red Sox appeared to pay off doubly as he was now able to start Feller in the Series opener in Boston, but Feller lost 1-0 to Sain. The game was marked by a controversial missed-call on an attempted pick-off play that eventually led to the game's only run. The Indians won the next three games behind solid pitching from Lemon, Bearden, and Steve Gromek. Larry Doby's home run in the third inning of Game Four held up Gromek's strong pitching performance. Following the game, a photography captured the two in a celebratory embrace in the clubhouse. The moment became a symbol for racial harmony in the world of sports. Feller lost his second start in Game Five and a chance to clinch the World Series in Cleveland in an 11-5 drubbing by the Braves. Arguably the biggest blemish on Feller's Hall of Fame career is that he never won a World Series game. Returning to Boston for Game Six, the Indians Lemon and Bearden limited the Braves to 3 runs giving

the Indians a 4-3 victory and Cleveland its second World Series championship after a twenty-eight year drought.¹⁹

All season long the Indians were supported by Cleveland's baseball fans. The team drew a MLB record 2,620,627 fans in 1948, as well as records for single-game and double-header crowds. Veeck's faith in a quality team and fan-friendly marketing was rewarded. Cleveland's throngs celebrated the World Series victory in grand style. The Indians took an overnight train back to Cleveland, and the city was waiting when they arrived at the downtown depot in the Terminal Tower. Even children from the Cleveland Public Schools were informed by their teachers that they would not be marked absent if they left school to attend the celebratory parade. Veeck and the players were ushered into convertibles upon their arrival and then made their way down Euclid Avenue, a main Cleveland road. Police estimated 3,000 people lined the five mile parade route to welcome home Cleveland's conquering heroes. Veeck commented that this was the first time he witnessed the real Cleveland. The Barons title may have been the first in 1948 and the Browns' championship may have capped the year, but the Indians World Series title was the most significant of the three. In winning arguably the most prestigious championship in American professional sports, the Indians bolstered Cleveland's status within the American landscape. They had given the city something to cheer about and, keeping with Mayor Burke's vision, presented Cleveland in a most favorable, national light. Not only did Cleveland know it was home of the World Series champions, but it

was hoped that sports fans in New York, Chicago, and elsewhere also would make the connection between city and sporting success. The Indians' title was the essential component to claims that Cleveland was the "city of champions," but went even further in the minds of many to validate the city as the "best location in the nation."²⁰

Cleveland's black community also joined in the celebration of the Indians' World Series title. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Call & Post* paid little attention to the Indians before it signed Larry Doby in 1947. The next year the Indians were constantly covered by the weekly paper. Doby's play was closely monitored by the newspaper beginning in spring training, where there were concerns about whether or not the rookie would get a fair chance to make the major league roster. Doby made the Indians' roster and Boudreau gave him the start in right field on opening day. Throughout the season, Doby's progress was monitored. Bill Veeck's efforts to court Cleveland's black community to Indians' games also caught the attention of the *Call & Post*. When the Indians clinched the AL pennant, the weekly proclaimed them as "Our Indians" on the front page. Veeck was painted as a man who combined a desire to win with an American idealism that scoffed at race, creed, and color. The Indians were a symbol of everything fair and democratic in American life. In the aftermath of the Indians' victory, the front page posted the aforementioned photograph of Doby and Gromek embraced after Game Four. Larry Doby and Satchel Paige, to a lesser extent,

drew the black community's attention towards the Indians, but Veeck garnered the most praise as a true champion of democracy.²¹

Veeck believed that any new ownership group had a three-year window to produce a winning team after it took over a franchise. Two and a half years after purchasing the Indians he had beaten this self-imposed deadline. But the excitement and fulfillment of a championship did not keep Veeck in Cleveland. Following the 1949 season, only three and a half years after arriving and reviving the "sleeping giant" that was Cleveland as a baseball town, Veeck moved out of town. Perhaps the reason was the frustration of the 1949 season in which the Indians dropped to third with an 89-65 record, a feeling that the Indians would not be able to beat out the Yankees year after year in the long run, or maybe it was a general impatience that the best had come and gone with the 1948 championship. Veeck insisted in his autobiography that his impending divorce with wife Eleanor and a desire to have money available for a settlement was the primary reason for the sale. His syndicate sold the Indians for \$2,200,000 to a group headed by insurance executive Ellis Ryan. Veeck claimed that every one of his investors received \$20 for every dollar they had invested in the Indians, while he came out with virtually nothing following taxes and the divorce. The *Plain Dealer's* Gordon Cobbledick argued that the new ownership syndicate was doomed from the start. They purchased the team as an investment that they hoped to later sell for a large profit, but knew little-to-nothing about baseball. Home attendance dropped the following season and the franchise value

consequently dropped, he continued. As a result, the Indians were for sale from that point on. Veeck's stay in Cleveland was brief, but it produced levels of excitement and celebration that were previously unseen in connection with the Indians. The public enthusiasm he spurred led to increased profitability, especially when one considered that Veeck's ownership was responsible for the largest season attendance records in Indians history. Twice he drew over 2,000,000 fans to Municipal Stadium. For decades after his departure, especially during the team's struggles and ownership turnover of the 1970s, Cleveland's baseball fans hoped a new Bill Veeck would arrive and bring the Indians some salvation. There were even rumors that Veeck himself would come back to Cleveland as an owner and again make baseball king of the city, but they never came to fruition. Instead, Cleveland was left with nostalgic memories of the magic of baseball in 1948.²²

The 1948 World Series victory marked the beginning of the Golden Era of Cleveland Baseball. Between 1948 and 1959 the Indians possessed dominating pitching staffs and dangerous lineups. As stars from the 1948 squad retired, were traded, or became role players, new talent was infused from the farm system or acquired via trade. Rookies Al Rosen and Luke Easter joined the Indians in 1950. Each drove in over 100 RBIs, and Rosen set a then-record for home runs by a rookie with 37. With Doby they combined to give the Indians a powerful trio until an injury to Easter in 1953 led to the end of his career. Rosen batted .336 in 1953 and led the AL in runs (115), home runs

(43) and RBIs (145), and was the unanimous selection as MVP. Feller was in the twilight of his career in the 1950s, but Early Wynn and Mike Garcia joined Lemon to form the “Big Three” pitching staff. From 1951 to 1956 the Indians compiled an impressive 570-354 record, but despite the Indians’ overwhelming talent they continually played second fiddle to the Yankees. The Indians won more than ninety games in seven different seasons (coming close with 89 in 1949 and 88 in 1956) during that stretch, yet they only managed to win one more American League pennant in 1954. The Yankees proved to be their bane as the Indians finished second to the Yankees five times in six years between 1951 and 1956. It became apparent through the local media that Indians officials were preoccupied with the Yankees from season to season. In 1951 the Indians lost sixteen out twenty one games against the Yankees, including ten of eleven games in New York. Yankee Stadium was facetiously called the Indians’ “unhappy hunting ground.” Going into 1952, Cleveland’s management appeared more concerned with the Yankees than their own team according to one local journalist. To compound matters, Ellis Ryan felt the need to respond publicly to criticism of the Indians made by Yankee’s manager Casey Stengel only thirty seven games into the season. Ryan’s penned an article that appeared in the *News* in which he replied, “I depend upon my Indians to do my talking for me.” The Indians finished second by two games that year. It might be unfair to imply that Cleveland had an inferiority complex when dealing with anything from New York, let

along a preoccupation. The Indians-Yankees rivalry during the so-called “golden era” brought home the differing directions each team was traveling.²³

The 1954 season was a last hurrah for the Indians. They won 111 regular season games and set an American League record, yet drew only 1,335,472 fans. Home attendance had been a concern for the new ownership group, who were unable to pack Municipal Stadium with the same success as Veeck. The *News*’s Ed Bang wondered at the start of the season if such large crowds had been an anomaly that would never be reached again. The Indians again had a talent-laden roster. The Big Four pitching staff of Bob Lemon (23-7), Early Wynn (23-11), Mike Garcia (19-8), and Art Houtmann (15-7) who had supplanted Feller (13-3) as the fourth starter, and an offense featuring the powerful bats of Al Rosen and Doby led the Indians into the World Series, where they entered as heavy favorites against the New York Giants. Once again Cleveland officials, led by Mayor Anthony Celebrezze, urged the community to use the World Series as a civic showcase. The goal was national recognition as a clean, friendly, and courteous city—the characteristics of a true big city. If achieved, it was argued, Cleveland could be proud of itself and even gain a measure of spiritual uplift. Clean city streets and hospitable merchants could not alter the Cleveland’s fate on the field, however, and the Giants surprised everyone by sweeping the Indians. The first game set the tone for the series. The Polo Grounds’ dimensions made heroes out of two Giants and arguably cost Cleveland a victory. Vic Wertz’s monstrous 460-foot drive to center field, which many

argued would have been a sure home run in Cleveland, instead became an all-time highlight when Willie Mays made a basket catch with his back to the infield and saved at least one run. The Giants won the game in extra-innings when pinch hitter Dusty Rhodes' 258-foot fly ball down the short right field line drifted fell just inside the foul pole for a home run. Cleveland was left shocked and disappointed at the outcome. The local press portrayed a city in mourning after being humiliated into realizing they were only second best. After playing second fiddle to the Yankees for so many years, the 1954 season seemed destined for a championship, but ironically they fell to one of the other New York teams. After the initial shock wore off, the local media did an about face and professed pride in the Indians' season. They proclaimed the Indians were "winners" in the hearts of Clevelanders. The World Series loss, nonetheless, marked a downward shift in Indians baseball. Player movement, both trades and retirements, saw the likes of the Feller and Doby leave the club in the hands of younger talent who Cleveland fans hoped would continue the baseball success of the last decade. Despite initial signs of hope, the Indians' future was destined to parallel Cleveland's urban decline over most of the next four decades.²⁴

THE VALUE OF BEING CHAMPIONS

Despite experiencing the embarrassment of having the Cuyahoga River catch on fire in early February, Cleveland fondly recalled 1948 by December thanks to the accomplishments of the Barons, Browns, and Indians. Cleveland sports fans were in a

state of euphoria, having never before experienced so much success in professional sports. The local press eagerly adopted “The City of Champions” as a proud, new claim on Cleveland’s place among other American cities. The Barons, Browns, and Indians highlighted the sports “year in review” articles for every daily paper’s sports section and inspired predictions of another round of championships in 1949. Only the Browns delivered on such a prediction. Still, professional sports grew into a special role through the course of the year and maintained it for decades to come. Teams signified the health and success of the community, primarily when they were winning. Support of winning teams highlighted this belief. By capturing three separate championships, Cleveland ideally rose above other cities while challenging elite cosmopolitan centers. Following the 1948 World Series, the News’s Ed Bang wrote, “Not only is Cleveland the home of champions...But [it] is also the town that forces the five more heavily populated cities in general, an especially Greater New York, to bow low when it comes to establishing attendance records.” Any chance a civic booster had to use numbers, or slogans as seen thus far, to positively measure Cleveland’s national value was taken. The Sixth City, a reference to Cleveland’s population-based ranking, proudly hailed the Indians’ attendance record.²⁵

The increased link between professional sport and Cleveland that emerged in 1948 also presented dangers to civic image that were not foreseen in the rampant use of “City of Champions” and other signifiers. Postwar Cleveland appeared to be revived

through the lingering impact of the wartime economy and efforts to address and embrace the changes predicted for the latter half of the twentieth century. When the Browns emerged as a powerhouse, the Barons maintained their winning ways, and the Indians rekindled pennant-fever immediately following World War II, it seemed a natural progression that sport would also experience a revival. Cleveland hoped, and perhaps believed, that it was again on the upswing of growth and development. It was premature and foolish to assume that such trends would continue unfettered, or that they had actually begun at all. The revival of sport and city, however genuine in that moment (1948), was fool's gold in the long-term reality of the city. Cleveland had not properly addressed either the changing national economy or the city's needs. The early signs of urban decline lingered underneath the feel-good attitude and low-risk civic policies of the postwar years. Cleveland's professional sports teams, tied in multiple ways to the community, also exhibited an arrogance rooted in the belief that short-term prosperity and success was destined for years to come. The departures of Veeck, McBride, and Sutphin within four years of each other should have raised warning flags that professional sport was quickly facing new challenges. By the 1970s Cleveland had given up on using numbers to characterize and value itself after realizing that survival outweighed dreams of retrieving its pre-Depression stature. Switching from the Sixth City to the Seventh, Eighth, and so forth as the population declined turned into an embarrassment until the practice was stopped. "The Best Location in the Nation," which civic promoters continue

to use, carried little weight as suburbanization and the growth of the Sun Belt induced the mass exodus of both population and businesses. Sport was not spared either, and the “City of Champions” went from a one year reality, to a possibility that was never quite reached, to finally being a sad reminder of how the inept teams of the present would never be the points of civic pride like three teams were in 1948.

CHAPTER 5

THE INDIANS' REVOLVING DOOR:

BASEBALL'S DEMISE THROUGH THE 1950s AND 1960s

Cleveland's postwar stability gave the city a healthy appearance. Like many large, urban centers at that time, Cleveland initiated multiple improvement projects in its effort to replace decay with progress. Public housing replaced several blighted areas. A new transit system and the construction of several highways brought Cleveland more closely in touch with modern transportation needs. Downtown, by many accounts, was alive with entertainment once again. The city's population had even grown from the previous decade according to the 1950 census (914,808). This perception of health, however, clouded the reality that the problems facing Cleveland's revitalization still threatened the city's future. In a similar fashion, professional sport seemed poised for long-term success, especially after 1948. The Barons, Browns, and Indians were expected to make Cleveland the "City of Champions" for years to come. The winning teams were counted on to boost civic morale and elevate Cleveland's image as a big time, or major league, city. In the years immediately following 1948, the on-field accomplishments of the city's professional teams led to varying degrees of success, but not the dominance many had desired. Professional sports were subject to many of the same issues that threatened the central city. By the mid-1950s, Cleveland's teams

confronted off-the-field problems that challenged their organizational stability as well as their continuance in Cleveland. The plight of the pro baseball in the city was perhaps the most critical. During the late 1950s and 1960s the Indians struggled for respect and survival, much like Cleveland itself, and in the end were haunted by bad decisions, bad timing, and bad luck.¹

CLEVELAND AT A CROSSROADS

Cleveland's immediate postwar years were marked by civic efforts to recapture the vivacity and wealth that made the city one of America's most important metropolitan centers prior to the Great Depression. In the 1950s urban renewal plans were almost always presented as efforts to return Cleveland to its rightful place among America's elite cities—a big time city. This included breast-beating by civic promoters and pomp and circumstance surrounding every civic accomplishment. Despite all the grandeur boosters garnished upon Cleveland, others recognized serious problems that continued were either handled haphazardly or ignored altogether. Cleveland pundits have argued that the city faced multiple problems in pursuing the lofty goal of 1920s prosperity. Local politicians and civic leaders were accused of focusing on the short-term impact of their decisions and therefore shied away from bold choices and plans that could have propelled Cleveland's development. Politicians coasted, according to former *Plain Dealer* editor Philip Porter, and turned the city's gradual descent into downward spiral. The restful nature of their terms drew comparisons to political comas. Cleveland voters added to

civic problems by defeating key tax levies. This put city finances in peril at levels not seen since the Depression, and also threatening Cleveland's eligibility for urban renewal funding from the federal government. Cleveland, like many cities with revitalization projects, found itself increasingly relying upon federal aid as a greater portion of general income. From 1945 to 1958 property taxes decreased by seven percent (to 57.1%) as a portion of general revenue while intergovernmental aid increased by three percent (to 20.3%). The constant efforts to assert a big-time city image while recognizing the city's decentralization, growing slums, and financial woes left Cleveland with an inferiority complex.²

Arguably the greatest problem Cleveland faced was the rapid growth of Cuyahoga County through increased suburbanization. A 1955 *Architectural Form* warned, "Every metropolitan area is plagued by the paradox of suburbs siphoning off tax income...In Cleveland this parasitic situation reaches an extreme...Suburban chauvinism in Cleveland is more than a political and financial problem. It is a social problem." The condition worsened with every passing year, and could be considered a local epidemic by 1970. Cleveland's postwar progress paled in comparison to Suburban growth. The suburbs outpaced the central city in funding for industrial expansion (\$1 billion versus \$700,000), new job opportunities (100,000 to 70,000) and the construction of new homes. Decentralization left Cleveland as an increasingly smaller portion of the overall population of Cuyahoga County, and the trends continued. Porter claimed the

fragmentation became manifest in political bickering, in which the suburbs blocked Cleveland's efforts to extend services outside its boundaries. Cleveland officials reciprocated by blocking suburban initiatives. Cleveland was a hurt town. In such a climate, the local press emphasized the importance of points of civic pride, and professional sports were among Cleveland's primary standard bearers.³

Throughout the problems haunting Cleveland was a desire to recapture the city's past glory. Using the Stephen Hardy's model of the city (as mentioned in the introductory chapter), a city is more than just a place on the map. It is a being that gathers its wholeness from its physical structure, social organizations, and attitude. At this time, Cleveland's attitude relied on the idea that the city could maintain or revive its success after experiencing a prolonged period of achievement. Many believed that the return to former glory was destined to occur. This is not meant to imply that Clevelanders, given their diversity, unanimously agreed upon a set of beliefs, but rather that they recognized a dominant thought pattern at the very least. Assuming that the attitude was valid given newspaper editorials and comments from civic leaders during the time period, Cleveland was enchanted with this notion. The city conversely provided an almost perfect locale for the flaws within such a thought process to play out. By the 1970s, in the aftermath of continued suburbanization, racial strife, and increased crime and poverty, Cleveland was forced to focus on means for survival while trying to also present a positive image. In the midst of urban decline and decentralization, Cleveland's

professional sports teams stood as institutions capable of uplifting local spirits and producing civic uplift and rekindling the image of a champion to the nation. Yet these teams were immersed in the same economic, political, and social cultures, and faced the corresponding challenges of survival and image construction themselves.⁴

1950s-1960s SPORTS: TOO MUCH SUCCESS?

Cleveland's attitude that the city could maintain or revive its success after experiencing a prolonged period of achievement held civic progress hostage to a certain extent. The Browns, Barons, and Indians faced similar challenges during the first two decades following World War II. In *The Man in the Arena*, George Condon playfully recalls an article in which a *Cleveland Press* reporter argued that the Barons' dominance in the American Hockey League was part of the reason fans lost interest in local hockey and the team faced an eventual decline. The article in question was written prior to the 1948 Calder Cup championship, giving Condon material to scoff at, but did the point have merit? The Cleveland Browns appeared in ten straight league championships from 1946 to 1955, but when attendance dropped local scribes also wondered if the title games had become routine to fans. They expected the Browns to appear in the championship game every year, subsequently making the season an uneventful and redundant process that they had to wait through. The Indians' Golden Era (roughly 1948 to 1954) produced two American League pennants and one World Series championship. With rosters including all-star and future Hall of Fame players, the Indians were one of Major League

Baseball's elite franchises for a decade. Throughout the Golden Era, however, attendance dropped on an almost yearly basis. This also coincided with a rivalry with the New York Yankees that too often resulted in a second place finish for Cleveland. The demise of the Cleveland Indians from the late 1950s through the 1960s, however, was more than a product of local apathy. Over those two decades the Indians came under new ownership four times, had twelve different men serve as manager, and traded away fan favorites and future star players. Poor attendance and growing organizational debt prompted rumors that the Indians were bound for Dallas, Houston, Minneapolis, Seattle, and San Diego during that time. If fan apathy was a valid reason for the Indians' demise, it was preceded by various levels of organizational and financial instability within the franchise. This plagued the team's public image and financial base and caused many fans to feel disconnected with the team. The Indians entered into a free-fall that made them the laughing stock of baseball for more than thirty years.⁵

TWO DECADES, FOUR OWNERS

Bill Veeck's departure after the 1949 season left the Indians in the hands of a syndicate headed by insurance executive Ellis Ryan. Ryan was not new to professional sports operations, having previously been a vice president with both the Browns and Barons. He was not, however, a man of tremendous individual wealth. The *Plain Dealer's* (PD) Gordon Cobbledick once noted that the entire syndicate was best described as investors rather than baseball men. Ryan and his colleagues could not afford

large or continuous financial losses. Unfortunately for them, the Indians' prosperity and popularity departed with Veeck. In his final season, the Indians drew 2,233,771 fans with a third place finish. In Ryan's first year the Indians finished fourth, despite winning 92 games. Ryan claimed he wanted to bring a happy medium of both Veeck and Alva Bradley to his ownership style, but attendance figures implied he was much more in line with the latter owner. 1950 attendance dropped by more than 500,000. General Manager Hank Greenberg responded by firing manager Lou Boudreau. He told reporters that the Indians might not win the AL pennant in 1951, but he would not lose control of the team. Greenberg's comments possessed an element of prophecy, and in the following year the Indians won 93 games and finished second under new manager Al Lopez. The Indians gained in the standings but lost at the gate as attendance again dropped slightly. 1952 was no different than the previous year; the Indians finished second and watched the gate fall once more (from 1,704,984 to 1,444,607). Even with the drops in turnout, the Indians were reported as being a profitable franchise under Ryan's leadership. In July 1952 the Indians recalled \$900,000 of preferred stock. They had also reduced a \$1,000,000 bank loan to less than \$350,000. Taken into account with profits from gate receipts and broadcasting rights for television and radio, it was estimated that the Indians had netted \$1,550,000 in profits under the Ryan regime.⁶

In December the Indians profits and another second place finish to the Yankees became moot points when news of a feud between Ryan and GM Greenberg hit the local

media. Reports indicated that Ryan was in discussion with the other directors to either buy out their stock or see if they would purchase his stock, should he decide to leave baseball. He desired to gain complete operational control of the franchise, which meant Greenberg would have his contract bought out. These actions not only placed Ryan in direct conflict with Greenberg, they also instituted a split in the existing ownership syndicate into two camps. The “anti-Ryan” faction had actually begun earlier that year when Ryan placed a friend with no baseball experience in charge of the Indians’ minor league affiliate in Indianapolis. While the Indians were profiting, Indianapolis lost \$100,000. Ryan also extended Greenberg’s contract through 1954 the previous year, meaning it would cost \$120,000 to buy him out. Many directors found these deals financially irresponsible. One in particular, Nate Dolin, took the lead in efforts to oust Ryan. It was soon revealed the Dolin had once been a bingo-slots operator, and rumors circulated that he was recruiting “dirty” money to buy out Ryan. The media wondered if it were true and if MLB Commissioner Ford Frick would get involved with the dispute. The publicity surrounding Dolin’s past thrust Greenberg’s place in the organization rift to the background. As news of the franchise chaos captured local headlines, worries over the damage the incident was wreaking upon the Indians’ public image were voiced. Dave Jones, a stockholder who later headed a syndicate that purchased the Cleveland Browns, felt the matter should have been kept private, and gave the public every reason to lose confidence in the team. The *Press*’s Franklin Lewis contended that the Indians were

again a national joke, just as they had been the previous decade when players attempted to get manager Oscar Vitt fired during the season (the Crybaby Indians). Calls for the Indians to reduce the number of directors from twelve to a more manageable number and thereby leaving less speculation over accountability indicated that a change was needed and without further haste.⁷

Ryan swore he and his allies would fight rather than sell their stock, but after directors voted against him at a December 18 board meeting he agreed to resign as president. He and those board members who supported him sold their stock to the other board members for \$600 per share, six times his original purchase price. Ryan's 551 shares netted him a \$275,500 profit. In all, Ryan and his allies sold 1,300 stock shares back to the club. In another part of Ryan's agreement to resign and sell his stock, the Indians named Myron Wilson the new team president. Wilson was only a minor shareholder (100 shares or roughly 3%) and had only gotten involved with the Indians at the request of Ryan, a longtime friend. In the board of director's vote he sided with the anti-Ryan contingent as he wanted a baseball man in charge of the Indians and therefore sided with Greenberg. The restructured ownership group maintained control of the Indians through the 1955 season, and continued to face two major challenges: home attendance and the Yankees. Jones' prediction that the infighting would lead the public to lose confidence in the organization cannot be proven for the 1953 season, but attendance again experienced a dramatic decline. 1,069,176 fans came to Municipal Stadium; down

almost 400,000 from the previous year. The 1954 pennant-winning season did see an increase, but was followed by a drop the following year. In both 1953 and 1955 the Indians finished second to the Yankees in the AL. The organization continued to claim that the diminished attendance created financial problems, but, just as it had under Ryan, it bought out stockholders at increased costs per share. In 1955 several stockholders were bought out at \$1,000 per share. Profits aside, Indians ownership was always willing to sell their investment, but only at their price.⁸

Only three years after ousting Ryan, the Indians underwent another change in ownership. Ashtabula, Ohio native William R. Daley, a local industrialist and financier, purchased the Indians for almost \$4,000,000. Shares of stock were valued at \$1,500 apiece, and the sale netted stockholders a \$3,000,000 profit over their original purchase. Daley's group paid the \$1,500 through \$800 in cash and a \$750 promissory note. They then issued 6,000 shares of stock for sale at \$1,000 apiece. By the time the deal had been completed, Daley's group paid less than half of the announced purchase price for more than 55% of the team. Daley became chairman of the board while Wilson remained the president. The new ownership group also included Ignatius A. O'Shaughnessy of St. Paul, Minnesota and Greenberg. Daley proclaimed a lifelong rooting interest in the Indians and revealed that he had once been an usher at League Park as a teenager. He had discussed purchasing the team from Veeck in 1949, but wanted to be in a partnership with someone who could invest in the ownership group and run the team. Daley

reasoned that having a baseball man with a vested interest in the team would give Cleveland a quality team and help maintain the city's reputation as a top baseball town. He believed Greenberg was the ideal candidate to fill that role. Greenberg welcomed the opportunity and revealed a previous desire to purchase stock in the Indians. He and Veeck had discussed the possibility when he was first hired into the franchise, but no stock was available. During his tenure as general manager the Indians' cash value increased 45%, and now Greenberg had a stake in the action. The media hoped the trend would continue, believing it would lead to better players and maybe another pennant or two. Daley, when asked if Cleveland could look forward to a return to the World Series under his ownership, told reporters the hope always sprang eternal with him.⁹

Indians' home turnout dropped below a million in Daley's first year. Perceiving that public relations was part of the problem, he hired Bill Veeck as an outside consultant. Cobbledick warned readers not to expect the same carnival-like atmosphere Cleveland experienced in 1948. Veeck was no longer in control, and the success of his schemes and plans depended on the leeway Daley and Greenberg gave him. By season's end not even the return of the most notable showman in the history of Cleveland sport could bring fans back to the Stadium. Attendance dropped from 865,467 to 722,256. Daley had little time to fret over attendance. Shortly after the season ended, he was faced with a case of internal strife within the Indians. As both minority owner and general manager, Greenberg had spent the 1956 and 1957 seasons dealing from a position of

tremendous strength within the organization. Still, his future with the organization came into question as directors argued for a reorganization of the front office. Greenberg's cause was not helped by the dropping attendance, and that the Indians reportedly did not profit for the first time since Greenberg was with the team. The local press also questioned Greenberg's lack of direction for the team. An informal meeting was held on October 16th to determine Greenberg's fate. On the verge of the meeting, the *PD* reported that the Indians' future in Cleveland had come into question, and the decision on Greenberg would indicate if the Indians would stay or relocate to Minneapolis after the 1958 season. MLB's landscape had expanded during the decade and growing cities challenged older, established ones for their teams. In 1953 the Boston Braves relocated to Milwaukee, and in subsequent years the St. Louis Browns moved to Baltimore and the Philadelphia Athletics moved to Kansas City. In 1958 both the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants left New York for Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively. Each of the relocated franchises left a city with multiple MLB franchises and often was the less popular team (with the exception of the Dodgers). The Indians was Cleveland's lone franchise, but the relocation threat was very real. Earlier in the season, Cobbledick addressed lingering rumors that the Indians were destined for Minneapolis, calling Daley's assertion that the team was not moving the best news of the season. "[The Indians] belong to Cleveland and Cleveland, in large measure, belongs to them," he wrote. "To separate the two would be to take away something vital from both."¹⁰

The Indians future in Cleveland was secured when directors voted to fire Greenberg. Daley told the media that the decision was based solely on fan reaction, but Greenberg later admitted that he had pressed the board to move the franchise. When he joined Daley's ownership group in 1956 he told the media that Cleveland was the best baseball town in the country. After the meeting he reiterated those comments and avowed that he had never suggested the Indians move from Cleveland. He finally admitted to plans for relocating the Indians in his autobiography, *The Story of My Life*. In it, he argued that media pressure made it impossible for baseball to subsist in the city. According to Greenberg, both he and the players were unfairly targeted by the Cleveland press. This hurt morale, and convinced him that a city such as Minneapolis offered a fresh start and support. Too many native Clevelanders on the board of directors, he concluded, ended his career and the chance to relocate the team. Greenberg remained on the board of directors until 1959 when he became part owner of the Chicago White Sox and was appointed vice president by old friend Bill Veeck. In one of his final acts as a member of the Indians board, he told them in August 1959, "Baseball is dead in Cleveland."¹¹

The Indians replaced Greenberg with Frank Lane, who created a whole new set of problems that will be discussed later. Not of Lane's doing were continued rumors of relocation that tormented Indians ownership and fans alike. Home attendance briefly again topped the million mark in 1959—the same year Greenberg claimed Cleveland

baseball was dead—but began a string of four straight seasons of declining numbers the next year. Gabe Paul, who replaced Frank Lane as general manager in April 1961, was determined to revamp the team after the 1962 season and regain fan support which dipped to 716,076 that year. He was a baseball man with previous front office experience during stints with the Cincinnati Reds' and Houston Colt .45's. The Indians' future somewhat suddenly took on a new direction in late August when team president Myron Wilson passed away. In memoriam he was praised for his peace-making skills between the multiple team directors, and also for his commitment to keeping the Indians in Cleveland. Although only a minor stockholder, the redistribution of his shares put in motion a reorganization of ownership. Dallas, and San Diego were mentioned on the list of the Indians' possible destinations, but Paul was determined to keep the team in Cleveland. In November 1962 he organized a new ownership syndicate that purchased the Indians for \$6,000,000. Paul had originally hoped to own 80% of the team, which would have allowed him to declare a depreciation value on the players, but the stock would have cost him roughly \$5,000,000. In an understanding with Daley, who was set to be the other major stockholder in the syndicate, Paul could not bring in new investors from outside of Northeast Ohio without Daley's approval. Both men wanted to avoid any possible links between ownership and possible franchise relocation. The final syndicate brought in members of Cleveland's elite, such as bankers, politicians, and CEOs. The group was praised for investing in Cleveland's future by making the Indians' future in the

city a certainty. Their next job, with Paul at the helm, was to build a pennant contender, something they said they owed Cleveland.¹²

Paul was elected president and treasurer, and remained the general manager. His tenure marked new lows for the Indians even though he was well versed in operating a team. In 1963 the Indians reportedly lost over one million dollars and drew only 716,076 fans. \$300,000 in stock was issued and sold to the current owners to cover some of the deficit. The Indians reportedly lost the same amount again in 1964, and attendance dropped to a dismal 562,507. Paul called on the stockholders to invest their own cash to keep the team afloat. He committed \$60,000 on his own as a good will gesture. Matters were also worsened that year by further rumors of relocation to Dallas and Seattle, and through problematic negotiations with Cleveland officials over a new lease for Municipal Stadium. By the end of the season the directors were ready to brush aside their civic spirit and move or sell the team. Paul and Daley, not wanting to abandon Cleveland, were sent to each of the rumored relocation cities to assess the financial benefits of a move versus staying in Cleveland. The two made their trips and returned with the conclusion that Cleveland provided the best option, provided a good stadium lease would be worked out with the city. The Indians eventually reached a deal and stayed in Cleveland. Paul attempted to lure fans back to games and in 1965 he traded for Rocky Colavito, a former Indian and local hero who was jettisoned to Detroit by Frank Lane in 1960 in one of the franchise's defining moments. Colavito's return boosted attendance

by almost 300,000 from the previous season to 934,786, but it proved to be a costly trade in the long run (as will be discussed later in the chapter). Paul continued in his efforts to build a winning and solvent franchise, but never succeeded. He argued that the fans needed only a winning franchise to reinvigorate them, but he was unable to provide them with such a commodity.¹³

The Indians' failings under Paul's leadership led to another shift in the team's controlling interest. Vernon Stouffer, a self-made millionaire who was president and chief executive officer of Stouffer Food Corp, joined the Indians as a minor stockholder in 1962. Rumors of franchise relocation increased his interest in the club, at which point he became active in learning about team operations. In August 1966 he purchased the team for \$8,000,000—\$5,500,000 of his own money and \$2,500,000 in loans. Stouffer bought out Daley and Paul, though Paul remained with the Indians as the general manager and the option to purchase stock later, and offered to purchase stock from the other shareholders for \$300 per share. The media praised the change in leadership in for two reasons. First, it gave the Indians sound financial backing, which it had lacked in the past. Second, Stouffer's loyalty to Cleveland was unquestioned and many felt there was no way he or his estate would ever let the team leave. Paul commented that Stouffer was a Clevelander, "first, last, and always." Of all Stouffer's philanthropic efforts, purchasing the Indians drew the most praise. Major Ralph S. Locher was thrilled local interests purchased the club and guaranteed it would stay in Cleveland. The *Plain Dealer*

included the civic slant in what it considered the most important aspect of the sale. The sale, they said, “means, in essence, that a Clevelander owns the team—a Clevelander who can afford it. The Indians now belong to Cleveland, absolutely and positively—and permanently. This is what Stouffer wants. This is his dedication and he has the dollars to back it up.” Stouffer furthered the importance of local ties by insisting that only native Clevelanders hold stock.¹⁴

The exhilaration civic boosters shared over Stouffer’s ownership did not carry over to fans during the season. The Indians finished in eighth place (75-87) and attendance dropped from over 900,000 in 1966 to just below 650,000. Fan-favorite Colavito was traded midway through the season, but his continued presence would not have salvaged the season or the gate. The team relied upon its young pitching staff, which included Sam McDowell and Luis Tiant, in 1968—the year of the pitcher. With both Tiant and McDowell boasting earned run averages below 2.00, the Indians remained in the AL pennant race for much of the season before finishing in third place. Fans expecting the usual mid-season collapse responded to the pennant chase by boosting the season’s home attendance to 857,994. The Indians closed out the decade in the recently accustomed fashion of early and mid-season collapses that killed any potential for a pennant, and attendance again dropped to just over 600,000. The Indians’ struggles under Stouffer took a turn for the worse when the stock market plunged in 1970, causing the Indians’ owner a massive financial setback. Suddenly the man who had enough

money to change the Indians needed to be cost-conscious. In 1971 he contemplated cutting the Indians' farm-system budget by one third; a move the vice president of player development likened to organizational suicide. Fans, already tired of annual losing seasons, accused Stouffer of being cheap. Despite his financial struggles and the Indians shoddy play, Stouffer remained committed to Cleveland. He turned down offers to sell the team, including one from George Steinbrenner, and to move the club to Dallas and Washington, D.C. during his ownership. Towards the end of the 1971 season, however, news broke that Stouffer had arranged a plan in which the Indians would play their first thirty home games in New Orleans. At first the media and fans accepted the idea of sharing the Indians between two cities, but gradually the plan stirred fears that it was the first step in relocating to New Orleans. Criticism mounted and Stouffer disappeared from the spotlight until March 1972 when he sold the Indians to a group headed by Nick Mileti.¹⁵

PLAYERS DEPART AND A CURSE ARRIVES

The regular shuffle of a new ownership group or restructuring of an existing group occurred four times during the 1950s and 1960s. Cleveland or Northeast Ohio natives headed every group, but that fact became much more meaningful to the local press and fans as rumors of franchise relocation sprouted. The Indians was a civic institution and its presence was often counted on to raise public morale. Having Cleveland origins was only selectively important. It was impossible, undesirable, and

unnecessary to fill the Indians' roster with Cleveland natives or even have one on the team. Indians fans only wanted a winner playing in Cleveland, but as the Golden Era came to a close in the mid-to-late 1950s, winning was harder to come by. The team's legacy of losing filtered into the 1960s and became a mainstay until 1994. It is natural that players come and go as a franchise looks to build itself into a winner, but the Indians underwent a series of player transactions as unfortunate as they were awful during that time. Frank Lane was, and remains, the name most often assigned blame for trades that gutted the Indians, but "Trader" Lane was only in Cleveland for roughly three years. Hank Greenberg sent Mickey Vernon to the Washington Senators in 1950 and Minnie Minoso to the Chicago White Sox in 1951. Gabe Paul was the man who traded away young prospects Tommy John and Tommie Agee to bring Colavito, then 31, back to Cleveland in 1965. Lane, however, was defined by the art of the trade. At the end of his first year with the Indians he traded Roger Maris, then one of the Indians' finest prospects, to the Kansas City Athletics. Two years later in 1960 he traded for Norm Cash, and then promptly traded him to Detroit. In 1961 Cash won the AL batting title and hit 41 home runs. Maris' 1961 season became legendary as he pursued Babe Ruth's single season home run record with New York. Vernon, Minoso, John, Agee, Maris, and Cash all went on to stellar careers elsewhere. There is no telling if they would have achieved similar success in Cleveland, but Indians fans lamented not having the opportunity to see them try.¹⁶

Frank Lane came to Cleveland in November 1957 to replace the ousted Greenberg. Called “the most volatile personality in the executive branch of baseball” by the *Plain Dealer*, Lane fostered his reputation as a general manager who built winning teams, but who also was not afraid to trade away popular players. He was charged with fielding a team that would capture the attention Indians fans and terminate discussions of relocation. Within days of being hired, Lane announced that he wanted to replace the middle-infielders, would not hire Lou Boudreau as hitting coach (a deal Greenberg previously proposed), and that he would be thrilled if the Indians could finish in second place. The local press continued to dole out information on Lane and his ideas for the Indians’ future, but a Gordon Cobbledick column foreshadowed the event that would become Lane’s legacy in Cleveland. While addressing Lane’s decision not to hire Boudreau, Cobbledick noted the courage of his convictions. In St. Louis, Lane drew the ire of Cardinals fans when he traded veteran second baseman Red Schoendienst. Cobbledick warned Indians fans that the same thing could happen in Cleveland. “Lane will make trades,” he said, “and it may be that he will deal off players who have established themselves as favorites here.” Cobbledick’s warning would come back to haunt Cleveland prior to the 1960 season.¹⁷

The 1959 season gave Cleveland its first serious pennant chase since 1956, but the Indians finished in second place, five games behind the Chicago White Sox. A four game series with the White Sox proved to be the critical point in the season. Chicago

took all four games, including the third game won by Early Wynn, whom Lane had traded away in his first month with Cleveland. Wynn beat the Indians again in September to clinch the pennant, prompting Lane to fire manager Joe Gordon. A day later, Lane rehired Gordon and admitted to making a mistake in firing him, rewarding him with a two year extension. In actuality the managerial replacement he had lined up demanded a larger contract than Lane was willing to give and the deal broke down. Lane's attempt to fire Gordon was big news, but it did not overshadow Rocky Colavito's season. Colavito was a product of the Indians' farm system. He was a power hitting outfielder who also had a strong enough arm to pitch. In his rookie season in 1956, he hit 21 home runs and batted .276, and in 1958 he emerged as one of the top power hitters in the AL with 41 home runs. Although the Indians failed to win the pennant in 1959, they had a rising star in Colavito, who had quickly become a hero in Cleveland.¹⁸

Colavito did not drink or smoke, he was of ethnic background (Italian-American), he attended mass at St. Francis de Sales on Sundays (in suburban Parma, Ohio), and he was handsome. He epitomized many of the values and background traits that Cleveland's ethnic, working-class families and fans saw (or hoped for) in themselves. It was said that Cleveland parents wanted their daughters to marry him and their sons to be like him. The charismatic Colavito was idolized by children who stood in droves outside Municipal Stadium to get his autograph and those who used to imitate his batting stance on the sandlot. He was considered baseball's heir apparent to Joe

DiMaggio. Cobbledick wrote, “No other Cleveland player in more than a decade has won and held the affection of the fans, and particularly the young fans, as [Colavito] has. No more than a half-dozen in the history of Cleveland baseball have been accorded the hero-worship he enjoys.” His 42 home runs in 1959 made him a power hitter, but only lent a portion of the image that made him the most popular athlete in Cleveland.¹⁹

Lane, however, did not share the city’s love for Colavito. He called the power hitting outfielder selfish for hitting home runs rather than concentrating on driving in runners or moving them up a base. Lane complained the Colavito struck out too much, and even blamed his end of the season slump for costing the Indians the pennant in 1959. In 1957 when he first arrived in Cleveland, he attempted to trade Colavito to Kansas City but scrapped the idea for a new trade that included Maris. Every year the two men argued over Colavito’s contract before the upcoming season, which was at the root of some of the animosity between the two. According to Colavito, Lane reportedly promised him a half of his requested raise for 1958 in the form of a bonus for reaching certain numbers. The bonus was not written into the contract, and instead Lane told Colavito, “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of you.” Colavito approached him at season’s end after attaining the necessary statistics Lane said he knew nothing of such a deal. From that point on, Frank Lane was a “lying S.O.B.” in Colavito’s mind. When Colavito held out at the start of training camp in 1960, Lane had his opportunity.²⁰

Colavito eventually signed for \$35,000, a \$7,000 raise from the previous year, and prepared for another season in Cleveland. Meanwhile, Detroit's Harvey Kuenn, the defending AL batting champ, ended his holdout with the Tigers and signed a \$42,000 contract. Lane had always claimed to be a big Kuenn fan, and had visited the Tigers' spring training camp shortly before Kuenn signed his contract. On April 17, 1960, a few days prior to the start of the regular season, Lane traded Colavito to Detroit for Kuenn. Colavito never wanted to leave Cleveland and was distraught. Cleveland fans were stunned, shocked, and outraged. Members of the Rocky Colavito Fan Club were heartbroken. The *Press* headline the next day read, "COLAVITO FANS OUT FOR LANES'S SCALP: REACTION VIOLENT AS TRADE STIRS MAN-IN-STREET." Letters poured in to the Plain Dealer and Press denouncing the trade and Lane. Many threatened to return their season tickets or boycott games. On the streets of Cleveland, fans hung Lane in effigy since they couldn't get their hands on the real thing. The trade provoked reaction elsewhere as AL players and managers wondered how the Indians could trade 42 home runs and 103 RBI's for a singles hitter. Herb Score, Colavito's roommate and friend, believed that Lane had a vendetta against Rocky. Lane, Score argued, believed ballplayers should drink and curse, be rowdy, and live hard—all traits that Colavito did not have. Furthermore, Colavito would remain the center of fans' affections no matter what Lane did with the team. The easiest way for Lane to take care of the situation was to make a trade. It was not his first trade or his last with the Indians,

but Lane changed the face of the franchise for decades to come when he sent Colavito to Detroit. Some have argued that the trade also changed the franchise's luck, and instilled the "Curse of Colavito."²¹

Three years earlier, Colavito and his roommate, left-handed pitcher Herb Score, were the projected cornerstones of the Indians future. Score was a hard throwing left-handed pitcher who took the American League by storm in his rookie season in 1955. He won 16 games that year, but more impressively led the American League with 145 strikeouts, a rookie record. The following season he won 20 games, struck out 263 batters, and posted a 2.53 ERA. He was an All-Star both seasons. Score consoled Colavito upon his trade to Detroit, but was himself traded to the White Sox the next day. Score's departure in 1960 was preceded by an event that changed his career and seemed fitting for the direction the Indians luck had turned. In a much-hyped series against the New York Yankees in May 1957, Score was struck near his eye with a line drive off the bat of Gil McDougald. He had received multiple injuries including a broken nose, swelling of the right eye, and a lacerated right eyelid. Score sat out the rest of that season, returning to spring training in 1958, but did not exhibit the prior command or velocity with his pitches. While the eye injury was commonly cited as the reason for the fall-off in his performance, Score later asserted that it was arm trouble developed early in the 1958 season that plagued the remainder of his career. He never did return to form, and after the accident posted a 17-26 and a 4.48 ERA with the Indians and the Chicago

White Sox. Score returned to the Indians in 1964 as part of the team's television broadcasting crew. In 1968 he moved into the radio booth doing play-by-play for the Indians, where he established himself as a Cleveland institution until he retired in 1999. The prosperous future the Indians envisioned with Score and Colavito leading the team into the next decade was never realized.²²

AFTERMATH OF A CURSE

Lane left the Indians for a job in Kansas City after the 1960 season, but his departure did not bring stability or success to the Indians. The loss of the beloved Colavito and the Indians' continued misfortunes stirred speculation that the trade cursed the franchise. A generation passed with the Indians finishing better than .500 only six times, never finishing higher than fourth place, and attendance dropping below a million for eighteen of the next twenty years. The correlation of the two lent further credence to the validity of the Curse of Colavito, but there was more. Understanding how the Indians sank so low and for so long, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, required a wider scope that extended outside of professional baseball to include Cleveland's political, economic, and social cultures.

A 1957 *Plain Dealer* editorial series addressed the issue in a diplomatic manner, but offered no definitive conclusion. Instead, it stressed the relationship the Indians, Cleveland, and the fans shared and the responsibility that came out of it. The Indians was a civic institution which many people in Northeast Ohio and around the nation identified

with Cleveland, for better or worse, and as such the owners were obligated to put forth a competitive team. The struggles of the 1950s and 1960s caused a loss of confidence among die-hard fans and a loss of support and interest from casual fans. Fans, subsequently, were chided for not giving their wholehearted support to the team and players representing their community. Cleveland officials were given the responsibility of contributing to the baseball experience through crime prevention, affordable parking, and stadium maintenance. The combined efforts, the editorials concluded, were necessary to maintain Cleveland's image as a big league city. This utopian vision overlooked Cleveland's changing infrastructure and professional sport's changing parameters, from which important questions arose. Could Cleveland produce an owner with the financial capacity to maintain a losing team until both the team and city rebounded? Were fans dissuaded by losing season after losing season or were they caught in the depression of urban decline and its many social ailments? Were politicians who stressed the Indians' importance in presenting Cleveland's "big league" image ignoring current problems as they focused on retrieving the city's past status? Finally, should the Indians, or any professional sports team, be relied upon as a purveyor and symbol of civic pride and image? Underneath the unfulfilled promises of winning teams and civic comebacks laid the ailing institutions of city and sport, with no cure in sight.²³

CHAPTER 6

WHEN MINOR LEAGUE BECOMES A MAJOR PROBLEM: THE DECLINE OF THE CLEVELAND BARONS

The Cleveland Barons hockey club had rested comfortably with its professional sports brethren in Cleveland for nearly a decade. Although not viewed as equals to the Indians and Browns, sports fans and journalists respected the Barons as they raked in championships. The Barons, after all, were the dominant franchise in the American Hockey League (AHL) and had opened 1948 with a Calder Cup championship. This set the stage for the Indians and Browns to ante up championships of their own. One World Series title and one All America Football Conference championship later, Cleveland proudly proclaimed itself the “City of Champions.” Al Sutphin, the former ink salesman who purchased the Barons and built the Cleveland Arena, was largely responsible for the success of the franchise. He was also par for the course within the realm of Cleveland’s sports entrepreneurs in the post-war era. Like the Indians’ Bill Veeck he created and sold spectacle surrounding his team. Like the Browns’ Mickey McBride his teams possessed a dynastic quality to accompany their successes. Championships in the 1938-1939, 1940-1941, 1944-1945, and 1947-1948 seasons bore witness to Sutphin’s desire for victory. While Cleveland itself was still reeling from the economic severity of the Great Depression, Sutphin did not let the fear of financial hardships impact his quest for victory. His checkbook frequently made trades go through and brought free-agents into

the Barons' fold when an extra player was needed to boost the team to a championship caliber of play. The years of producing winners and keeping the Arena afloat, however, took their toll on Sutphin. His 1947-1948 championship team was called his greatest, and on that note Sutphin began pondering his eventual exit from the business of professional hockey. In April 1949 Sutphin sold the Barons and Arena to a group of Minneapolis businessmen who represented a Detroit syndicate. "The bloom is off the rose," commented Sutphin, and with that Cleveland entered a new era of professional hockey.¹

Clevelanders had enjoyed many years of quality hockey thanks to the aggressive ownership of Sutphin. But fans and journalists alike had to wonder in what direction the Barons would head under the new ownership group. Any worries proved to have been much ado about nothing. Jim Hendy was named general manager by the new ownership syndicate and maintained the Barons as the "Yankees of the AHL." Sutphin upgraded his teams through the power of the almighty dollar, a resource not as readily available to Hendy. But the Barons' new GM made up for his financial shortcomings through his hockey savvy. A shrewd bargainer, Hendy produced his own string of AHL champions through a system of developing young talent and then selling the players off to NHL clubs. During his tenure the Barons won the AHL regular season title three times and the Calder Cup four times. The success of the Sutphin Era, rather than being lost with the onset of new ownership, was instead mirrored through the continuation of strong leadership and player evaluation and development.

While hockey thrived in Cleveland at the start of this period (1949-1968), problems soon emerged that could not be circumvented. The brilliance of Jim Hendy and the play of stars such as Johnny Bower, Fred Glover, and Jack Gordon aside, hockey found itself in increasing trouble as each year passed. The AHL's hope to rival the NHL as a professional league through player talent and public recognition was never achieved. As AHL franchises readily became farm teams to their NHL brethren, the Barons were faced with two choices for survival: give up their independent status and become a full-fledged minor league farm team in the AHL or submit an application to the NHL in hopes that the league would make Cleveland its seventh market. In 1952 Hendy and the Barons' ownership chose the latter. Hopes were high that city's "major league" status would sway the NHL Board of Governors to admit the Barons, but a summer of negotiations only led to rejection. The fallout from the failed 1952 NHL bid was the gradual demise of hockey in Cleveland. With the AHL firmly entrenched as a minor league, the Barons could no longer afford to maintain their independent status. Furthermore, the team could not keep its young, star players from joining the NHL. Cleveland's place as a minor league team, despite periodic rumors of pursuing an NHL franchise, was made certain when the Barons signed working agreements with the New York Rangers and Montreal Canadiens for the 1960-1961 season. The AHL and the Barons were most definitely minor league in a city that considered itself major league in every aspect. The combination did not sit well with the image Clevelanders and civic

leaders desired, and the proud legacy of the Barons soon faded to the background of Cleveland sports.

A NEW FACE AND A NEW ERA: JIM HENDY

Al Sutphin had been an Ohio native and a resident of Cleveland since he was four years old; his family left rural southwestern Ohio for the growing Lake Erie metropolis in 1900. He had established roots and business connections in the city prior to his investment in professional hockey in 1934 and the construction of the Cleveland Arena in 1937. Jim Hendy's path in becoming the most prominent figure in Cleveland hockey followed a much different path, but concluded with the similar success on the ice. Born in Barbados of the British West Indies in 1905, Hendy did not have the opportunity to experience the sport of ice hockey until his family moved to Vancouver, British Columbia six years later. There he learned the game by spending time as a "rink rat" hanging out at an arena built by Lester and Frank Patrick, founders of the Pacific Coast Hockey Association.²

Hendy first got involved with professional hockey after moving to New York City in the 1920s when he worked as a telegrapher for Western Union, filing sports copy at night for the company. The arrival of the New York Americans and New York Rangers hockey teams to the new Madison Square Garden (MSG) not only brought hockey directly into Hendy's life, but also reunited him with Lester Patrick of the Rangers. He worked briefly for the International News Service who hired him in 1931 as a reporter

before joining the publicity department for MSG. In 1940 he became director of publicity for the New York Rangers in 1940, giving him “a complete union with the game.” During this time Hendy also began compiling statistics to aide reporters in their stories. The vast collection he amassed culminated in the 1933 publication of *The Hockey Guide*. This new statistical resource was highly regarded, and subsequently transferred its high regard onto Hendy. *The Hockey Guide and Who’s Who* was published for 19 years, and became known simply as the “Hendy Guide.”³

Following World War II, Hendy took on even greater challenges in North American hockey by becoming the president of the United States Hockey League for the 1947-1948 and 1948-1949 seasons. The front office experience he gained while working in his Minneapolis headquarters and his sterling reputation as a “hockey man” did not go unnoticed. In 1949 Al Sutphin asked Hendy to become general manager of the Cleveland Barons following the sale of the team by to a group of Minneapolis businessmen representing Detroit interests. Hendy accepted, and began a decade long relationship with the team and Cleveland.⁴

On April 26, 1949, all three Cleveland newspapers gave the city’s sports fans a surprise when they announced the sale of the Cleveland Arena. Sutphin, who had earlier transferred ownership of the Barons to the Arena group, sold the facility and its interests (Sutphin’s Ice Capades and Ice Follies, and interest in the Barons’ farm teams in Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Brandon, Manitoba) for roughly \$2,000,000 to three

Minneapolis businessmen who represented Detroit interests: George Drake and George Heller (partners in an international construction contracting firm) and Lyle Z. Wright (principal owner of the Minneapolis franchise in the United States Hockey League). Three weeks after the sale Cleveland attorney “Buddy” Rand, a Cleveland area lawyer who represented the new ownership group during the sale, announced the members of the new ownership group and their main business interests: Oscar Johnson, and Eddie and Roy Shipstead (owners of the Ice Follies); the previously mentioned Drake, Heller and Wright; and Max Zivian (president of Detroit Steel Co. and its Cleveland subsidiary, Reliance Steel Co.), Edward Bernstein (president of Sterling Supply Co. of Detroit), and Sam Rubiner (vice president of Cunningham Drug Stores in Detroit). Stock was also committed to Clevelanders Ellis Ryan (Ryan Insurance Co.) and Wentworth Marshall (Marshall Drug). Sutphin admitted that he and principal associate, Carl Lezius had been looking at the possibility of divesting themselves of these assets for some time, but had not wanted to leave the bulk of the 350 minority stockholders at a loss. According to their accounts, earlier sales would have only bought out Sutphin’s and Lezius’ stock. Sutphin felt it was “morally” inexcusable to accept any deal that did not extend the same offer to the remaining stockholders. The Minneapolis group, it was announced, was willing to both buy out the stock from minority holders at the same price it paid Sutphin and Lezius and to make a portion of that stock available to investors from the Cleveland area.⁵

Coverage of this breaking story was by no means uniform in the booster press, and thereby served to show the varying nature in which hockey was both covered and perceived in Cleveland. It also opened the door for commentary on the future of the sport and the desire for “major league” status. The *News* made brief mention of sale, and chose to direct any additional stories towards Al Sutphin and his legacy. With the Indians beginning their defense as World Series champions and American League pennant winners, the city’s sports focus was directed towards baseball rather than hockey, and sports editors obviously weighed the importance of hockey against the renewal of the national pastime. The *News* was most evident of this trend. In contrast to the *News*, however, both the *Plain Dealer* and *Press* delved beyond the mere sale and looked into broader meanings. The sale made front page headlines in the *Plain Dealer* and dominated the sports section in the *Press*. Editors for each paper’s sports section found reason for the sale to impact the desire to achieve NHL hockey in Cleveland, and addressed the issue.⁶

The *Plain Dealer*’s Gordon Cobbledick addressed the possible link between new ownership and a move to the NHL with skepticism. He asked, “Does [the sale] mean that the Barons will go into the big league?” His reply was an emphatic “NO.” Arguing that the Cleveland Arena was too small to accommodate big-league crowds and that NHL teams would not make quality players readily available for an expansion franchise, Cobbledick contended that Cleveland was still years away from achieving a place in

hockey's "major league." "Cleveland's record and reputation as a sports-minded city is such as to leave little doubt on that score (i.e. that the city would support an NHL team)," he argued, but the reality as he saw it left no other conclusion that the NHL would follow in the new ownership group. His final thought, instead, damned the state of hockey and perhaps foreshadowed the inevitable fate of the sport in Cleveland. "Where hockey is concerned," he surmised, "Cleveland is bush."⁷

Franklin "Whitey" Lewis of the *Press* addressed the possibility of Cleveland joining the NHL on the same day as Cobbledick. While reaching essentially the same conclusion, he mustered up a slightly more optimistic outlook. After speaking with Rand, Lewis ascertained that three factors all but guaranteed that the Barons and minor league hockey would remain a fact of life in the foreseeable future. First, the NHL had not guaranteed the new owners that they would place a franchise in Cleveland. Second, the owners had not stated that their intent was to pursue an NHL franchise. And third, as Lewis noted, the new owners did not have "any record of conversations during negotiations for the transaction dealing with the possibility of big league hockey being introduced [in Cleveland]." Lewis was arguably the biggest proponent of "major league" hockey for Cleveland, and his desire to see the Barons move past the "minor league" AHL was evident if not outright. He urged his readers to give the new owners time to better gain an understanding of Cleveland and its sporting scene before pushing for an NHL team. But just like Cobbledick, who equated the city's current hockey product as

“bush,” Lewis castigated the AHL as he envisioned the grandeur of, “that big stride from shinny to hockey.” In the course of their commentaries, he and Cobbledick had stumbled across the root argument that would both propel future attempts at an NHL expansion franchise and would haunt the subsequent failures: Cleveland was “major league” in football and baseball, so it was only logical that hockey should exist on a parallel level.⁸

Rumors suggested that Norbert Stein would remain as the Arena manager, but they proved to be invalid. Jim Hendy, now responsible for running both the Barons and the Arena, was introduced to Clevelanders in a series of articles on May 16th and 17th. Stein decided to stay on for one year as an advisor. According to local accounts, continued success and a favorable public opinion would not be an easy task for the new general manager. Hendy himself admitted, “I don’t know how you can improve on perfection, but that is the task that faces me.” Sutphin had come to define Cleveland hockey and he was the heart and soul of the Cleveland Arena. “Anyone following Al Sutphin in operation of the Arena wags the tail of the best trained seal act in Cleveland sports history,” argued Lewis. In his column he weighed the issues Hendy faced as the man who was now in control of both team and facility. Sutphin’s shadow was large, commented Lewis, but not without escape. This was a direct result of the different backgrounds Sutphin and Hendy possessed, and the perceived advantages of each man’s style. Sutphin was not, by all accounts, a man with a great knowledge of hockey. His focus was on filling the seats of his Arena by producing a winner. “When the Barons or

the house count slipped,” Lewis asserted, “[Sutphin] darted to the nearest telephone and got to work, ringing in new talent or giving the box office a healthy boost with a promotional scheme.”⁹

Hendy’s strengths were steeped in his understanding of the sport and his front office experience rather than in any opportunity for unrestrained purchases and trades. Hendy, like Sutphin, was also viewed as a “large and friendly” man who possessed the valuable asset of being able to “personalize” his job. This would be an especially important factor considering Hendy was an employee of the Barons instead of its owner as Sutphin had been. The key to success, therefore, lay in the freedoms ownership granted him in assembling a quality team and his ability to sell the Barons and Arena to the community. Lewis, in wishing Hendy success, addressed the tensions at play in Cleveland for hockey and the entrepreneur: “I have always felt that hockey fans were interested mainly in their team’s winning or losing and not in whoever ran the front office. The front office is the last to be credited for the success of a professional sports venture and the first to be criticized though Willie Veeck, Mickey McBride, and Sutphin did pretty well in the department of public huzzahs.” The connection to Veeck, McBride and the departing Sutphin placed Hendy in elite company in Cleveland.¹⁰

THE DREAM CONTINUES

The Barons team Hendy inherited from Sutphin had underachieved during the 1948-1949 season. Given the dominance of the squad that won the 1948 Calder Cup a

season earlier and had remained relatively unchanged, their exit in the second round of the 1949 playoffs was a disappointment. The veteran squad that had lost only three times in its last 48 games en route to winning the 1948 championship was unable to repeat its success. According to Ed Bang, sports editor of the *Cleveland News*, "The team was old. It was stalemated." Although Sutphin's teams had always been stocked with quality veteran players, an infusion of youth was needed periodically. That was the case when Hendy took charge, but he was not complaining. "Al Sutphin sold us a fine hockey team," Hendy asserted, and he backed up his claim by outlining how he had traded two veterans for four quality, youthful players who contributed to the teams continued success in the 1949-1950 season. Bang concurred, arguing that the Barons roster looked great on paper, but was unable to get into a successful unit on the ice. As individuals, these players were appealing talents. Sutphin had left the new regime with players who were quality trade bait, but also left Hendy with the highest paid team in the AHL. The payroll of this independent franchise was a concern, but a manageable one considering Hendy's penchant for trading quality veterans for promising young players or acquiring young players from NHL franchises and selling them back to their former teams at a profit. Without the benefit of Sutphin's bank account at his disposal, Hendy found a way to field a competitive and profitable team.¹¹

Two holdovers from the Sutphin Era were also key components in the Barons' continued AHL dominance. Bun Cook, a former NHL star with the New York Rangers,

was widely regarded as the best coach in the AHL and one of the elite hockey coaches anywhere. Although just entering his prime, future Hall of Fame goaltender Johnny Bower was becoming a dominant force and a fan favorite. Hendy, himself, put several new rules for on-and-off ice conduct into place to propel the Barons commitment to winning. He forbade players from drinking hard liquor, and limited their beer consumption to only “a few bottles” following a game. Consumption of beer was outlawed in or near the Arena, lest an individual incur a \$50 fine. Hendy also made it clear that physical play was encouraged. While not endorsing “dirty” hockey, he condoned legitimate on-ice altercations. He promised his players, “Any time you are hit and want to fight with the fellow who hit you, I’ll gladly pay your fine.” Under his new training rules, the Barons set AHL regular season records for most wins (45) and points (100) in Hendy’s first season, but were swept in the Calder Cup playoff finals by an Indianapolis squad led by another future Hall of Fame goaltender, Terry Sawchuk. The following season offered new hopes. With Bower anchoring the team in goal, Cook leading from the bench, and new player additions to compensate for retirements, trades, and departures to the NHL, Hendy’s 1950-1951 squad returned Cleveland to the glory of the Sutphin Era by capturing the regular season championship and then the Calder Cup in April 1951. Hockey success would not escape Cleveland, and it was facilitated by Hendy’s guiding hand.¹²

The 1951-1952 season began with the anticipation of the championship Barons team defending its title. Cleveland's icers, after a mid-season slump that saw the team fall sixteen points out of first place, rallied to win twenty straight games (23 out of final 25 games) and finish two points out of first place. Momentum seemed to indicate another championship was waiting in the wings. Ed Bang compared the franchise to the New York Yankees, noting that, "year in and year out, the Barons either win the [AHL] championship or finish right up there in the money." But as the playoffs began, Cleveland Barons management shifted their vision from the Calder Cup onto the greener pastures of the NHL. Early hints that Hendy was biding his time in the AHL came during the Barons' first round series with the Providence Reds. Following a 5-1 loss Hendy exploded in the press over the state of officiating in that game, and the subsequent statement it made upon the AHL. He noted that AHL officials who had worked the entire season were brushed aside for NHL counterparts in the playoffs, and called the AHL a "bush league." He stated that, "This league can't run a peanut stand properly." The assumption that NHL personnel were automatically of a better quality than their AHL peers irked the usually jovial GM. The loss marked the beginning of the end for the Barons' playoff hopes as they lost the final three games of the best-of-five series, but Hendy's outburst preceded an even greater news item.¹³

On March 26, one day after Hendy's outburst, the *Cleveland News* reported that the Barons were on the verge of moving into the NHL for the 1952-1953 season. While

Hendy remained quiet until the AHL playoffs had ended, anonymous NHL sources were making noise. Noting Cleveland's geographical location, the strength of the organization, and a belief in an increase in talented young players, anonymous sources in the NHL labeled Cleveland's entry as "not only possible, but extremely logical." Moreover, the argument that would come to haunt the franchise for years to come emerged: Cleveland was 'major league' in baseball and football, but 'minor league' in hockey. Cleveland's existence as a 'major league' city had been argued since Al Sutphin and the NHL began flirting with each other in the 1940s, but the sincerity with which Hendy and the Barons pursued an NHL team took the status of the city's hockey team to new heights. The *Press* soon picked up on the story, and furthered Cleveland's plight as a 'major league' city with a 'minor league' team. Whitey Lewis, still the most avid hockey fan among Cleveland's sports editors, did not hesitate in lambasting the AHL and anticipating the NHL. "Cleveland fans have been entitled to something better than the shinny played in the American League by players insufficiently talented to make big league teams," he deduced. He applauded Hendy's decision to leave the AHL and its unattainable dream of becoming a "second major circuit." Finally, Lewis again banged the drum of the city's image, stating, "Cleveland is a major league city in sports and so should be, too, in ice hockey."¹⁴

The *Plain Dealer* was noticeably delinquent in the area of unabashed promotion of Cleveland as a 'major league' city deserving of NHL hockey. The paper warned of the

criticisms the team and city faced in an article announcing Hendy's and the Barons' intent to pursue an NHL franchise. Acknowledging that the NHL had avoided overtures from Cleveland in the past, mostly to avoid the scheduling problems of having an odd number of teams, the article brought up some of the pragmatic criteria upon which the Barons' application would be judged. The Cleveland Arena, just over a decade old, fell about 3,000 seats short of the NHL's seating average. Hendy was aware of this criticism and already had set in motion a public relations campaign that argued higher ticket prices would erase the difference. But higher priced tickets, although a feasible answer given the higher quality product of the NHL, seemed counter-productive given recent attendance trends. The *Plain Dealer* reported that the Barons, "will not do much better than break even this season." Over the course of the previous decade attendance figures showed a loss of roughly 70,000 for the 35 home games on the schedule. Overall, Barons attendance had dropped from an almost regular 300,000 to 230,000. Would the drop in attendance and the money lost weigh in the decision of the NHL's Board of Governors? Hendy and the Barons, reportedly armed with a list of the Cleveland market's advantages, moved forward with their application request. The *Plain Dealer's* concerns unfortunately foreshadowed the coming wave of issues the Barons would be forced to address as the rumored franchise application became a reality in the Spring of 1952.¹⁵

THE SPRING OF '52

Jim Hendy arrived in Toronto in early May to begin discussing Cleveland's application with NHL governors. He met with NHL President Clarence Campbell, who informed him that space on the league's upcoming meeting agenda had been set aside for discussion on admitting the Barons. Campbell provided the *News* with a broader list of the criteria the NHL would use to judge Cleveland's merits. This "eight-point" program looked at the following: (1) Geographical location and transportation; (2) arena facilities; (3) arena location in relation to the city; (4) player personnel; (5) management; (6) farm system; (7) financial structure; and (8) impact on the league schedule. Campbell also told Hendy that three-fourths of the current NHL teams needed to vote in favor of Cleveland's application for it to be approved rather than a unanimous vote. While this sounded promising, still it meant that five of the six teams needed to vote for expansion. Hendy returned to Cleveland where he announced these revelations to the press. In a surprising move, Hendy showed up in Montreal and presented the NHL with a check for \$50,000 for the franchise and posted another \$57,000 payment towards the league reserve fund on May 14th, the morning of the governors meeting. He wanted to show NHL owners that Cleveland's bid was serious and well-financed. A later report indicated the Hendy arrived in Montreal with a \$25,000 check for the franchise, a \$50,000 check for the league's reserve fund, and a bank letter of credit for \$150,000, as well as a performance bond worth \$500,000 as a guarantee to the NHL against any loss the Barons could cause in the future. Regardless of the exact amounts, it was hoped that these payments would

make a strong statement about the financial stability of the Barons franchise. Going into the meeting Campbell maintained a diplomatic front, telling reporters, “I’m 100% neutral.” Hopes remained high in Cleveland and among its hockey faithful as they awaited the NHL’s verdict.¹⁶

May 14th came and went without the NHL granting a Cleveland franchise membership into the league as its seventh team. While there was no admittance, there was no flat-out rejection on the part of NHL governors. According to a report in the *Press*, the NHL Board of Governors voted unanimously to admit the Barons, but with a large “IF” attached. New stipulations were put forth for Barons management, and, despite the combined \$107,000 Hendy had already posted, they revolved around the financial set-up and stability of the organization. Campbell explained that Cleveland met all of the NHL’s requirements except for sufficiently showing the amount of money Arena management had earmarked specifically for hockey operations. He would not specify on either the exact conditions or numbers the league requested; however, it was learned that the NHL now demanded \$50,000 for the franchise, \$57,000 for the reserve fund (both amounts that the Barons had already met according to some reports), and \$318,000 in hockey-exclusive working capital. The Barons now needed to present the NHL a grand total of \$425,000. Hendy acknowledged that the league demanded a higher figure than the Barons had presented, but was confident that the new set of conditions would be met. A meeting of Arena stockholders was scheduled for one week following

the Montreal meeting, at which time they discussed the NHL's new demands. Some members of the Barons' Board of Directors hesitated at meeting these new demands and also at the jump to the NHL in general. They argued that the new amount of working capital the NHL demanded was probably less than would actually be required to run a successful major league franchise. Despite the argument on the side of financial caution, the board agreed to meet these new demands. But the expected admittance to the NHL and a celebration for the Barons and city was again put on hold. Campbell, who had been staying at the Hotel Cleveland during the board's deliberations, announced that the NHL had added a new stipulation to the application process: 60% of Arena stock needed to belong to Cleveland residents.¹⁷

The NHL gave the Barons until June 1st to meet its latest requirement in the application procedure. To achieve 60% local ownership in Arena stock, roughly 30% of the stock would have to exchange hands in three days. Hendy again did not foresee this as a problem, or as crucial as raising the necessary working capital had been, but frustration over the NHL's handling of the process began to show. "We have been placed under an unfair handicap by those guys [NHL governors]," Hendy insisted. "It takes time to do this sort of thing intelligently." Finding Clevelanders willing to put forth enough money to purchase the stock was not the Barons' concern. Finding "dignified, outstanding citizens," as Hendy noted, who the current stockholders would be comfortable bringing into their ranks was a concern. The NHL eventually moved the

deadline back to June 10th, and the search for investors remained ongoing. Arena President Richard L. Kroesen stepped forward to purchase \$50,000 worth of stock in the days preceding the deadline. Smaller investors had showed interest in investing \$1,000 to \$5,000 in stock, but the Arena needed to keep its overall numbers below 25 investors to maintain its status as a private corporation according to Security and Exchange Commissions regulations. The Board of Directors was left searching for four or five more individual investors to complete the latest NHL stipulation.¹⁸

The June 10th deadline was met, and Hendy flew to Montreal on the 16th to submit evidence of the Barons' compliance to the NHL at another meeting of their Board of Governors. Still the NHL did not come to any decision at their June 17th meeting. Its official explanation was that the league needed more time to determine how the Barons came up with their money in meeting the new stipulations. Barons officials were subsequently told that a final decision would be rendered in a week to ten days. By this time, Hendy and the Cleveland representatives were no longer amiable to further impediments towards admittance into the NHL. Avowing the rallying cry of Cleveland hockey, Hendy went on the offensive in the press. "We can't continue to operate in the American Hockey League. For one thing, Cleveland's a major league town in baseball and football. And for another, it just wouldn't be profitable; the major league's the only place we can go." He continued, "We're the only independent team in the AHL. All the

other clubs have major league sponsors. On top of that, we have a farm system and a network of scouts. We just can't stay in the bush leagues.”¹⁹

July 2nd became the eventual deadline for a decision on the Barons' application for admittance into the NHL. A little over three months after Hendy first told the Cleveland media of his intentions to pursue an NHL franchise, and after roughly two months of negotiations and stipulations, Hendy, the Barons, and the citizens of Cleveland would finally know if they were going to become “major league” in hockey. The atmosphere of excitement and anticipation leading up to the deadline was occasionally jolted by press reports indicating possible roadblocks. Hendy came forth to announce that the Barons had most assuredly met every stipulation the NHL registered over the previous two months. “We consider ourselves in the league right now,” he asserted. Arena President Kroesen echoed the same sentiments. Hendy upped the ante for the proceedings when he also hinted at a “stupendous” lawsuit against the NHL if Cleveland's entry was denied. “We have burned our bridges behind us in an effort to bring major league hockey to Cleveland.” Hendy also stated that, “It will have cost us a lot of money if anything goes wrong.” The possibility of a lawsuit was followed by a warning that the Barons might not return to the AHL if its application was turned down. For Hendy and the Barons, the NHL, not a continuation of minor league operations, was its only foreseeable future. Outside sources also emerged as roadblocks to Cleveland's possible admission. *Press* reports indicated that James Norris, Sr. and Norris, Jr. were

each responsible in part for blocking league approval of the Barons' application. Norris, Sr. owned the Detroit Red Wings, but also owned Chicago Stadium where the Blackhawks played and was director of Madison Square Garden where the Rangers played. Reporters surmised that Norris did not want to face the possibility that a seventh team would disrupt the balance in voting power in the NHL (known at this time as the Norris House League). Norris, Jr. reportedly demanded that the Cleveland Arena make certain concessions that would give his own interests outside of hockey—the International Boxing Club (of which he was president) and an ice show that he owned—preeminence in the Cleveland market.²⁰

The contributions of Cleveland's booster press bolstered the city's aura of anticipation throughout the NHL's decision-making process, but also painted the reality that was rapidly approaching Hendy and the Barons as the decision day neared. The notion of Cleveland as a "major league" city in need of, and indeed deserving of "major league" hockey was played to the hilt, and the booster press seemingly enjoyed every second of it. The original deadline on May 15th spawned multiple reactions of joy as Cleveland's entry into the NHL was seemingly assured. The heading to Lewis' daily column in the *Press* read, "After 25 Years Big Time Hockey Come to Town." "So progress the Barons from the bushes to the big time," he lauded, "from the second-rate American League to the only major circuit for skaters." He called word of the Barons' inclusion in the NHL, an inclusion that had not been granted by the NHL, the "most

pleasurable news of the year.” Columnists in the *News* and *Plain Dealer* did not attack the issue with the Lewis’ intensity, but did note that Cleveland was assured an NHL team just as soon as it showed the proper money to the Board of Governors. All three papers had even begun to presume the methods by which the Barons would begin acquiring NHL-level talent to bolster their roster for the upcoming season. Hendy freely fielded questions on the issue of player talent and spoke about a minor league future since he was certain that the Barons were one stipulation away from a guaranteed NHL spot. The postponement of a final decision did not leave a sense of panic within Cleveland’s hockey-hopeful press. The articles and columns that followed exhibited aspects of caution mixed with bitterness, yet were still highly optimistic. Lewis offered readers a cynical prelude to the NHL’s final decision; one laced with jabs at the league’s owners, procedures, and heritage. He took shots at the Norris-faction’s “concern” for the game, the NHL’s desire to broaden its fan base, the league’s past handling of expansion into Cleveland, and the general narrow-mindedness of NHL owners. “We have only four more days until we know for sure,” Lewis chided. “Only four more days until we probably can whip up a toddy and toast the National Hockey League, a generous, outstanding, uplifting, imperturbable, impregnable and unimpeachable collective farm. I feel a postiveness that the Barons, humble though they may be, will be accepted as landgrubbers. Oh glorious day!” Sarcasm aside, Lewis accurately captured the frustration of the Barons and their unwavering belief that they would soon be an NHL

franchise. All the requirements had been met. The announcement was merely academic.²¹

The euphoria of Cleveland's booster press did not go unnoticed by members of the press in existing NHL markets. Intrigued by the possibility of a new hockey market, these journalists approached the breaking story of the Barons' plight with caution, excitement, and wonderment. After all, it would be fifteen years before the NHL would actively pursue its expansion. Perhaps most interestingly, their coverage, while lacking the unabashed civic-boosterism exhibited by Cleveland's press corps, perpetuated the same fundamental image that was at the root of this entire quest for an NHL franchise: "major league" status. Sports scribes from Toronto and Montreal were all-too-happy to remark on Cleveland's disparity as a major league city for professional baseball and football but a minor league city for hockey. From March to June, columnists such as Vern De Geer of the *Montreal Gazette* and Jim Vipond of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* assessed the tumultuous NHL expansion process as well as Cleveland's chances of gaining entry into the league. A Cleveland franchise, they surmised, was a geographic plus to travel schedules for the league, a natural rival for the Detroit Red Wings, and a great means for stabilizing the "shaky ground" upon which interest in professional hockey then lay. It was the "only obvious arena in the world" for a new franchise. But NHL magnates did not project similar sentiments. James Norris commented that he would present "an open mind that was wary." One month later in mid-May, Conn

Smythe, who also vowed to go into deliberations with an open mind, commented that Cleveland would be admitted if it showed good cause for admission, but added, “I wouldn’t bet on it.” By the time the NHL again delayed their final decision in mid-June, this group of journalists sensed a problem that Cleveland’s booster press optimistically neglected. Vipond discerned that Hendy had met every stipulation the NHL had put forth, and avowed that no member of the NHL board of governors had expressed any dissenting opinion on the advisability of Cleveland’s admission. Still, something did not seem right. “[A decision] shouldn’t have taken this long,” he and other reporters stated to each other as the June 17th deadline came and went. Vipond surmised that, “[NHL Governors] are grasping at straws in the hopes of retaining the Big Six.” As Cleveland’s quest for “major league” hockey hung in the balance, the city’s sportswriters failed to acknowledge the possible conclusion that the existing hockey press saw emerging. A Cleveland franchise was not “as good as in.”²²

‘BACK TO THE SALT MINES’ AND BEYOND

The long awaited decision on the part of the NHL finally came down on July 2nd. Jim Hendy, the Cleveland Barons, and the city’s hockey fans had been tormented for two months with headlines celebrating an NHL franchise that was never accepted but never rejected. Closure arrived for all parties with three different sports page headings in each of Cleveland’s daily papers: “National League Rejects Barons’ Bid For Franchise” in the *Plain Dealer*, “Barons Seen Continuing in AHL Another Year” in the *Press*, and “Back

to Salt Mine' For Snubbed Barons" in the *News*. Clarence Campbell would only tell reporters that the NHL hoped to include Cleveland in the future, even as early as the 1953-1954 season, but wanted them as a working partner. Anonymous sources elaborated that the board of governors refused to accept the \$319,000 in working capital the Barons presented because it had been borrowed from stockholders rather than being cash in hand. Hendy countered that at no point during negotiations had the NHL ever stated that borrowed money would not be acceptable. Beyond that, the Barons' general manager was angry at the outcome. "They kept us dangling and hopeful," he lamented, "and then shut us out." Arena stockholder Edward Bernstein seconded the notion; he angrily told the *News*, "This is the worst run around that ever took place in professional sports." Canadian Press reports proclaimed that the Barons were barred on a "technicality," but *Gazette* columnist Dink Carroll called the rejection an "evasion" by the NHL. The NHL had its story and the Barons had its, but the final verdict, one belonging to the NHL, would not change. Major league hockey would not be coming to Cleveland in the autumn of 1952.²³

Financial instability was the official reason given by the NHL for its no vote against admitting the Barons. "If you own a racehorse," Conn Smythe reasoned, "you don't take in a partner unless he can pay for half the feed." And while the board of governors saw the money the Barons franchise put forward for the present, they feared that one or two bad years would see those funds disappear and the Cleveland franchise

would be buried under a mound of debt from which it could not recover. Even Whitey Lewis, who had championed an NHL franchise for Cleveland, recognized this concern as having validity. He chided the NHL for drawing out a process that could have been dealt with some two months prior to the fateful July day. Between the NHL's reasoning and the scolding of the Cleveland booster press, three new theories emerged to shed light on the Baron's rejected application and the complicated state of major league hockey. The primary culprit in the first theory was James Norris, Sr. The NHL had only six teams, but Norris had financial interest and a voice in three of them (Detroit, Chicago, and New York) and could therefore block any item or issue going before the board of governors that he himself was not in favor of. A seventh team could shift the current balance of power away from Norris. Reports indicated that Toronto, Montreal, and Boston all favored admitting Cleveland while Chicago and Detroit voted against the Barons and New York abstained. The second theory looked at the AHL's relationship with the NHL as a minor league. Several NHL teams had working relationships with AHL franchises as farm teams. Questions regarding the stability of professional hockey in general floated around the sports world, but those specifically addressing the financial health of the AHL were quite worrisome to those groups and individuals with a vested interest in that league's survival. Cleveland was by far the strongest AHL franchise, and several reporters surmised that a Barons' departure would instigate its structural and financial collapse. NHL owners, it was subsequently argued, would risk losing their investments if

they let the Barons move up from the AHL. The final theory, one held prominently in Cleveland, insinuated that the NHL sought revenge for the “sins of the father.” In 1942 the NHL approached Al Sutphin to bring Cleveland into the league. The Brooklyn Americans franchise had folded, and the NHL looked to bring Cleveland and Buffalo into its ranks. The AHL sought to challenge the NHL as a major professional hockey league, and Cleveland and Buffalo were its two strongest franchises. The proposed move would strengthen the NHL as well as weaken the rival AHL. Sutphin, despite a desire to give Cleveland and NHL franchise, decided against the move, thereby spurning the advances of the NHL. One decade later, the NHL was able to return the favor by rejecting the Barons, or so it was argued. Regardless of the reason, Cleveland’s hopes for attaining a major league hockey franchise were dashed for the foreseeable future. The return to the minor league AHL, described as the “bush leagues” by Cobbledick and the home of “tall grass and shinny” according to Lewis, was the Barons’ only choice.²⁴

BITTERSWEET SUCCESS

During the remainder of the summer of 1952, the Barons organization prepared for the start of the upcoming AHL season with little fanfare. Hendy’s earlier threats of a potential lawsuit never came to fruition, and his assertions that Cleveland could not return to minor league hockey after its attempt at a major league team proved to be hollow. The Barons organization looked towards the upcoming season as a chance to prove the NHL wrong, and again attempt a major league team. Cleveland had been promised the

opportunity to again pursue a franchise in 1953, and seemed geared towards another run at NHL status in the wake of their rejection. Before they could initiate this plan and a new season, however, they witnessed the failure of another challenge to the NHL. This time, it was the AHL as a whole exerting itself as an independent league by disallowing the recall of any players by NHL clubs during the season.

On Saturday, October 11 the Barons were scheduled to open its season against the Pittsburgh Hornets in Pittsburgh. The entire AHL schedule, however, was put on hold as the league butted heads with the NHL over the issue of player recalls. In September the AHL initiated a “no recall” rule stating that any player sent by an NHL franchise to the AHL would have to remain with the farm club for the entire season. The “no recall” rule signified two of the minor league’s motives according to some journalists. On one hand it was evidence of the lingering hope the AHL held onto that it could still arise to a position rivaling its major league counterpart. On the other hand, it signified a desperately emerging need for stability on the part of the minor league product, something that had emerged in professional baseball. Game attendance was falling and an end to the NHL’s “player raiding” was deemed a realistic way of countering this trend. The latter point became the AHL’s rallying cry and was taken to the booster press. Needless to say, the NHL was not in agreement on this declaration. Conn Smythe of Toronto led the counter-charge by asserting that the Maple Leafs’ farm team in Pittsburgh would not play in the AHL under those rules. Clarence Campbell further

acknowledged that teams in Hershey (affiliated with Boston) and Providence (an independent franchise) also threatened to quit the league. As a result the AHL season was set back a week. The delay and subsequent lost revenue caused the financially unstable Indianapolis franchise to fold. The Barons, an, independent franchise, were not directly impacted by the issue of player recalls, but the confrontation with the NHL gave Hendy a further excuse to vent his frustrations. He complained that Smythe had, “no interest in anybody but himself” and that, “he doesn’t care whether or not his actions will cost other clubs to lose thousands of dollars.” As the deadlock between the two leagues reached a settlement, the *News* revealed that Hendy had instigated and led the challenge to the NHL the entire time. In mid-October the two hockey leagues agreed on to new terms for player recalls, allowing the AHL season to begin as well. The agreement made stipulated that the NHL could send players to an AHL farm team and be assured that they could recall two players as needed as long as they replaced the players called-up. The Barons began play, but the ill will Hendy held towards the NHL was far from over.²⁵

If the Barons organization downplayed any lingering effects or thoughts from the failed NHL application earlier that summer, the team’s fans and the booster press picked up the slack. As the 1952-1953 season began, the *News* held a slogan contest. Offering two tickets during the AHL playoff championship series, the *News* asked readers to capture a dominant theme for the Barons during the upcoming season. Among the helpful suggestions they provided was listed, “They are fighting to show the National

Hockey League that Cleveland is a big league town all the way.” The winning submission—“Onward Barons! Flash the light—the NHLs still in sight.”—paid little attention to the reality of the eroding relationship between the Barons and the NHL. But this mattered little to the booster press. Lewis reminded his readers at the start of the season the “Big League Hockey” was still a year away at best. His lamentations towards the minor league status of the AHL continued in ensuing columns where he noted the Barons’ home attendance when compared to the rest of the AHL markets. The nearly 11,000 fans that packed the Arena for the first game was over three times the amount seen in Pittsburgh and Providence, the second and third highest home attendances. “Looks like another lopsided winter in the bush league,” Lewis sadly wrote. While the Barons’ attendance figures were not indicative of the entire season average, Lewis used those early numbers to indicate Cleveland’s unfortunate inclusion with lesser cities.²⁶

Just prior to the AHL playoffs, Jim Hendy took yet another opportunity to confront the NHL. The Stanley Cup, the trophy awarded to the NHL’s playoff champion, was originally donated as a challenge cup, but not since 1925 had a team outside of the NHL been so inclined to take up that opportunity. Hendy used history to his advantage and put forth a best of five series in which the Barons, contingent upon them winning the AHL championship, would play the NHL champion. He backed up his challenge with a \$20,000 a game guarantee. Hendy made all of this clear in a letter to Clarence Campbell in which he insisted upon the legitimacy of his idea. The booster press recognized that

the NHL would almost assuredly turn down the challenge, and indicated that the move was an act of scorn on Hendy's part. The news reportedly hit the NHL governors like a bombshell, and their response paralleled the booster press' assumptions. Campbell made the NHL's denial of Hendy's bid official on March 19, stating that two conditions figured into the final decision. First, the NHL refused to consider the Barons a legitimate challenger since they had not yet won the AHL championship. Second, and most importantly, the NHL did not consider the AHL strong enough to merit consideration. Campbell also made it clear that the Barons' application for a franchise was no longer active. Any attempt to gain an NHL franchise would call for a new application, and Campbell commented that such a scenario would in all likelihood not elicit a favorable response given Hendy's challenge.²⁷

The 1952-1953 season was a cause for celebration as the Barons went on to win the Calder Cup, giving the franchise its second playoff title in three years. The success again provided journalistic fodder for Cleveland's booster press, who used it to chastise the NHL throughout the season. "Evidently, when you slammed the door in the face of the Barons last summer," the *News*' Geoffrey Fisher mockingly noted, "it not only irked a big league city but sent its hockey team home with a mission." Editorials praising the city's champions acknowledged the NHL "snub" from the previous year, and noted that the Barons played "big league hockey, even if the National League is a little reluctant to recognize it." Others saw the Calder Cup title as a promising beginning for a new "City

of Champions” era in Cleveland; a validation of Cleveland’s big league status and success. Cleveland was on top of the AHL world, but resentment over the NHL’s rejection and the manner in which they deliberated remained. The Barons were still not “major league” in the eyes of the press or their general manager, and the relationship between Cleveland’s hockey franchise and the NHL had ostensibly grown more and more strained. Almost two decades would pass before Cleveland again put in a serious bid for an NHL expansion franchise, but the memories of 1952 would linger even then.²⁸

THE DECLINE OF THE BARONS’ EMPIRE

Over the next two decades, the Cleveland Barons continued their dominant play in the AHL. They captured the Calder Cup in the 1953-1954 and 1956-1957 seasons, giving them four titles in the decade of the ‘50s. A final Calder Cup title came at the end of the 1963-1964 season. The continuity the Barons displayed on the ice was not matched by other aspects of the organization as the team drifted further and further away from the failed 1952 NHL application. Hendy’s Barons survived on the ice because of his hockey “know-how” and personal relationships with some of the NHL’s moguls. The 1953-1954 championship was a hollow vindication of the Barons’ hockey prominence, but it also marked a disturbing shift in roster management. This shift was indicative of the ever-changing relationship between the NHL and the AHL. Cleveland’s booster press first indicated this shift in the very articles and columns that praised another championship. Johnny Bower, the team’s star goalie, was a prominent piece in the

Barons' lineup. Hendy had argued a summer earlier that Bower would give the Barons every opportunity to compete with the established franchises of the NHL upon Cleveland's proposed admission to the league. Bower was indeed an NHL talent, but it would not be with the Barons. Hendy looked to trade his goalie to the New York Rangers. Hendy told the *News*, "We can pay him the same dough he would get in the National League, but he deserves a crack at the National League. That's the ambition of every boy in hockey." Bower left the Barons for New York before the following season, but returned to Cleveland to start the 1957 season after Hendy reacquired him from the Rangers. His stay was short, though, and Toronto drafted Bower in the inter-League draft prior to the 1958-1959 season. Bower wanted to end his career in Cleveland, but Hendy talked him into the opportunity that Toronto presented. This was almost ironic considering Hendy had traded a young defenseman to the Maple Leafs in hopes that they would refrain from taking Bower in the draft, which they did anyway. The AHL abolished the inter-League draft as a result of Toronto's actions, but Bower would no longer play in Cleveland. He was arguably the greatest hockey player to ever skate in Cleveland, but he was not the only player the Barons lost to the NHL. Future stars like fan favorite John Ferguson were traded or sold before they would be lost to the NHL without compensation. The Barons, like every other team in the minor leagues, watched major league teams gobble up their young talent and emerging stars. The long-time

independent franchise could not survive on its own, and eventually agreed to working relationships with NHL franchises.²⁹

The loss of talent, a reminder of the AHL's subordinate position to the NHL, was not the sole element of Cleveland's hockey decline. The redundancy of proclaiming Cleveland a "big league city" appeared to be absorbed into the mindset of the city's sporting culture. The Barons, despite its success on the ice, began to struggle with public support. They also underwent two ownership changes that spoke volumes towards the worsening financial conditions of the franchise. Jim Hendy and Claire Grove, a long-time hockey fan and president of the Second Federal Savings and Loan Association, led a syndicate which purchased the Barons in 1955. The sale renewed hopes, especially in the booster press, that Cleveland would again pursue an NHL franchise now that the issue of local ownership was firmly answered. The Barons and their players on the reserve list cost the Hendy syndicate a total of \$300,000. To revive fan interest, ticket prices were reduced \$.25 each. Despite showing a profit in 1958, attendance continued to dwindle as the minor league team struggled. When Hendy suffered a heart attack and passed away in 1961, no further NHL application had been made and attendance continued its downward spiral. In 1962 the Press asked readers if hockey was dying in Cleveland as fans stayed away from the Arena during an eight-game winning streak. One year later, columnist Bob August noted that, "running a hockey team in Cleveland has become a desperate and costly proposition," in response to front office upheaval. By 1967 team

president Paul Bright, a stockholder who gained majority control in 1962, pointed to competition from NBA games, the inability to purchase broadcasting rights, the weather, and the loss of Saturday dates to explain why the Barons were averaging 4,000 fans at home games that season. The loss of broad fan support and the new experience of dwelling near the division basement legitimately brought the future of Cleveland hockey into question.³⁰

The AHL never did match the NHL in regards to skill and prestige, and hockey's hierarchy dictated that it settle further and further into the role of a minor league comprised of NHL farm teams. Nor did the Barons ever again attempt to gain entry into the NHL under Hendy's watch. The team, and Cleveland, reluctantly settled into the role of a minor league team for the long haul. This, however, did not mean that it was unconditionally accepted. Between 1952 and 1968, the year that Nick Mileti purchased Barons and Arena and renewed hope for a major league franchise, professional hockey drifted into the shadows of public appreciation and booster press coverage. The Barons were not on par with the Indians, as poorly as they played, and the Browns. Their headlines came when baseball and football were not in session, but even then they shared the spotlight with news from spring training, training camps, trades and winter meetings. The Barons hockey franchise was arguably the most dominant professional team in Cleveland's sports history, yet they faded into a realm of nostalgic wonderings.

Cleveland wanted major league hockey, but failed to receive it upon demand, and slowly but surely shifted its attention to teams that represented the city in the best light.

CHAPTER 7

A NEW BROWN IN TOWN: TEAM IMAGE AND THE NEW BLACK ATHLETE

The Cleveland Browns dynasty that Paul Brown had handcrafted completed its decade long run of dominance in 1955. Following the season star quarterback Otto Graham retired and the 1956 Browns responded with the first losing season in franchise history. But like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Paul Brown and his team returned to challenge the NFL's elite over the next six seasons. History tells us that the Browns' good fortunes were made possible not only through Paul Brown's genius, but also because of a lost coin-toss at the 1956 NFL draft. The selection of Syracuse fullback Jim Brown brought new life to the Browns, but it also introduced a new era of sport to Cleveland. This chapter examines two coinciding themes as they developed during Jim Brown's career (1957-1965). First, the Browns underwent a transition in identity from Paul Brown to Jim Brown and finally to Art Modell. The importance of the Browns as an institution that could bolster civic image was most evident following the 1964 NFL Championship, but the intertwined relationships between Brown, Brown, and Modell brought forth the importance in controlling the face of the franchise. Second, Jim Brown represented the two-pronged evolution of modern NFL players and the new black athlete. These factors exposed an underlying racial turmoil on the team that paralleled

Cleveland's own racial conflict and dispelled the myth of racial harmony the Browns had nurtured since the team's inception.

Cleveland's football fans were greeted on the morning of Labor Day 1955 with news truly worthy of celebration. Quarterback Otto Graham was coming back to work. After he retired following the 1954 National Football League (NFL) championship game victory over the Detroit Lions, the Browns found themselves without a proven quarterback. Paul Brown, armed with Graham's own promise that he would return if the team needed him, contacted his former player shortly after a preseason loss to the Los Angeles Rams. Graham told the *Plain Dealer*, "I sincerely wanted to retire but I said I'd be back if the Browns needed me." And needed him they did. The return of Cleveland's all-pro quarterback renewed hopes that the Browns juggernaut would remain intact for at least one more season. "If you don't think I'm happy about this," Brown told the *Cleveland Press*, "you're crazy." By December, columnists called the 1955 version the best Browns team in ten years. In front of 87,695 fans at the Los Angeles Coliseum, the Browns defeated the Rams 38-14 for their second straight NFL championship, and renewed belief in the team's greatness. But in the aftermath of the championship, the celebration was tempered with the reality that Graham was again retiring; this time for good. He called his career a "grand and glorious ten years" during which the Browns experienced unparalleled success. With Graham gone, a new and unknown era of Cleveland football was about to begin.¹

Graham led Paul Brown's teams to ten straight championship games—four in the All-America Football Conference and six in the National Football League—and seven league titles—four in the AAFC and three in the NFL. His retirement robbed Cleveland of its offensive lynchpin. Critics who had claimed the most important element to Cleveland's success was the quarterback and not the coach received ample ammunition the following season. The Cleveland Browns and Paul Brown experienced their first losing season in 1956, going 5-7 and finishing tied for fourth place in the NFL's Eastern Conference. For the first time in team history they would not be playing for a championship. A silver lining, however, accompanied this gray cloud. In the 1956 NFL draft the Cleveland Browns hoped for a quarterback but, unable to draft one, chose Syracuse University fullback Jim Brown. A new era of Cleveland football now had a name and face. That person was surnamed Brown, but it was Jim rather than Paul.²

Jim Brown's playing career in Cleveland lasted from 1957 through 1965, but his impact on the team was not limited to that time frame nor was that impact limited to football. The changing images of professional football, the black athlete, racial relations in Cleveland, and the Browns franchise all fell under his mighty shadow. Jim Brown impacted his coaches, team ownership, and his teammates, as well as notions of the black athlete held by white and black fans alike. His duality as a black athlete symbolized a new era of professional sport and racial relations. Gone were the grizzled World War II (WWII) veterans who followed their coaches onto the gridiron just as they had their

commanding officers onto the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific. Professional football's maturation as a sport and subsequent acceptance into American popular culture paved the way for younger athletes to make substantial careers playing a game. Former Browns' offensive lineman Dick Schafrath noted the change athlete's attitudes and the problems they faced in Paul Brown's system. "Paul just expected you to be good. If you weren't you were out the door," Schafrath stated. "And the players that played before 1960 just respected authority, and he was able to control that situation but as we matured in this country and started to get more dignified and more self-respect, the control the Paul had kind of stifled anyone's growth." Also, the re-integration of professional football following WWII provided opportunities for black athletes; opportunities for which many individuals connected with football felt these athletes should feel fortunate. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s shaped a new generation of black athletes, as represented in Harry Edwards' *Revolt of the Black Athlete*. The days of passively accepting a conservative integration eroded under a heightened awareness of individual rights and social awareness. Jim Brown and other black athletes outwardly addressed not only personal issues, but also those issues impacting the black community in America. Gains by the black community, however, were often perceived as challenges to the power structure and resulted in notions of "white victimization." Brown and others were not immune to the resulting backlash, but continued to strive towards social and economic independence (if not equality).³

BRIDGE TO A NEW PRESENT

“Dealing with a sports legend did get complicated. In Paul’s case that isn’t hyperbolic. To the public, Paul *was* the Cleveland Browns. Paul formed the team. He gave the Browns its name, his name, the Browns being the only NFL team ever named for their coach. For seventeen years Paul was the Browns’ head coach and general manager, for most of that period one of its owners....Cleveland faltered when Otto Graham retired, revived when I appeared one year later. The bridge from past to present was Paul.”

Jim Brown in *Out of Bounds*⁴

The dismal 1956 season left Cleveland with the sixth overall pick in the 1957 NFL Draft. With Graham’s departure looming large in light of the franchise’s first losing season, Paul Brown eyed one of three quarterbacks with the Browns’ selection: John Brodie, Paul Horning, and Len Dawson. After Pittsburgh, with whom the Browns had lost a coin toss for the fifth pick, selected Dawson, all three were gone. Cleveland decided upon Syracuse University fullback Jim Brown, who they considered the best available athlete. Paul Brown praised his new fullback as an “Ollie Matson type” in the *Press*, but also was visibly disappointed by being unable to bring one of the three prized quarterback prospects to Cleveland. Little did anyone know that the selection of Brown would change the face of the franchise. Brown himself was excited to be drafted by the Cleveland Browns and to have the chance to play for Paul Brown, whom he considered to be the greatest coach in the NFL. Despite stories of the coach’s hard-line approach and grim behavior, Brown was introduced to a friendlier persona. Paul Brown told the media that he envisioned prominently using the young fullback and compared him to Marion Motley after Jim won the starting job during training camp. “Paul was a dictator,” Jim

Brown later recalled, “but a benevolent dictator in his own way because he wanted to win so he played black players, he played anybody.” Jim Brown’s rookie season was a success. He led the NFL in rushing with 942 yards on 200 carries, and the Browns won the Eastern Conference. Despite losing to Detroit in the NFL Championship, the success to which Paul Brown, the Cleveland Browns, and Cleveland’s football fans were accustomed had seemingly returned.⁵

Jim Brown continued to dominate the NFL, winning rushing titles in his first five seasons under Paul Brown. The Browns continued to post winning records during that time, but never finished higher than second. The national media began to wonder aloud if the rest of the league had caught up to Paul Brown. His own players wondered the same thing, but did not dare comment aloud on the issue until after Brown was gone. Jim Brown’s own relationship with his coach worsened in subsequent seasons. Members of the Browns became frustrated with the lack of input in play calling and the restrictions of Paul Brown’s messenger system. Jim Brown and others felt that the team was talented enough to win the NFL Championship, but that Paul Brown was coaching with an eye on the past, thereby preventing the full use of the team’s talent. In the decade following his departure from Cleveland, Paul Brown criticized Jim Brown’s inability to block and accused the fullback of dividing the team along racial lines. Yet tensions between the fullback and coach did not become public until owner Art Modell fired Paul Brown after the 1962 season. In his autobiography, Paul Brown acknowledged Jim Brown’s athletic

talent, but called his fullback selfish and argued that he did not like authority figures. Jim Brown, in *Off My Chest*, was quick to give respect to Brown's coaching genius, but felt that he was stubborn and no longer approachable. He said he never had a relationship with Paul Brown, and despite not being the fondest of the coach's admirers, lamented the fact that their relationship had never developed.⁶

The frustration Jim Brown and others felt with Paul Brown gained a sympathetic ear when Art Modell purchased the Browns in 1961. Modell's active presence in team operations and personnel decisions conflicted with the absolute authority Paul Brown had wielded under Mickey McBride's and David Jones' ownership. When it came to football in Cleveland, there was only Paul Brown in the beginning. Otto Graham may have quarterbacked the Browns to ten straight league championships, but it was Brown's coaching innovation and brilliance that garnered public praise. He had been the persona embodying the essence of the team since the day he signed on to coach the Cleveland franchise in the upstart All-America Football Conference (AAFC) in 1945. Brown led the team to seven football championships in their first ten years of existence. Paul Brown was thrust into a realm of veneration from the local media and public that was befitting a sort of Cleveland royalty. Jim Brown, upon joining the team, recognized that the Browns were Paul Brown.

Paul Brown's relationships with the franchise's first two ownership groups were strictly business in nature. He was helped, undoubtedly, by his inclusion as a stockholder

in each group. Arthur “Mickey” McBride, the team’s founder, merely signed the checks. “[Brown] was the hero,” commented McBride, “and I was the businessman.” Brown had complete control over player personnel decisions as head coach, general manager, and vice president, and was able to create a team of his liking from scratch. The coach’s freedoms paid off immediately in championship after championship. In 1953 McBride sold the Browns for \$600,000 to a group headed by Cleveland businessmen David Jones. Rumors surfaced that McBride was tired of playing second-fiddle to Brown. There were additional rumors that McBride suspected the team’s successes on the field and at the box office had reached their apex. McBride was also linked to Al Capone and organized crime in Chicago, his hometown, and in the early 1950s testified before the Senate Crime Investigating Committee. Twenty-one years after first inquiring about purchasing the Rams and entering the world of professional football, McBride bid adieu to the team he founded. The new ownership group left Brown in control over team management and player issues. Back-to-back NFL championships in 1954 and 1955 initially proved McBride’s fears of demise false, but the Browns’ subsequent seasons produced second- and third-fiddle performances within their conference. The decade of dominance was over. Jones too exhibited signs of frustrations in dealing with Brown’s totalitarian control of football operations. He compared owning the Browns to playing the triangle in a symphony orchestra, saying that, “With a fellow like Brown around there is very little for anyone else to do.” After five years without a championship, Jones’ ownership group

was looking to sell, and in 1961 a third ownership group took control of the team. Art Modell's arrival subtly challenged Brown's control over the team and later escalated the confrontation into a battle between two steadfast egos.⁷

Modell purchased the team in 1961 for just under \$4,000,000. Although he owned the team, it was anything but his in the eyes of the public. Modell had no intention, however, of relegating himself to the franchise's backseat. Local media accounts indicated that upon purchasing the Browns franchise, the gregarious Modell quickly immersed himself into learning the business of football. He later told the media that he had envisioned a prosperous partnership with Brown as part of his team involvement. The Browns were, after all, Modell's primary business at the time. But the young owner irked his coach by fraternizing with team players and getting more and more involved with the daily operations of the team; becoming a "playing owner." Brown felt this was in direct violation of his contract, and undermined the team structure he had put in place. Between 1961 and 1963, Modell and Brown moved further and further apart in their professional relationship. Modell had proclaimed his idolization of Brown and his desire to become friends with the legendary coach early on. Brown, on the other hand, expressed disgust and a distrust of Modell with the passing of every new day. Pinning down the crux of their tensions, Brown cited their two different philosophies: Brown's coming from knowledge and experience and Modell's coming from a complete lack of either. Regardless of the credibility of this nostalgic account,

there was little chance that the growing rift between the two men could be resolved.

Many local scribes felt that something would give, but no one knew when this would happen. One man would have to go.⁸

The conflict between Modell and Paul Brown escalated as the 1962 season approached another disappointing end for the team. Following a 17-13 loss in New York to the Giants in the next-to-last game, disgruntled teammates complained about their coach's predictability and unwillingness to adapt. Several Browns players, including Jim Brown, discussed their displeasure on the flight back to Cleveland, and decided that they needed to take action. According to Brown's accounts, the committee of players backed away from its original plans to approach Paul Brown first on the plane and later at his home. Modell halted any plans to address Coach Brown, assuring the players committee that he would resolve the situation. Jim Brown believed that Modell was well aware of the player's discontent and that the Browns had "become a diseased organization almost beyond cure." The Brown's fullback and others did not want to play another season restrained by their coach's play calling and ego. "We definitely wanted Paul to open up the offense," he said. "But we wanted *Paul* to do something about it." Modell, armed with player unrest and the possibility of trade demands if some course of action was not taken, waited for the season to end before making a move to protect his investment.⁹

On January 7, 1963 Modell informed Brown that he would have to step down as head coach and general manager. The only coach in Browns' history still had six years

left on his contract, at a salary of \$82,500 per year, but Modell argued that it was the only means available to remedy a dangerous undercurrent afflicting the team. Two days later both parties met again where they discussed and reached an agreement on the public announcement of Brown's removal. While various reasons circulated as to why Modell fired Brown (including rumors of an impending players revolt and a belief that the game had passed Brown by), Brown insists that the foremost reason was Modell's ego. According to Brown, Modell told him, "This team can never fully be mine as long as you are here because whenever anyone thinks of the Cleveland Browns, they think of you. Every time I come to the stadium, I feel that I am invading your domain, and from now on there can only be one dominant image." This by no means suggests that other factors were not at play or valid in the firing of Paul Brown. Evidence found in comments from players and reporters at this time reveals that several factors were possible. Mike McCormack and Galen Fiss, the offensive and defensive captains respectively, believed the team's performance had not met its talent thanks in part to Brown's play calling. The change, in their minds, was justified and needed. Yet the pattern that emerged after Brown's departure clearly pointed to a desire on Modell's part to become the face of the franchise. Jim Brown, a member of the players committee that had been prepared to confront their coach before Modell fired him, also argued that it was only a matter of time before ownership made such a move. While also noting Paul Brown's inability to acknowledge the future—the Browns' continued need for progress in light of the progress

other NFL teams were making—Jim Brown argued that Modell viewed the players’ discord as the “fertile situation” that would enable him to run the team himself. Modell simply used his ownership power to propel this desire closer to reality.¹⁰

Modell’s firing of Brown could not have been timed better in terms of public relations. Cleveland was in the midst of its longest newspaper strike, rendering both daily papers (*Cleveland Plain Dealer* and *Cleveland Press*) unable to inform the team’s rabid fans of the fate of their beloved coach. Brown himself believed that Modell orchestrated the firing to occur during the strike to minimize public outcry. The booster press did not remain silent on such a large news item, and subsequently united to produce a small publication detailing the firing and varied reactions. Brown insisted in his autobiography that Modell hired the out-of-work sportswriters to write a “thirty page justification” for the firing. Titled *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn’t Call* and selling for a quarter, the sports booklet was a schizophrenic voice on the firing. Sports editors, beat writers, and columnists alike agreed that a new era of Cleveland football was to emerge, but they couldn’t decide where to place blame or if there was blame to be placed. Again, hints that a power play was at or near the center of the Brown-Modell saga came forth. Frank Gibbons of the *Press* noted that Paul Brown had “carved a very large chunk of football marble” for Cleveland during his coaching tenure, he did not want or appreciate Modell’s presence in football decisions and communications between the two suffered as a result. “The only way that Modell could break into the inner sanctum,” he continued,

“was to fire the stern guard at the gate...Brown.” According to Gibbons, this provided Modell with his chance to become a larger part of the team and “carve his own piece of marble.” Others, such as the *Plain Dealer*’s Hal Lebovitz, commended Modell for his decision. “It took courage to fire Paul Brown,” he wrote. Others chimed in with varying opinions from various angles, but the one constant from the booster press was the acknowledgement that a new boss was in charge.¹¹

The newspaper strike that necessitated a special tabloid to address the firing of Paul Brown did not affect the *Cleveland Call and Post*, a weekly paper serving the city’s black community. Ever since the 1946 signings of Bill Willis and Marion Motley the *Call & Post* paid increased attention to the Browns in columns and articles, with a special fondness for Paul Brown. In the aftermath of the firing, however, those articles that eulogized Brown in the *Call & Post* barely focused on the issue of race. Instead they speculated that Modell wanted to take over the team for himself and take his share of the publicity that Brown had received. An editorial contended that whoever took over as new coach would have to accept Modell’s voice in winter meetings, draft sessions, and elsewhere. It also warned that second-guessers would not be allowed.¹²

The strike among Cleveland’s daily newspapers muted much of the public reaction, with the exception of a few “man on the street” comments in *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn’t Call*. One such fan letter did find its way into the letters to the editor section of the *Press* in May 1963. Four months after Brown’s firing, this letter angrily

argued that Modell let the “wrong Brown go.” The letter’s author attacked Jim Brown for reveling in all the trappings of athletic stardom, including being able to fire a great coach on a whim. That reaction bolstered an argument which stated that Modell encouraged notions that the players demanded he fire Paul Brown. Jim Brown himself admitted to such demands from players in a 1968 interview in *Playboy*, but later corrected himself. He pointed out what he believed was a manipulation of events to clear Modell of public scrutiny and backlash. He stated that, “Art didn’t create the situation, he didn’t tell [Browns players] to be unhappy with the offense, but he utilized it, from a business standpoint, beautifully. When Art fired Paul he knew there was player unrest, as did everyone else. Art took that fact, used it skillfully with the media, diverted the glare from himself onto us, and smoothed his transition into power.” General fan contempt for the rushing star was not limited to the firing of Paul Brown, for Jim Brown, despite his performance on the field, would find that he was still playing in a divided city.¹³

A TEMPORARY REPRIEVE

The departure of Paul Brown and the legacy of Cleveland’s football dynasty made way for Jim Brown and hopes of renewed greatness on the city’s gridiron. The coaching duties were passed along to Blanton Collier. Collier first came to the Browns with its inception in 1946, but departed in 1954 to replace Paul “Bear” Bryant at the University of Kentucky. He returned to Cleveland in 1962 as the club’s backfield coach after Kentucky fired him. Collier had been one of Paul Brown’s closest friends and most

trusted assistants. Midway through the 1962 season Collier received public accolades for the check off system of play calling implemented by Paul Brown. Shortly after, the check off system was dropped and the relationship between Brown and Collier cooled. The players lamented the loss of freedom in calling plays while the media wondered if the change was the result of Brown's ego being bruised. When Collier stepped into the head coaching position at the start of the next year, he found himself responsible for a group of players who believed he would be a breath of fresh air and Cleveland's hopes for a return to the championships that turned his predecessor into a legend.¹⁴

Despite the new pressures, hurt feelings, and additional emotional baggage attached to the change in coaches, these were still the Cleveland Browns. The 1963 season began with plenty of anticipation, and soon the Browns winning ways returned. Collier kept the coaching staff intact from the previous year to accompany the same core of players, but implemented two key changes—the quarterback had the opportunity to call the majority of the plays, and the check off system returned. Winning coincided with these changes, and the Browns won their first six games that season. Fans noticed and began showing in greater numbers, including a then NFL record of 84,684 in a win over Pittsburgh. The team slowed, however, and the fans followed suit. *Sports Illustrated* noted early in the season that the Browns had yet to face the toughest teams on their schedule, and only then could the success of the transition from Paul Brown to Collier be gauged. Cleveland compiled a 4-4 record to end the season and finished second to the

New York Giants. The second place finish had a silver lining. The players, especially Jim Brown, viewed the season as a step in the right direction and argued that their passion for football was revived under Collier's coaching.¹⁵

The 1964 season fulfilled the lofty expectations held by the Browns organization. Prior to the season the team drafted future Hall of Fame players Paul Warfield and Leroy Kelly to bolster the offense. A 4-1 preseason record indicated that the team was poised to again reign with the dominant teams in the league. Ticket sales boomed before the season started, and home attendance never dropped below 72,000 that year. The Browns jumped out to a seemingly insurmountable lead in the NFL's Eastern Conference, compiling a record of eight wins, one loss, and one tie. Their lead disappeared, however, when they lost two of their next three games, and its final game in New York against the Giants became a "must win" situation if the organization was to claim its first conference title since 1957. In a steady rain on a Saturday afternoon in Yankee Stadium, the Browns wrapped up their title hopes and a date with the Baltimore Colts (the NFL's Western Conference champions) with a 52-20 victory. Collier was credited with reviving a competitive flame within the team and among its fans.¹⁶

Despite claims that the "good old days" of Browns football had returned to the shores of Lake Erie, the championship game against Baltimore remained a final obstacle. National and local football writers gave the Browns little chance of upending a powerful Colts team. One *Sports Illustrated* story went so far as to assert that the Eastern

Conference champion would merely win the right to be thrashed by Johnny Unitas, Lenny Moore, Raymond Berry, John Mackey, and company. Don Shula's Colts had finished with a 12-2 record while possessing the NFL's highest scoring offense and stingiest defense in terms of points allowed. The Colts were a seven point favorite heading into the December 27th kickoff. The snow has stopped falling prior to the game, but Municipal Stadium was cold and windy. The Browns and Colts played to a scoreless first half to the dismay of the national press who found the game boring. Members of the Cleveland media, however, were amazed that the Browns had held the Colts' powerful offense scoreless. The second half became the Gary Collins show as quarterback Frank Ryan connected with the Browns receiver for three touchdowns. Lou Groza added two field goals. With twenty-six seconds left, fans stormed the field to celebrate the Browns 27-0 victory and its first NFL Championship since 1957.¹⁷

Winning the NFL Championship thrust heightened expectations upon the Browns for the immediate future. The local media, acknowledging some roster changes would be needed, still believed that any team with Jim Brown anchoring its offense and a defense that had shutout the Colts vaunted offense would be a favorite at the start of the 1965 season and possibly for years to come. The impact of the victory, however, was not limited to the gridiron and any form of a renewed football dynasty. Local editorials following the game used the victory as an advertisement for civic pride. The *Plain Dealer* editorial page, complete with a drawing of a Brown's helmet adorned with a

laurel wreath claiming “victory,” proclaimed that “every citizen of Greater Cleveland today can feel a little happier, a little more elated.” It pushed forward the argument that the claim “Home of the Champions” was a one-of-a-kind civic boast. Echoing these sentiments, the *Press* lauded the civic benefits of the championship. The editorial gave substantial credit to the entire organization for overcoming odds all season to give Cleveland a Christmas gift that would not soon be forgotten. More importantly, it stated the civic importance of the moment. “This Greater Cleveland community,” it stated, “...has every reason today to feel 10 feet tall—tall enough at least to help with pride, enthusiasm and bursting civic exuberance to put ‘World Champions’ on the flag pole at the Stadium.” A few days later, the *Press* ran a second editorial extolling the spiritual and material benefits the Browns title brought Cleveland. It went so far as to claim that through the championship the name, Cleveland, had appeared in the datelines of every American sports page and many front pages. The intangible benefit of this name recognition would in turn impress the business community and lead to increased convention opportunities for Cleveland. For the Browns, the 1964 NFL Championship was the celebratory culmination of a season’s worth of sacrifice, effort, and teamwork. For the local sports media, it was a possible foreshadowing of professional football in Cleveland for the next few years. For civic promoters, football victory at its highest level meant national glory and the dollars that would follow.¹⁸

JIM BROWN'S TOWN

Jim Brown's emergence as the team leader and the public face of Browns' football coincided with a new generation of football player. From the postwar integration of sport into the 1960s, the black athlete increasingly challenged existing social norms. Within the larger civil rights movement, race was used as a political resource. The shift from *Negro* to *black* fulfilled, in part, the need to assert power through self-identification in the quest for social and racial democracy. Connected to this larger movement was the black athlete's challenge to white society's long-perceived notion that he was all brawn and no brain, and that he deserved more than the chance to play professionally. Scholars such as Othello Harris, David Wiggins, David Zang, Harry Edwards, and Amy Bass detail the changing athlete in a changing time as well as the pressures he faced. Joe Louis and Jessie Owens widely represented the barrier-breaking black athlete who understood the importance of accommodating white society. They knew the ramifications of being labeled "uppity" from stories of former heavyweight champion Jack Johnson and others. Harris comments that "The black athlete of this era was expected to be humble, obsequious, non-threatening, and tolerant of demeaning stereotypes and characterizations." One needed to be a "credit to his race" after all. Owens criticized the new era of black athletes, especially those protesting in the late 1960s, and more specifically those looking to boycott the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. As David Wiggins noted, Owens understood that racism was a continuing problem, but believed that sport was a primary institution in the improvement of racial relations. He

felt that protestors were snubbing their noses at an opportunity for unparalleled personal success and credit to American blacks. He dubbed their actions to be un-American.

Despite any level of truth in Owens' contentions, one cannot overlook the fact that in the process of civil rights as a form of social progression there were "always bitter seeds of defeat hidden within the fruit of victory," to quote Manning Marable. Sport, as a component of the civil rights movement, was no exception. Too often power brokers within sporting institutions expected black participants to rest with the satisfaction of the opportunities they had been given. To expect or want more was not something white America, no matter how liberal in ideology, was prepared to give up.¹⁹

Shifts within the civil rights movement of the 1960s gave a new voice to black America and subsequently to the black athlete. Recognizing the multitude of individual groups that made up the civil rights movement, historian M. J. Heale commented that they were taking forms of action to assert their identity and claim their rights. The aforementioned "fruits of victory" had not quashed racism from American society, and many turned to more vocal and radical forms of protest. From within this larger body of protest, social pressures increasingly came upon black athletes—collegiate and professional—to publicly represent the larger black community. Jim Brown and Muhammad Ali, among others, used their celebrity standing to give black athletes accord to be both athlete and activist. Wiggins stated, "Although never approaching the degree of activism evident among some members of their community, and not always prepared

for the rigor or consequences of racial protest, black athletes in unprecedented numbers became participants in the civil rights struggle.” Harris adds that “accommodationists were on their way out.” The actions of the new black athlete lent well-known faces and national stages through which to showcase the frustrations and plight of America’s black communities.²⁰

Jim Brown best represented this new athlete in Cleveland. While the city’s sports heroes had previously captured the city’s working-class or ethnic character, and were almost always white, Brown embodied the celebrity associated with professional sports and the social conscious of the Civil Rights movement. Brown was outspoken to some; merely spoke his mind to others. “I loved the 1960s,” he once wrote. “America met rebellion, got its pompous ass woken up.” By the early 1960s he broke the trend of Cleveland Browns players quietly passing their days under Paul Brown’s direction. When Jim Brown’s backfield mate Bobby Mitchell was traded to the Washington Redskins for the first pick in the NFL Draft (used to take Syracuse University’s Ernie Davis), he criticized the move. Jim Brown was quoted as saying that the Browns made a mistake and that he was subsequently overworked (Davis was diagnosed with leukemia and not cleared to play). He had previously argued that the trade benefited himself, Mitchell, and Davis, each of whom could better negotiate a new contract. The media chided Jim Brown for making contract figures public, and wondered what Paul Brown must have thought. Years later Jim Brown again criticized the trade that sent Mitchell to

the Redskins. He expressed his belief that Paul Brown made the deal because the Browns backfield mates were taking headlines away from the coach. Mitchell concurred, saying, “Jim Brown was just as big as [Paul Brown] was. Jim Brown carried a big stick.”²¹

The arrival of Art Modell as the Browns’ owner in 1961, complete with his advertising background, created a change in the relationship between the players and management. Paul Brown’s teams were characterized by the rigidity of the top-down structure where the coach ruled with an iron fist. The lack of communication between players and coach that developed under this system, or at least the problematic nature of gaining Paul Brown’s ear, became an early concern for the new owner. Modell was closer in age to his players, and his bachelor lifestyle paralleled his players’ interests. This was of concern to Paul Brown. Modell was sympathetic to his players, but more importantly was eager to promote his stars. Jim Brown was the biggest and brightest Cleveland had in sport, let alone football, in the 1960s. At his first press conference, the Browns owner described his star fullback as his “senior partner.” Author Terry Pluto surmises that such an assertion was a precursor of Modell’s vision for the Cleveland Browns and the place of Paul Brown within that vision. Certainly Jim Brown’s superstar status in the league and among Cleveland’s football fans was not lost on Modell. Capitalizing on the team’s most marketable commodity, he arranged for him to co-host a weekly radio show with local sports journalist Hal Lebovitz. Brown used the outlet to speak his mind on a variety of issues, both football and non-football related. On several

occasions he upset his coach by stating opinions on team play calling and on debates of who should start at quarterback. While Jim Brown's opinion on sports often upset Paul Brown, they elicited only the coach's displeasure. Many believed Paul Brown was afraid to confront his fullback. Jim Brown's opinions on society and the rights of black America, however, elicited more troubling responses. His defense of black Muslims as religious followers and not terrorists, along with his views on racism in Cleveland were upsetting to some. In September 1964, a caller on Brown's radio show threatened to bomb Brown's home. Police guarded Brown's home for several days, but nothing happened.²²

The bomb threat was not the only incident that left Brown with disheartened feelings on race in Cleveland. He was cheered on Sundays at Cleveland Stadium, but off the field was still subject to the problems Cleveland's black community faced on a daily basis. On one occasion, when looking to rent an apartment in Cleveland convenient to the Browns' practice field and in a safe neighborhood, Brown was turned away because of race. The building's landlady, according to Brown, told him, "We only take whites." In *Off My Chest*, he vented his frustrations, saying "I don't ask integration. I just don't want to be segregated." Brown's business ventures in the city were also subject to race on a broad level. Examining his own popularity as an athlete, especially among children, he lamented the placement of his picture on billboards only in black neighborhoods. Brown argued that limiting advertisements featuring black athletes to black

neighborhoods symbolized backwards thinking in marketing practices, and limited spokesman opportunities for black athletes. “What image will Jim Brown project?” he asked. “Will he project the Negro image or the athlete image?” For an individual who proclaimed that the one color that transcended race was green, life for Jim Brown away from the football field revealed the harsh reality of Cleveland’s racial divide.²³

During his playing days Brown entered into summer employment with the Pepsi-Cola Company. He served as a marketing executive for the company, in the process gaining an understanding of the role of economics in America and had hopes of preparing himself for an administration position upon retiring. In turn, Pepsi was able to boast the presence of one of America’s top athletes. Although Pepsi eventually terminated its relationship with Brown, he used the business knowledge he acquired to promote black-owned businesses that were financed by black investors. Brown gained further support of over one hundred fellow black athletes such as Bill Russell and Lew Alcindor (later Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) on a national scale, as well as teammates John Wooten and Leroy Kelly. The Negro Industrial and Economic Union (NIEU) was founded to empower entrepreneurs within the black community and to seek equality through financial strength. The organization planned on using its collective fame and financial might to revive life and hope in the American ghetto through businesses, schools, summer camps for children, and recreation centers. Headquartered in Cleveland, the NIEU also had offices in eight other American cities. In the aftermath of race riots in Watts, Newark, Detroit,

and Cleveland, as well as multiple other American cities, Brown saw the work of the NIEU taking on a new importance. Investing in the future of the black community and strengthening it along economic lines would insert a larger sense of pride within urban neighborhoods. The organization also provided support to black athletes, as it did with Muhammad Ali when he refused induction into military service. Brown organized a summit of black athletes who were members of the NIEU. They met with Ali and, after discussing his reasons for refusing induction, threw their collective support behind his decision. Jim Brown called the meeting “friendly and productive” and implied that Ali’s reasons satisfied the athletes in attendance. Brown eventually left Cleveland and football for Hollywood and movies, but did not abandon his vision for the NIEU and an obligation to implementing social change in America’s black communities.²⁴

By 1966 Jim Brown began to question his future in football as his interests shifted to his acting career and his work with the Negro Industrial and Economic Union, of which he was chairman of the board. As his interests outside football diversified, they threatened to take away more and more of Brown’s time from football. Modell accommodated Brown with a separate set of rules befitting a superstar, but even these rules had limits. When it became apparent that Brown would not arrive for the start of the 1966 training camp, Modell drew a line in the sand. Although admitting the complexity of the movie industry, he announced that Jim Brown would be suspended without pay if he missed the start of training camp. The threat of a fine was a moot point

to Brown, who had a one-way contract with the Browns. Modell only paid Brown if he played. Less than a month later in a letter to Modell written in London, England where he was filming *The Dirty Dozen*, Brown announced his intentions to retire. He also intimated that he took offense to Modell's use of pressure tactics through the media. "I was very sorry to see you make the statements that you did," penned Brown, "because it was not a victory for you or I but for the newspaper men." Brown had earlier hinted that he would retire from football after the 1966 season, but the pomp and circumstance brought on by Modell's press release precipitated this new plan of action. It would be unfair to suggest that Modell pushed the best player on his team, not to mention the most marketable athlete, into retirement in a gesture of power.²⁵

The local press met Brown's departure from football to concentrate more carefully on his acting career and the continued development of the NIEU with a combination of sorrow and celebration. Editorials and columns in the *Plain Dealer* and *Press* addressed the sudden void in Cleveland's backfield and how Brown would be missed, but commended him for the feats he accomplished in a Browns uniform. Their stories quoted Modell and Collier as praising the accomplishments and dedication Brown exhibited in his nine seasons of pro football. Each, however, quickly pointed out that the organization had no time to dwell on Brown's retirement. They promised that the 1966 season would require no radical changes to the lineup, turning to Leroy Kelly and Ernie Green to replace Brown. Quarterback Frank Ryan admitted that the Browns would have

a new direction in their offense, but did not feel that opponents could or should take them lightly. William “Sheep” Jackson of the *Call & Post* viewed things in a different light. While his paper’s editorial welcomed Brown’s mission to uplift the black community along economic lines, Jackson foretold of doom on the gridiron. Without Brown the team lost leadership, identity, and that special performer who kept opponents guessing. Jackson simply stated, “The Browns need Jim Brown.” Without Brown, the Browns failed to win to the NFL Championship despite reaching that game in three of the next five seasons, including 1966. Leroy Kelly developed into one of the game’s best running backs, putting together a career that would land him in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, but he could not replace Jim Brown. In the coming seasons, nevertheless, the shadow of Jim Brown would be cast upon his former team once again.²⁶

CHAPTER 8

BLACK, WHITE, AND BROWNS: CLEVELAND'S LEGACY OF RACE IN 1960S COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

Cleveland, like many its Northern, urban counterparts, experienced a tremendous growth in its black population during and after World War I. Even though discrimination in a variety of forms existed, Cleveland maintained a “good reputation” as a destination. WWII saw a continued migration pattern of Southern blacks coming to the industrial north to escape both poverty and discrimination. The increase in Cleveland’s black population was indeed noticeable within the city’s changing demographics following WWII. In 1940, roughly one in ten Clevelanders was black. In 1950 that proportion rose slightly to approximately one in six. Between 1950 and 1965, however, the change was immense. While Cleveland’s overall population decreased by 100,000 residents, the black population increased by just fewer than 150,000 to make up nearly three-eighths of the city. During approximately the same time frame, extended to 1970, an overall increase of 144,000 in the black population and a 307,610 decrease in the white population occurred.¹

Some scholars have noted that Cleveland’s black population followed settlement patterns similar to those of European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth century, and retained distinctive customs and traditions to maintain a sense of autonomy. They defined themselves through “segregated residential patterns and the establishment of racially identifiable churches, organizations, and businesses,” found primarily on the city’s east side. Neighborhoods, churches, and schools were valued as central points for social interaction within these communities. As the black population grew, however, it led to new social needs. Urban renewal projects born out of post-war social reform were originally intended to address slum conditions and create quality public housing. From war’s end to 1965, Cleveland proceeded on several plans of urban renewal, and had the “dubious honor” of having more acreage designated as slum or blighted than any other city in America by the end of that time. Public housing projects never fully or successfully addressed Cleveland’s needs due in part to conservative Federal control of funding in the 1950s, concentration on downtown’s physical appearance over slums, and local planning delays. As mentioned previously, Cleveland’s white population had been decreasing since 1950 while the black population increased at a higher level. Many of the well-defined, ethnic, east side neighborhoods that dotted Cleveland’s landscape had been populated by Eastern Europeans. Following WWII first and second generation families were moving from these communities to the suburbs while black families, with increasing population numbers from migration and high birth rates, replaced them. Together with the desegregation of public schooling in Cleveland, the infringement of black populations on these traditional white neighborhoods resulted

in conflict—both verbal and physical. Whites in the Collinwood and Murray Hill (Cleveland’s “Little Italy”) neighborhoods came into open and violent conflict with blacks on several occasions, most notably in January of 1964 over plans to integrate Cleveland schools. Many white parents of ethnic backgrounds and groups such as the North American Alliance for White People protested the plans. One parent responded to news of the school board’s plans by angrily stating, “We are looking for education for our children, not for Negro sons- and daughters-in-law. I don’t want my grandchildren black.” Racial inequalities and *de facto* segregation were not new by the mid-sixties, but the unrest surrounding them had come to a head.²

Prior to WWII, Cleveland’s Hough and Glenville neighborhoods had been predominantly white. Hough’s residents had previously been middle-class and wealthy Jewish families. Glenville, annexed by Cleveland in 1905, had also been home for wealthy Jewish families, many of whom began moving to nearby Cleveland Heights when the first black families began moving in during the 1920s. By the 1960s, each of these east side neighborhoods was predominantly black and poor. The changes in Hough and Glenville further illustrated the polarization between white and black communities in Cleveland, and especially between the suburbs and the central city. Ruth Turner of the Congress of Racial Equality, which had been active locally in combating *de facto* segregation, commented that Cleveland “was a polarized community by virtue of the fact that a vacuum had been created in the white community through apathy, and that vacuum

had been filled by people who would rather scream Communism than address themselves to the real grievances of the community.” Both Hough and Glenville captured local and national attention, however, as the center of race-rooted “riots” during a three-year span in the mid-1960s. Public shock and outrage in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County underscored “white” Cleveland’s disjointed vision of life in the ghetto, and brought about a new reality of racial inequalities in the larger scheme of urban decline.³

All accounts indicated that Hough was without doubt a ghetto. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. echoed this belief during a 1967 visit to Cleveland when he called Hough the worst American ghetto. The two square mile neighborhood was marked by “a vicious cycle that included segregated and inadequate housing, unemployment and a dependence on welfare to subsist, poor schools that rarely led to higher learning, an increasing crime rate, disease and squalor which infest everything and everyone, and attitudes of bitterness, frustration, and defeat.” Census figures from 1965 showed that Hough, in comparison to Cleveland as a whole, had a higher unemployment rate among males (13.4% to 6.4%), less schooling among adults (9.7 years to 10.3 years), and a lesser median family income (\$4,050 to \$6,869). All of these variables had show patterns of decline between 1960 and 1965, during which time Hough experienced an increase in persons living at the poverty level (increasing by a third or almost two thousand persons). Projections for the future raised concern that these trends would

continue to worsen. With Cleveland doing little to effectively ebb Hough's downward spiral and the city's inflamed racial tensions, the path to conflict had been laid.⁴

1966 began with reports that black youth from the JFK House (named primarily for Jomo Freedom Kenyatta and alluding to John F. Kennedy) recreation center had attacked a white father and son. As the year progressed, further reports of skirmishes between black and white youths ensued, but no police or political action was taken. The black youth gangs were reported to be headquartered out of the JFK House. On the night of June 22nd a white gang attacked two black youth. A few days later a black youth was shot, reportedly by two white youths in a passing car. Throughout these incidents, coordinators of the JFK House and other adults remained disappointed with police reaction. Black and white leaders were not in agreement on causes and the proper reactions. At the urging of Mayor Ralph Locher peace was restored, but only for a month.⁵

The non-violent methods of the Civil Rights movement had given way to chants of "Burn, Baby, Burn" in the summer of 1965 in Watts. Cleveland's turn came in July 1966. The Seventy-Niner's Café stood in the middle of the Hough neighborhood, and owned by brothers Abe and Dave Feigenbaum. Their relationships with the surrounding black community were described as never being great. On July 18th, after several contentious encounters in which the brothers were reported to have used derogatory terms towards black patrons, neighborhood crowds began gathering outside the café. The

arrival of the police at the request of the Feigenbaums, instead of causing the crowd to disperse, inspired full-scale rioting. Rocks and bricks were used as missiles against the police and storefronts, which were subsequently looted and vandalized. Fires were spreading in the riot area, but firemen tormented by crowds despite police protection were unable to fully react. Random gunfire then ensued, taking the events to a new level. The police set up a mobile station, and began entering area homes in search of the snipers. Many of these searches followed forced entries.

Fears emerged that the fires, vandalism, and gunfire would spread to neighboring areas, especially Glenville to the northeast and the Central area to the south. Not wanting to see Cleveland become a repeat performance of Watts and Chicago where the cost of lives and damage was high, Locher called in the National Guard. They were unable to arrive until 11:00 PM on the 19th, at which point a repetition of the previous night's looting, vandalism, and gunfire were in effect. Rioting lasted four nights, leaving four black residents dead (two caught in the gunfire of the riots and two the apparent victims of white vigilantes reacting to the riots) and millions of dollars in damage in its wake. Almost everyone involved was criticized at some point. Major Locher was viewed as an ineffective leader who had ignored the recommendations of Cleveland's black community. The police were charged with being unable to communicate or sympathize with black residents. Church leaders asked for more integration of the police and for development of new housing and recreation in blighted areas. The police, not to be left

out, argued that the rioters appeared organized during the last two nights. Some felt that the JFK House had been used as a training ground for rioters before and during those four nights in Hough. In the week following the riots, some businesses reopened and the National Guard were withdrawn. Cleveland searched for a return to normalcy, but the problems that triggered the violence and vandalism of the previous week remained present in the city's social and cultural makeup. The fear born out of the riots gave way to feelings of futility. The local Sunday papers were filled with letters to the editor that lamented the violence and pondered both its causes and effects. Included in this grouping was one letter blaming the fact that Hough's residents had too much free time. The author's solution: bus restless youth to night games at Municipal Stadium, helping both the community and the Indians. The problem of addressing the riots was not as simple as assuming that "idle hands were the devil's toys," and civic leaders moved towards a quick solution.⁶

The Hough Riots triggered a sense of fear among many of Cleveland's residents, and perhaps more importantly among the city's business community. With the mayoral elections of 1967 approaching, a common sentiment making the rounds with the business community was the need for a mayor who would bring security to the city. Mayor Locker appeared unable, or possibly unwilling, to communicate with Cleveland's black population, and took much of the blame for the riots. Voters had the choice of sticking with Locher or moving in a new direction, or the choice between the status quo and civic

progress as the election was commonly framed. During the last elections in 1965, a charismatic state representative and attorney named Carl Stokes had unsuccessfully run for mayor. Locher narrowly defeated the young state legislator by approximately two thousand votes. The 1965 failure did not deter the politically ambitious Stokes from running again in 1967. This time, Stokes received the backing of the white business community to go along with the black vote. He defeated Locher, and Frank P. Celeste, in the Democratic primary by 18,000 votes. Locher argued that everyone living in Cleveland was a victim of the riots and its violence, and that the media (both television and the press) had painted a morose doomed picture of Cleveland. Summing up his loss to Stokes, he said, "You can't win in this time of great conflict, especially when there is an appealing Negro running." Stokes did indeed have an appeal that television conveyed to Cleveland voters. To some scholars, Stokes television appearances turned him from a black candidate into a strong and charming candidate, whose skin color merely added another dimension to his campaign. As the final election between Stokes and Republican candidate Seth Taft approached, local politicians predicted Stokes would win a close election. A feeling of unease pervaded Cleveland, with many uneasy over the prospects of further violence if Stokes lost the election. At Stokes headquarters, a visitor from Detroit proclaimed that Cleveland should be torn down until there was nothing left if the election came out in Taft's favor. Workers at the headquarters dismissed the comments as being out of line. Those fears became a moot point on the morning of November 8,

1967, when Stokes became the new Mayor of Cleveland, the first black mayor of a major American city. Although the difference was only 1,600 votes, a recount concluded that Stokes had indeed won. Former *Plain Dealer* executive editor Philip Porter, looking back upon the 1967 election and the place of race, commented on the impact of the local press in assisting Stokes campaign. He argued that the radical step was to endorse a “black man in the hope of bringing peace to the racially troubled city.” With the financial support of white businessmen and liberals, the backing of the *Plain Dealer*, and the lack of a proper endorsement from the *Press*, Stokes administration took on the monumental task of renewing hope in Cleveland.⁷

The racial harmony and overall stability Stokes’ election was supposed to bring to Cleveland never arrived. Memories of violence and vandalism were rekindled only five days after the two year anniversary of the Hough Riots. On the evening of July 23, 1968 gunfire erupted in the Glenville neighborhood and began five days of violence. While the local and national media characterized the events as everything from an “incident” to a “siege” or “riot,” the confrontations between black nationalists and the police was reminiscent of guerilla warfare. Reports indicated that a police surveillance car monitoring the home of Ahmed Evans, a member of the Black Nationalists of New Libya who was suspected of stockpiling arms in preparation for a violent outbreak, was fired upon. A gunfight between policemen and snipers ensued. Like Hough, lives and property were lost in the violence that consumed a mostly black, east side neighborhood.

Three police officers were among the eleven fatalities. The actual events, as they unfolded, remained in public debate; however, the presence of Ahmed Evans as the central figure inspired the greatest public reaction. It turned out that Evans had received \$10,000 from Cleveland: NOW!, a program under the Stokes administration that funded programs not eligible for federal funding. He used the money to purchase weapons. The ramifications of this revelation prompted many Clevelanders, especially among the white population to dismiss the validity of Cleveland: NOW! and lose faith in Stokes. Even though Stokes won reelection in 1969, the divide between Cleveland's predominantly black east side and predominantly white west side was not bridged. The situation, perhaps, had even worsened. The events of Hough and Glenville and the racial undertones of Stokes' initial election portrayed a Cleveland far removed from the "good" city black migrants from the South had described between WWI and WWII. To blame simple racism for these tragedies would ignore the prevalent problems of housing, employment, education, and overall poverty that were rampant in Cleveland, and especially in its ghettos. The addition of race into this overall equation added fuel to the fire.⁸

The black athlete in Cleveland sports also had a prominent legacy prior to the 1960s. Cleveland native Jesse Owens won gold at the 1936 Summer Olympiad in Berlin, striking a blow against Hitler's dogma of Aryan supremacy. Professional sports in Cleveland began to benefit from the presence of black athletes ten years later. In 1946

Bill Willis and Marion Motley joined the Browns during the All America Football Conference's inaugural season. Their success helped reintegrate professional football. Larry Doby broke the American League's color barrier the following year. He and pitcher Satchel Paige played important roles in helping the Indians win the 1948 World Series, their first in twenty eight years. These were the Golden Years of professional sports in Cleveland, and the presence of talented, black athletes contributed to the success of these teams. But times changed and so did the black athlete. By the 1960s Cleveland's demands upon its athletes and the athlete's demands upon the city were often in conflict with each other. The image of the black athlete, how it reflected upon the team and city, and on the values of the community (perhaps more appropriately articulated as the values conveyed through a predominantly white media) were brought to public attention through individuals and events, just as Hough, Glenville, and Carl Stokes revealed broader issues of race and race-related troubles in Cleveland.

FIVE HOLDOUTS: NEGOTIATING RACE AND LABOR

The Cleveland Browns entered training camp in the summer of 1967 with senses of relief and hope. The previous year Jim Brown announced his retirement from football. The local press and fans predicted that the sudden void in the backfield would lead to an inevitable decline in the team's performance. To the delight of those who held such doubts, the Browns hardly faltered. Leroy Kelly rushed for 1,141 yards, scored 15 touchdowns, and proved a more than capable replacement for Brown as he helped lead

the team to a 9-5 record. The Browns finished one and a half games back of the Dallas Cowboys in the Eastern Conference and failed to make the NFL postseason, but by no means did they resemble the deflated team many expected. The 1967 training camp signaled a time of renewed hope for a new season. On July 22nd the expectations of a successful new year hit an early and unexpected obstacle. Owner Art Modell received a telegram from local attorney Carl Stokes, in which he was informed that five members of the Browns would not report to training camp on time that summer.⁹

The holdout, as it unfolded, was rather uneventful. Events began with running back Leroy Kelly, guard John Wooten, tackle John Brown, linebacker Sid Williams, and defensive back Mike Howell of the Cleveland Browns hired Stokes to represent them as they collectively bargained for individual interests. Stokes was a local attorney, a state legislator and a mayoral candidate in Cleveland's upcoming election. Kelly, Wooten, Howell, and Brown each wanted to negotiate a new contract, with all but Wooten having played out a one-year contract from the previous season. Williams, looking for ownership to intervene with coaching on his behalf, requested additional playing time during the preseason in his attempt to win a starting linebacker job as well as a new contract. Wooten was set to begin the second year of a two-year contract he signed before the 1966 season, and garnered the most media criticism for his presence among the holdouts. Stokes notified Modell that the players would not report to training camp until a conclusion had been reached on their contracts. He also stated that the five would

negotiate collectively, and that if any one player was traded, all would have to be traded. Modell in turn released his official statement to the local media, saying he would not be intimidated and that he would fine each player for every day of camp missed. In the course of the overall statement released to the press, he also provided a brief paragraph on how the Browns' history in the "treatment of Negro players speaks for itself." While all five of the holdouts were black, as well as their lawyer, the issue of race was not an issue in their collective holdout until Modell brought it up. A day later Stokes responded to Modell in the press, and lambasted the Brown's owner for bringing race into the story.¹⁰

The holdout proceeded with random reports of meeting requests and statements on negotiation positions appearing in the local press. Six days after the first report, Jim Brown voiced his opinion from Hollywood and ruffled the feathers of the booster press and fans back in Cleveland in the process. A new element of race and labor was thrown onto the proverbial fire as Brown defended the stance of his former teammates. Before the end of July, Mike Howell ended his holdout and promised to report to training camp after spending two weeks performing his National Guard duty. The calendar turned to August with news that the holdout was nearing an end making front page headlines. Stokes and Modell had remained in communications through this point. The Browns, meanwhile, passed Williams and Brown through waivers, which hinted at the potential for trades despite the original "trade one of us, trade us all" demand by the five

teammates. On August 4 they traded Brown to Pittsburgh and three days later Williams to the New York Giants, but Kelly and Wooten agreed to come back to camp with their wallets \$1,400 lighter. Rather than sign the new contract the Browns offered, Kelly decided to play out his option at a 10% deduction of his current contract and then become a free-agent in 1968.¹¹

The battle between the holdouts and the Browns lasted sixteen days and was chronicled by the local and national media. As the labor dispute unfolded, themes emerged that spoke directly to the conflicts between owners and players, the slant of the mainstream media, and the tensions between black and white on the field and in the community. First, the absence of the AFL as a rival league negated a negotiating tool and inspired the five Cleveland Browns to join forces in their efforts to have Modell and the organization meet their individual demands. Players had seen owners spend for rookies in the previous years, and looked for a new outlet to reopen those wallets. Kelly, Wooten, and the others decided upon collective bargaining as the best means to negotiate from a position of strength. Second, local and national press coverage revealed a discrepancy in how the labor dispute was framed and how race was treated, if at all, depending on the paper. What could best be described as mainstream, white, daily papers, both in Cleveland and nationally sympathized with ownership's stance and either dismissed or ignored the element of race Modell had infused into the story. The black press countered by selectively addressing the element of race, as well as addressing the

players' motivations in holding out. Finally, the rhetoric of the holdout/strike spoke loudly towards the racial tensions that divided Cleveland, as well as the Browns football team. The fact that the five players were black, the presence of Carl Stokes who was a black candidate for mayor, and the unexpected input of the recently retired Jim Brown brought out stresses that split the city in two. Just as the Cuyahoga River split Cleveland between East Side and West Side, the city was also geographically and ideologically divided between black and white in many ways. Stokes was subjected to taunts and jibes from members of the media and fans, who felt a mayoral candidate had no business thrusting his clients into an untenable position. Similarly, the legacy of racial indifference—of unity—that the Browns had fostered during its inception in the AAFC was broken. Further incidents aside from the holdout, with race most definitely as a central issue, delivered a death blow to any semblance of racial unity on the team.

While the Browns spent the 1966 season worried about the loss of a legend and winning their conference, the NFL addressed a larger issue of greater consequence. In August 1959 a fourth incarnation of the American Football League (AFL) was founded by Lamar Hunt and Kenneth “Bud” Adams, each of whom had been rejected in earlier efforts to purchase an NFL an expansion or existing team. The relationship between the NFL and AFL was antagonistic from the start. One point of contention was the competition for acquiring players, with much of it revolving around college talent. The AFL pursued talented collegians, signing them to large contracts, thereby forcing the

NFL to follow suit. The two leagues eventually formed an informal truce over salaries, which lasted until 1966. Lost in this commotion were the contracts of NFL veterans, many of whom expressed their dismay at the discrepancy in pay favoring unproven rookies over proven veterans. Although these players could have played out their NFL options and then negotiated contracts with the AFL, few veterans followed this path. When it appeared that the rival leagues had renewed their bidding war in 1966, veterans were finally ready to cash in on the deep pockets owners had earlier exhibited on rookies. To their dismay the NFL agreed to a merger with the AFL, bringing in all of the franchises and taking away the only real negotiation leverage the players possessed. Embittered veterans, aware of the money owners had spent on contracts and bonuses during the mid-1960s, used their experiences as motivation in their drive to form a certified union in the 1970s. At the very least, the relationship between owners and players had turned hostile.¹²

The NFL-AFL merger was the impetus for the holdout of the five Browns players. Modell and the media failed to admit this fact, choosing instead to label them as malcontents who had forgotten the concept of “team.” Stokes, meanwhile, argued the opposite. He insisted that his clients desired only to negotiate a fair market value, and believed that as a group they could attempt to create a position of power from which to negotiate. At the same time the players had no bargaining position because of the merger, a fact that Stokes implied wreaked of a monopoly. Stokes insisted that he had no

intention of pursuing this point. Jim Brown, in his press release addressing the holdout, reiterated these sentiments. The holdout, he claimed, was a protest against a “get-strong” policy the owners implemented through the merger of the two leagues. In response to the merger the previous year, Brown sent an official letter of protest to Washington, D.C. in hopes that Congress would prevent the owners from possessing all power. He contended, “40 players on the Cleveland Browns recognized that when the merger was passed, players no longer held a fair bargaining position. These five players should be praised, not condemned, for their courageous action in taking the only avenue left to them.” The *Plain Dealer*’s Chuck Heaton, a Browns beat writer and blatant proponent of Modell’s stance, criticized these comments, believing that Brown should call the players’ actions “foolish.”

The *Plain Dealer* and *Press* reported on these events as they transpired, including the initial verbal volley between Stokes and Modell. By all appearances, the *Press* supported Modell and ownership while remaining an objective news source willing to argue other positions. The paper did not aggressively fault the five players, and at worst grouped them together as “Grid Rebels” in one headline. It acknowledged Modell’s comments on race in their first story after the Browns official press release, but it could be argued that it did so only because of Stokes’ subsequent criticism. Even in its acknowledgement, the *Press* neither praised nor chastised the Browns owner. Instead

they characterized him as having been backed into a corner from which he would aggressively defend his position.¹³

The *Plain Dealer*, arguably the more conservative of Cleveland's two daily papers, took the defense of Modell and football's integrity to a new level. Chuck Heaton went on the offensive, labeling Kelly, Wooten and the others as 'strikers' in column after column. His broke the story with a column headlined, "Five Players Defy Browns," setting a definite tone for his ensuing coverage. In a later opinion piece that headlined the *PD* sports page, Heaton called the 'strike' a "big mistake" and made the case against each holdout while also warning that no party involved would come out unscathed, including Stokes and his mayoral campaign. Bernie Parrish, a former NFL defensive back who was active in the players association, argued that the choice of words ("defy" and "strike") were used strategically to present the players as trouble-makers and vindicate Modell's refusal to negotiate. Parrish wrote, "*Strike* is a word that evokes an emotional response from the public, with deep negative connotations, and by using it the press helped to turn the public against the players, and over to Modell's side." With Heaton as a mouthpiece, Modell was free to outline and justify his plan of action, which included four conditions for negotiation. First, he would not discuss Wooten's contract, which had one year remaining. Second, he would not discuss playing time for Sid Williams, instead leaving that as a coach's decision. Third, contracts would be discussed on an individual basis, not as a group. Finally, he demanded that the players drop their

stipulation that they either stay as a unit or are all traded. Heaton defended Modell's methods and motives, claiming that "no football club can permit any group of players to fail to live up to contracts and to gain by such methods." The line between ownership and the players was clearly drawn, and the mainstream media clearly sided with ownership.¹⁴

Heaton and other writers last dealt with a group of athletes holding out in 1966 when Los Angeles Dodgers pitchers Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale missed spring training while negotiating new contracts. During the previous season, the two future Hall of Fame pitchers combined to win 49 games for the Dodgers on way to leading them to a World Series championship. Koufax and Drysdale decided to capitalize on their success and that of their team by holding out together in search of a reported \$500,000 apiece over three years. It was also rumored that they asked for one million dollars apiece over four years. The Dodgers had offered Koufax \$105,000 and Drysdale \$95,000, which the players rejected. The Dodgers then refused to negotiate with their pitchers. General Manager "Buzz" Bavasi told reporters that he would not "be pressured into meeting [Koufax and Drysdale's] demands." Modell reiterated this exact sentiment a year and a half later in regard to his own holdouts. Koufax, speaking for Drysdale as well, responded to the media stating, "The ball club is defending the principle that it doesn't really have to negotiate with a ballplayer because we have no place to go." He further argued that the joint holdout was a fight for the "antiprinciple" that ballplayers were not

slaves. Stokes later argued this same point on behalf of his clients. Koufax and Drysdale abandoned their original demand of three-year deals, but the Dodgers renegotiated their original offer and eventually paid Koufax an estimated \$120,000 and Drysdale an estimated \$105,000 for one-year deals each. In comparing the five Browns to Koufax and Drysdale the national media made two points. First, it accused the Dodgers of dealing a calamitous blow to baseball when the team eventually caved-in to the pitchers' demands. Second, the media noted that none of the Browns players was as notable or important to his team as Koufax was to the Dodgers, thereby diminishing and dismissing the negotiating power of the group. Given these points of argument, the vast majority of journalists supported Modell in his stance and hoped aloud that he would not place football in the same precarious situation that Bavasi and the Dodgers had place baseball. No one dared to state the obvious when comparing the Dodgers and Browns situations; Koufax and Drysdale were white.¹⁵

The story of the Browns' holdout was newsworthy across the nation, with many mainstream, national dailies following a similar pattern of reporting as had already been exhibited in Cleveland. Papers from New York City to Los Angeles, Detroit and Wheeling, West Virginia in between looked at the implications a successful holdout might have on professional football and all of professional sports. "The sanctity of the contract appears to have no respect in the action of Cleveland's unhappy five," wrote Shirely Povich of *The Washington Post*. Dallas papers quoted Tex Schramm of the

Cowboys saying that unionism was a great threat to pro football's continuance, which would be expected from an owner. A Wheeling columnist, openly sympathizing with Modell, begged the Browns' owner not to set a dangerous precedent like the Dodgers had with Koufax and Drysdale. Although several journalists acknowledged the right of each player to negotiate a fair contract and therefore use holdout tactics as a tool on his own behalf, some found it a "dirty tactic" in grouping together and almost all felt that the best interests of football were represented in this challenge to the status quo of contract negotiations. One Los Angeles columnist did not merely settle for the generalized call for veteran players to avoid unionizing; instead he recognized the imminent future: "...the merger of the leagues doesn't mean the end of the owners' headaches. The players union is just warming up."¹⁶

Distrust over the NFL pension and salary negotiations were at the heart of players' overall contempt for owners, but this did not preclude the presence of other issues. The ability to negotiate a fair contract from a position of strength was central in the motivation of the five Browns, not a sense of bias or prejudice being implemented by the Browns organization. Race was not an issue until Modell infused it into the debate in what can be characterized as an unnecessary and careless manner. Modell's press release on July 22 defended the contracts existing between the Browns and each of the holdouts, underscored the generosity of the Browns payroll (Modell argued it was the highest in all

professional sports), and professed an optimism that the situation would be resolved quickly. The second to last paragraph, however, took on a new direction. It stated:

The Browns' record over the years in regard to the treatment of Negro players speaks for itself. Early in the club's history, the Browns paved the way for the mass influx of the Negro athlete in professional sports. In recent years, under my ownership, they have composed one-third of our squad, more than any other team in the NFL.

Stokes initial telegram to Modell gave no indication that the five had been discriminated against in any way through their existing contracts. He reiterated this point in an official statement. A "dumbfounded" Stokes called Modell's comments "irresponsible" and hinted at a loss of respect for the owner, while making clear that his clients simply believed that their contracts did not reflect their individual value. Modell fired back that he would only negotiate with the players on an individual bases. He did not address race, nor would he further mention any racial aspect of the matter again in public.¹⁷

Although Modell remained silent on his initial racial comments, the mainstream Cleveland media took up his defense and worked towards making race a non-issue through relative silence on the topic. The *PD* and *Press* shifted their focus to coverage centering on labor while race drifted to the background or was forgotten all together. In the course of such coverage, Modell did not escape totally unscathed. Seemingly on the verge of implicating Modell for some level of irresponsibility in making race an issue, Heaton called the Browns' owner to task. He wrote, "Modell is not without fault in this situation. He has been *too generous* with players on occasion in the past." This, he surmised, led the players to believe that they could push around their "generous and

friendly” employer in negotiations. Heaton remained adamant in his support of Modell, even if it went so far as to daftly intimate that Modell was a victim of his gregarious nature and closeness with the players. These statements then led into Heaton’s regret that race was now part of the argument, but the writer claimed that it was the race of the five players and their attorney and not Modell’s comments that led to racial overtones being implied. The connection to race, he conclude, was inevitable.¹⁸

Several national journalists also addressed the infusion of race as a secondary issue to the holdout. For some, the major concern lay in the fact that all five holdouts were members of the Negro Economic and Industrial Union. The NEIU and the players were faulted for disturbing the peace that NFL and AFL owners had so recently brokered. These writers feared that one union (NEIU) would lead to another, with outside interests moving into the world of professional football. Racial undertones also emerged in this coverage. Povich argued that the race of the five Browns and their membership in the NEIU might not have been “quite beside the point,” giving credence to Modell’s comments. Melvin Durslag of the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, looking at the “dilemma of the Negro athlete,” reasoned that black athletes must have felt immense pressure to find a balance between the images of the Black Panther movement and an Uncle Tom. Membership in the NEIU provided a sensible compromise for football players, and this was the volatile factor in the Cleveland situation. The inclusion of race was an unfortunate offshoot of Modell’s choice of wording to many of them, with the real

danger lying in a possible labor victory by the five players and movement towards a strong players union.

The *Cleveland Call & Post*, the city's historic black paper, had always been rooted more in community issues than in mainstream news. Limited in its coverage by virtue of being published only on Saturdays, the *C&P* was late in addressing the Browns holdouts. Perhaps surprisingly, it followed a pattern of coverage similar to that of the mainstream dailies. William "Sheep" Jackson, the paper's sports editor, made no mention of race in his first column on the holdout. A week later he simply stated that it was not a racial issue, qualifying the statement with the fact that 200 players in the NFL and AFL who were holding out. Not until longtime Cleveland area journalist Jack Clowser, who had most recently written for the *Press* from 1942-1966, wrote a letter to his former paper in which he criticized Stokes for representing the holdouts did an editorial appear in the *C&P* which addressed race more directly. Again, the paper's stance was simply stated: the race of the players and the owners made the case no different than any other holdout. A definitive reason for the lack of criticism has never been given, but there are several possibilities. The *C&P* sports staff may have wanted to avoid immersing the paper into an open racial conflict. They may not have wanted to upset the Browns organization, which still employed more black athletes than any other professional sports franchise. Finally, the *C&P* could have feared that any criticism

would be viewed by Cleveland at-large and the suburbs as another threat to the fragile racial peace of 1967.¹⁹

Unlike their Cleveland counterpart, the *Chicago Daily Defender* openly criticized Modell for his insertion of race into the holdout and his assertion as to the overall generosity of the Browns and his ownership to black football players. Noting that Modell had been generous in donations to the NAACP among his charitable organizations, A.S. “Doc” Young chastised the Browns owner for acting as if he were “God’s gift to Negro athletes.” Professional football was a business to Modell and the players were employees who made success a possibility. From Marion Motley and Bill Willis to Jim Brown and Leroy Kelly, black athletes had been present on the Cleveland Browns because they excelled as football players like their white counterparts. Young brought this point home saying, “[Modell] doesn’t hire Negro players because he loves their souls.” He further pointed out that it was ridiculous to “suggest that Negroes should now accept any wages and conditions Modell offers out of racial gratitude.” The *Defender’s* Lawrence Casey reiterated a belief that Modell’s comments were ignorant and a mistake. Casey did not believe Modell could justify his comments, no matter what level of truth they contained. Most importantly, he argued that Modell purchased his way into the Browns’ tradition of racial opportunity of which he so proudly boasted. For at least one portion of the black media, Modell’s actions exhibited what they termed racial snobbery.²⁰

The only outward mentions of race in Cleveland's daily papers were found in letters to the editor. Surprisingly, and possibly the result of selective editing rather than a representative sampling of responses, a roughly equal number of letters felt race was a valid issue as those letters that argued against its inclusion. Parrish had argued that, "Modell's eagerness to label the players' action a racial matter was typical of his crass attempts to manipulate public opinion," but the letters printed in the *PD* did not shift fan reaction in such a sympathetic direction. Many fans and some non-fans complained at the lack of loyalty and the greed the holdouts exhibited. One letter did complain that the holdouts had dissociated themselves from the only color that mattered—the orange on the Browns' helmet, and another accused Jim Brown (following his statement to the press on the holdout) of making a racial issue out of the situation because he had a chip on his shoulder. These concerns were directed towards the quality of team the Browns would be able to field if the holdout persisted. Although Modell received his fair share of support from fans, several letters indicated that the insertion of race were worthy of criticism. These letters also cited the bias in Heaton's coverage of the holdout, with one implying the writer was in some way indebted to Modell. The argument on race found in these letters was the same one the *C&P* used and reiterated by Stokes over and over again. The holdout was a labor issue to these fans, and the race of the players was a non-factor. Still, the overall discussion of the holdout remained contextualized by skin color.²¹

The ramifications of the 1967 holdout of five Cleveland Browns were felt well beyond the football field and the Browns offices. The labor elements of that moment were settled by early August when Kelly, Wooten, and Howell returned to training camp and Williams and Brown were traded. The dialogue on race that came out of this event, however, had only just begun. Cleveland, one year removed from the Hough Riots, was still deeply torn by geographic, ideological, and class differences on the issue of black and white. Despite the unity displayed on Sunday afternoons in the quest for gridiron glory, the Browns paralleled the tumultuous relationship between differing groups. The most prominent examples to come out of the holdout were, first, the treatment of Carl Stokes as a mayoral candidate, and, second, the reactions to Jim Brown's statements from Hollywood.

Stokes was running his second mayoral campaign in 1967. A narrow defeat in 1965 convinced him that a successful run at the mayor's office was not out of the question. In 1967 he had gained the support of the business community following the Hough Riots and continued fears that several of Cleveland's minority-laden neighborhoods were powder kegs. Still, he faced the reality that racial prejudice would be present in the minds of some voters. Being a practicing attorney and having worked with the NEIU previously, Stokes had no reason not to accept the request by Kelly, Wooten, and the others to represent them in their holdout. He stated to the Browns and the local media that he would convey the demands of his clients and represent their

wishes. Unfortunately, a black man representing five black men translated into a racial statement to many observers, as Heaton hinted. The sports-loving community in Cleveland, one that had little to cheer for outside of the Browns in the 1960s, was but one of the groups in which a portion of its members took Stokes' presence as an attack on the team. Knowledge of the tightrope Stokes was walking elicited multiple reactions in and by the media. To some Stokes was guilty by association, which as one fan wrote, caused distress in many Cleveland football fans. "[Stokes] may deplore it," argued the *Press's* Bob August, "but his position as lawyer for the unhappy five will generate heat among the electorate." When he proclaimed that he would not let Modell intimidate him because of his candidacy, the *PD* reported that it received call upon call complaining that it was Stokes who had tried to intimidate Modell. While Stokes was characterized as a young, intelligent, and exciting candidate in the political sphere, he was viewed as part of the group attempting to "gang up" on the Browns in the sports sphere. Others believed Stokes was the ringleader of the entire holdout and gave orders to his clients. For those who felt this way and took heart in Modell's assertion that race was involved, Stokes and the NEIU were equated with some form of black power movement at times. They felt that Stokes' status as a mayoral candidate was being used as a weapon against the Browns, or even as a promotional tool for his candidacy. Former *Press* sports writer Jack Clowser wrote a letter to the editor stating as much. "Now my feelings, and those of many Clevelanders, must have been changed by the untenable position into which

[Stokes] has thrust his clients,” he wrote. As stated earlier, the *C&P* reacted strongly against the implication. Although there was obvious reaction to Stokes presence in the holdout, there is little evidence showing he himself was directly confronted with these sentiments. The media remained the medium through which disgruntled fans, political opponents and concerned citizens voiced their two cents on the matter. So while hate mail was sent to his home and campaign headquarters, Stokes did not receive complaints regarding his representation of the five Browns.²²

The local media had made two points in defense of Modell and the Browns. First, by failing to scold Modell for the irresponsibility of his comments on race they allowed racial overtones to underscore the negotiation process as well as remain a viable point in public sentiment. Second, in defending the Browns history of player salaries, they often cited the comfortable lifestyle Jim Brown was afforded through Mr. Modell’s paychecks. It did not take long, therefore, for Jim Brown to offer his thoughts on his former team—employer and teammates. On July 27th, he released a statement to the national press from Hollywood where he was filming *Ice Station Zebra*. His words turned heads and seemingly caught his former supporters by surprise. The statement was a mirror image of Modell’s initial statement: it began with a brief comment on race, and then proceeded to break down the labor issues at the heart of the players’ holdout. Brown called Modell “completely off base” in asserting to the press the Browns’ generosity to black players. He elaborated, “Let it be known that Negro players are no different from white players in

seeking economic betterment. So if Mr. Modell feels that this is a racial matter, let him be informed that the players involved are not concerned with charitable contributions made to them on the basis of race.” He proceeded to justify each player’s reasons for holding out and noted the changed landscape resulting from the NFL-AFL merger. He ended his statement with several questions for both the media and the public, including the pointed, “Should the owners be complete dictators in salary negotiations?” Brown had spoken his peace and supported the players in their actions, but his new presence in the holdout elicited strong reaction.²³

The media—local and national, black and white—viewed Brown’s comments along several lines. The vast majority kept with their support of Modell and ownership, and as a result portrayed Brown as an ungrateful former player, a racial agitator, or the ringleader for the entire holdout. The *PD* and Chuck Heaton continued to serve as Modell’s mouthpiece. Brown’s statement was preceded by a rebuttal from Modell, who refuted the stated salary figures and proclaimed that he once again refused to fall prey to Hollywood exploitation. Heaton, in turn, wondered how a player who once received such lucrative paychecks and public support from Modell could so abruptly dismiss those past acts by advising such foolish actions on the part of his former teammates. Fans joined Heaton in criticizing the player they once cheered. One, in a letter to the editor, accused Brown’s statement of being a “sick attack” against the Browns. In his 1965 biography *Off My Chest* Brown had been critical of his former team, which some fans took as an act

of betrayal. Heaton briefly responded to the letter by dismissing Brown's credibility in any area off the football field. He stated that he thought of Brown only as a great running back, and advised the five Browns to ignore the former fullback's statement altogether.²⁴

A sampling of the national media, especially given their concerns over the NEIU's possible push to form a players union, revealed a very cautious approach to Brown's statement. When pushed on whether the NEIU had been involved, Brown told the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* that he entered the dispute as an individual and that the NEIU was never approached for involvement. Still, more than a few journalists across the nation held that Brown's involvement was unwise and unwarranted. Pete Waldmeir of *The Detroit News* argued that Brown gave his former teammates bad bargaining advice and also tried to play race in his favor. He wrote, "If [Brown] thinks that a group of Negro players with a Negro attorney striking enmasse on the advice of a Negro player-businessman-turned-actor bears no racial characteristics, then brotherhood has just lost another 100 years." Brown's criticism of Modell brought on criticism of its own. One writer argued that Brown's comments were wrought with both ingratitude (the likening of Modell to Simon Legree) and racism. His claims of racism, however, could best be measured through his own statement that it was better for the black players to hold out than to riot. Finally, a *New York Post* columnist commented that Brown's actions reeked of self-interest and future-plans, the collective nature of which was not known. No

matter the implications for those involved, the only person who would emerge unscathed according to the article would be Jim Brown.²⁵

While the mainstream dailies overwhelmingly supported ownership on all levels, which included undermining the validity of Brown's comments, the black press stayed true to its own pattern of coverage. The *C&P* did not mention Jim Brown's statement at all. Outside of Cleveland, the *Chicago Defender* addressed Jim Brown's statement on the holdout with the same veracity it addressed Modell's insertion of race into the larger picture. Young briefly commented on how Brown had rapped Modell for his comments, and proclaimed that a man would have to side with Jim Brown in that situation. Casey's column directed its commentary at those journalists who criticized Brown for, on the one hand, taking Modell's money as a player and, on the other hand, advising others to holdout for more. His argument also indirectly addressed Modell's assertion of his own generosity to the cause of black players. "I wonder if Jimmy [Brown] thought Mr. Modell was paying him such a salary because Jimmy's contributions to the team made him deserving?" Casey wondered. "Or did Jimmy think Mr. Modell was only being charitable because Jimmy was a Negro?" Many print media outlets failed to acknowledge the vast majority of Brown's statement, which argued for the right and the legitimacy of the five Browns' to negotiate for new contracts. The black press attempted to provide this outlet, defusing the element of race in the process.²⁶

The end of the holdout in early August marked the beginning of a period where the tensions of sport and city were set to be put to rest. Wooten, Kelly, and Howell returned to the Browns and helped the team to a 9-5 record and the Eastern Conference's Century Division championship. Kelly led the NFL in rushing while playing out his option. Although the Dallas Cowboys easily dispatched the Browns in the playoffs, 52-14, Cleveland football seemed at peace going into 1968. On a similar note, Stokes' election as Mayor of Cleveland brought hope for a new peace and bright future for a city in decline. The 1967 holdout of five Browns started as a labor dispute, and perhaps would have remained as such if not for an ill-conceived comment. But race became an issue, and the dialogue it inspired brought out not only a divided locker room, but also a city divided by rich and poor, East Side and West Side, black and white.

A GOLF OUTING GONE AWRY: RACE IN THE LOCKER ROOM

The events of the summer of 1967 revealed many cracks in the façade of progressive idealism and opportunity regarding the Browns organization's treatment of race. The Brown's "treatment of Negro players," so noted by Modell in his press release during the early days of the holdout, was a point of pride relying on substance that was over two decades old by 1968. In integrating the AAFC and helping to reintegrate professional football (along with the NFL's Los Angeles Rams), the Browns added to Cleveland's reputation as a more open-minded city in terms of race relations. Since 1946, however, the presence of Bill Willis, Marion Motley, and Jim Brown on the

Browns roster was a greater statement on the athletic abilities of these men than on the enlightened viewpoint of the organization. The Browns appeared tranquil after putting the holdout situation behind them, but in 1968 the issue of race would come to the forefront in an explosive manner. Again, a muggy Cleveland July would bear witness to events that went well beyond hinting at the fragmented racial relations that rested uneasily on the gridiron and in Cleveland's neighborhoods. By the end of the month, the legacy of racial openness that the city and Browns presented publicly had been dismantled.

Walter Beach, a starting defensive back on the 1964 NFL Championship team, was quietly released on July 19th, prior to the holdout situation. While the move garnered little more than passing mention in local papers, and only then because it meant that the Browns' defensive backfield had at least two open spots heading into training camp, it was another piece in the evolving puzzle of race and labor relations on the Browns. Beach's release was as much a statement on the disconnect between ideals and actions concerning race as was the dialogue following Modell's press release. In 1971 Beach filed suit against the Browns and the NFL and claimed they had conspired to restrain trade in violation of the Sherman Act. According to several sources, Modell had originally confronted Beach in August 1966 when the latter was found reading Elijah Muhammad's *Message to a Black Man* in the locker room. Newspaper reports covering the suit described a situation where Modell was concerned with Beach's political

leanings. Citing the suit itself, one report indicates that Modell told Beach that he should “concern himself more with football and less with community and social problems.” According to Parrish, the encounter resulted in a tirade on the part of Modell who asked Beach if he was a Black Muslim. “I’ve read the Torah too,” Beach replied, “but that doesn’t make me a Jew.”²⁷

Beach’s 1971 suit made three arguments. First, the NFL signing system was corrupted with discriminatory practices. Next, stacking (the practice of limiting players to certain positions based on race) was widely practiced on all teams. Finally, he was blackballed around the league after his release because Modell did not agree with his political and social views. Beach was placed on waivers and was not claimed during the 48-hour period. While the Browns organization swore in statements to investigators of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) that July 19, 1966 was the first time they had placed Beach on waivers, it was disputed by evidence other teams provided. Both the Detroit Lions and New Orleans Saints had claimed Beach off of waivers on July 6th and 7th respectively, only to have the Browns recall him. Parrish argued that Modell had prevented Beach from continuing his career by making it known that he would not allow any team to claim the malcontent defensive back. Modell dismissed the charges, contending that Beach was trying to discredit pro football, the NFL, the Browns and himself. Modell supported his claims with the EEOC’s dismissal of previous charges by Beach. The Browns owner could also argue that Beach was

released because he was no longer a starter, having lost his position after suffering a leg injury in 1966. Once again labor and race had intersected within the Browns organization, again eliciting a hazy depiction of the racial harmony and opportunity Modell so openly touted.²⁸

Jim Brown has often recalled his playing days with much fondness and an overall appreciation of the support Cleveland Browns fans gave him. However, football did not exist in a vacuum. Off- and on-field situations arose at various points that revealed evidence of prejudice. As mentioned earlier, Brown had serious reservations about being prevented from living in certain areas of Cleveland because of skin color. Similarly he was aware of the difference in his social status from when he was on and off the field. These elements of racial prejudice and overall disharmony carried over into the Browns organization and its practices. Dating back to Paul Brown's time as coach, the Browns had always kept their rooming assignments segregated, as did other professional football teams after post-war reintegration. Marion Motley reportedly argued that he was initially added to the Browns 1946 roster because he provided a black roommate for Bill Willis as much as it was for his immense talent. Art Modell, according to Brown did little to change these practices when he took control of the team. This practice was most obvious when there were odd numbers of black and white athletes. Rather than room one black player with a white player, each player was given his own room. Jim Brown remembered telling Modell that the practice was unacceptable to the teams black players. "You can't

room a black guy by himself to keep him from rooming with a white guy,” He told Modell. “We can’t accept that.” Brown did not consider Modell a racist, but believed the practice was discriminatory in nature. It was symbolic of practices throughout the NFL that were discriminatory in their nature, and seen as such by individuals coming from different perspectives in the turbulent 1960s. Brown reacted to the times by organizing black players on the Browns through social cohesion. “If the brothers were going to be separated,” he said, “I wanted us separated on our own terms, not the team’s [terms].”²⁹

The segregation of room assignments by the Browns spoke to a larger problem afflicting the team. Race was a divisive factor in the Browns’ locker room. In 1963 Jim Brown set the NFL’s season rushing record and won the MVP award, but did not receive the team’s MVP award. Instead, players voted the honor to offensive lineman Dick Schafrath. Many players pointed to that one event as a symbol for the racial division that had undermined the team’s overall efforts that season. Blanton Collier and team leaders met to address the problem, and by 1964 it was believed that it had been dealt with. Following the utopia of the 1964 Championship, the racial divide slowly but surely reappeared. There was a definite lack of socialization and understanding between black and white players. Brown had said as much when he noted that patterns of socialization and public appearances often differed. Brown told Modell, “Look. [White players] don’t invite us to the parties and events with the pretty white girls, then we won’t go to those

community functions, that boring political shit, where they want to make us look like one big happy family. If we can't go to all the stuff, the fun stuff, then we won't do the fake stuff." Local sports reporters lamented the fact that the Browns were not able to present a unified front on and off the field like the Green Bay Packers were doing under the direction of Vince Lombardi. Instead, a cloud of *de facto* segregation hung over the Browns. Jim Brown felt an obligation to his black teammates and created an unofficial support system for the Browns' black players. "If we don't take care of ourselves," he argued, "and look out for each other, and if I am the star of this team and I have that power, and if I don't utilize that power at this particular time and I let you suffer, then I'm not doing my full job." Wide receiver Paul Warfield supported the notion that Brown was the only player with enough power and influence to initiate change. He said, "Jim realized his leadership and realized that he was the guy who had more power than any of all of us and he had to take stands and that he had to look out for the interests of the few who were perhaps not as powerful as him." Brown wanted black athletes to feel comfortable in Cleveland, but also wanted them to take responsibility for that comfort.³⁰

Brown's retirement in 1966 marked that departure of the most prominent and vocal black athlete in Cleveland, let alone on the Browns. In light of the 1967 holdout situation, local and national sports writers implicated him in the continued presence of race as a divisive issue on the Browns. Many argued that John Wooten, Brown's friend and fellow NEIU member, was acting as a lieutenant for Brown who issued directions for

Los Angeles. Debate over Brown's involvement in the holdout and the issue of race on the Browns disappeared from local sports pages as the holdouts returned to training camp and the season began. The issue itself, however, was far from being settled.

One of the community functions the Browns had been involved with was a celebrity golf tournament at the Country Club of Ashland. The club had invited a contingent of players from the Browns to come, play golf, and mingle with club members. Over the years club members had expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the lack of involvement on the part of the black players invited. The first year black players were invited, only John Wooten showed up, but Brown and Jim Shorter did not. The next year Wooten and another black player did not show up. In 1967 six black players attended and played golf, but members complained that they kept to themselves in the back of the clubhouse once the golf had ended. As a result, the club decided against inviting any black players for the 1968 golf outing. On Monday, July 1, 1968 the club released its invitations, which were reduced from 30 in 1967 to 18 in 1968. Both black and white individuals were among the twelve not invited from the previous year. When Wooten found out that he and other black players were not invited he was furious. The brunt of his anger was directed at defensive back Ross Fichtner, who was a member of the club and had assisted in making arrangements for the tournament.³¹

Both the *Press* and *PD* quoted Wooten as saying, "We black Browns are after the hide of this white Brown." Wooten later refuted the words as being his own, but their

sentiment it conveyed was undeniable. The exclusion of black players from the golf tournament caused racial tensions within the organization to erupt. Wooten was by far the most vocal, expressing his dismay at having been invited the previous three years and now suddenly being excluded from the event. He called Fichtner a bigot, and linked him directly to the decision not to invite black players. "Who were the guys that were invited?" asked Wooten. "Fichtner and all his bigoted friends." He further dismissed the argument that the country club directors had made the decision by arguing in turn that Fichtner could have used his presence as a member to influence the club or could have pulled out of the tournament himself to show team unity. Indeed, Fichtner did miss an opportunity to express team unity when he told reporters that he had no objections to the decision the country club made. He supported the decision by acknowledging additional incidents where black players had not fully participated in team and community activities. One such occasion was the Fairview Park American Legion's annual "Pro of the Year" dinner. Fichtner lamented that black players had show up in full force when Leroy Kelly won the award, but not one of them showed up when Paul Wiggin won it a year later. The lack of fraternization between black and white players and their families was common practice. Black players were angry. White players were angry. *The Press's* Bob August saw the incident as a sad reminder of the need for leadership within the Browns and racial tensions of society at large. "Who did what to whom and when is an inquiry that merely wanders down a pathless maze," August stated. "What matters is that

the split between black and white does exist on the Browns. Part of it is merely a reflection of the times and yet people on the inside reluctantly admit that it goes deeper with the Browns than with most pro football teams.” He and many others hoped the players would put aside any resentment and settle the incident before the scars that had emerged were opened further.³²

In the days that followed the situation continued to fester although tempers did cool. Fichtner and Wooten arranged for separate meetings with Modell and Collier over two days. The Browns organization originally issued a “no comment,” but had to face the problem sooner than later. Although the Browns did not issue an official statement, reports indicated that they were furious that both men took their dispute to the press rather than keeping it internal. Fichtner told the local media that he did not foresee himself staying with the Browns, especially if fifteen of the forty players hated him. There were fifteen black players on the Browns’ roster. “Both my career and John’s are in jeopardy,” Fichtner proclaimed. “If all the colored boys on the team feel the way John does about this thing, then I don’t see how I can continue playing here.” He expressed disbelief at how events unfolded and the extent of the repercussions. Wooten, meanwhile, acknowledged that he wanted to speak with Fichtner to discuss their respective positions. He also professed that the situation and hard feelings would not impact the quality of his play. Other teammates were given their say in the local press. Guard Gene Hickerson argued that black and white didn’t matter on the field, and

quarterback Frank Ryan stated that the ugliness of the situation had to be the result of a misunderstanding rather than any real animosity. Defensive lineman Walter Johnson told reporters that the team would suffer from the lack of togetherness. He also said that if placed in a situation where no whites were invited to a black tournament, he would have declined his invitation. Ironically, this is the very sentiment members of the media and Browns organization had wanted Fichtner to express.³³

The local press addressed what they dubbed as a “feud” between Fichtner and Wooten much more carefully than they had the holdout the previous July. Race was the central issue of the feud, unlike the incidents of 1967 where race was an ever-present element pushed to the periphery. With memories of the Hough Riots still fresh in their minds, they avoided pointing blame in any one direction, and instead chose to lament the lack of harmony. Sport, they argued, was an institution that transcended race through individual effort in the name of teamwork. The Browns were now experiencing the end product of years of hidden friction. Bob August wrote “For several years there has been a growing separation between the white and black players, a separation that has worried team officials, and now it threatens to become wider.” He hoped that team would find leadership from within to avoid further trouble. Hal Lebovitz argued that some event of this nature had been in the making for years given the uneasiness lurking within the franchise. Now that it had occurred, he wanted the problem to be examined and discussed. Lebovitz seconded Wooten, who had said, “I think anything can be cleared up

if the people are honest.” The *C&P*’s “Sheep Jackson” commented only briefly on the incident, wishing that the affair could have been handled internally and that it would come to a quick end. All three writers placed hope in a reconciliation between the players and an end to the growing racial tension, thus allowing the team to move forward in its quest of an NFL championship. Fan reaction, however, indicated a need for blame. Three letters to the editor, one in the *PD* and two in the *Press*, placed the blame firmly on Wooten’s shoulders. Combined, they blamed Wooten for airing the team’s dirty laundry to the public, claimed he acted like a greedy child, and hoped he would stay quiet and simply concentrate on football. One dared to suggest that the Browns trade Wooten as soon as possible to remove the malcontent. This last suggestion remained an all-to-viable option for the Browns as they searched for a solution.³⁴

The search for a resolution to the infighting and lingering friction that had torn the Browns apart led to a planned meeting between Wooten, Fichtner, and their teammates on Thursday, July 11th. The lack of communications in the past had haunted any chance of progress in relations. Now, both sides would have a forum to air their grievances and search for common ground. As the meeting approached, a big step was taken as Wooten and Fichtner spoke over the phone. While they did not resolve their problems or reach a compromise, they did learn from their discussion. Fichtner commented that he had a better understanding of Wooten’s position, and Wooten avowed that, “We know we can settle this dispute pretty easily.” While the two remained silent on the specific details of

their conversation, Wooten revealed a proposal that players be allowed to choose their own roommates rather than have it predetermined based on race. News of the proposed meeting coincided with news that NFL owners were planning on closing training camp to veterans, who in turn were planning on striking. The meeting never took place and soon the local press reported that the Browns were set to release Wooten and Fichtner.³⁵

Just over two weeks after newspaper reports first indicated that racial tensions had blown apart in the Browns locker room, Wooten and Fichtner found themselves facing uncertain careers in professional football. Fichtner's belief that it would be near impossible for him to continue to play for the Browns turned prophetic on July 19th. Despite Modell's initial silence on the matter, at least publicly, he was reportedly ready to release both players immediately after press reports first appeared. While the extent of Modell's dealing with the players and others on this matter can only officially be linked to separate meetings with both Fichtner and Wooten as well as discussions with Collier, it was suggested that Modell pulled strings to punish the two players for creating this public relations nightmare. Bernie Parrish claims that Modell first dissuaded the president of the Country Club of Ashland from making a public statement placing the final decision on invitations solely in the hands of the country club. Although this would have exonerated Fichtner to a large degree and possibly calmed much of the racial friction that had ensued, Modell told the president that he would help most by remaining silent. Next, he supposedly had Browns General Manager Harold Sauerbrei cancel the players meeting,

making it impossible for the situation to be remedied from within. Finally, after Fichtner and Wooten had cleared waivers, it was hinted that Modell tried to keep Fichtner from making the Saints' final roster by complaining to New Orleans ownership. Parrish offers only Fichtner's accounts and his own interpretation as evidence, but the cloud of labor strife hovering over the 1968 season and the previous year's evidence that NFL ownership did not want to see any form of strong unity among the players makes the scenario at least possible.³⁶

Modell blamed the "circumstances" rather than Wooten and Fichtner when he announced that the two had been placed on waivers and would never again play for the Browns. Claiming that he was "not trying to hang either one of them," he argued that his decision was based instead on the best interests of all parties involved. Modell also took the moment to assure the public and media that the Browns was a team in harmony. Blanton Collier alluded to the need for a fresh start during his "State of the Browns" address a few days later. In it, he stated, "There is no room on this squad for greed, selfishness and racial difference." He stressed loyalty to the team as the only foundation for success, while saying that football should be the third most important thing in every player's life behind God and family. While Modell and Collier pushed the Browns into a new direction, both Fichtner and Wooten cleared waivers and began searching for new employers. Their releases elicited sadness from local columnists, who realized that their departures would not so easily erase the roots of racial turmoil. "Words tossed back and

forth,” claimed Heaton, “indicate that matters between the black and white on the team go deeper than this one incident.” He concluded that there was no alternative to releasing both players, and that a sense of togetherness was necessary for even the best in personnel to win. August conveyed similar sentiments, noting that the controversy brought long-submerged resentment to the surface, threatening to incite racial tensions even further. Still he had not foresight into what lay ahead for the Browns even with the departure of the two players. He did, however, communicate the voice of the fan, who would forget the whole incident if the season produced a winner.³⁷

Harry Edwards was one individual who did not share this “winning solves everything” outlook. Edwards was a former sociology professor at San Jose State University and organizer of the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR), a proposed boycott of the 1968 Summer Olympics. While Heaton used columns to push for togetherness on the Browns, Edwards focused on what he perceived as a continued racial divide. His involvement stemmed from Wooten’s continued status as a free agent after his release from the Browns. The Saints had picked up Fichtner within days of his clearing of waivers, while Wooten remained unemployed well into August. Heaton had predicted that Wooten, despite being the player more likely to contribute to a team, carried that label as a trouble-maker and many teams would not want to add turmoil to their own locker room by signing the guard. Edwards felt that Wooten had been subjected to a separate set of rules by the NFL. As a result he proposed a boycott of the

Browns to protest the “white-listing” of Wooten. In *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*, Edwards recalled threatening to “disrupt by any means necessary every home game played by the Cleveland Browns until Brother John Wooten is reinstated, at full salary, into professional football.” Wooten remained silent during the ordeal at the advice of his advisor, Cleveland insurance executive Arnold Pinkney. The two men eventually met with NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle to discuss their disappointment that no team had yet signed Wooten. Shortly afterwards, a spokesman from the commissioner’s office hinted to the media that Wooten would soon be on an NFL roster. Sure enough, dialogue between Pinkney and Washington Redskins’ president, Edward Bennett Williams in the days following the meeting with the commissioner resulted in contract for Wooten. With the signing, the tangibles of the Wooten-Fichtner feud ended.³⁸

Despite an end to transactions resulting from the feud, a general uneasiness still lingered in and around the Cleveland Browns. The *New York Times* implied that the Browns had been fraught by racial tension rooted in the legacy of Jim Brown and his militant views. Wooten, Brown’s friend and colleague at the NIEU, had continued the divisive legacy after the fullback’s retirement in 1966. With Wooten released, the *Times* continued, the Browns could implement change for the better. Harry Edwards’s claims of racism within the Browns, from the players up through ownership, served as a reminder that a gap in understanding and communications remained at the very least. The local press immediately contradicted his assertions. Heaton called allegations of

racism in the Browns organization phony, and defended the organization's history of providing athletes with color-blind opportunity. Wooten, he argued, remained unsigned because he was viewed as a source of trouble. Lebovitz believed that Edwards' claims were unfounded, and that he used the situation to create chaos. Browns players denied continued tensions after Wooten and Fichtner were released. New captains Ernie Green and Jim Houston told the media that the only discussions of race were instigated by Edwards' claims. All signs indicated that the franchise was looking ahead to a fresh start.³⁹

The 1968 season moved forward without further incident, and not until 1971, when Walter Beach's suit found its way into the pages of the local press did claims of racism reemerge. The local media downplayed each element of tension as it materialized throughout the feud, but perhaps closed off an important avenue for dialogue in the process. As several journalists noted throughout the various incidents, the problems existing between white and black players on the Browns were not new and would not be remedied through the removal of Fichtner and Wooten from the locker room. Yet these writers maintained a company line, and contradicted themselves, by insisting that racism did not exist on the team. They ignored the reality that racial tensions pervaded throughout almost every aspect of society in the 1960s. While the Browns found themselves in conflict with each other, black nationalists and the police engaged in a shootout over several days in the Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood. At Mayor

Stokes' side in his efforts to quell further acts of violence in the city's mostly black neighborhoods was none other than Walter Beach himself. After his release, he was able to concern himself with those very political and social concerns that Modell thought were getting in the way of football. Perhaps the saddest coincident throughout this entire ordeal was the Hall of Fame induction of Marion Motley. Bill Willis, who was already inducted in Canton, introduced Motley at the induction ceremony. As two of the Browns' all-time greats, two men who played such prominent roles in the reintegration of professional football, celebrated in their accomplishments in Canton, Ohio, just up Interstate 77 the city of Cleveland remained a stage for so many racial tensions.⁴⁰

CHAPTER 9

NICK MILETI: CLEVELAND'S WHITE KNIGHT

In February of 1972, William Miller of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote the following: “Nick J. Mileti, sports empire builder, hometown Cleveland booster, financier, housing consultant, broadcasting expert and philosopher, has become the city’s business superstar. In four short years he has zoomed from obscurity to national attention. The dazzling success story can appear almost unreal to the average worker hustling and bustling to make monthly payments on a small suburban house and rustling automobile. But, in Nick Mileti’s own words it is ‘the American Dream come true.’ ” Such high praise was often the norm for the man who, at his pinnacle, had constructed a sports empire that consisted of the Cleveland Barons of the AHL, the Crusaders of the WHA, the Cavaliers of the NBA, Major League Baseball’s Indians, the Cleveland Arena, the Richfield Coliseum, and NBC-WKYC radio’s AM and FM stations. Starting in 1968, when he burst onto the Cleveland sports scene with his purchase of the Barons and the Arena, Mileti took on the role of the proverbial white knight destined to save his kingdom of Cleveland from the grips of urban decline. Instead of a mighty sword, Mileti wielded the ability to broker ownership syndicates that would maintain Cleveland’s image as a “big league” city by saving its existing sporting franchises and bringing in new ones. At his pinnacle he was the city’s savior; the second coming of the beloved Bill Veeck.

Sports fans believed it. The media believed it. Most importantly, Mileti believed it. But Mileti's empire was short-lived and the luster it once possessed quickly tarnished into memories. Before leaving Cleveland, he explained that the fun was in creating, not in maintaining. Indeed, that was the pattern Mileti had chosen to follow.¹

At the forefront of Mileti's time in Cleveland lay his importance as the "local" owner whose intentions were grounded in civic pride and responsibility. Faced with a dying, if not already dead, downtown, Clevelanders looked for points of local pride in which they could find solace. Mileti was born and raised in southeastern Cleveland. He represented a blue-collar work ethic and an "Old World" ethnicity—both traits so dearly valued in city, and he championed the city's pride. Civic leaders and the media were quick to praise the local boy who brought hope and renewed prestige to Cleveland through sports franchises. Yet Mileti turned this pride into fear several years later as he debased his hometown by moving professional basketball and hockey out of the city.

Mileti also represented a new type of owner in an era of sports expansion and new league formations. He was not born into a wealthy family, nor did he work his way up to "Fortune 500" type wealth. Rather, he was a first generation American; the son of Sicilian immigrants. He was the self-made man of modest yet comfortable means whose ingenuity lay in brokering ownership syndicates without having to put forth much of his own capital. Mileti was a salesman who, reminding Clevelanders of the vibrancy Bill Veeck brought to the city two decades earlier, used his charisma and the "Walter Mitty"

syndrome to entice local businessmen into financing a sports empire. In the process he cornered majority ownership in a dream scenario: four sports teams as the products, two arenas as the locale for these products, and two radio stations to broadcast and advertise his products. This groundswell of success was also paramount in creating the image and ego of Mileti, especially as the modern Bill Veeck. Mileti was an owner who seemed to desire the spotlight for himself as much as for his teams. Yet the bulk of it all—the syndicate empire, the image and ego, and the comparisons to Veeck—came crashing down almost as quickly and completely as they had been erected. Financial miscues, confrontations with both civic leaders and his own partners, and losing teams marked his decline.²

MILETI ARRIVES

The National Basketball Association expanded in January of 1968 with the additions of new franchises in Milwaukee and Phoenix. Cleveland, according to *Plain Dealer* columnist Hal Lebovitz, was a market that the NBA coveted, but still remained without a franchise. In an open letter to Mayor Stokes, Lebovitz addressed Cleveland's failure to land an NBA expansion team, as well as the city's falling rank as a national sports center. "We were shut out again," he argued, "because nobody here wants to put up the money for a franchise as long as we don't have a satisfactory place in which to play." He further stated, "this metropolis deserves major league stature in all sports...lesser cities, being more progressive, have passed us up." With a decrepit arena

sinking further into decay with each passing day, local businessmen and investors shied away from the risks and responsibility of bringing a major league franchise, whether in basketball or hockey, into the city limits. Instead, a city so quick to boast of its “major league” status found itself relegated to being a spectator during an era of unprecedented professional sports expansion. That is, until Nick J. Mileti arrived on the scene.³

On September 6, 1968, the *Press* and *Plain Dealer* reported that a deal to sell the Barons was very near completion. Current Barons owner, Paul Bright, acknowledged having had talks regarding the sale of the minor league team, but insisted he was not committed to making a deal. Since 1963 Bright had owned stock in the Barons and had been its majority stockholder since 1965. Nevertheless, he insisted that, “If somebody else can really make (hockey) go, I’m willing to sell.” Reports indicated that three anonymous “somebodies” were interested in purchasing the franchise. Bright’s refusal to verify the sale was a moot point to the sports press and local hockey fans thanks in part to his own behavior that year. Beginning in May, reports began to filter in that Bright was buying up outstanding shares of stock in the Barons for \$7 a share, and by August he actively advertised that he would sell them for \$13 each. If the price was right, the team would be sold. Furthermore, the Barons’ Board of Directors had already authorized the sale of all team assets. Only the sale itself was left before a new era in Cleveland sports would begin.⁴

The only other name mentioned in the articles rumoring a sale was that of Nick Mileti, described mainly as an attorney and an “active Bowling Green alumnus.” When asked about his interest in the Barons, his only response was the proverbial “no comment.” Three days later on September 9th, Mileti was introduced as the imminent owner of both the Cleveland Barons and the Cleveland Arena. He brought with him a youthful energy and hope that soon captured the attention of civic leaders and residents alike. “I think things are happening in Cleveland,” Mileti said upon the announcement of the new ownership group, “and I think things will happen at the Arena.” Such enthusiasm soon became a trademark of Mileti’s successes. One of his announcements that day, a proposed 1970 NCAA basketball game between Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and national power Houston, was evidence of his larger plans. His energy and visions for the Arena and Cleveland had the booster press salivating in anticipation of future sporting grandeur. The young entrepreneur, still awaiting final approval on the purchase of both team and facility, was pressed in interviews on his plans for both NHL and NBA expansion teams. Mileti’s response: “You can eat an elephant only one bite at a time.” As confusing as his “Sicilian” pearls-of-wisdom could be, the booster press projected the very plans Mileti kept quiet. “Nick is a young visionary and an action man,” wrote Lebovitz. “He knows what he wants and how to get it done. He needs big-time hockey and basketball to make his new investment pay off and he knows it. Within five years, look for these major league franchises to be here.” Others felt that

Mileti, the young swinger, would transfer his personality onto the Arena operations and turn it into a swinging place that would carry the types of programs “(to) make a night at the Arena one to remember.” The future was looking bright, indeed.⁵

While he professed his lifelong love of hockey and all Cleveland sports, Mileti’s only involvement in organized sports prior to 1967 were several years of little league baseball and a stint as a cheerleader at Cleveland’s John Adams High School. The seeds for his purchase of the Barons and the Arena, and subsequent entrepreneurial endeavors in Cleveland, were planted one year prior to the sale when he began in earnest his foray as a sports promoter. In 1967 Mileti, working at the bequest of the Alumni Chapter of Bowling Green, sought to bring a BGSU basketball game to the Cleveland area. Once the athletic department and Mileti decided on an opponent—Niagara University—it was necessary to procure a date at the Cleveland Arena. When Mileti met with Arena personnel, he discovered that the only events scheduled were the Barons’ games that monopolized the weekends. He was readily able to book a date for the game, and it was a success. Still, the lack of events at the Arena puzzled Mileti. “I couldn’t figure out what was going on here,” he said. “Here we were sitting in the eight-largest market in the United States, we had this arena with 10,000 seats and nothing was going on in it. When I saw all the white on the wall (i.e. open calendar dates), I realized something had to be done. I couldn’t figure out what the problem was, though.” The problem, Mileti soon realized, was that the Barons and Arena had different ownership groups with different

interests. Rather than having the Arena flourish with a multitude of events, the two groups worked for the betterment of their respective interests. Mileti felt that success could be achieved if the Barons and Arena came under the same owner. With his purchase of the team and facility, Mileti accomplished this goal for the first time since 1955, and began the process of enticing entertainment events and Clevelanders back into the currently empty Arena seats on a consistent basis.⁶

Ten days after the press announced the sale to Mileti, the first portion of the transactions was completed when Barons' stockholders agreed to the sale of the team. Mileti's silent partner, for the first time, also came to light. Mileti was full of ideas and embraced the challenge presented with the purchase of an empty arena, but obtaining the proper capital to turn his dream into a reality remained the key obstacle. Luckily for him, a past friendship came to his aid. Mileti had befriended Leo McKenna during a stint in the army following his graduation from BGSU, and the two had remained close. McKenna, whom Mileti described as a "great friend and great backer," had landed on Wall Street where he worked as an investment counselor. One of the firms he represented was C.F. Kettering, Inc. of Dayton, Ohio, which possessed millions of dollars for investments. McKenna convinced Kettering, Inc. to invest with Mileti in the Barons and the Arena, and they provided Mileti with \$1,000,000 for the purchase of both the team and facility. Mileti subsequently pulled together the necessary remaining funds through loans and some of his own capital. On September 27, the sale of the Arena

became official. Not only had Mileti embarked on his crusade for Cleveland sports, but he cemented a relationship with strong financial backers whom he would call on for assistance in future ventures. For roughly \$1.9 million, Mileti and Kettering purchased both the Barons and the Cleveland Arena. Kettering provided the bulk of the funding, but Mileti gained 51% majority ownership. Success or failure rested clearly in his hands.⁷

THE ROUGH REVIVAL OF HOCKEY

In reality, Mileti's group purchased a last-place minor league hockey team, and a woefully outdated arena that was situated in a deteriorating neighborhood. Despite the failures of previous Barons owners and the Arena's condition, Mileti's unification of team and facility under one ownership group signaled hope for a bright future. Mileti went about the difficult process of situating his new assets as civic assets. One month into his ownership, he addressed the challenge of reviving interest in Barons' hockey and the Arena in Cleveland. Letters to the sports editor had indicated fan frustration with a losing team with which no one wanted to identify. The empty seats at the arena were a reminder of the work the new owner needed to do. Still, Mileti mustered up a positive take on the scenario. "There's been a tremendous negative feeling about both the Barons and the Arena in this town," he stated. "We think the feeling can be turned around. Some of the reasons behind this feeling are factual and we intend to make the necessary changes. Like, for example, taking a last-place hockey club and building it into a first-

place club. Some things we will try to change by communication (i.e. the perceived image of the Arena's neighborhood)." Mileti was convinced he would be the one owner to succeed in filling the "vacuum in winter sports" in Cleveland. The booster press anointed him a difference maker, stating, "For years there was much conversation from many people about buying the Arena and and/or Barons. For years it was talk, talk, talk. Then Mileti came along and made it happen...He'll make the rest happen too." But instead of positioning himself as a savior amidst the praise heaped upon him by press, Mileti shared the future credit for reviving hockey in Cleveland with the city itself. The local boy expressed his confidence in the people of his hometown.⁸

Before his first season as owner came to a close, Mileti's faith in the people of Cleveland looked to have collapsed. "The city talks about being big league," he lamented, "but it acts bush league in some respects and must suffer the consequences. That disturbs me." Poor fan attendance and a perceived lack of public respect for the efforts the Barons' organization put forth fueled his outburst. He positioned the Barons as one of many institutions that helped to make Cleveland a "big league" city, but argued that all of these institutions (professional sports, the arts, etc.) needed to be supported for such a civic moniker to carry any validity. Playing up the role of the civic booster, he argued, "We believe in this city. But the big issue is what the people of Cleveland think about the people of Cleveland." Was this merely a public relations ploy to garner much needed interest in hockey, or was his outburst genuine? Most likely it represented both.

The story did earn the sports page's headline, but it also came during a season where attendance averaged only 3,415 a game.⁹

Calling out the city in such a manner, and putting its collective pride into question compelled fan and media reaction alike. The *Plain Dealer's* Chuck Heaton scolded Mileti for his attack on Cleveland. He argued that Cleveland was indeed a "big league" city, and that calling it "bush league" was no way for Mileti to endear himself or the Barons to fans and civic leaders. Yet even in the potential public relations nightmare of calling his own market "bush league," Mileti found support for his working-class efforts to restore pride to Cleveland and its sports culture. One letter from a local fan lauded the entrepreneur for being a man of action. "Nick Mileti has done more for Cleveland and Cleveland sports and Cleveland hockey than any owner before him on sheer guts and personal belief," stated the fan. "We need, in this town, more people with Nick's guts and belief in Cleveland at all levels. Skyscrapers might create an image, but people create progress." Support aside, Mileti also found a call for the NHL to come to town.¹⁰

Embracing the criticism and support he found himself immersed within, Mileti began his outreach to Cleveland with a specific focus on hockey promotion. Comparisons to Veeck had not yet begun in earnest, as they did when Mileti assembled his sports empire en masse, but the promotional side of the young entrepreneur came out in a variety of means. The most prominent one for making the city appreciate hockey was the inception of the Cleveland Cup Challenge. This event brought four collegiate ice

hockey teams to the Arena for a two day tournament. Designed to showcase hockey and to induce local ties, the tournament included two Ohio schools every year. Inevitably, one of them was always the Bowling Green Falcons. Mileti also sought to establish a grass-roots level of support for hockey in Cleveland. His outreach included the Barons' sponsorship of Cleveland municipal hockey leagues. The leagues were promoted through visits to local schools by players as part of a goodwill tour.¹¹

The casual sports fan was also targeted as a missing piece to the puzzle of hockey's success. In a move that would be duplicated down the road with the construction of the Richfield Coliseum, Mileti promoted special access for season ticket holders to the Arena that included use of the workout facilities and access to a restaurant he built inside the facility. Aside from these incentives, general improvements were made to the Arena. These included removal of unsightly billboards from inside the Arena and the expansion of parking space around the facility. Creative advertising campaigns furthered Mileti's efforts to build on the "need" for hockey in Cleveland for everyone. Playing off of both image and the individual's need for belonging, Mileti placed advertisements in the local press for standing room only tickets. The tickets, however, were fictional and based on hopes for the next season. Mileti hoped to stress the necessity of seeing sold out games of the soon-to-be winning team and the need to purchase these tickets before they were no longer available. Advertising efforts were not solely devoted to Cleveland's male population either. While Veeck had once passed out

orchids to appeal to female fans, Mileti fleshed out female fan interest and presence in a different manner. A promotional poster for the Barons indicated that “an unusually high percentage of Barons’ spectators were pretty girls.” What reasons were given? The poster listed three: First, because it was a fast game where girls could stand and cheer; second, because it was an easy game to understand, and “pretty girls always seem to know the score;” and third, because men who play or follow hockey “are more apt to have pretty girls for wives and dates.”¹²

Despite Mileti’s best efforts during that inaugural year, and an appearance in the AHL playoffs, the team’s attendance was an all-time low. But then again, Mileti did not buy the Arena and enter into the world of professional hockey merely to sustain minor league hockey in Cleveland. The labors of Mileti extended far beyond the desire to turn his current assets into successful products. The pleas of the booster press and Clevelanders for major league hockey and basketball did not fall on deaf ears. Although he had avoided questions of bringing the NHL and NBA to Cleveland, or used his arsenal of Sicilian phrases to confound reporters, Mileti had planned to bring these two leagues to Cleveland even before he purchased the Barons and the Arena. He and McKenna knew that stopping with a minor league hockey team and a run-down arena was financial suicide. With that in mind, Mileti began to put his visions for major league hockey and basketball into action.

DANCING WITH THE NHL

The *Plain Dealer* headline for June 10, 1969 read, “Barons Seek NHL Franchise.” With that, Mileti started what eventually became a three-year courtship of the NHL. The *Plain Dealer*’s article echoed the very point that was the focus of the *Press*’s lead story that same day: the Cleveland Arena. While the Arena had been one of the preeminent ice houses in North America when Cleveland and the NHL were first linked in 1942, it had since evolved into one of the major obstacles in expansion into Cleveland. Mileti submitted not only his official notice of expansion to the NHL, but also his plans to renovate the Arena to meet the league’s standard requirements. The Arena had a seating capacity of 9,300, a number that had not changed since it had opened in 1937. Mileti’s plan, drawn up by the architectural firm of George A. Ross and Associates, would bring the seating total up to 17,000 seats by adding 20 additional rows to each side and a 10 row balcony to the facility. It was estimated that work would be completed in time for the 1970-1971 season, the earliest point for a Cleveland expansion team to initiate play. The projected cost of the renovation was between \$2 million and \$3 million. “This has been in the works for a long time,” reported Mileti from Montreal, where he submitted his letter of notice. But the chase was far from over.¹³

Perhaps mesmerized by Mileti’s charm and the backing of Kettering, Inc., or perhaps caught up in the hope and/or belief that Cleveland was a desirable “major league” market for the NHL, the booster press threw its almost-blind support behind Mileti. “There are talkers and there are doers,” wrote Hal Lebovitz. “(Mileti) has vision;

he wants what is best for this city and he knows this city won't buy anything minor league." The press argued that the energy and enthusiasm Mileti brought to the Cleveland sports scene was not enough on its own to fill the empty seats at the Arena. His first year of ownership proved that, according to a *Press* editorial. Major league hockey was the missing link. With the NHL looking to admit two new teams for the 1970-1971 season, it seemed certain that Cleveland's expansion bid would stand out from the three other competing cities: Baltimore, Buffalo, and Vancouver. After all, as a *Plain Dealer* editorial extolled, "it would be difficult to understand how those places could offer better prospects than Cleveland for the NHL." The only word of caution came from Bob August of the *Cleveland Press*. He applauded Mileti's efforts, but also raised a question that foreshadowed the problems of Mileti's future ventures, both the successes and failures: is Mileti putting himself at financial risk? This question remained unimportant to the city and its sports fans as it was believed Mileti would rescue professional hockey in Cleveland by bringing the city into NHL fold.¹⁴

The pomp and circumstance that filled the pages of the local press did not carry northward up the St. Lawrence Seaway to the NHL offices in Montreal. As quickly as the bandwagon for bringing the NHL to Cleveland had started, Clarence Campbell, the NHL president, did his best to put an end to the enthusiasm. He made it painfully clear that he did not share in Cleveland's pomp and circumstance surrounding Mileti's pursuit of a franchise. As the *Plain Dealer* espoused Mileti and his "Can Do" attitude, it

simultaneously ran a story in which Campbell threw obstacle after obstacle in the path of expansion success. Among the problematic points he raised were two that were subject to Mileti's renovation plans: the seating capacity at the Arena and the lack of parking for the facility. A third point was the NHL's poor television ratings in Cleveland. The NHL President argued that the city did not carry the nationally-televised game-of-the-week. When informed that the local station did not carry the game due to poor ratings, he responded, "What does this indicate? If people are not interested in watching hockey on television, what prospect is there of getting them to see it live?" But it was the last of Campbell's four points that really struck a nerve. He cited a civic apathy for hockey and all professional sports in Cleveland. In no uncertain terms, he called Cleveland a bad hockey town and a bad sports town. When it came to killing the image and enthusiasm of Cleveland's sports aspirations, Clarence Campbell was public enemy number one. As Lebovitz put it, "Nobody bad-mouths Cleveland the way Campbell does and this is indeed a feat, for our fair city has more than its share of detractors."¹⁵

Campbell's distaste for Cleveland, or at least for hockey in the city, seemingly droned on and on in published reports. Nevertheless, he always ended such diatribes by stating that he did not want to discourage Mileti from submitting a formal application for an NHL expansion franchise. Sure enough, Mileti did not let Campbell's distaste alter his plans for his Arena and for Cleveland. He continued to take the necessary steps prior to submitting an NHL franchise application. Yet there was some truth to Campbell's

commentary, especially concerning a waning hockey interest within the city. Although the league president had no vote on expansion, he certainly had an influential voice in the NHL. Mileti wanted to quell Campbell's concerns as he moved forward in the expansion and renovation processes. "We think we can show him a turning point (for hockey) has been reached," stated Mileti. "We are on the upswing." The "we" he spoke of, most certainly, were the people of Cleveland. By October, reports filtered in detailing the progress made in the one area Mileti could actually control: conditions at the Arena. The local media lauded the young entrepreneur's efforts to both improve physical conditions—more parking, better seating, removal of unsightly billboards—and to add special benefits to season ticket holders (access to the dining facilities at the nearby University Club). Still, the conditions set forth for an expansion franchise lay out of Mileti's hands.¹⁶

In June of 1969 the Cuyahoga River caught on fire once again due to the industrial waste polluting the water, in this case an oil slick. The event made national news and added to the bevy of jokes that eroded the city's image. By the dawn of winter, Cleveland's latest NHL expansion bid went up in smoke. Before Mileti could get out of October, his dream of bringing the NHL to Cleveland for the 1970-1971 season came to an end. During the first intermission of a game between the Barons and the Hershey Bears at the Arena, Mileti had a statement read to the crowd of 1,910 fans informing them that he would not submit an application for expansion. In the prepared statement,

Mileti declared that he could not agree with the terms and conditions set forth by the NHL Board of Governors. Among them, all of which Mileti stated had a part in his decision, were the limited availability of players on current NHL rosters and the franchise fee of \$6 million. Mileti foresaw an expansion team eventually costing roughly \$11 million by the end of the process of building it up for the start of the season, and this exceeded his means. A similar letter was sent to Clarence Campbell, informing the NHL of his decision while also reaffirming his commitment to bring major league hockey to Cleveland in the future. Still, the failure to land a team stung, and put an obstacle in Mileti's broader plans. "It's frustrating," muttered Mileti. "We wanted to accomplish something, but when the NHL set down those conditions... (His voice then trailed off)."¹⁷

Popular reaction to the announcement did not outwardly carry the disappointment Mileti so obviously felt. The Arena crowd cheered Mileti's decision as it was announced. One spectator yelled out, "You show 'em, Nick!" Another praised him, saying, "He did the right thing. The price was ridiculous—and for what? I don't blame him at all." To add insult to injury, Campbell revealed in a phone interview with *The Press* that the NHL preferred Vancouver and Buffalo all along, and that Cleveland may not have been as attractive to the Board of Governors. Still, the sentiment of support from the fans, Mileti admitted, helped him feel better about the situation and deflect the comments Campbell made. He remained committed to bringing the NHL to Cleveland,

and insisted he would now consider looking at putting in a bid for a current franchise if that team was struggling and looking to relocate. Framing their disappointment with understanding, the booster press praised Mileti for not allowing himself to be forced into a bad business deal by the NHL and their “exorbitant demands.” During this process, though, Mileti firmly entrenched himself as a proponent of Cleveland in its entirety. He was the working man, the underdog who would not compromise his beliefs for the sake of inclusion. More importantly he set in motion the whirlwind of business deals and media support that would almost blindly approve the construction of Mileti’s sports empire.¹⁸

The attention given to Mileti’s aborted bid for an NHL expansion franchise was truly worthy of the abundance of media space it received in the latter half of 1969. Widespread expansion among professional sports leagues opened up the American landscape to new “big league” cities and new sports facilities. Cleveland had donned the “major league” label thanks to professional teams in baseball and football, and ranked with an elite few in this regards for much of the Twentieth Century. Yet the city, hindered by an archaic stadium and arena, had failed in all previous attempts to join in this new wave of expansion and procure either an NHL or NBA franchise. As expansion brought new teams to the emerging markets of the American South and West, Clevelanders became aware that the luster of having pro football and baseball teams no longer separated them from the competition. Mileti’s attempt to bring the NHL to

Cleveland renewed hope in efforts to bolster Cleveland's local and national image. As social conditions worsened for Cleveland, especially in its downtown district, Mileti's efforts gave hope for progress.¹⁹

THE NBA COMES TO CLEVELAND

If the New Year brings new hope, then January 1970 was truly a welcome sight for Mileti and Cleveland. With the NHL not coming to Cleveland, the city's "major league" status in sport rested squarely on the shoulders of the Indians and Browns franchises. Yet, lost in the commotion of the failed NHL bid were subtle rumors that Mileti also eyed an NBA expansion franchise. As it turned out, his courtship with the NHL was only a prelude to his efforts to bring a "major league" sports franchise to Cleveland, and to make gigantic strides in the creation of his empire. Hal Lebovitz had indicated shortly after Mileti announced his pursuit of an NHL franchise that an unspecified American Basketball Association (ABA) team had expressed interest in moving to Cleveland for the 1970-1971 season, with the possibility of staying longer. With a contract written and needing only his signature, Mileti opted to forgo the ABA and set his sights on the NBA. Nick J. Mileti wanted only the best.²⁰

Cleveland's history in professional basketball prior to Mileti was a mixed bag of short lived ventures and rumors. As recently as 1969, civic leaders had sought an ABA franchise as the league entered its second season. The NBA was no stranger to Cleveland either. In its inaugural season of 1946-1947, the Cleveland Rebels finished 30-30, but

were disbanded. *The Plain Dealer* and the Cleveland Browns brought the NBA back between 1966 and 1969. They arranged for the Cincinnati Royals, featuring Oscar Robertson and former Ohio State star Jerry Lucas, to play a series of games in Cleveland every season. Art Modell, on behalf of the Browns, underwrote the games in an attempt to showcase Cleveland as an NBA quality city. As Royals' games grew in popularity during the third season, the *Plain Dealer* made a point of referring to the team as the "Ohio" Royals, to make the team more inclusive into Cleveland's professional sports culture. Fan reaction to the Royals remained mixed, however, leaving Mileti with ample opportunity to pursue a team solely for Cleveland. Promoting his own cause, and bolstering the image of Cleveland, Mileti argued for Cleveland's rightful place in the NBA. In an interview, he stated, "Cities like Milwaukee had an NBA team. Seattle had a team. Phoenix had a team. I mean, these were nice cities, but they were \$2 cities, especially in those days." Mileti continued, "Here we were, this huge town, this humongous town...my town. And we didn't have a team." The wheels to change this were put into motion.²¹

The booster press began a three-week frenzy of NBA expansion coverage in mid-to-late January. While negotiations between Mileti and the NBA took place in the preceding months, little was reported. The reason, Lebovitz explained, was that Cleveland had experienced so many near misses with an NBA franchise that the *Plain Dealer* "made it a point not to excite (its) readers, fearful of building them up for another

letdown.” Coming off the failed NHL expansion bid, Mileti was reported to have put together a syndicate group of roughly two dozen investors (including George Steinbrenner) who were willing to pay as much as \$3 million for an expansion franchise. As Mileti attended the league meeting in Philadelphia, two larger issues needed to be settled before Cleveland would join the NBA. First, rumors swirled that the NBA might decide against expansion. A movement, led by Jack Kent Cooke, owner of the Los Angeles Lakers and head of the expansion committee, wanted to hold off on any growth so as not to further split up the television money that was part of a new contract for the upcoming season, and because it appeared that the ABA was looking to merge soon. Second, Mileti had his own set of criteria that needed to be met. “IF the price is right,” listed Hal Lebovitz. “IF the draft arrangement is satisfactory, IF the TV cut is equal, IF the ground rules for ABA absorption are okay, IF decent playing dates are promised, THEN, and only then, Mileti and Company will put up the earnest money.” Having established a means of operation through his dealings with the NHL, Mileti let it be known what terms he was looking for in expansion.²²

Changes to the expansion process greeted all franchise applicants prior to the finalization of expansion terms. After the Board of Governors vetoed any possibility of a merger with the ABA, the NBA quickly disbanded the existing expansion committee headed by Cooke and created a new one. The one big rumor still floating around was that the new committee would raise the expansion fee from \$3 million to \$4.5 million. It was

suggested that the increase was designed to sway those owners not in favor of expansion to change their minds. Mileti refused to comment on the financial limit set by the syndicate he headed. One day later, all suspicions and rumors were verified as the NBA's new terms included a \$1 million shift for expansion applicants. The franchise fee was increased to \$3.5 million, while \$500,000 in television money was taken away from the new expansion teams. Also, the league now considered adding four teams instead of two, having received \$100,000 deposits from Cleveland, Portland, Houston, and two groups representing Buffalo. Adding to the new financial terms, the extra teams meant the possibility of weaker expansion and college drafts and a less attractive schedule. Mileti, shaken by the alteration in terms, had less than a week to accept or refuse the NBA's changes. Returning to Cleveland, he indicated that he needed to contact each syndicate member before he could even guess as to what direction he would head.²³

In the days leading up to the January 26th deadline, press reports differed on Mileti's decision. *The Press* stated that Mileti would not pursue a franchise based on the conditions the NBA set forth. An unidentified member of the proposed ownership group commented that, "This setup would be an artistic failure and an economic bomb." While the gist of the article focuses on how the inclusion of four expansion teams would negatively impact the new product, the hint of an "economic bomb" was one of the few references to possible financial limitations. Earlier, upon the announcement of the NBA's terms, Mileti expressed concern over borrowing additional funds, especially

considering the unfavorable rates in the given economy. While *The Press* shut the door on expansion, the *Plain Dealer* left open a small chance that Mileti and syndicate would move forward. Regardless, the booster press had made it clear that Mileti was a sympathetic hero, defending Cleveland from a “second class” citizenship that the NBA’s new terms dictated. Public support grew stronger in the process. Fan reaction, spurred on by both the booster press and the sight of a proactive civic leader (a rare sight in Cleveland, indeed), praised Mileti for his efforts to improve Cleveland and his prudence in approaching this deal.²⁴

The NBA’s deadline arrived with the *Plain Dealer* also conceding that Mileti would say “no” to the NBA’s new terms. Along with the Portland ownership group, Mileti indeed turned down the new terms of NBA expansion and backed away from a franchise for Cleveland. Surprisingly, the applicants still approached the NBA with the possibility of reaching compromised expansion terms, and a Cleveland team remained alive. Meanwhile, rumors of ABA interest in Cleveland took on added weight while Mileti waited to hear back from NBA officials on these new terms being discussed. Mileti and several ABA franchise owners indeed communicated shortly after the NBA set forth its new expansion terms. The booster press also expressed disgust with the NBA’s flip-flopping of expansion terms and posed alternative methods of bringing professional basketball to Cleveland. If the NBA insisted on its “guaranteed-bankruptcy” proposition, they argued, then Mileti and Cleveland should look to purchase either a current NBA

team if it is in financial trouble (Cincinnati was mentioned) or the Los Angeles Stars of the ABA. On February 6th, such ideas became a moot point. “City Acquire NBA Franchise” boasted the *Plain Dealer* on its front page. Cleveland joined Houston, Portland, and Buffalo as new entrants into the NBA. The final compromise between the league and the applicants dictated that the applicants would pay a franchise fee of \$3.7 million, but would remain equal partners in the television money distribution. “Cleveland is my town and it’s a big league town,” declared a triumphant Mileti. Cleveland had its first new major league franchise since the Browns were formed in 1946, and it finally had major league basketball. The booster press concurred, stating that “it is an overdue victory for Cleveland basketball fans,” and that, “...being in such select company is a feather in Cleveland’s sports cap.” Mileti was the unquestioned hero of the day.²⁵

McKenna and C.F. Kettering, Inc. were once again the primary backers of Mileti’s expansion franchise, but, unlike the circumstances surrounding the purchase of the Barons and Arena, they were not alone in their support. Several Cleveland businessmen, including Mileti’s cousin Joseph Zingale, were among the syndicate that brought basketball to Cleveland. Of the \$3.7 million cost, \$1.5 million was due to the NBA within the first month. The combination of Mileti’s assets and the amount of capital Kettering was willing to provide could not cover the needed financing. Assisted by McKenna and the Kettering name, Mileti formed a syndicate of 25 partners, whose

financial backing made possible an NBA team in Cleveland. Before the NBA upped the ante for a franchise, the funds needed for the initial deposits and subsequent payments would be procured as follows: individual members of the syndicate had agreed to contribute \$25,000 each, Kettering, Inc. would contribute \$300,000, and a \$1 million bank loan would constitute the remainder. Several members of the syndicate, including George Steinbrenner, dropped out of the venture once the NBA proposed new terms. When Cleveland was awarded an expansion team, Mileti, Kettering, Inc., and the remaining syndicate put together the necessary funds to deposit \$100,000 to the NBA upon the announcement and \$650,000 in the days that followed. Prior to the college draft, another \$750,000 needed to be paid to the NBA. The remaining balance of \$2.2 million would be paid over four years. While Mileti was able to induce Cleveland businessmen to join this venture and contribute financially, he still needed additional funds. The \$300,000 he would receive from the league's television contract would truly help, but more was needed. Having queried NBA owners at previous meetings, Mileti decided to make stock in the team available to the public for five dollars per share. Putting a good public relations spin on the sale, Mileti argued, "One of the objectives of this venture is to get a broad representation of the community. This is one way it can be accomplished." Initial sales indicated the community support he was looking for, and Mileti was soon presented with a much needed check for \$2 million from the sale of 400,000 shares.²⁶

The celebration surrounding the arrival of professional basketball in Cleveland led to new questions, while the process of bringing an NBA franchise to the city further shed light on Mileti and his dealings. With a team scheduled to commence play within roughly eight months, Mileti began the process of establishing a “skeleton organization.” Foreshadowing future problems in this area, Mileti conceded that he had not thought about filling these positions earlier because his focus had been on acquiring a team. Front office and coaching staff aside, it was evident that Clevelanders would not be exposed to the highest quality of NBA basketball during the early years. It was expected that an expansion team would struggle. Would the city support a loser? Predictions were not positive. “The whole world knows how Cleveland embraces a loser,” argued Burt Graeff of *The Press*. “It doesn’t.” The *Plain Dealer*’s Chuck Heaton acknowledged Cleveland’s growing reputation as a one-sport town, but stated that Clevelanders needed to learn to love a loser, especially having clamored for the NBA’s arrival for years. The level of support, the city’s image aside, impacted Mileti and his financial status. While the sale of public stock had lifted a huge burden, financing needed to be in place to help run a professional basketball team on a daily basis. Estimations put the yearly operations of a team at an average of just under a million dollars. As the landlord of the Arena, Mileti could cut costs when possible, but still needed an average attendance of 4,000 paying roughly \$4 per seat for every one of the 41 home games during the upcoming season to break even. With this in mind, even after the expansion process and the sale of

public stock, Mileti still pursued additional local-investors to provide the team with working capital.²⁷

Perhaps the most important observation to come out of the NBA expansion process was the extent to which it became obvious that, as Mileti extended himself into larger ventures, he would need creative ways to finance his projects. Ownership syndicates were not new to Cleveland or professional sports, but the extent to which Mileti used them to build himself an empire, without investing much of his own capital in the process, became a true phenomenon. Kettering, Inc., again established itself as a consistent partner, and purchased roughly five percent of the franchise stock. To entice additional local-investors, Mileti used the “connection with professional sports” and some aspects of civic responsibility. Many of these investors became involved in more than one of Mileti’s ventures. Some of them admitted, “Sports is a Walter Mitty thing, and Nick’s enthusiasm was infectious.” Others noted that they had succeeded in Cleveland, and wanted to give something back...something, however, that could also serve as a tax write-off. While professional sport was a hobby for these investors, it took on increased importance for Mileti. With the acquisition of an NBA franchise, Mileti now owned two teams and the arena they would play within. Rather than a hobby, the professional sport game was rapidly becoming his primary business.²⁸

MILETI'S MONUMENT: THE COLISEUM

In 1968 Hal Lebovitz addressed the stagnant state of professional sports in Cleveland. But along came Nick Mileti to breathe new life into the city's sports scene. In less than three years, Mileti had unified the Barons and the Arena under one ownership group, attempted albeit unsuccessfully to bring the NHL to Cleveland, and procured an NBA franchise for the city. While this answered in part Lebovitz's call, work still remained on the journalist's call for a new arena. Towards the end of 1970, the booster press reiterated this same call. In a special *Plain Dealer* editorial page entitled "Reassessment of Cleveland Area Near End of a Bad Year," special mention was given to the status of the city's sports facilities. A new stadium for baseball and football and a new arena for basketball and hockey were required for Cleveland to take the necessary steps for growth and development. Earlier in the year the city was told that the construction of both a publicly-funded domed stadium and arena were not feasible given current economic conditions. The study conducted by Charles Luckman Associates of New York City for \$120,000, however, attested to the feasibility of an arena on its own. Private development of either type of facility was highly encouraged. With a new NBA franchise already playing in the Arena that was earning a reputation among players for its shoddy facilities, and with dreams of the NHL still at the forefront of his plans, Mileti began to weigh his options for expanding his empire and housing his assets.²⁹

The cry from the print media for a new sports facility in Cleveland was finally answered in 1971. After several months away from the headlines, Mileti announced

plans for a new arena to house his NBA team and to bring an NHL expansion team to Cleveland. “This is a fulfillment of a long dream,” he said. “We saw the need for a major league coliseum here—and now we’re going to have it.” The excitement of having a civic dream answered was tempered by the reality of the chosen location for the new facility, for the “here” Mileti referred to was Richfield Township, a rural locale roughly an hour southeast of downtown Cleveland. Rather than replace the archaic Arena with a new downtown structure, Mileti decided on a rural location in Summit County, half way between Cleveland and Akron, for his \$17 million dollar sports complex. Adapting to the changing demographics of Northeast Ohio, Mileti’s placement of the Coliseum was symbolic of the shift from metropolis to metropolitan area that was readily occurring. The exodus of the 1960s drained Cleveland of jobs, people, tax values and voting power. The old central city was estimated to have experienced a population loss just over 10,000 people as the suburbs gained 241,000 new residents. As local government failed to update its own thinking to address a new economy and the accompanying needs, residents who came upon any means of wealth realized they were no longer confined by the city limits. Mileti embraced this portion of the population and sought to bring professional sport to them and their entertainment dollars. When the press questioned his choice of location, he responded by stating that Richfield was the only area considered, and added, “There are over four million people living within less than an hour’s drive of the location. We expect to draw crowds from several states (i.e. Ohio, Pennsylvania, and

West Virginia).” He argued that this was a decision that was made for him by the circumstances of the day. In a later interview, Mileti expanded his view of Cleveland to include the larger metropolitan region. “I don’t go for all this breast-beating and talk about what Cleveland is lacking in. What does that kind of thinking ever get anyone?” asked Mileti. “The answer to those who disparage the city is to do something for the city and the Northeastern Ohio area that will make everyone recognize it as a great place to live. That’s one thing this Coliseum is going to do—attract people from all over the world, because they are going to want to see the greatest sports complex ever built and they are going to have to come to Northeastern Ohio to do it.” His efforts to better the city’s image no longer had to directly impact Cleveland proper.³⁰

Mileti’s fellow Cleveland sports owners applauded his initiative, and reminded politicians of the need for renovated or new facilities or face future team movement from downtown. The previous year’s announcement that the Luckman-stadium plan was unfeasible left both Vernon Stouffer of the Indians and Art Modell of the Browns with the realization that it would be a long time before a new downtown sports stadium would be seriously considered. Each was expectedly asked if he would consider joining Mileti in the lush countryside or would at least consider moving his respective team outside the central city. Each man proclaimed a loyalty to Cleveland and downtown, but each also expressed the flip side of that coin. “You’ve got to go where the space is,” stated Stouffer. “We’ve gotta have something better than that Stadium down there.” Modell

took a more diplomatic stance, but still hinted at the possible repercussions of being forced to stay in the declining Stadium. While noting that Mileti's move fits in with a trend seen elsewhere in the professional sports landscape, Modell commented that he felt the Coliseum was being placed too far from the central city. Aside from gaining the approval of his fellow local franchise owners, Mileti won praise from the NHL. Prior to the announcement, Clarence Campbell had stated that the NHL was considering expansion in either 1973 or 1974. In an interview with the *Plain Dealer*, Campbell indicated that the Arena was one of two roadblocks (the other being financing) that kept Cleveland from obtaining a new club. With the construction of the Coliseum, NHL thoughts began to change. Bill Wirtz, president of the Chicago Blackhawks and Chairman of the NHL's Board of Governors, asserted that "Cleveland is definitely in the future of the National Hockey League." In his mind, the city was ripe for NHL hockey and the Coliseum was the final piece to the puzzle.³¹

Fan response varied based on the part of the city, or the more demographically-correct "region," in which one lived. Within the Cleveland area, the reaction was mixed. For the casual fan, the move was a sign of the times and perhaps nothing more than a minor travel inconvenience. They would no longer be forced to drive downtown or to watch from the Arena seats. Some fans saw the choice of Richfield as the only choice for Mileti if he wanted to a new facility. Given the foot-dragging and infighting within Cleveland politics, private financing and ownership were the only ways to guarantee the

construction of a new arena. Die hard fans, respective to either the Barons or the Cavaliers, felt differently. The previously loyal sports following from Cleveland's west side was angered by the extended pilgrimage they soon would face if they desired to watch hockey or basketball. The economics of the time and area, not to mention the possibility of racial tensions found in a distant, rural suburb, also dampened the spirits of the black population from Cleveland's east side. In many ways, the reactions of these two groups articulated the new strains placed on team loyalties.³²

The reaction outside of Cuyahoga County was predictably more positive, but still not homogenous. Many residents of Akron were thrilled to be considered within the mix of Cleveland's professional sports. During discussions of the Luckman Stadium plan, many Browns fans from Akron and Summit County wrote to the sports pages to plead that any new stadium retain a seating capacity similar to that of Municipal Stadium. Projections to go from 80,000 seats to roughly 56,000 left many Akronites feeling like they would be excluded from trips up Interstate 77 to see their favorite team. The close proximity of the Coliseum would open up the area to multiple opportunities and its fans to increased participation. To some, the location was vindication of the support residents of Summit and Portage Counties had shown Cleveland sports over the years. Others viewed the location, as Mileti did, in terms of the evolving megalopolis of Cleveland-Akron-Canton. While the placement of the Coliseum created greater spectator opportunities, to many in the Akron-Summit County area it was a clearer statement on

the development of the area and its symbolic merger with Cleveland. As one Akron businessman stated, “We, both Cleveland and Akron, need something like it.”³³

Richfield and its roughly 2,000 residents, the population most directly affected by the new Coliseum, seemed shocked at first. The rural community’s only prior claim-to-fame was its nineteenth century link to preacher and abolitionist John Brown. Now a state-of-the-art sports arena was going to rise up among the farms, fields and forest of the region. Two schools of thought soon emerged regarding the Coliseum. The first represented those residents who saw this as an opportunity for modernization and progress, and one that would bring jobs to the area. The Coliseum, they believed, would assist Richfield’s development and bring the attention and money needed for new projects. One Richfield resident argued that this could be the best thing that could ever happen to Richfield; that people would know Richfield exists; that people from all over northeastern Ohio would come; and that the Coliseum would give the town a new identity. The second school of thought protested the Coliseum as a threat to the rural community’s tradition. Construction of the facility, this school feared, would bring the picturesque countryside nothing but the crime, traffic, and other problems of urban centers. One citizen went so far as to compare Miletic and his Coliseum to the Caligula and the Roman Empire. “Ancient Romans,” he stated, “had the same sorry habits—worship of their athletes—when the empire staggered at the gates of doom. Mankind had a second chance in that long ago time. This time there will be no second chance.”

Another couple commented that the addition of restaurants and clubs to complement the Coliseum were items Richfield had never had and did not want. The Coliseum was clearly not a doomsday warning, but battle lines were being drawn by both parties, and Mileti's plans to open the facility by the end of 1972 were in for a fight.³⁴

The group most angered by the imminent departure of both a professional team and a sports facility were Cleveland's political and civic leaders. Mayor Stokes called it a "great loss for the city" and blamed the infighting of the city council for pushing the new facility away from downtown Cleveland. He hoped to speak with Mileti shortly after the announcement to see if he could persuade the entrepreneur-owner to reconsider a downtown location, yet Stokes also admitted that he found Mileti's choice to move a natural reaction to the regional circumstances. City council, in turn, accused the mayor of grasping at straws while deferring an administrative blunder. The point of contention between the mayor and city council was the Gateway development for the E. 9th area of downtown. Unsuccessful negotiations with Mileti for the construction of a new arena located just southeast of Municipal Stadium had taken place prior to the announcement of Richfield as the final choice. The Greater Cleveland Growth Association also expressed sadness that Mileti (who ironically was a member of the GCGA) was leaving the central city. The GCGA had extended offers to Mileti to work with him in developing arena plans for the city's Gateway district, but this went to no avail. "Cleveland has lost another facility that goes towards making a city vital," lamented Cleveland Development

Director, Richard Green. “It’s just another index to the economic realities of a dying city.” The one surprising constant within the sentiments of political and civic leaders was the absence of any blame on Mileti.³⁵

Reaction from the local media did not fully call Mileti to task for moving a facility and two teams out of the central city and away from its traditional fan base. *The Cleveland Press*, with its laissez faire approach to sports, neither outwardly praised nor decried the Coliseum’s location. For the most part, it used the occasion to applaud Mileti for his initiative and proclaimed that the new facility would open the door to the NHL. At its most contentious point, the *Press*’ Bob August commented on the difference between Mileti’s location—one that could draw from every direction—and a downtown Cleveland location—one that is hindered by the lake on its north border. Still, August argued that the lake had not hurt the drawing power of the Browns, but admitted that it was an argument for another day. While the *Press*’ sportswriters stayed out of civic politics, two news editorials addressed the issue: one mentioned a “twinge of regret” at the site; the other asked Mileti to call the facility the “Cleveland” Coliseum as a reminder of the source of any box office muscle. Perhaps by accident, the first of these editorials found itself ironically placed under an editorial titled, “Jobs leaving Cleveland.” Cleveland’s ever-present march into urban decline left the city vulnerable, and not even the booster press could succinctly defend civic image successfully.³⁶

The Plain Dealer sports staff, one that had caressed and coddled Mileti's every venture with the loving touch of a parent, followed Mileti's announcement with a schizophrenic collection of editorials and columns. Initial reaction was much the same as found elsewhere: understanding and well-wishes for Mileti countered by sadness for downtown's loss. As time passed, cynical assessments of the state of Cleveland emerged to support Mileti's decision—even after years of promoting a downtown arena. Lebovitz pondered if Mileti had set a precedent that tenants of Municipal Stadium would soon follow. One columnist wrote "in most cities there would be something anomalous about the professional sports teams playing their home games far from home, but the departure of the Barons and the Cavaliers is the best Cleveland tradition—a growing tradition, incidentally. Some of the most interesting attractions Cleveland has to offer are outside of town." Taking on a similar tone, columnist Bob Dolgan proclaimed himself a convert to the idea of moving from the central city to the center of the region. "Many people sincerely feel that Mileti's departure is a black eye for Cleveland. They talk about civic pride and they're honest and concerned," argued Dolgan. "But what does it all mean? We're not put on this earth to preserve downtown. I fail to see how my life or yours is going to be better if the new arena is in Lakewood, or Shaker, or Richfield or on the corner of Ninth and Bolivar...But nothing is sacrosanct. There's no law that says the heart of Cleveland has to stay right where it is. You can't blame people for wanting to go where it's roomy and comfortable." The seemingly enlightened and generous praise

Dolgan elicited was not a foreshadowing of the booster press's future coddling of Mileti. The move to Richfield could have been a major disaster for Mileti and his image, especially that of the champion of Cleveland. When asked in an interview in the *Akron Beacon Journal* if locating the Coliseum outside of Cleveland would hurt the city, Mileti responded, "I don't know. That's not my bag. I'm not in politics." The city's savior was proving he had other interests. Nevertheless, the entrepreneur escaped Cleveland's wrath, but the bloom seemed to be off the rose and Mileti was now under the microscope in his hometown.³⁷

TROUBLE IN THE HENHOUSE: MILETI VS. THE ENVIRONMENT

Mileti envisioned the perfect scenario when he selected Richfield as the site for his Coliseum. Sitting perfectly between Cleveland and Akron, the Coliseum would be able to attract four million people from Northeast Ohio. Furthermore, the rural area was ripe for further development. Sitting conveniently at the Interstate 270 exit on Route 303 (an accessible intersection), Mileti envisioned more than a mere sports arena. The 600 acres he purchased were to be used for hotels, restaurants and clubs, gas stations, and all the amenities modern culture could possibly desire. Some of the development would be his, and rumors suggested he envisioned a larger sports complex that might draw the Indians and Browns away from downtown, while others would buy portions of his land or buy land on their own to build up the rustic countryside into a more bustling suburbia. This sent up warning flags among the residents of Richfield Township, Peninsula, and

other area communities. What had originally seemed to be an easy process of placement and construction for Mileti soon turned into over a year of courtroom challenges. Along the way, construction on Mileti's Coliseum was delayed, the struggling economy caused costs to rise dramatically, financial weaknesses came forward, and another side of the entrepreneur/sports emperor was revealed. To some, the Coliseum marked the ultimate triumph for Mileti—a monument to his vision. To others, it was his Waterloo—a mausoleum of reason, his sports empire, and the hopes of his investors.³⁸

Initial projections that construction on the Coliseum would be completed by October 1972 and at a cost of \$17 million may have been generous, but circumstances soon came forth to ensure that neither goal would come to fruition. Shortly after Mileti's announcement, a grass-roots level group calling themselves Citizens Organized for the Preservation of our Environment (COPE) began distributing flyers in Richfield and the surrounding communities in protest of the construction. In spite of the benefits Mileti promised the Coliseum would bring to the area, mainly \$250,000 annually in tax money for schools and much needed sewage and water facilities, a growing challenge emerged among some residents of Richfield, Peninsula, and other neighboring communities. Advocating three major issues—Pollution of the air and water surrounding the proposed area, destruction of the scenic values in the area, and excessive traffic—COPE challenged the process by which Mileti's Coliseum plans were approved by the Zoning Commission and Board of Appeals. Not satisfied that the rights of residents or the environment had

been considered, COPE filed suit in the Summit County Court of Appeals. This began a series of lawsuits and appeals that lasted until the end of 1972 when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case. While Mileti was not without supporters in the area, he had been unable to shake COPE's legal proceedings. The grassroots organization represented enough of the population and even more so was persistent enough with its legal challenges that they forced Mileti to delay the ground breaking.³⁹

In October 1971 Mileti was forced to announce that the Coliseum would not be ready by its projected opening date of October 1972. To his dismay, the environmental challenges did not end with the trail of lawsuits. While in the middle of his legal debacle with COPE, Mileti was in the process of working out details on acceptable water systems and sewage treatment facilities for his new complex. The rural state of the area worked to his disadvantage, as modern facilities had not yet been brought there. Furthermore, land to the east of the Coliseum's site had been designated as national park land for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Whatever problems Mileti faced through the interests of residents were multiplied by the sudden involvement of politicians and the Environmental Protection Agency. With the change of the calendar, new focus was given to Mileti's plans to tie his sewage treatment into the facilities being used by a nearby housing development. The runoff would have been sent to Furnace Run, a small stream that conservationists did not want tainted with treated sewage. The state's Water Pollution Control Board (WPCB) threatened to challenge Mileti on this issue, and by

April Mileti announced that he dropped this plan. While trying to think of new options for treating sewage from the Coliseum, Mileti was able to work out details with Akron officials to have that city's water and sewage lines extended to the Coliseum at a \$500,000 cost to Mileti. This plan did not include the extension of service to Richfield or the rest of northern Summit County. The problems of the water and sewage lines lasted well into mid-March 1973 when, to the surprise of all, Mileti broke ground on the stadium in the middle of a debate with the EPA.⁴⁰

In the midst of this latest debacle surrounding the Coliseum's construction, attacks on Mileti remained steady but selective. For the most part, environmental conservation remained the focal point of all criticism. Some Akron officials came out in support of the current site, or at least the area, but were critical of Mileti's proposed methods of handling water and waste. Rep. John Seiberling (D-Akron) feared that the Coliseum would bring in additional development that would suburbanize the area to the detriment of the Cuyahoga National Valley. William Nye of the WPCB concurred. Mileti defended himself and his record on conservation. He stated that he was a conservationist because he enjoyed "trees and streams and things like that." As overly simple as this statement sounded, and as important as the park and environment had become, it did not address the most potentially volatile issue: water and sewage for Richfield. Even the proclamation that Mileti was taking all the required steps and doing his part to be a "good neighbor" seemingly went unnoticed. By March 1973 the Ohio

Sports Center, Inc.—the corporation Mileti set up to operate the Coliseum—signed a contract to build a treatment center at the Coliseum site for \$922,730. Needing only the expected EPA approval of this plan, Mileti broke ground and started another round of verbal fireworks. The EPA’s challenge against Mileti and the start of construction was thrown out, and the Coliseum was finally under way. Soon afterwards, the *Beacon Journal* reported that Mileti purchased an additional 297 acres in the area. Every fear politicians, conservationists, and residents expressed that their rural countryside would be transformed into a new urban or suburban hotbed looked to be coming true. In the process of all of his actions Mileti aggravated his problems as he did much to erode the local support he had initially received, mainly as the result of arranging for water service from Akron to the Coliseum while forsaking any service to the rest of Richfield. The problems Richfield had encountered up to that point inspired them to unanimously pass legislation in January 1973 to seriously curb development opportunities for future sports and amusement complexes. Richfield’s mayor, Paul Wulff openly criticized Mileti for his water plans, stating that the sports entrepreneur had negotiated with Akron for his own benefit, and behind the backs of Richfield residents. Eventually the frustration of knowing that the Coliseum would be the only part of Richfield to which water would be provided became too great for Wulff, and he told the water provider that it could, “Go to Hell.” When the Coliseum eventually opened in October 1974, a special “Coliseum” section in the *Akron Beacon Journal* noted that it was Mileti and his facility that brought

water to Richfield. The credit was all his. Mileti's goodwill mission to Northeast Ohio had gotten off to a rocky start and was now experiencing a rockier middle.⁴¹

Back in Cleveland, the city that was at the heart of Mileti's motives, news of the Coliseum rapidly dropped from the headlines soon after the initial planning announcement was made. But the lack of headlines did not mean that civic leaders and politicians had turned a blind eye or a deaf ear to the news out of Richfield. A strong desire to build an arena in downtown Cleveland still made the rounds in conversations involving downtown development, but there was no reason to build such a facility with no teams to play in it. By the end of 1972, in the midst of Mileti's legal troubles and construction delays, Mayor Ralph Perk, elected in the 1971 elections, publicly began the campaign to bring home Cleveland's favorite son and his professional teams. Shortly after the election, Perk claimed that the Coliseum would be built in Cleveland after all. Mileti countered, saying "I appreciate Cleveland wanting us but we're going to build the coliseum where it should be built...a geographic spot most convenient to most people."⁴²

After Mileti failed at a second NHL expansion bid attempt in June 1972, Perk made a major move. Cleveland's Gateway project had been relegated to small talk and civic dreams in the past. Mayor Perk announced on June 11th that he had been in discussions with developers on a new plan for development of the area. The new \$100 million plan was scheduled to include a downtown luxury hotel, parking garage, and possibly an arena. When questioned by reporters on Mileti, his failed NHL bid, and the

Coliseum, Perk was not at a loss for an opinion. He declared that he had been informed of the NHL's decision on Mileti's bid a week prior to its public disclosure. He further stated that Mileti's continued insistence in building the Coliseum in Richfield was done out of respect to his financial backers. Perk steadfastly contended that the construction of an arena near Municipal Stadium was a necessity for reviving downtown, and that he would soon be in communication with Mileti to make this happen. Sheldon Guren of U.S Realty Co, a cohort of Art Modell in the Cleveland Stadium Corp. and a proposed downtown arena, went even further, conceding, "We have the feeling Cleveland now requires all the professional sports it can get." The Coliseum had to be built downtown. Guren later stated that Mileti would have never built his Coliseum downtown. He recalled that, "(Mileti) said he thought he'd have a better chance to attract the suburban-type audience he wanted in Richfield." Despite the lingering problems impeding construction, Mileti continued to make it clear that Cleveland was out of the picture.⁴³

Events that followed news of the new Gateway project soon brought into question the extent of persuasion Perk and Cleveland were willing to use to bring Mileti and his teams back downtown. Rumors swirled that key politicians and civic leaders exerted undue pressure on local financial institutions and other businesses that worked with Mileti. From the state capital, talk indicated that politicians pressured Ohio Governor John J. Gilligan to make sure the Coliseum was built in Cleveland, but Cleveland area representatives immediately denied it. Mileti discounted any back-room dealings aimed

at torpedoing his Coliseum, and Cleveland politicians steadfastly denied any wrongdoings. Yet a sense of civic pride on the part of Cleveland businesses soon came in the form of cancelled loges in the Coliseum. McDonald & Company, one of the most influential firms in Cleveland, was one such company. They informed Mileti that “After giving this matter careful consideration, we do not wish to back any facility which will lead to the detriment of redeveloping downtown Cleveland.” As part of its conclusion, they called on Mileti’s sense of civic loyalty: “Cleveland has a lot to offer you. You, in turn, could help us take a great step forward.”⁴⁴

Another issue that received little attention at the time, but was the source of scrutiny and criticism as years passed, was the means of funding the Coliseum. Mileti’s original price tag for the state-of-the-art structure was roughly \$17 million but the delays caused court cases pushed up the overall cost. Perhaps most importantly, the struggling regional economy did little to ease construction costs over the course of the delays. The Coliseum’s price-tag escalated to \$25 million by its completion. In 1972, Mileti arranged for a \$2.4 million loan with the CleveTrust Realty Co. for construction and site development. At that time, he also received conditional commitment for an additional \$22 to \$24 million construction loan. Questions over the feasibility of building the Coliseum for merely \$18 million, however, began hovering over the project. “I don’t know who was pulling the wool over whose eyes,” stated a one-time Coliseum president, “but somebody didn’t face up to the real world.” CleveTrust was informed through an

outside source in the construction industry that the final figure for the Coliseum would more likely run between \$25 and \$30 million. Concerned over the financial stability of the facility, CleveTrust asked for confirmation on the number of loges that had been pre-ordered. The Coliseum loges were set to be leased at an annual rate of \$25,000. Although press reports indicated that 60 loges had already been leased, Mileti and the Ohio Sports Center, Inc. refused to release any information regarding the loges. This included the names of companies that had leased them, reportedly because these corporations feared retribution from Cleveland's civic leaders. CleveTrust was later informed that only three loges had been purchased. The suddenly questionable stability of the Coliseum's construction was reason enough for CleveTrust to back out of its deal with Mileti before construction began.⁴⁵

Mileti found himself in desperate need for new financial backing. Cleveland's financial institutions were not chomping at the bit to provide the financial assistance necessary to cover the construction costs for the Coliseum. Some in the business community considered this a reaction to the withdrawal of CleveTrust's financial backing from its original deal with Mileti. Banks were leery of the financial stability of the Coliseum, especially as concerns over cost estimates came forward. Others turned to a conspiracy theory in which Cleveland politicians pressured these institutions not to do business with Mileti. These individuals felt that Cleveland still hoped to lure the Coliseum back downtown. Either way, the Coliseum's creator began anew his quest for

funding for his monument in Richfield. Where Cleveland's financial institutions no longer could be called upon for aid, Akron's banks and investment homes were only too happy to assist in the quest for financial stability. Eventually Akron's Firestone Bank approached Mileti, but not to provide the needed financing. Instead, it recommended that Mileti contact Chase Manhattan Bank. Chase had recently entered the world of sports arenas when it financed the renovation of Madison Square Garden in New York and the construction of the Capital Centre in the Washington-Baltimore area. Mileti gave Chase his best sales pitch; providing them with a map of the area indicating its proximity to both Cleveland and Akron and the numerous interstate routes facilitating travel to the location. He told them how the Coliseum would reach over four million people in 22 counties in a 60 mile radius. Chase concurred with the vision Mileti painted, and came forward with a \$12 million loan to cover the 500 acres for the Coliseum and its surrounding land. The Mellon National Mortgage Company committed a \$6 million interim loan soon after.⁴⁶

Predictions that the Coliseum would never be built within the \$18 million budget projection came to fruition, and Chase was again called upon to shore up financial shortcomings. The *Plain Dealer* reported in late 1973 that Chase did not act on Mileti's request for an additional \$7 to \$8 million to complete construction. With the bank having already invested so much money in the Coliseum, an unnamed source revealed, Mileti felt he controlled the situation while Chase held very limited options. Just over a week

prior to the opening of the Coliseum, Chase and Mellon anted up an additional \$14.5 million to cover the escalated costs of the building. The same source revealed that, “this thing came within a half hour of blowing up. Chase had about made a decision not to go forward.” The additional funds from Chase brought the total project costs to \$32.5 million. Mileti scrounged another \$4 million (later revealed to have come from Chase) to cover operating costs and settle debts to contractors. In all, Mileti’s Coliseum bill was slightly more than double (\$36.5 million) the originally projected \$18 million estimated in December of 1972 when it opened in October 1974 with a Frank Sinatra concert.⁴⁷

One name missing from the list of financial providers for the Coliseum was the Kettering Foundation. Although they did not publicly contribute any funds to Mileti’s latest venture, they did prove beneficial. Years after the construction of the Coliseum had been completed and during a time when the facility’s financial shortcomings had become the stuff of legends, many in the media wondered aloud what Northeastern Ohio’s financial institutions whispered amongst themselves: Why did Chase ever agree to finance the Coliseum? One theory had the bank going gaga over sports facilities, but others tended towards a perceived stability based on Mileti’s partnerships with Kettering. The Kettering name had thusly sealed the deal that Mileti presented to Chase. Of greater importance, however, was the behind-the-scenes maneuvering Kettering and Mileti completed. Rather than put any new money into the Coliseum, Kettering made arrangements to simply shift its interests in the Arena over to the Richfield facility.

Technically Ohio Communications Inc owned the Coliseum and Ohio Sports Center Inc managed and operated it. In reality, Mileti and Kettering each controlled one third of Ohio Communications (as of 1975), and they split ownership of Ohio Sports Center 51% to 49% respectively. To protect his financial assets, Mileti had the Ohio Sports Center Inc. sell the Coliseum to Ohio Communications the day before the grand opening. The sale price was \$18.5 million. Ohio Communications in turn leased the Coliseum back to Ohio Sports Center. While Mileti did not want his Coliseum to struggle, his financial investments were now safe. With financing in place, Mileti was now the president and principal owner of the Coliseum, as well as the dependent of its successes and failures. The question remained, however, would both Mileti and the Coliseum emerge unscathed if major problems ensued.⁴⁸

CHAPTER 10

CHINKS IN THE ARMOR: THE COLLAPSE OF MILETI'S SPORT EMPIRE

From 1969 through 1971 Nick J. Mileti regularly grabbed headlines in Cleveland. He purchased the Barons and the Arena; a move that unified the team and facility under one owner for the first time in nearly twenty years and also paved the way for NHL expansion bids. Mileti then flirted with the NHL, only to withdraw his bid because he felt the league was exploiting the applicants. The NBA came to town in 1970 when Mileti refused to kowtow to last-minute changes by the league's expansion committee but also refused to let professional basketball slip away. Finally, he announced the construction of a state-of-the-art arena in Richfield Township instead of downtown Cleveland. The print media showed unquestioning support for Mileti, even knowing his arena would deprive downtown of hockey, basketball, and the entertainment dollars that would have been spent there. Mileti was posited as visionary, a working-class man of action, and the foremost defender of Cleveland's image and honor during a time when the effects of urban decline were readily seen and felt. The problems he faced in neighboring Summit County with the construction of the Coliseum were distant to Clevelanders. Mileti could seemingly do no wrong, but he was also not finished grabbing headlines.

From 1972 through 1978, Mileti continued to add to his empire with the acquisition of two radio stations, the Cleveland Indians, and the expansion Crusaders in the World Hockey Association (WHA). But after reaching its pinnacle, Mileti's empire came crashing down under the weight of fiscal and administrative mismanagement. In a city desperately searching for someone or something to lead them out of decline, Mileti was initially seen as the answer—the savior. It became evident, however, that he was instead synonymous with the myriad of problems haunting Cleveland. The financial ineptitude with which Mileti managed his assets highlighted the latter portion of his years in the Cleveland sports scene and the collapse of his empire, but it was not the sole black mark on his record. More importantly the image of Mileti the civic-minded entrepreneur shifted to that of Mileti the ego-maniac and perhaps even modern carpetbagger. He publicly butted heads with Cleveland politicians, Browns owner Art Modell, the president of the NHL, members of his own syndicates, and Cavaliers coach Bill Fitch. He basked in the public spotlight of sports-related fame and media praise, but recoiled when public criticism sprung forth. When the booster press stopped boosting Cleveland's favorite son, Mileti in turn viewed every criticism as a personal attack. The love affair between the local sports owner and Cleveland came crashing down. By 1978 Mileti packed his bags and left Northeast Ohio for the warmer weather and glitz of Hollywood, California.

WHO WANTS THE INDIANS?

Cleveland's baseball history had been one of highs and lows up to 1972. As a charter member of the American League Cleveland had seen its fair shares of star players don the hometown uniform, and twice its Indians captured the World Series (1920 and 1948). Following the 1948 title the Indians were positioned to be a dominant force in baseball over the next decade. Unfortunately, the most dominant force during that same time also resided in the American League: the New York Yankees. Between 1949 and 1959 the Indians captured one pennant (1954) and finished below .500 only once, but they finished second six times (five times to the Yankees). Those years have been called the Golden Era of Cleveland baseball by some. The years that followed were anything but golden. By the end of the 1971 season baseball in Cleveland was a spectacle of the worst kind; resembling a car crash rather than a carnival. The ever-decreasing fans in attendance over the years had been treated to the loss of talented players through trades, the seemingly constant threat of franchise relocation, and most importantly, a steady diet of losing baseball. Vernon Stouffer, majority owner of the Indians since 1966, was understandably worried about the drops in attendance and the financial nightmare surrounding Cleveland baseball. Stouffer, the local millionaire who had purchased the team so it would stay in Cleveland, had previously shrugged off rumors that the Indians were for sale and the interests expressed by outside bidders. The situation at the end of the 1971 season was depressing enough for him to begin entertaining options to make his

franchise more financially viable. At the forefront of these options emerged a plan to share the Indians with New Orleans beginning in 1974.¹

The Cleveland Indians ended the 1971 season with a 60-102 record and 43 games out of first place. The worst team in major league baseball was also in need of a manager, a director of player personnel, and two minor league affiliates going into the off-season. The Indians drew 591,348 fans to Cleveland Stadium, numbers lower than any other American League team. More telling was that this was a drop-off of 138,404 fans from the previous year. Truly, the Cleveland Indians were a franchise in disarray. The embattled Stouffer had always vowed to keep the team in Cleveland, but an influx of money was badly needed. Early in the season Stouffer had set a \$9,000,000 price tag on the franchise. While no one matched that number, there was no shortage of possible suitors. Foremost among them were George Steinbrenner and Edward DeBartolo, Sr. Steinbrenner, from nearby Lorain, Ohio, had previously owned the Cleveland Pipers basketball franchise, and was rumored to be offering \$6,000,000 for the franchise. DeBartolo, the owner of Thistledown Race Track, was supposedly interested in buying the Indians and then moving the team to a new stadium near Akron, Ohio. While each man eventually got his professional sports franchise (Steinbrenner the New York Yankees, and DeBartolo the Pittsburgh Penguins), they were unable, or more likely unwilling to approach Stouffer's asking price. The Indians owner refused to sell for less than nine million dollars, and kept the team through their troubling season.²

In August 1971, with the baseball season all but over, the local press began reporting that Stouffer, rather than sell the team, was looking into the possibility of “sharing” the Indians with an untapped market. In this case the market was New Orleans with its brand new Superdome. As more and more reports came in, rumor shifted towards reality. Stouffer argued that the sharing system would give the franchise a much needed financial boost to the tune of \$2,500,000 from New Orleans investors. Playing 30 home games there would also help home attendance numbers hurt by the cold April weather the Stadium experienced thanks to its lakeshore proximity. The investment of \$2,500,000 million of the part of New Orleans investors would also mean the transfer of 25% of the team’s stock into their hands. Stouffer already possessed roughly 78% of the Indians’ stock, so the sale of the proposed portion to New Orleans investors would still leave him with majority ownership. The decision was Stouffer’s alone since he could overrule any veto from the Indians board of directors, but he continued to seek their approval before making his decision. Simultaneously he tried to ease public perceptions and fears by reassuring all who would listen that the sharing proposal did not mean an inevitable relocation of the Indians. According to Stouffer, sharing the Indians with New Orleans would save the team for Cleveland. An unnamed insider with the board of directors perhaps more correctly articulated the situation when he told the *Press*, “The whole thing is in a state of confusion.”³

Initial responses from the booster press articulated the confusion of Cleveland; so willing to point out its flaws to itself on the one hand, while boldly proclaiming its worth to outsiders on the other. Most curious of the coverage were the initial editorials found in the *Plain Dealer*. In August, coverage of the New Orleans rumor elicited logical justifications and self-assurances that the team would never leave Cleveland rather than concern over a move that could be perceived as the initial signs of professional baseball's exodus from Cleveland. Cleveland baseball fans needed to look no further than the Washington Senators, earmarked for the Dallas, Texas market in 1972, to see the reality of the business of professional sports. Owners were loyal to the dollar and profits, not to tradition and supposed civic responsibility. But the *Plain Dealer* counted on civic loyalty and responsibility from Stouffer. One editorial, appearing shortly after news of Stouffer's plan broke, commented that, "It is difficult to fault the Indians for wanting to accept an offer to play some regular season games [in New Orleans] in 1974." Citing the poor weather on the lakefront in April and May, and the subsequent poor attendance at games, the editorial argued that the Indians should not be forced to stick to a "less-rewarding schedule." *Plain Dealer* sports editor Hal Lebovitz seconded this notion. He cited four advantages that would emerge from sharing with New Orleans. First, the elimination of 30 games would make the season much more manageable for fans. Next, businesses would be more prone to buy season tickets for a shortened, 50 game schedule. Third, by televising all of the games played in New Orleans, baseball continuity would

remain in tact in Cleveland, and the organization would pick up much needed revenue from the broadcasts. Finally, the Indians would be able to pocket a guaranteed sum from New Orleans once a deal was finalized, and reduce their financial problems in the process. Those in favor of sharing the Indians saw no danger in the eventual shift of all 82 home games and the franchise to New Orleans, and instead viewed it as a “win-win” for each city. Cleveland would get a financially stronger baseball team, and New Orleans would be the recipient of major league baseball for its Superdome.⁴

Others in the media were not so quick to jump aboard the New Orleans bandwagon. As fears of an eventual relocation of the Indians more clearly surfaced, the team was labeled a “civic institution” and the call went out to save this Cleveland treasure. Lebovitz changed his tune and used his column to call on Stouffer to commit to Cleveland and sign a long-term lease at Municipal Stadium rather than share games with New Orleans. Stouffer responded that there was no way he would tie himself up long-term in the aging Stadium. He intimated that a new stadium or ballpark would change his mind for certain, but everyone knew that the reality of a new sports facility in downtown had been a losing battle for years. Another *Plain Dealer* columnist, noting Cleveland’s troubled state, wondered if the “sharing” could extend beyond merely a ball team. “Now if Cleveland can interest other cities in sharing our problems, politicians, and pollution,” wrote George Condon, “we could all stand up and cheer.” Bob August of the *Press* was far more cynical, and had been from the moment Stouffer’s plan was announced.

Addressing Cleveland's growing apathy towards the potential move, he commented, "But even in the worst of times, which these certainly are, the Indians are better than nothing, something to talk about, even if only to beef about." An improved team would quickly reverse the mood of baseball fans he implied. August saved his strongest comments for the actual sharing plan. The New Orleans deal, he stated, "looks like seeking the cure for a severe headache with a bullet above the ear." Another *Press* columnist directed similar sarcasm at the *Plain Dealer* for its rationalization that the partial move to New Orleans would keep the team in Cleveland: "which is like saying you don't mind a woman having a baby as long as she doesn't give birth." Behind the *Press's* subtle jibes steeped in logic, one message was loud and clear. The loss of the Indians would be a huge blow to Cleveland and its image.⁵

Cleveland's baseball fans, faced with the realization that there was a very good possibility their Indians would played 30 games from its home schedule roughly 1,050 miles south when the 1974 season began, were indifferent to the news. As Lebovitz shifted away from his initial supportive stance to the sharing plan, he turned to fan letters sent to the sports section to bolster his new opposition to the move. "Get rid of Vernon," and "Sell OUR Indians to Clevelanders" were the battle cries of roughly 75% of the over 1,000 letters he received. Other journalists found fan reactions much more subdued. A *Press* editorial pointed out, "Fan interest (this year) went from lukewarm to plenty cold. This is probably why there has not been a great deal of fan reaction to the Indians

dickering to play 30 of their games in New Orleans in 1974.” The *Plain Dealer*’s Bob Dolgan commented on the apathetic response most fans exhibited when Stouffer’s plan was announced. When he polled the 75 attendees at a meeting of the Wahoo Club (an Indians fan club) on whether the team should play all of its games in Cleveland, only 10 to 15 favored the notion. Dolgan added that such acceptance of the potential for a move, whether the Indians ever played in New Orleans, marked a shift in the meaning of baseball for Cleveland. Baseball in Cleveland was in need of major help, and soon.⁶

MILETI’S FINEST MOMENT

Mileti started 1972 off by purchasing NBC’s WKYC radio stations in Cleveland. This \$5,500,000 purchase provided him with both an AM and an FM station on which to broadcast his Barons and his Cavaliers. Mileti gave his broadcasting opportunities a touch of grandeur, stating he would use his latest purchase to broadcast the greatness of Cleveland. While the radio stations sat nicely in the frame of his empire, the purchase did not grab headlines like his previous ventures. The plan to share the Indians with New Orleans still hovered on or near the surface of the city’s sport headlines, and sometimes its front page headlines. The situation was ripe for something big to happen, and maybe that something would boost Mileti to the forefront of local news and further the growth of his sports empire.⁷

American League owners exhibited some hesitation to Stouffer’s plans after he and representatives from New Orleans presented the plan at the American League’s

winter meetings. Baltimore's Jerry Hoffberger, California's Gene Autry, and Texas' Bob Short expressed individual concern, and Oakland's Charles Finley complained about the plan for two reasons. One, he didn't like the Indians tying up two markets. Two, Finley asked, "What if I want to move there?" It was the former of these two points that troubled most A.L. owners. Knowing very well that the National League had 11 of its 12 teams draw over one million in attendance, and that the A.L. had only four teams with similar numbers, A.L. owners may have been willing to try "rash measures" to boost their figures and expand into a new market. When the move of the Washington Senators franchise to Dallas was approved, the Washington, D.C. area began eyeing the Indians as a replacement. "Cleveland should be concerned," warned a Washington Board of Trade representative. "And so should other cities that are known to be having problems in supporting their teams." The Indians franchise was "unhealthy," suitors were targeting it, and Vernon Stouffer was a man in the spotlight.⁸

The local press appealed to Stouffer directly after baseball's winter meetings. Their passive-aggressive methods called on his past loyalties to Cleveland and his civic duty to his hometown, while urging him wholeheartedly to sell his team to local investors. In many ways, Stouffer could not continue as owner. Outside of A.L. winter meetings, Stouffer was seldom seen or heard. His son James acted as his and the organization's official mouthpiece since the announcement of the New Orleans plan. When Stouffer hinted that he would consider selling the team to outsiders, it appeared

that Cleveland would lose professional baseball. “Say it isn’t so, Vernon,” pleaded Bob August, who later attributed Stouffers comments on selling the team to anger and frustration. He, like many, was shocked at the possibility of a man regarded as a civic booster and hailed as a public benefactor turning his back on his hometown. A *Plain Dealer* editorial reminded Stouffer that, while a baseball team is a private venture, “it is so close to being an enterprise in the public domain that the will and welfare of the people should be the prime consideration.” The *Press*, in an editorial of its own, finished the collective thought: “What is in the best interests of this town is to have the Indians remain here, full time.” Vernon Stouffer’s legacy in Cleveland was yet to be decided, but the booster press made clear the only possible choices: hero or goat.⁹

Late February reports indicated that Mileti met with officials from Kettering, Inc. in New York to finalize the purchase of the Indians franchise. He and Stouffer had supposedly agreed upon an undisclosed price for the team, and approval from Kettering was all that was needed. The planned purchase would split ownership between Mileti and Kettering; 51% to 49% respectively. Kettering would provide the funding, and Mileti would run the show. But this time, Kettering decided against anteing up for another Mileti sports enterprise. Kettering announced that it had invested all that it was going to invest into Cleveland sports, and declined the offer. This left some Cleveland financial institutions a bit uneasy. McKenna told Mileti that purchasing the Indians should be a Cleveland project, so Mileti turned to the city’s civic leaders and boosters for

financial backing to meet the ten million dollar price tag. Alva Bonda, Joseph Zingale, and Bruce Fine (each already a member of the Cavaliers ownership syndicate) were joined by Howard Metzenbaum and Bruce's brother Marshall Fine in forming a potential ownership syndicate. Each member reportedly contributed \$100,000 up front while Mileti put forth \$500,000 (borrowed). The \$1,000,000 would enable them to provide a first payment in the buyout of Stouffer (\$800,000) and also have working capital set aside to operate the team (\$200,000). Together they would team with Mileti in pursuit of the Indians.¹⁰

On March 6, 1972 headlines blared that Mileti and five partners had purchased the Indians, and the saga of the team appeared to be over. Surely, Cleveland's savior would never consider moving his city's baseball team to New Orleans or Washington, D.C. The Indians were saved. Vernon Stouffer, no longer burdened with ownership issues, admitted to the pressure he felt over the past seven months. "Some nights I couldn't sleep. There seemed to be so much criticism all the time," he lamented. "Seemed like so many people abandon you when things go bad. The papers were tough on me. Could have used more kind words." The ownership shift from Stouffer to Mileti was ironic to some. Each was a local boy, proud of his city, and proud to contribute on Cleveland's behalf when possible. But, whereas Stouffer came across, "like the Poor Soul; a well meaning but fumbling do-gooder who manages to wind up more pitiful than proficient, Mileti has the aura of man with the Midas touch, a man with a history of reaching out and

stalking an area where others fear to tread.” A new era of Cleveland baseball was set to begin.¹¹

The sale plan Mileti presented to A.L. owners was fronted by \$1,000,000 of available cash (including the \$500,000 Mileti had borrowed) out of the \$10,000,000 total cost, and called for \$4,000,000 to come from the sale of public stock. This was a method Mileti had previously used with the Cavaliers, but one that was not beyond the scrutiny of A.L. owners. The recent financial problems of the Seattle Pilots and Washington Senators franchises were fresh on the minds of baseball owners. The sale of public stock, and to a larger extent the vagueness of the purchase and capitalization, appeared to be the hang-ups of many owners. Mileti was called to a meeting in Florida within a week of the announced sale to discuss three major questions with A.L. owners: the proposed “sharing” of the Indians with New Orleans; any conflicts because of his dual ownership of major league teams; and the stability of his financial package. Only after he quelled any fears of a financial disaster would Mileti’s purchase of the Indians be given final approval. Exuding confidence that he and his syndicate could meet any financial requirements put forth by A.L. owners, Mileti told the *Press* that every venture he had ever undertaken had been 100% solid. But for a man who had done the unfathomable, creating a sports empire that was on the verge of adding a major league baseball franchise to a stable already stocked with two arenas and both professional basketball and hockey

teams, perhaps the most telling and yet ironic comment was his final one. Regarding the securitization by A.L. owners, Mileti simply acknowledged, “This is the real world.”¹²

American League owners, grounded in the reality of the real world, did not believe the Indians’ financing was stable. After Mileti presented that group with his plans, owners described the financial structure of the Indians purchase as “thin” and “shaky” and feared it would lead to another Seattle or Washington situation. “We don’t want indebtedness staring us in the face again,” cautioned one unnamed owner. Jerold Hoffberger of the Baltimore Orioles ascertained that, “All Mr. Mileti did was to propose a method of buying back Vernon Stouffer’s stock and paying off certain other indebtedness of the club.” How would Mileti run a baseball franchise with his limited cash base? Owners knew that he had presented them borrowed money, that he had no huge cash assets of his own to invest in the team, and that the plan for selling public stock was risky considering the quality of the product. Ten days after the sale of the Indians was first announced, the American League told Mileti what he must do to finalize the deal everyone anticipated as automatic. An entirely new format was needed to give Mileti a baseball team for his empire. “There is a lot of money in Cleveland dying to get into baseball with Nick as the leader,” stated Joseph Zingale, member of the potential ownership syndicate. “There is no question this deal well be put together.”¹³

True to Zingale’s words, several local businessmen came to the rescue of Mileti’s purchase and joined his syndicate. Dudley Blossom III and C. Bingham Blossom,

brothers and members of one of Cleveland's most prominent families, local attorney Richard Miller, and numerous minor partners joined the syndicate and brought an infusion of cash with them. Initially the original members of the syndicate had each been asked to increase their contribution, but the addition of new members answered the concerns over financing the team. The new and much larger syndicate came forward with the required \$3,000,000 to meet A.L. demands, and the league approved the sale of the Indians on March 22, 1972. Even without Kettering's backing Mileti was still able to complete the deal, but it came at a price. In all previous purchases and holdings, Mileti had procured 51% ownership. While this was to be the plan again, the revamped syndicate left Mileti with only 7.5% of the stock. Of the 40 total investors in the syndicate, 24 had invested less than \$100,000 individually and combined to hold 28% of the stock and three possessed more stock than Mileti. The Blossom brothers each invested \$1,000,000 (14.45% of the stock), and Stouffer still held 13.53% of the stock (although, this number would diminish gradually). The money behind the team wasn't Mileti's, but the team was in his hands.¹⁴

A FORESHADOWING OF MEDIA BACKLASH

Given Mileti's penchant for making headlines and coming out smelling the part of the proverbial rose, it would not have been surprising for a fairy tale proclamation to accompany the announced finalization of the Indians' sale on March 22nd:

Once upon a time Cleveland was in danger of losing its baseball team to a far away kingdom. Nick Mileti, a knight and defender of his hometown, began a quest to make sure baseball stayed on the shores of Lake Erie. When all hope seemed lost, he came forth and kept the team in Cleveland. He saved both baseball

and his kingdom's image. Under Mileti's guidance baseball in Cleveland was reborn, and brought championships and honor to the city. The young knight became king, his empire was prosperous, and everyone lived happily ever after.

Unfortunately, such a scenario would have to remain a fairy tale. Mileti's purchase of the Indians was a final hurrah rather than the spring-board for future successes. Doug Clarke of the *Press* proclaimed that the unveiling of his Coliseum plans was Mileti's top moment as a sports entrepreneur in Cleveland. But it was the purchase of the Indians franchise, especially given all the chaos surrounding the franchise and its future in Cleveland that took the city's burgeoning sports mogul to his pinnacle. A frenzy of laudatory columns, editorials, and letters proclaimed Mileti as the man who saved baseball in Cleveland. When his hometown needed him most, Mileti pulled off his finest civic duty by keeping a nearly-irreplaceable institution from leaving. In so doing, he bolstered a new, albeit fleeting, image for Cleveland and for himself. "The Indians belong to Northeast Ohio," Mileti exuberantly proclaimed. Indeed, Northeast Ohio believed him and was thankful for his intervention.¹⁵

Cleveland rejoiced in knowing baseball would not follow the path of so many industries, jobs, and residents and flee the city limits. The public recognized Mileti as the man responsible for bringing new life into Cleveland sports, and wished him success. Mileti and his ownership group downplayed any mention of "saving the Indians" from leaving Cleveland. One member of the ownership syndicate argued that, "Cleveland will have to save the team for Cleveland. And Nick is the guy to make people aware that they still love the Indians." Seemingly, a love affair between the fans and the Indians was

resurrected from 12 years of apathy that had threatened the value of the team to the community. Letters sent into the *Plain Dealer* exhibited such enthusiasm on the part of males and females alike. While one such letter wished Mileti continued success; another urged all fans to celebrate and cheer on the team through the purchase of tickets. But the most poignant letter, one that struck upon a theme that had previously only hovered around the persona of Mileti, tied a nostalgic element to the new owner and the expected shift in fortunes. “The purchase of the Indians by Nick Mileti and his associates,” read the letter, “is the best news for baseball fans since Bill Veeck arrived on the scene over 25 years ago.”¹⁶

Comparisons to Veeck and his 1946 purchase of the Indians became commonplace for Mileti in March 1972. Lebovitz argued that Mileti bought the team at the right time, just as Veeck had done in 1946. Both transactions came at periods with the Indians’ performance was down. Whereas Veeck was able to build a World Champion with the core of talent he inherited and fill Municipal Stadium through innovative promotions and marketing campaigns, Mileti was essentially expected to do the same. Describing him as a “doer,” Lebovitz argued that the sale to Mileti will “be a big lift to the town, one we desperately need.” Chuck Heaton saw the speaking tours Mileti had been embarking upon as more than just a means of promoting the Barons, Cavaliers, and now the Indians. He saw them as reincarnations of Veeck’s sojourns throughout Ohio to build up interest and support for Cleveland’s baseball franchise. The

Press seconded these notions in columns and editorials, and declared that there was more than a hint of showman Bill Veeck in Mileti. Clarke, noting the shortage of visible and risk-taking leadership in Cleveland, argued that with Mileti running the team, “The city will have a ball club with dynamic leadership, a leadership lacking since Bill Veeck took his tieless neck elsewhere.” Three years later even *Sports Illustrated* chimed in on Mileti’s Veeck-like ascension in 1972 and the fervor it evoked, but this was the limit of any parallel they witnessed. Veeck was idolized in the memory of Clevelanders and Indians fans, and the success his teams experienced seemed ages removed. Mileti now was firmly entrenched and isolated in the spotlight of civic attention and hope. A second coming of success at the gates and on the field was yet to accompany the celebrations that greeted Mileti in the role of baseball owner and savior.¹⁷

Tucked quietly amidst the flurry of “rah, rah” enthusiasm from fan and press alike was a surprising occurrence. In Mileti’s greatest moment, honest criticism of the city’s savior found its way into local newspapers. The *Plain Dealer*’s Bob Dolgan, who had so cynically thrown his support behind the placement of the Coliseum in Richfield, dared to throw questions and caution towards Mileti’s sports empire. Within one month he wrote two opinion-editorial columns that dared to mention the possibility of failure. Other columnists had wondered aloud if Mileti indeed spread himself too thin with the addition of the Indians to an already well-stocked arsenal of teams and facilities. Yet these columns stroked enough of Mileti’s ego to avoid upsetting him. Dolgan, with one article

assessing the “Schnozz’s” ego and a second wondering why the public should hold any confidence and hope in his running of the Indians franchise, broke the understood tradition of coddling the city’s favorite son. Mileti had been given a free ride based on his energy, his belief in a better Cleveland, and most importantly his actions. He was the one local figure who continually (and publicly) took risks to back up his words. Dolgan shattered that pattern, and in the process initiated press criticism and questions that would haunt Mileti until his departure from sport and Cleveland. His columns were not malicious or outwardly prophetic of doom and gloom. But, where others had witnessed a situation that by all accounts posed the possibility of problem and had found the silver lining to report upon, Dolgan instead firmly grasped the grey cloud and looked no further.¹⁸

In late March 1972 Dolgan addressed the possible reasons behind Mileti’s purchase of the Indians. “My hunch is that in buying the Indians the Schnozz not only wants to make a bundle and immortalize himself as the man who saved baseball in his hometown,” asserted Dolgan, “but also that he is responding in part to the drums of glory, which have made bigger men than he dance to their tune.” Mileti had an entourage, he was the subject of public recognition, and he soaked up the limelight with visits to some of Cleveland’s watering holes and restaurants. When the sports talk turned the Browns or Indians, Mileti would remind everyone that he owned the Barons and Cavaliers. In Cleveland, as bad as the Indians were, baseball and football were still top

banana. Rather than remain in the shadows of public consciousness, Mileti purchased the Indians to emerge into forefront of thought. Dolgan recognized this, wished him success, and decided to sit back and see how things would unfold.¹⁹

One month later Dolgan again rankled Mileti's feathers with another op-ed piece. This time the columnist dared to wonder aloud if Mileti could turn his latest venture into a success. Noticing the unquestioned support Mileti received from the vast majority of fans, Dolgan looked for reasons behind such faith and devotion. The Cavaliers remained a struggling expansion franchise. The Barons struggled to make a playoff where eight of eleven teams qualified, only to be eliminated in the first round. Finally, the Coliseum was six months behind schedule at that point. What reason did anyone have to believe Mileti would turn around a franchise in such disarray? Dolgan pointed to the confidence and competence Mileti radiated, and the public appeal it leant. Although seeming harmless enough, these two articles contributed to the erosion of the Schnozz's popularity as well as Mileti's relationship with the press. Unnamed members of the press and of Mileti's syndicates noticed behavioral changes once his credibility became the issue. The early days had been marked with jovial conversations, never failing charm, and old Sicilian sayings—all good copy for the booster press. Following the purchase of the Indians and the accompanying subtle criticisms, Mileti became evasive and suspicious. It was felt he used sarcasm to build walls between the media and himself, and also became more and more unsure of himself in the process. The booster press, no longer extolling

his sports empire, initiated a new era of relations with Mileti, one which, according to one reporter, was such that you “were either with this man or against him.”²⁰

Fan reaction to Mileti’s purchase was not entirely uniform either. The congratulations and comparisons to Veeck were countered with voices of concern. At the heart of this concern was the fate of baseball at Municipal Stadium, and in many ways the health of downtown Cleveland. Still haunted by the inevitable loss of hockey and basketball to Mileti’s Coliseum, fans hoped against the construction of a baseball park and the formation of a sports complex in Richfield. “A million boos to Nick Mileti” wrote one fan who chided him for moving “everything entertainment wise” out of Cleveland. Faced seemingly every day with editorials and stories about dying neighborhoods and the closing of traditional social establishments, Clevelanders were left with a downtown that became synonymous with dilapidation, crime, and pollution. Municipal Stadium’s tenants were two of the few “civic institutions” that still drew visitors to the old central city. Outside Cleveland, residents of the Richfield area remained committed to having Mileti reconsider the location of his arena, let alone the addition of a ballpark, and avoid impending traffic problems, sewage and pollution issues, and the “inconvenience” it would cause to traditional fan bases. Perhaps the praise heaped upon his initiative so many times earlier had become passé, or perhaps individuals realized that headlines for a new arena or sports team did nothing to better the

quality of life in a poor neighborhood. Either way, Mileti's public perception as a savior became questionable to many.²¹

The fanfare from the press and the public alike was not enough to ensure that the euphoria of the moment would last, or more importantly, translate into a well-run and successful franchise. The sale of the Indians to Mileti would ideally have produced stability, prosperity, and success within the franchise. The team did not move to New Orleans, Washington, D. C., or any other market and Cleveland kept the team the booster press hailed as an irreplaceable civic institution, but success ended there. Enthusiasm surrounding Mileti and the purchase did nothing to draw fans back into the empty seats of cavernous Municipal Stadium for the long haul. Cleveland baseball continued to struggle financially and on the field. The Indians traded and sold-off young talent, could not afford to keep or bring in the players needed to build a contender, and did not challenge for the A.L. pennant. Mileti kept the team in Cleveland, fulfilling a great degree of stability for the franchise. "I told them in New Orleans I'm sure they had a dynamite city," Mileti told *SI*. "I also told them I didn't want to know them." Achieving prosperity and success were not to follow as easily, if at all.²²

MILETI/NHL PART II: PRO HOCKEY FINALLY COMES TO TOWN?

The purchase of the Indians was another feather in Mileti's cap, but the addition of the baseball franchise to a stable that already included teams in hockey and basketball, two radio stations, an existing arena within Cleveland's city limits, and another arena

planned for the metropolitan area was more than merely another sports commodity. Minor league hockey and professional basketball neither had nor projected the magnitude of sport in Cleveland. For all of Mileti's additions, his teams remained mired on a second tier of appreciation and importance within the city. The Indians immediately became the crowned jewel of this empire and elevated him to a new level of importance among Cleveland's civic leaders. Only the Browns could have raised Mileti to a higher level of importance in the public eye, and even with the addition of Major League Baseball to the fold, Mileti was not finished. Instead, he set his sights on righting a wrong; on revisiting his first prominent attempt at elevating his status as a sports entrepreneur as well as the image of Cleveland. As he awaited the final verdict from American League owners, Mileti made it known that he would renew his quest to bring the National Hockey League to Cleveland.²³

When Mileti announced his plans for the Coliseum in March 1971 it was widely speculated that the pursuit of an NHL franchise would soon follow. True enough, the booster press subtly filtered out both progress and rumor on this subject as the calendar turned. Clevelanders anticipated the major league hockey team that, according to journalists, was all but assured with the construction of a new arena. But while fans, the media, and those close to the Cleveland hockey scene espoused a popular sentiment that promised an NHL team to play in the Coliseum, Mileti took a more cautious path when addressing his future hockey plans. "I'm not optimistic, I'm not anything, really,"

cautioned Mileti. “I haven’t heard that an expansion committee has been formed so I don’t know what to expect.” Expansion, however, was exactly what the NHL was planning, and reports in the press indicated that an unspecified number of teams would be admitted to begin play in the 1974-1975 season. Perhaps it was unwise of Mileti to rush into the pursuit of another sports franchise so quickly after purchasing another, especially given the financial problems that haunted his most recent venture. But waiting was not Nick’s game. “Other people waited till the timing was right, and that’s why Cleveland, the eighth largest market in the country, didn’t have major league hockey or basketball [in the 1960s],” warned Mileti. “That’s why the Indians were leaving. Think of it! Pittsburgh had hockey. Seattle had basketball. *Seattle!*” Cleveland’s primary mover-and-shaker set forth in June 1972 to bring major league hockey and a bit of prestige back to his hometown.²⁴

Cleveland’s 1969 bid for an NHL franchise had ended when the NHL announced its franchise fee and Mileti subsequently withdrew his application. Still, he never took his eye off the chance to bring major league hockey to the city. Mileti acknowledged to Lebovitz in the days leading up to the NHL’s official decision on expansion that he had been working on a new bid for almost four years. With one franchise all but guaranteed for Kansas City, only one additional franchise remained open. Mileti and Cleveland were in competition with groups representing Cincinnati, Phoenix, Indianapolis, Washington, D.C., Dallas and San Diego. Despite the crowded field of established and growing

metropolises, Cleveland seemed the logical choice, especially if one read the local papers. Lebovitz listed the seven key points Mileti would use in his sales pitch to the NHL Board of Governors. Cleveland was the largest American city applying for a franchise. It was an established “major league” town. Geographically, it was a two hour flight or less from thirteen existing teams. The weather made Cleveland an ideal winter sports town. Hockey had been a continuous and successful part of the city’s sports culture since the late 1920s. Mileti’s empire and the connections it brought would work on behalf of promoting an NHL franchise. And finally, the team and the Coliseum would be owned by the same group, eliminating the hassle of negotiating for playing dates (something no other applicant could boast). Whether on paper or in the morning paper, the argument on behalf of Cleveland looked good, but nothing remained certain.²⁵

Following a preliminary vote amongst members of the NHL Board of Governors, Mileti’s bid had received nine votes and needed only to obtain three more before the final vote to gain final approval and bring the NHL to Cleveland. Asked how he would be impacted if he didn’t get a team, Mileti calmly responded, “I’ll still live.” Four days later, however, Kansas City and Washington, D.C. were admitted as NHL expansion franchises. Rumors swirled that Washington’s admission was due mainly to the desire by NHL officials to have “friends” in D.C. The threat posed by the upstart World Hockey Association and recent challenges to baseball’s reserve clause were two of the more prominent issues of concern for the NHL and professional sports. Rich Passan, the *Plain*

Dealer's Barons beat writer, quoted Minnesota North Stars President Walter Bush as saying, "Having friends in Washington is healthy. Professional sports are being attacked from all sides." On the flip side, congressmen, senators, and even President Nixon were believed to have pushed for an NHL franchise to fill the void left by the relocation of the Senators baseball franchise to the Dallas-Ft. Worth market at the end of the previous year. Editorials lambasted the NHL and its erratic board of governors, looking with disgust on the snub given to Cleveland. But when all was said and done, Mileti was left to wonder what it would take to bring major league hockey to Cleveland. Shocked by the NHL's decision, Mileti later wondered aloud, "Imagine that, Kansas City, Kansas, a major league city." Unlike the experience in 1969 when he first attempted to get an expansion hockey franchise, or even just a few months earlier when plans to purchase the Indians were met with initial rejection, this setback more obviously and outwardly hurt Mileti.

The backlash directed at the NHL by the press instantaneously found a means of expression through the league's new adversary, the WHA. Instead of waiting for another round of NHL expansion and the uncertainty of admission, Mileti was urged by the press to seek entrance into the WHA for its inaugural season. Whereas in the past the press had always looked at rival leagues (such as the American Basketball Association and the American Football League) as lesser commodities, their frustration with the NHL cleared the way for rampant justifications for Cleveland's entry into the new hockey league. The

WHA was more promising to Mileti because it was a possible calendar-filler for his Coliseum. Pressure from Cleveland's politicians and businessmen to reconsider a downtown location for the Coliseum had not subsided, and the failed expansion bid sparked a new wave of public courtship on the part of civic leaders. The fact that there had been no ground-breaking or construction in Richfield, coupled with the lost possibility for a major gate attraction, encouraged Mayor Perk and U.S. Realty's Sheldon Guren in their pursuit of Mileti. In order to make his envisioned Coliseum a reality, and to fend off the public pursuit by downtown interests, Mileti needed to give his arena additional drawing power.

Announcing that the door to bringing an NHL team to Cleveland was now closed, Mileti conversely acknowledged that he would be willing to consider other options. "Our town for 30 or 40 years was trying to have a baby called the NHL," stated Mileti. "That path is no longer viable." He continued, "The alternative is to adopt a baby." That "baby" was a WHA franchise. The WHA most definitely wanted Cleveland as its twelfth and final team. James Brown, league administrator for the WHA, expressed interest in the Cleveland market as a franchise location and told the local press that the match looked good. With the help of Kettering, Inc. and some of the members of his other syndicates, Mileti anted up the \$250,000 franchise fee and a \$100,000 performance bond for the league. "We have three major teams here," boasted Mileti, "and I wanted the fourth." WHA commissioner Gary Davidson echoed such sentiment, saying, "Cleveland

is a great city for us. It's major league in every respect." Although the "major vs. minor" league status of the WHA was originally under debate, Cleveland had entered a new era of hockey.²⁶

Entrance into the WHA, while widely praised, was not without an accompanying air of warnings. The vast majority of fan reaction applauded the move to the WHA and expressed bitterness and disappointment for the NHL. For the working-class hockey fan, Mileti had been given the proverbial shaft by the established league, and subsequently made the smart move by joining an upstart league. The booster press, in columns and editorials, took turn praising Mileti for again proving to be a man of action with Cleveland's best interests in mind. They also warned both Mileti and fans of the dangers of placing high expectations on a new league. Selling the WHA, an unproven quantity, to Clevelanders was just as important as having a solid organization in place when play began. The onus of success was also placed squarely on Mileti's shoulders with the new hockey franchise. Since the WHA was in its infancy, and parity was being preached, the development of the team would reflect the success of Mileti the entrepreneur more than any of his previous ventures. His Cavaliers struggled as an expansion team in an established league, and the Indians were riddled with problems when Mileti's group purchased the team. This quality of the team Mileti put on the ice could not be emphasized enough. For many, the success of the WHA was secondary to the success of Cleveland's new hockey team. Even though NHL players had jumped to the new league,

led by all-star forward Bobby Hull, “major league” status would still have to be earned, and fans were advised as much.²⁷

A less-subtle dilemma emerging from the admittance of a Cleveland franchise into the WHA was the relationship between Mileti and the NHL. The fact that the NHL had rejected Mileti’s last bid at an expansion franchise, and that Mileti subsequently joined a rival league would seemingly indicate that there was no further point of contention. However, many felt an eventual merger of the WHA into the NHL was inevitable, and that Mileti was in danger of making himself a marked man. According to NHL Historian, John Halligan, the NHL considered Mileti a maverick. But he cautioned that, “In those days we hated anyone associated with the WHA.” When Mileti decided to honor the last year of the Baron’s contract with the NHL’s Minnesota franchise, he also found himself in the awkward position of owning two teams in essentially rival leagues. Rumors that he wanted to use the Barons as a farm team for the Crusaders once his obligations to the parent club had expired further infuriated NHL executives. The NHL was not in favor of this situation, but it was out of their control. Furthermore, the AHL had no precedent to which to turn, and could not render any decision against Mileti. Dolgan chimed in with additional warnings. Hinting that Mileti may be experiencing some financial hardships for the first time, he was amazed that the Baron’s owner was taking on a second hockey team. “Holy smoke!” wondered Dolgan. “The Cleveland fans

weren't exactly breaking down the doors to see one hockey team. He's bound to lose a bundle."²⁸

The fear that Mileti was alienating himself from the NHL community, although garnering a "so what" from Lebovitz in a column, was given more credence by NHL President Clarence Campbell. Others could argue Campbell directed a threat at Mileti. In an interview with the *Plain Dealer*, Campbell admonished the NHL for rejecting Cleveland's application and ripped into Mileti's credibility. "I don't want to malign Nick because of the future possibilities he may have...But [the NHL Board of Governors] haven't exactly forgotten that he blackballed the last expansion," asserted the president in regard to Mileti's decision in 1969 to not pay a \$6,000,000 franchise fee and withdraw from consideration. When asked about Mileti's record over the four years he had been in hockey, Campbell found no shortage of words to express the contempt the NHL currently felt. "He says he's a hockey operator. Well, maybe he is. Maybe inspection of his basketball operations will show they're not near as extensive as he says. Maybe they're very much like his baseball interests. He's just a front man. This whole atmosphere—when you build it up with a lot of other facts—inevitably creates doubts." Asked to rate Mileti as a hockey man, Campbell stated, "I would say he's a sports, uh, buff. He wants to be associated with the action and has a tremendous amount of leadership capability and drive and enthusiasm. But I don't know how much staying power he's got." Campbell ended by arguing that the NHL's decision did not do Mileti or Cleveland any injustice,

but not before throwing a few final jabs in Nick's direction. "[Mileti's] always talking about the prospects and I, up to now, haven't seen him deliver. I haven't seen him deliver anything."²⁹

The addition of the Crusaders, as the WHA franchise was eventually named, would mark the last permanent addition to Mileti's sports empire. Roughly \$40,000,000 and almost five years after it had begun, the empire had reached its maximum growth. Unfortunately for Mileti and for Cleveland, Dolgan's warning and Campbell's rants proved more prophetic than either man had probably envisioned. Had Mileti's heart vetoed logic in his pursuit of major league hockey? "Getting a major league franchise for our community is a big deal." Mileti further clarified, "It has a significance that transcends ordinary things. I'm not shortchanging or underrating it one bit." Saving the Indians from relocation and bringing major league hockey to Cleveland, according to Mileti the civic-minded native, seemed to be a duty of love in this context. But the ego and image that necessitate and facilitate the purchase of two such extraordinary commodities could not be overlooked. 1972 was truly a pivotal year in the Mileti Era in Cleveland, and one that truly would mark the last high points of his entrepreneurial efforts.³⁰

THE FIREWORKS BEGIN TO FADE

"Rockets are bright and beautiful and then they fade away. And this now seems to be the inevitable destiny of the Mileti sports empire." By all accounts, Chuck

Heaton's aforementioned comparison of Mileti and his empire to Fourth of July fireworks captured that transition with crystal clarity. During a fluster of activity in the summer of 1972 Nick Mileti and his empire began the arduous and painful process of removing themselves from the forefront of Cleveland's attention. The headlines that Mileti strove for and received no longer came as readily as they had in the past. Furthermore, when headlines were made, they were often not as kind as they had been prior to the purchase of the Indians franchise. But before Mileti disappeared from the sports scene and Cleveland altogether, an unraveling took place that revealed as much about the climate of Cleveland during the 1970s as it did about the city's most extravagant sports entrepreneur. The image of Mileti as a white knight saving Cleveland through the compilation of a sports empire collapsed with the actual empire following the purchase of the Indians.³¹

Mileti's years with the Indians were outwardly marked by miscues and organizational tension and inwardly marked by financial flounderings. On the field, the Indians followed up their dismal 1971 season with modest success. A quick start put the team in first place towards the end of May, but a series of losses and a subsequent drop in the standings culminated in a fifth place finish. While the Indians again ended the season with a losing record (72-84), they were able to rebound at the gate by drawing more than 150,000 more fans to home games. This alone seemingly suggested that the organization had turned a corner, and was on its way to brighter days. Such a fate, however, was not

to be. The 1972 season projected success merely from the standpoint that the Indians played in Cleveland and for local ownership. Local ownership, in spite of promises for a brighter future, did not usher in a bright new era of Cleveland baseball.³²

Named Indians' president after the finalized purchase of the club, Mileti put together an organizational structure mirroring the teams on the field upon which Clevelanders had been pinning their hopes: high on potential, but young and lacking experience. This was indeed a trend seen in all of Mileti's sports ventures. To a large degree each of his organization's inner administrations was dotted with new and inexperienced faces. Head positions within each organization and facility were respectively filled by a more than competent head man, lending to the assumption that each venture had at least a solid foundation to foster learning among the inexperienced staff. Gabe Paul, who had served under Vernon Stouffer, remained as the Indians' general manager. Head coach Bill Fitch added the role of general manager to his responsibilities with the Cavaliers. John Muckler oversaw the hockey operations (formerly the Barons and later moving to the Crusaders) and the Arena was operated by John Lemmo (who would later take over at the Coliseum). Despite each man's qualifications within his particular field, Mileti remained the head man who was responsible for any problems and final decisions. Mileti immersed himself into the daily operations of the Indians while maintaining similar roles with the Cavaliers and his hockey teams. The Coliseum, perhaps the most personally endearing of all his

possessions, was never far from his thoughts. Public fears that Mileti had spread himself too thin along financial lines were now being transferred to his allotment of time and skill in managing one sports franchise, let alone four franchises and two facilities. Organizing and spending roughly \$40 million to amass the empire was one thing; to remain the primary operator of \$40,000,000 worth of teams and facilities was another. Many wondered about the amount of time and levels of stress that would have to accompany the operations of a sports empire of this magnitude, and showed concern for what it would elicit on a solitary individual. “No matter how much you delegate authority,” commented an anonymous Cleveland executive, “if the full financial and artistic responsibility rests on one man he’s got to be on top of the business.” He argued further that the logistics of his sports empire alone would have smothered Mileti. Mileti denied any logistic or financial strains on his teams, his syndicates, or himself. His reputation as a “doer” had earned him enough slack within the press to evade a total inquisition, but questions of stability haunted Mileti through the remainder of his time in Cleveland.³³

Review of the 1972 baseball season indicated that press concerns were on par with fan dissatisfaction over Mileti’s modifications. Increases in attendance figures were not indicative of popular satisfaction. By the start of the 1973 season, the gap appeared to widen between those who praised and those who chided Mileti. Although some fans indicated a continuing gratefulness for his efforts to better Cleveland sports, others found flaw in Mileti’s methods. Children wrote to the *Plain Dealer* to complain how the

Indians cancelled a program giving tickets to straight-A students. Adults felt their attempts to support the Indians were unappreciated by Mileti. When a Major League record opening day crowd of 74,420, a large portion of which was a walk-up crowd, were unable to purchase tickets and get into their seats in a timely manner before the start of the game, Mileti did not offer the public apology for disorganization that many had hoped for. Instead, he played the role of the salesman boasting his product and suggested that such a problem could have been avoided had these individuals purchased season tickets. When Mileti changed the rules for Bat Day, a fan-favorite for years, the press spoke up on behalf of the fans and urged for changes in team operations. Instead of allowing children who had purchased an adult ticket or who were accompanied by an adult to receive a bat once they came through the turnstiles, Mileti's new plans made them stop at a fast-food hamburger chain to pick up a ticket for the bat and bring that to the game. A similar ploy was used for Helmet Day, which saw attendance drop from 18,230 in 1972 to 11,943 in 1973 when a ticket from a fried chicken restaurant was needed. Did the money saved when these food chains picked up the tab on the helmets and bats make up for lost attendance? More importantly, wondered one article, had the Indians become a penny-pinching organization; one that was not offering its fans a first class experience in sport or entertainment? "Nick's not dumb and he is extremely image-conscious," argued Lebovitz. He foresaw changes for Mileti, but not those that would change Mileti's role within the Indians organization.³⁴

Municipal Stadium was the locale for many of these “short-sighted promotions” and public relations gaffes, but it was also the stage for a more deeply impacting issue for both Mileti and Cleveland. For just over forty years, Cleveland Municipal Stadium had been standing on the shores of Lake Erie and housed the city’s baseball and football franchises. In 1931 upon its opening it was considered the premier sports facility in the United States and was set to be the crowned jewel in Cleveland’s quest to become the nation’s sporting capital. In 1972 it was the home to a horrible baseball franchise and a declining football team, and was showing the wear and tear of both time and weather. Both the Indians and Browns were tenants of Cleveland, using the Stadium in exchange for portions of team profits. But each team was nearing the end of their lease at Municipal Stadium, and the city did not want to lose either tenant. The announcement of the Coliseum plans by Mileti the previous summer meant the loss of a possible facility and two professional teams to the central city. Fearing that Mileti would build a ballpark next to the Coliseum the city sought a new lease agreement with the Indians.³⁵

The Indians entered lease negotiations with the city under a bit of duress. Buddy Bell, one of the promising young players on the Indians, had been seriously injured on the Stadium’s outfield warning-track. Mileti, taking a stand against the city as well as Art Modell and the Browns, threatened to build a proper warning track without the approval of his landlord or fellow tenant. Modell and the city responded to Mileti’s perceived lack of consideration for his partners at the Stadium. A *Plain Dealer* editorial

took all three parties to task for their roles; calling Modell a *prima donna* who overreacted, scolding Mileti for his “ill-advised” threats, and warning the city not to push either team outside Cleveland’s corporate limits by badgering them into signing a lease. Tensions remained high, however, as city representatives and Mileti failed to touch base in any productive manner. In September 1972, Mileti was notified by Frank Dunham, Acting Director of the Department of Public Properties, that the city had decided to terminate the Stadium’s lease with the Indians (a stipulation existing in the current lease) and desired to immediately open negotiations over a new lease. In hindsight the termination of the Indians’ lease appears to have been a further attempt by city officials to pressure Mileti into aborting his Coliseum plans in Richfield and return to downtown Cleveland. Mileti countered by complaining of being “evicted” to the press and hinting that he may have to move the Indians elsewhere to find a place to play the 1973 season. Tensions had begun to boil over. In a November statement released by Richard Hollington, Jr., Cleveland’s Law Director, he lambasted Mileti for negotiating through the press. He further accused Mileti of trying to use scare tactics, of being evasive during the negotiation process, and of making unfounded statements (i.e. of being evicted by the city). “To date, Mr. Mileti has declined to personally discuss anything with City officials,” argued Hollington.³⁶

The tension between Mileti and Cleveland officials subsided somewhat after the New Year, and took a turn in a positive direction in March 1973. Apparently listening to

the pleading of Hal Lebovitz, who had called for Cleveland to give both Mileti and Modell a reason to want to stay in downtown Cleveland, city officials came forth with plans to renovate the current stadium. In total, the plan proposed by Christopher Associates called for \$36.3 million in development of the Stadium and land to the east (for the construction of a car garage and a hotel-apartment building). Any final acceptance of this plan was contingent upon approval by both Modell and Mileti. Looking for a short-term lease at the time of the announcement, Mileti commented that he would pursue a long-term lease instead, "if the necessary improvements are made." When Modell formally announced that he would definitely keep the Browns at the Stadium as long as the necessary \$10,000,000 in renovations were made, the onus of civic duty fell squarely back on the shoulders of Nick Mileti. No plan for renovation would work if the Indians did not commit to staying at the Stadium, and without a plan (meaning the Indians would have moved to a new facility elsewhere) the Browns would leave downtown and build a new football-only stadium in the southwestern suburb of Strongsville. Cleveland was truly at the mercy of its sports savior. The Christopher Plan became a moot point by the summer of 1973. Mileti and Modell signed a memorandum of agreement with Sheldon B. Guren, president of U.S. Realty Investments, thereby ending negotiations with Christopher Associates. Modell and Guren had formed the Cleveland Stadium Corporation, which would operate the Stadium with approval from Mileti as well. Negotiations between the Stadium Corp and the city finally ended in July

with the Browns committing to a 20 year lease and the Indians committing to a ten year lease, although nothing was officially signed at the time. Mileti was able to return to the daily operations of his empire, but this did little to distance the continuing stresses of the past two years.³⁷

An interesting side note in the relationship between Mileti and Modell took place shortly after the completion of Stadium lease negotiations. Apparently not satisfied with the incompleteness of his sports empire, Mileti purchased a franchise in the upstart World Football League in October 1973. The cost was a mere \$250,000 in cash, but intimated a graver cost to the relationship between Mileti and Modell. When informed of Mileti's WFL purchase, Modell simply commented that he admired "Nick's insatiable appetite for professional sports." Others called it a "tight-lipped" comment from the shocked Browns owner. Clevelanders were shocked as well. Amid the chaos and financial troubles of his ventures in hockey, baseball, and basketball, Mileti's addition of a football franchise seemed unfathomable and illogical. "The question is how Mileti does so many things," asked Bob August. "The answer so far seems to be—very poorly." The flip side of the commotion surrounding the purchase hinted that Mileti had never stated the new franchise would play in Cleveland, and that he had privately promised Modell that he had no plans of putting another team in Cleveland. The story appeared to end three weeks later when Mileti sold the franchise to Chicago construction magnate, Thomas Origer. The sale, totaling \$750,000 netted Mileti a hefty \$500,000 profit, which he subsequently

used to purchase a home in the exclusive Cleveland suburb of Gates Mills instead of infusing some much needed cash into any of his struggling franchises. While Mileti was publicly admonished with the sale of his WFL franchise, his foray into football had apparently not ceased. Rumors circulated that after selling his franchise, Mileti urged John Bassett, Jr. to move his franchise from Toronto to Akron. While Mileti later denied any truth to the story, Bassett conversely attested to its truth. A WFL franchise never came to Cleveland to challenge the Browns, but Mileti's foray in to football strained a working relationship with Modell that was already being tested by negotiations between the Indians and the Stadium Corp.³⁸

By the time the Indians and the Cleveland Stadium Corp finally came to terms on a lease at Cleveland Stadium, Nick Mileti was no longer the functioning power broker for the city's baseball franchise. New ownership had not guaranteed profits, and Mileti's innovations had not increased team revenue. Stockholders, as a result, pushed for the removal of Mileti as the chief power broker after the 1972 season. Ted Bonda, one of the members of the syndicate that had purchased the Indians, gradually replaced Mileti as the main administrative and organizational force during the 1973 season. Mileti, in turn, retained his title as president of the team (and the salary that accompanied it), but in reality had been stripped of any real power. Cleveland's sports emperor was now a figurehead. The 1972 season had not fulfilled the dreams of either baseball fans or the team investors, and 1973 continued in this pattern. A lack of operating capital and

incoming funds left the Indians in serious financial trouble. Within the organization itself, the farm system found itself in desperate need of the parent club's cut of player salaries while the Stadium Corporation received late rent payments. Mileti and his team had also gotten a reputation for unreliable financing from around the American League. Visiting teams did not receive prompt payment of their share of the gate receipts. American League rules stipulated that visiting teams be paid 20% of the gate receipts one day after the game is played. One A.L. team official reported that he had not received payment from a September series until October, and that he was also aware of several other teams that were still awaiting payments. Losses at the end of 1973 were estimated to have totaled \$1,800,000, making Mileti's two-year total roughly \$8,000,000 in losses, and rekindling the concern A.L. owners had over the financial strength of Mileti's syndicate.³⁹

Mileti's financial reputation and the status of his teams were so bad at this time that a local joke concerning the "Mileti cocktail" began making its rounds in the pubs and taverns of downtown. As reported in the *Plain Dealer*, "The gent at the bar throws down a quarter for the ginger ale, and everyone else at the bar is supposed to buy him the whiskey." Mileti's means of operations, according to the joke and article, consisted of a heavy reliance on others to provide the bulk of support for his ideas. This referred not only to the financial contributions of others enabling the substantial syndicates Mileti used to buy his teams, but also the fans' acceptance of his implementations for new and

existing teams in the name of “civic duty” and appreciation for his efforts. The argument can even go so far as to propose that Mileti, once he realized the severity of the Indian’s financial woes, looked for the A.L. to bail him out. In October 1973 Mileti proposed that the league expand into Toronto and New Orleans. Two anonymous A.L. officials saw Mileti’s proposal for what many believed it was: a desire for an injection of cash from expansion fees. With each expansion team reportedly having to pay \$12,000,000, and with the \$24,000,000 total divided among the twelve existing A.L. teams, Mileti’s Indians would get \$2,000,000. “And let’s face it,” admitted one executive, “the guy (Mileti) could work in Cleveland for the next twenty years and he wouldn’t make \$2,000,000.”⁴⁰

The financial problems surrounding the Indians typified the status of Mileti’s entire sports holdings. Fulfilling the prophecies of local sports scribes, Mileti spread himself too thin on many levels. In a market experiencing a population and industry exodus, the entertainment dollar was a shrinking luxury. Mileti had overextended himself. Four professional teams and two sports facilities could not and would not find the community support needed to stay in the black. Mileti also immersed himself into the operations of each team without surrounding himself with experienced and qualified personnel. Simply put, he tried to control every aspect of each franchise while learning the nuances of daily business operations on the spot. Trying to cut corners in the process only led to greater problems. Cavaliers’ head coach, Bill Fitch added the general

manager duties to his resume when it became apparent that the sales department, consisting primarily of a core of individuals being shared by each of Mileti's teams, was not competently handling the promotion of the team. During what should have been Mileti's proudest moment as the Cavaliers owner, the 1976 "Miracle at Richfield," local papers instead reported of a heightened feud between Mileti and Fitch over ticket sales policies—something only concerning Fitch after he added the extra GM duties. The public feud between coach and owner brought criticism upon Mileti from the press and the public. Fitch remained silent as Mileti blasted his coach in the media; claiming that he had carried Fitch during the lean years and that as a coach, Fitch had been "a loser." The owner was portrayed as an ego-maniac who wanted all credit for the Cavaliers' success. The "Vegas hipster" image that Mileti had ridden to popularity in his early years of prominence in Cleveland had given way to the portrait of a petty and paranoid man. Fitch, despite his request to be released from his contract, was portrayed as a sympathetic figure. While the feud was put to rest during the off-season, harsh words had been spoken and the damage had been done. While Mileti's empire began its financial unraveling, his public image was taking a beating. The good times were becoming a distant memory as things went from bad to worse.⁴¹

By 1975, Mileti was actively selling off his sports interests with the exception of the Coliseum and the Cavaliers. Saying that he had "done his sports thing," Mileti insisted that he was shifting his focus and energies into the completion of the Coliseum

(opened in October 1974). Many referred to the Richfield structure as Mileti's monument to himself. His teams could and would be bought and sold by numerous individuals as the years passed, but only he could lay claim to the construction of the Coliseum. Unfortunately for Mileti, his prediction that the Richfield area would become a hub of Northeast Ohio's suburban populous never came to fruition. While the creation of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park made much of the land adjacent to the Coliseum off-limits to developers, the development boom Mileti had counted on never took place. Further adding to the Coliseum's troubles, the facility was not drawing enough attendance at Cavaliers and Crusaders games or for other entertainment dates. Problems with getting to the sports arena and with parking when one arrived did add to the unfavorable atmosphere surrounding the new facility, but it was a flop as a draw. In order for the building to pay for itself, Mileti needed to fill 300 dates a year and get 3,000,000 people through the turnstiles. Needless to say, such estimates were unrealistic and went unattained. Among the problems the Coliseum and Mileti faced were: an inability to pay the interest due on the \$32.5 million loan from Chase Manhattan; inadequate event bookings that were ten to fifteen percent below needed projections; the conflict-of-interest Mileti faced as chief executive of both the Coliseum and its two primary tenants; the aforementioned traffic and parking problems that deterred fans; limited income from parking and concession contracts that were signed just prior to the opening; and further personality conflicts that forced out Mileti's two most able

executives. In June 1976, Chase Manhattan Bank reacted to concerns over unpaid loans and exorbitant interest rates by forcing Mileti to divest his Coliseum interests.⁴²

The financial losses only slightly phased Mileti. When he handed over control of the Coliseum at the request of Chase Manhattan, he shocked a reporter with his carefree attitude. Comparing life to a Van Gogh painting, Mileti told the reporter that he sees it in “broad brush strokes.” He added that it was not his responsibility to fill in the details. After all, he said he never became a sports entrepreneur for financial gain. It was the creation process and the ability to help *his* town that made it worthwhile. When the media challenged his motives and shattered his “savior” image, Mileti became sensitive and suspicious. His commitment to Cleveland, the banner he accepted and waived so proudly during his successes, was now openly questioned. The extent to which Mileti had used syndicates to create his empire was even more telling of his financial dilemma. In 1974, Mileti had spearheaded spending more than \$40 million for teams and facilities, but had contributed only \$1.2 million of his own money. Most of that money was borrowed. “It’s nothing for me to take somebody’s money,” said Mileti. He was the idea man and the dealmaker. He sold local investors on the association with professional sports and a dream image of Cleveland. “I’ve made money in Cleveland and I wanted to put some back,” stated C. Carlisle Tippet (investor in the Indians and Crusaders). “Nick Mileti is the man who made it happen.” Bonda seconded the power of persuasion Mileti exuded. “We all turned to jelly when Nick came around, but only because we wanted to”

he commented. “Sports is a Walter Mitty thing, and Nick’s enthusiasm was infectious.” Not since Bill Veeck had a Cleveland sports entrepreneur excited so many from the city’s business community.⁴³

Unlike Veeck, Mileti did not have knowledge of sports operations and never transformed his knack for self-promotion into winning or profitable teams. For every individual wooed into investing in a Mileti venture, another cautiously watched from the outside. “If Nick were organizing a trip to the moon, I’d buy a ticket,” stated an anonymous friend of Mileti. “But if [he] wanted to erect a hot dog stand on the moon I wouldn’t put a dime in it.” Mileti’s restlessness and inexperience inspired him to move on to new deals rather than nurture his current ones into financial successes. Left behind to clean up the financial mess were the investors and financial institutions that had been drawn into the deal by Mileti’s infectious enthusiasm. Bonda conceded that Mileti didn’t have his “feet on the ground” and had diluted himself. “Nick is the kind of guy who doesn’t recognize a problem,” he argued. “He has this attitude that everything can be overcome and sometimes he just doesn’t share the problems and he keeps them to himself.” Bonda later told *Newsweek*, that Mileti’s collection of teams, facilities, and radio stations was a “Marshmallow Empire”—large, but lacking in structure and stability. Others were not so kind or quick to forgive Mileti for the financial shape into which he directed his sports empire or left his investors. “(Mileti) did well feathering his own nest,” noted Cleveland businessman Joseph Fogg (investor in the Indians). Responding

to the claims that Mileti saved Cleveland baseball and built the Coliseum, Fogg retorted, “But you notice (Mileti) got out clean. Everyone else lost money.” Indeed, Mileti had managed to sell off many of his holdings and stock for substantial profits, and arrange for Chase Manhattan to forgive his \$32,500,000 million debt from his Coliseum loan as part of his agreement to hand over control of the facility. While his image and ego had taken a beating in the court of public opinion, his wallet had only grown larger as the empire grew and was then dismantled.⁴⁴

Mileti departed the Cleveland sports scene for good in 1980 when he sold his interest in the Cavaliers. In his own words, Mileti had hoped that during his run he would “have some fun and leave some footprints behind.” Both were accomplished, but not to the degree that either he or Clevelanders had hoped. The look back at Cleveland’s white knight revealed an American tragedy rather than the American dream. Mileti was able to bring teams to Cleveland with other investors’ money, but he was unable to make them financially successful. The Coliseum was a monument to Mileti’s vision but a fiscal nightmare for the individuals and banks who built it for him and a geographical nightmare for his traditional fan base. He saved the Indians from relocation, but ran the organization so poorly that the team lost \$2,800,000 million three years after he took over, during which time he was forced to give up daily operations. Mileti’s few successes and multiple failures told the story of unfulfilled promises made possible through the assets of other and civic hope in a local savior. The syndicate empire proved

superficial once Mileti lost interest in it. His commitment to Cleveland proved inconsequential when deals opened up elsewhere. Mileti's image and ego, bruised and battered but undaunted, safely made their way to Beverly Hills to conquer the film industry. Cleveland was left wondering who Nick J. Mileti really was. "Despite the hip packaging," argued one local columnist, "Mileti is still the kid from the old neighborhood, the kid who was never a big Jock, the short one who cheered while others achieved." In a time of urban decline, Mileti symbolized Cleveland better than anyone wanted to admit: each talked loudly about visions of grandeur, but neither took the initiative to see their visions mature into a stable reality. Unlike most, he took risks, but never at much great financial risk of his own. Nick Mileti was the hype and disappointment, the dreams and the reality, the civic savior and the prodigal son. Nick Mileti was Cleveland.⁴⁵

CHAPTER 11

LOSING IS A WORK OF 'ART':

MODELL AND THE IDENTITY OF THE BROWNS¹

The relationship between the sports entrepreneur and the urban center was not lost on Nick Mileti during his time in Cleveland. Although his ethnic and social class origins, along with his modest wealth did not parallel the traditional profile of a franchise owner, his focus on sports organizations and networks followed a traditional pattern. Mileti concentrated on sport in his use of product, place, and promotion. Cleveland, wanting for any institution or individual that promised civic uplift, gladly accommodated Mileti whenever possible. But the sole concentration on sport did not provide continuity for Mileti, and his was short-lived. A different entrepreneurial path was carved in Cleveland at roughly the same time. Scholar Stephen Hardy, in a call for a heightened study of sports entrepreneurs and investors, encouraged studies to look beyond the roles of these individuals within product development and the creation of individual organizations and networks of organizations. Missing from this body of scholarly study were the multiple business opportunities for the entrepreneur outside of the sporting realm that are made available through the entrepreneur's connection to sport. The commercial promoter, as Hardy dubs these individuals, was motivated by "civic duty, egotism, and a love of sport." Not surprisingly for men of business, their connection of sport was a "means to

personal or corporate profit.” In 1970s Cleveland Nick Mileti embodied the sports entrepreneur, but Arthur Modell incorporated the motivations, the drive for personal profit, and a grander sense of civic duty that connote the commercial promoter.²

Art Modell’s tenure as Browns’ owner between 1961 and 1978, especially the 1970s, displayed the methods by which he asserted himself as a commercial promoter. Modell indeed took full advantage of his position as majority owner of the Browns to publicly promote civic leadership and charity, and to privately search for greater profit while catering to his ego. Specifically, three interconnected themes emerge that establish the pattern of control he sought and the motivation behind his actions, and that also elaborate on how he was able to proceed without question or concern from Cleveland’s media and civic elite. First, Modell established himself as the identity of the Cleveland Browns through both his own conscious efforts and circumstance. Next, he shed his image as an “outsider” or “carpetbagger,” largely due to his connection to the Browns, and became one of Cleveland’s most active and respected civic leaders. Finally, Modell used his new image to branch out his business efforts into non-sport related ventures.

Throughout this process Modell courted and gained favor with Cleveland’s booster press, which enabled him to proceed with support and the image of a local hero. The Browns struggled through much of this period, but sport had seemingly become a means to an end as Modell looked to broaden his presence. Using the fame and popularity that came from being the owner of one of Cleveland’s most popular and

prominent civic assets, Modell emerged as the “Pride of Cleveland.” Overall, the 1970s mark a period during which Modell’s sports team suffered, his public image hit an all-time high, and his business dealings were applauded despite their questionable motives.³

THE “PLAYING OWNER”

In the beginning, there was only Paul Brown. He was the alpha and the omega of the Cleveland Browns franchise. Despite the presence of future hall of famers such as Otto Graham and Marion Motley, one solitary man defined who the Browns were and how they were viewed. Paul Brown had been the persona embodying the essence of the team since the day he signed on to coach the Cleveland franchise in the upstart All-America Football Conference (AAFC) in 1945. Brown had complete control over player personnel decisions as head coach, general manager, and vice president, and was able to create a team of his liking from scratch. Arthur “Mickey” McBride, the team’s founder, merely signed the checks. “[Brown] was the hero,” commented McBride, “and I was the businessman.” In 1953 McBride sold the Browns for \$600,000 to a group headed by Cleveland businessmen David Jones. The new ownership group left Brown in control over team management and player issues. This lasted until 1961. The arrival of Art Modell subtly challenged the nuances of Brown’s control over the team at first, but later emerged as a battle between two steadfast egos.⁴

Although Modell owned the team, it was anything but his in the eyes of the public. This factor would eventually change. Between 1961 and 1963, Modell and

Brown moved further and further apart in their professional relationship. The young owner irked his coach by fraternizing with team players and getting more and more involved with the daily operations of the team; becoming a “playing owner.” Brown felt this was in direct violation of his contract, and a way of undermining the team structure he had put in place. Pinning down the crux of their tensions, Brown cited their two different philosophies: his coming from knowledge and experience and Modell’s coming from a complete lack of either. Regardless, there was little chance that the growing rift between the two men could be resolved. Many local scribes felt that something would give, but no one knew when this would happen. One man would have to go. On January 9, 1963 Modell informed Brown that he would have to step down as head coach and general manager. While various reasons circulated as to why Modell fired Brown (including rumors of an impending players revolt and a belief that the game had passed Brown by), Brown insists that the foremost reason was Modell’s ego. According to Brown, Modell told him, “This team can never fully be mine as long as you are here because whenever anyone thinks of the Cleveland Browns, they think of you. Every time I come to the stadium, I feel that I am invading your domain, and from now on there can only be one dominant image.” The pattern that emerges after Brown’s departure clearly points to a desire on Modell’s part to become the franchise’s public image. Modell used his ownership power to propel this desire closer to reality.⁵

Modell's timing in firing Brown could not have been better in terms of public relations. Cleveland was in the midst of its longest newspaper strike, rendering both daily papers (*Cleveland Plain Dealer* and *Cleveland Press*) unable to inform the team's rabid fans of the fate of their beloved coach. The booster press, however, united to produce a small publication detailing the firing and varied reactions. *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn't Call* provided the booster press with a forum on the firing when all other major print media in the city had been rendered silent. Frank Gibbons of the *Press* noted that Paul Brown had "carved a very large chunk of football marble" for Cleveland during his coaching tenure. But Brown did not want or appreciate Modell's presence in football decisions and communications between the two suffered as a result. "The only way that Modell could break into the inner sanctum," he continued, "was to fire the stern guard at the gate...Brown." According to Gibbons, this provided Modell with his chance to become a larger part of the team and "carve his own piece of marble." Others, such as the *Plain Dealer's* Hal Lebovitz, commended Modell for his decision. "It took courage to fire Paul Brown," Lebovitz wrote. Others chimed in with varying opinions from various angles, but the one constant from the booster press was the acknowledgement that a new boss was in charge.⁶

While Modell's relationship with Paul Brown had been cantankerous from the start, the same could not be said regarding the other prominent Brown on the team. Jim Brown, the team's star running back, was the apple of Modell's marketing eye. Several

sources cited Jim Brown's displeasure with Paul Brown and his system as one of the primary forces behind the coach's firing. He was as confident as he was talented, and did not back down from Paul Brown the way the majority of the players had done during the coach's tenure. It is possible that the shift in control and image from Paul Brown to Jim Brown resulted from the change in personalities on the Browns' roster over the years. Paul Brown's original teams were made up of men who had served in WWII and were well beyond their college years by the time they were able to play professional football. Furthermore, they were more accepting of their coach's brand of team discipline because of their wartime experiences. Jim Brown's emergence as a team leader and public representative of Browns' football coincided with a new generation of football players with whom Paul Brown had problems relating. These athletes benefited from the advancements in pro football made by their predecessors, while also coming to grips with the cultural tensions of the Civil Rights movement and the growing American presence in Vietnam. Jim Brown best represented the new athlete in Cleveland. The outspoken running back's happiness and future with the team were of concern for Modell. One rumor, as reported in *Sports Illustrated*, hinted that Modell suspected that Paul Brown had a Jim Brown for Johnny Unitas trade in the works. Modell did not want to lose his star player. Certainly Jim Brown's superstar status in the league and among Cleveland's football fans was not lost on Modell. Jim Brown was the owner's self-proclaimed

“senior partner.” Brown was the team’s most marketable commodity, and soon replaced Paul Brown as the public face and dominant personality on the team.⁷

But Jim Brown was not simply a football player. By 1966 Jim Brown was beginning to question his future in football as his interests shifted to his acting career and his work with the Negro Industrial and Economic Union, of which he was chairman of the board. As his interests outside football diversified, they threatened to take away more and more of Brown’s time from football. Modell accommodated Brown with a separate set of rules befitting a superstar, but even these rules had limits. When it became apparent that Brown would not arrive for the start of the 1966 training camp, Modell drew a line in the sand. Modell, although admitting the complexity of the movie industry, announced that Jim Brown would be suspended without pay if he missed the start of training camp. Brown, in London, England filming *The Dirty Dozen*, responded less than a month later in a letter to Modell, in which he announced his intentions to retire. Brown also intimated that he took offense to Modell’s use of pressure tactics through the media. “I was very sorry to see you make the statements that you did,” penned Brown, “because it was not a victory for you or I but for the newspaper men.” Brown had earlier hinted that he would retire from football after the 1966 season, but the pomp and circumstance brought on by Modell’s press release precipitated this new plan of action. It would unfair to suggest that Modell pushed the best player on his team, not

to mention the most marketable athlete, into retirement in a gesture of power. Still, his ultimatum left the Browns without a strong face or identity.⁸

Without either its greatest player or most successful coach, the Cleveland Browns found itself lacking a dominant figure for the first time in franchise history. The Browns' identity was truly up for grabs. In 1971 Nick Skorich was hired as the third head coach in the history of the Cleveland Browns. *Cleveland Magazine*, in an article examining the indistinctive Skorich, noted that he was the first "mere mortal" to coach the Browns. Paul Brown, the team's legendary first coach, was compared to an "Olympian God of War," while Blanton Collier, his successor, was seen as both a teacher and an intellectual. As to why one of the NFL's most storied franchises would hire a relative no-name, the author directs his readers to look no further than to team majority owner Arthur Modell. Personalities were at play; Modell wanted someone who would not make waves within the organization; and Skorich knew who was boss. "In Cleveland," the article states, "Modell—and nobody but Modell—owns the Browns."⁹

The Nick Skorich experiment failed after four seasons. The Browns made the playoffs in the coach's first two years (1971 & 1972), but the team was slipping into a state of disarray. In 1974 the Browns won four games and lost ten; only the second losing season in franchise history. Modell next turned to another Browns assistant coach, Forrest Gregg, and signed him to a three year contract. Finding coaches within the Browns' family had been successful with Blanton Collier and with Nick Skorich, at least

initially. This left Modell with high hopes for the team's revival. Gregg, however, brought with him the influences of his former Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi, and proved to be an outspoken taskmaster. His grating style did not appeal to the players, and the on-field results bore the proof. Gregg's teams went 3-11, 9-5, and 6-8 in his three seasons as coach. Perhaps more importantly, team attendance had been on the decline since 1971 and reached a new low in 1975 when it dropped below 400,000 fans for the first time in team history. The lack of winning dissuaded many fans from populating the seats of Municipal Stadium on Sunday afternoons. The stability of the organization rested squarely on Modell's shoulders, as he himself admitted in several interviews during the mid-70s. One could argue that the team began its collapse once the players and coaches put into place by Paul Brown had left and Modell, the former student of the game who became the *de facto* general manager, took over much of the operations of the Browns. His coaches and scouts, Modell argued, were never overruled to make any personnel decisions. Still, perhaps unnecessarily using the prerogatives of ownership and diplomatically keeping an awareness of his investment, he kept his finger on the team's pulse. Modell proclaimed that he wanted answers for every move, but only in terms of reasoning—not accountability.¹⁰

Paul Brown had once been the individual whom the booster press turned to in their quest for good copy and inside information. The low-profile coaches of the 1970s did not carry with them the same credentials or success. They were employees instead of

power brokers. Modell was now the face and force of the Browns, and was thusly thrust onto the hot seat. The booster press wondered aloud to the owner into what direction the city's football team was heading, but did not criticize him for the most part. Modell obliged them with projections of a return to glory and promises of impending changes if failure persisted. Regardless of the situation, it was clear in many a press clipping that the Browns franchise was in the hands of Arthur B. Modell. Upon hiring Gregg before the 1975 season, Modell announced that he would "spend more time in camp than in recent years," and, whenever possible, that he would be "at Forrest's side to help." After a 1977 loss to the Los Angeles Rams, Modell was quoted during in local sports pages regarding his dissatisfaction with team play. He promised a re-evaluation of all facets of the team and changes when the season ended, saying, "I will call in everyone from top to bottom." Gregg felt Modell was intruding, and in the process undermined the coach's authority and team confidence. Following a thrashing at the hands of the San Diego Chargers one week later, Gregg exploded to the local press, claiming that Modell's comments affected him throughout the week. No phony "vote of confidence" followed, and Gregg was fired before the '77 season was completed. While the coach bore the brunt of organizational and public blame, and indeed Gregg was not a scapegoat, some in the media felt the heat for the franchise's problems should be dispersed. One Press columnist overtly stated, "Beginning with Art Modell, the entire bunch of routiners that makes up the club must face the responsibility for an organization that is listless, boring

and I'm afraid rather hopeless." Couple this with headlines stating, "Modell: 'We'll find the answer,'" "Does Modell eat his words?" and "'We need help' says Modell," and an examination on the "State of Modell" in the *Plain Dealer*, and it was clear that Modell had become the "player owner" Paul Brown had feared.¹¹

Throughout 1970s Art Modell was by far the most prominent personality linked to the Browns. There was no high-profile coach roaming the sidelines, and no superstar running back bursting out of the backfield and into the endzone. Modell had risen to the forefront of the franchise, and was the first person the booster press turned to when it wanted an update on the state of the Browns. According to some, this was just the way he wanted it. "[Modell] wanted to be the Browns," stated an unnamed employee, "and he wanted his name to be associated with the Browns and his name only." Modell's name was then linked to a struggling franchise that left its fans wanting. For better or for worse, the Browns' new direction was the direct responsibility of their owner.¹²

THE "DRUMMER WHO DIDN'T LEAVE TOWN"

Author David Harris surmised that "Art Modell [circa 1974] was the Browns, the Browns were Cleveland, and Art Modell played the role to the hilt." The young owner took his association with the Browns and used it to its fullest capacity in Cleveland. One cannot underestimate the value of the Browns. "The Browns are more than the town's professional football team," argued journalist Doug Clarke. "They are an institution...the Browns are no less than the city's most important ego-trip." Throughout most of the

1970s, Modell was able to parlay his football ownership into a series of widely applauded outside ventures. None of these ventures would have been possible, however, had Modell not been able to overcome the suspicions and distrust surrounding him and become the epitome of civic boosterism.¹³

Modell came to Cleveland an outsider, and to make matters worse a native New Yorker. If Cleveland's sports past had proven nothing else, it proved the existence of an inferiority complex when Cleveland came up against New York. The Browns, the one team able to consistently raise Cleveland to an elite level with a proven track record against a New York squad, was sold to an advertising executive from Brooklyn. The natives were restless. Reportedly Modell feared the repercussions from three possible public perceptions: that he was an advertising man, that he was from New York, and that he was Jewish. Clevelanders cautiously sized-up the new owner, and surely stereotyping was at play. Some judgments equated that perceptions of Modell would translate into the demise of a team said to represent Cleveland's blue-collar determination. "When I came [to Cleveland]," Modell once said, "it was said that I was a 'Madison Avenue Hustler' and a 'Carpetbagger', who was going to strip the Browns and beat it out of town." But the team soon became Modell's meal-ticket to public approval. The Browns defeated not only their New York rivals, but the majority of the league on a consistent basis as well during Modell's first decade in Cleveland. "Winning changes everything," Modell boasted after the Browns defeated the Baltimore Colts to win the 1964 NFL

Championship, his lone championship in Cleveland. But success alone would not and did not foster an unconditional acceptance of the team's owner. Art Modell had to actively overcome in many ways the stigma of being an outsider on his way to becoming Cleveland's favorite "adopted" son.¹⁴

Modell's greatest ally in creating a civic-friendly, public image was the local booster press. His friendly relationships with members of the media, including television, certainly precipitated multiple public-relations opportunities and the framing of these opportunities in the greatest possible light. Dino Lucarelli, who had worked in public relations for Modell's Browns, argued that Art was great with the media and he was great for the city of Cleveland. "Oh, the media loved him." At worst the press criticized Modell with kid gloves, arguing that his brashness came from his football inexperience and his actions were born of the best of intentions. They would often add that he was still learning his trade. On the whole, however, the media praised Modell as a sports owner, promoter and civic leader. Prior to the 1975 season, the *PD*'s Hal Lebovitz praised Modell for being just such a person. "We submit to you that Modell already has done more for downtown than any single individual, or corporation, in Cleveland," he stated. He later lauded Modell's efforts, which "reveal[ed] what an individual with courage and ability" can do. Through interviews, editorials, and columns, the booster press helped diminish Modell's "otherness," and posit him for civic inclusion. Their motives were seldom questioned, and the benefit of the doubt was given to the Browns

owner until he proved otherwise. “It must be said,” commented Lebovitz, “that Modell goes out of his way to aid other civic ventures in trouble...His track record on working to revitalize the city merits high praise.” Modell wisely picked and chose his moments to optimize both headlines and profits, and the booster press obliged him with glowing affirmations.¹⁵

The 1970s produced the worst football in the Browns’ franchise history (up to that point), but the booster press remained supportive of the team and Modell. While the upbeat coverage seemed nothing more than the usual pattern of media optimism, some questioned the journalistic integrity of the situation. Modell’s relationships with members of the media went beyond the scenario of the newsmaker and the reporter. Through the Browns radio and television broadcasts, Modell employed several journalists and therefore had direct connections to their respective media outlets. With others, the connections resulted from past employment and friendship. In 1978 the umbrella of Modell’s influence stretched to great lengths. Former Browns wide receiver Paul Warfield was a sportscaster for channel 3 (Cleveland’s NBC affiliate), channel 8 (CBS affiliate) sportscaster Jim Mueller was the color man for the Browns radio broadcasts on WHK, and Gib Shanley from channel 5 (ABC affiliate) did play-by-play for radio broadcasts and was a co-owner of WJW radio with Modell. While the qualification of each man for his respective job was not in question, an assurance of objectivity in reporting was in doubt. *Press* columnist Doug Clarke pointed out the danger of having

“three major TV stations, along with two radio stations, coming perilously close to residing in the hip pocket of the Cleveland Browns.” His cautionary column was not lost on those he named or his own editors at the *Press*. Modell called Clarke’s column an example of yellow journalism in a letter sent to the journalist and his editors. Shanley took a moment during a nightly sportscast to accuse Clarke of seeking publicity. According to free-lance writer Roldo Bartimole, Clarke was confronted by *Press* managing editor Bob Sullivan who complained about the reaction to the article. Clarke reportedly responded, “What am I supposed to do, go after the little guys and leave the big guys alone?” The order then came down that Clarke’s future articles were to be reviewed by one of the *Press*’s top four editors. Bartimole further pointed out the unhealthy relationship Modell had with sportswriters and editors; leaving them tickets for games and sending them gifts at the holidays. These gifts were not so much bribes as they were symbols of the problem at hand. Bartimole asserted that censorship was the issue and that editors made rules so that “certain business people [were] off limits to criticism.” The relationship between Modell and the press was arguably unhealthy along ethical lines; however, news coverage of Modell would continue to be kind and void of serious scrutiny with friends and protectors in place.¹⁶

Modell’s biggest tool for gaining favor in Cleveland was his loudly proclaimed loyalty to his new hometown and the constant quest for the betterment of its conditions and imagery. For much of the 70s, Modell made just as many headlines through his

efforts to promote the city as he did with the Browns. Given the state of urban decline Cleveland was experiencing, civic promotion was no easy task. The usual suspects in urban decline—crime, pollution, poverty, and suburban flight—debased the foundation of the central city and traditional neighborhoods. “Overall, a morbid tone pervaded the analysis of [Cleveland],” argued Jon Teafor. “[It] appeared to be hitting bottom, largely unaffected by attempts to buoy [its] fortunes.” In fact, between 1960 and 1970 Cleveland had lost 14% of its population, and retail sales had dropped 26% from 1950 to 1970. The Greater Cleveland Growth Association (GCGA) entered into a series of publicity campaigns designed to reinstate a sense of confidence within Clevelanders as well as inspire businesses and conventions to return to the city. One of the prominent members of the GCGA was none other than Art Modell. He saw a connection between the overall state of Cleveland and the perception and expectation placed upon the city’s professional sports team. In a *Plain Dealer* interview, he commented, “There’s a negativism in Cleveland for reasons other than sports. There have been nothing but problems in our town. I can’t help but feel that the political and financial and other problems do have a relationship to the sporting scene. And sports hasn’t helped erase the negativism...the fans who look for escape through sports have not been accommodated.” Modell continued to work with the GCGA on their efforts to create a positive image for Cleveland, and by 1978 he was co-chair of the “New Cleveland” campaign.¹⁷

Modell's public face and the image of a civic leader that had been crafted around him paid off in public and civic accolades despite the hardships surrounding the Browns through much of the 70s. Away from the game of football, Modell strove to showcase his commitment to Cleveland, his new home, in a variety of ways. This included promotion of the city through sports and by way of civic involvement. In the late 1960s, when Cleveland had no professional basketball franchise, Modell (through the Cleveland Browns) worked with the *Plain Dealer* to bring the Cincinnati Royals to the Cleveland Arena for several games a season. Sportswriters credited Modell, through this gesture, as one of the key figures responsible for the NBA's eventual arrival in Cleveland. In 1975 Modell was named foreman of the local Grand Jury, and the decision was immediately praised in the local press. One editorial called the decision a "topflight choice" and further stated that, "Modell has been administrative business mind and the civic view of this community." Modell served his time and was praised for the sincerity he showed in approaching the position. He was commended in the press for championing the role of the Grand Jury foreman when the position's value was questioned, and for seeking the implementation of laws that would aid crime victims. Art Modell had become, or was framed as, a man for the people.¹⁸

His popularity further became evident in 1977 when he was linked to Ohio Governor James Rhodes. The press indicated that for years Modell's friends and colleagues urged him to cash in on his good name and popularity by running for mayor of

Cleveland. Modell had always declined. Now the Browns' owner was linked to a stage bigger than professional sports. In March 1977 both the *Press* and *Plain Dealer* reported that Modell was seriously considering joining Rhodes as a candidate for Lieutenant Governor on the GOP slate for the next elections. The governor was receptive to the idea by all accounts. Modell himself stated that he was beginning to lose interest in professional football given the "legal entanglements" facing the NFL at that time. A second factor was that Rhodes, if elected, would be serving his final term. This would put Modell in the enviable position of front-runner for the subsequent gubernatorial race. As ideal a match as this might have seemed, several roadblocks came forth. First, the *Plain Dealer* revealed that Modell had contributed \$1,000 to the Democratic candidate opposing Rhodes for governor in the previous elections. Modell quickly countered with the assurance that he had contributed to various Democratic and GOP candidates, including Rhodes, over the years. Second, Modell's conditions for candidacy revealed an unrealistic desire on his part for control over his fate. A *Press* report indicated that Modell would run only if the GOP cleared the field for him by presenting no opponents in the primaries and by issuing a strong public endorsement. Time passed by without confirmation of either of Modell's desired scenarios coming to fruition. By May, any hint of Modell running for Lt. Governor was put to rest. Modell then came forth and announced that he was out of politics. Some hinted that the Modell opted to stick with professional football, in spite of the legal entanglements it was undergoing, after realizing

the responsibilities of the position. Another possibility, which will be discussed in more detail later, was that Modell went along with the rumor in order to parlay the publicity surrounding his possible political entry into greater public favor. In turn, Modell could present himself in an even greater civic light as he pursued the privatization of Cleveland's Public Hall (much as he had done with Municipal Stadium). Whatever the truth may have been, the credence given to Modell's political potential again confirmed the growing acceptance he had nurtured.¹⁹

The field of candidates capable of carrying the mantle of Cleveland's pride was thin in the 1970s. Modell, the outsider, had made tremendous strides in separating himself from this small group of contenders. In a case of irony, however, Modell's biggest challenge as a promoter of professional sports and a steward of civic pride came from a Cleveland native. Nick Mileti burst onto Cleveland's sports entrepreneurial scene in 1968, yet he did not initially seem like much of a challenge to Modell. After all, Modell owned the storied Browns of the NFL while Mileti possessed the decrepit Cleveland Arena and the American Hockey League's Cleveland Barons. Within four years, however, the Cleveland native had added the Cavaliers of the NBA, the Crusaders of the World Hockey Association, and major league baseball's Indians to his stable of professional teams. Mileti never missed an opportunity to frame his sports and entertainment investments as fitting tributes to the grandeur of Cleveland, playing up the notion of being Cleveland's "favorite son." Professional sport was his means, and fame,

fortune and ego were his end. Modell, however, did not limit himself to the world of professional sports. The NFL's policy against cross-ownership in professional sports prevented him in part from becoming financially involved with a couple franchise related opportunities (i.e. investing in the Indians or an expansion hockey franchise), so Modell pursued opportunities in related areas. His additional business ventures in Cleveland, while not making the headlines of Mileti's growing empire, kept his name in the press and furthered the notion of civic commitment he cultivated. When Mileti built his Coliseum outside of Cleveland, consequently taking professional hockey and basketball away from the city, Modell's public commitment to keeping the Browns downtown drew praise. Years later it would be revealed that Modell had indeed privately weighed his options regarding Municipal Stadium as well as possibilities for building a new one elsewhere. Yet in the aftermath of Mileti's announcement it was Modell's commitment to Cleveland that the booster press extolled. In accordance, the Greater Cleveland Growth Association dubbed the Browns owner as "The Drummer Who Didn't Leave Town" in their monthly magazine. According to the article, "[Modell was] an unblushing partisan of Cleveland, sounding like a brash, tub-thumping publicity man when asked about his adopted city." Surpassing the "favorite son" was a fine feather in the cap of the "adopted son"²⁰

The aforementioned NFL rule disallowing owners to have cross-ownership of franchises in other professional leagues kept Modell from investing in the Indians, but it

did not keep him from becoming involved with the team. And again, Modell's every action was posited as a gesture of civic-minded responsibility and concern by the booster press. In 1972 Mileti had headed a syndicate which purchased the team, thus keeping the franchise from inevitably moving to New Orleans. Five years later the team was still in Cleveland but was not financially solvent. Between 1972 and 1976 the Indians lost \$4,500,000 and the franchise found itself desperately trying to liquidate a \$5,500,000 bank loan. Both the *Press* and *Plain Dealer* announced in April 1977 that Modell would offer his services to the Indians, but only after receiving permission and guidelines for involvement from NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle. "I want to make it clear that this effort on my part is still a conjectural thing," asserted Modell. "But I am definitely interested in helping stabilize the Indians financially or any other way I can." Indians stockholders Dudley Blossom, Bruce Fine, and Ted Stepian each went public in welcoming Modell's involvement. Referring to the franchise's bank loan, Fine told the *Press*, "We're not an ailing franchise. But, we can use some help." Rozelle informed Modell that he could not invest directly in the Indians, but other doors of involvement remained open.²¹

Not everyone, however, believed Modell's motives for involvement with the Indians were pure. Two problematic fronts came forth: public skepticism from within Cleveland and fraternal discord from a fellow NFL owner. First, a feeling emerged in some parts of Cleveland that Modell was seeking involvement in the Indians only to

secure the financial stability of a Stadium tenant. Such an accusation failed to paint the picture of Modell as Cleveland's civic-minded benefactor. Instead, it focused on his role as Municipal Stadium's operator (which will be discussed in greater detail later) and the Indians' *de facto* landlord. Truly, his investment in Municipal Stadium could not afford the loss of 81 event dates if the Indians were to leave Cleveland. But this angle was downplayed by the booster press. "It must be said that Modell goes out of his way to aid other civic venture in trouble," argued Lebovitz. "So his effort to help the Indians can't be labeled as entirely selfish. His track record on working to revitalize the city merits high praise." Modell himself portrayed himself as a concerned individual ready to work with Indians management as a consultant, a member or the team board, or not at all if desired. The self-proclaimed "catalyst" used his influence to put together a new ownership syndicate headed by trucking magnate F.J. "Steve" O'Neill. The group purchased the club for \$11 million, out of which \$5,500,000 was earmarked for the team's bank loans, and Art Modell found himself a member of the Indians Board of Directors.²²

Modell was able to overcome this first public relations problem, but a second problem was lingering from within professional football's fraternity of owners. Oakland Raiders' owner Al Davis found Modell's involvement with the Indians an example of the NFL's hypocrisy in regards to cross-ownership. Davis objected to Modell's seat on the Indians' Board, especially in light of the NFL's stance against Lamar Hunt's ten percent

absentee ownership in the Chicago Bulls of the NBA. Underlying this argument, it must be noted, was an existing antagonism between Davis and Rozelle. Modell's friendship with Rozelle and the "gray" nature of his involvement with a professional baseball team made him a likely target for Davis. Rozelle and Modell argued that the Browns owner's role came from an act of civic mindedness and possessed no financial investment.

Modell admitted that his only reason for getting involved with the Indians was because of the Cleveland Stadium Corp. Without the Indians, he proclaimed, it would have been very likely that the Stadium Corp. would have gone bankrupt and he himself would have subsequently gone bankrupt. Davis countered that Modell's connection with the Indians was no less a conflict of interest to the NFL's cross-ownership rule than was Hunt's connection with the Bulls. To avoid further scrutiny and possible divisiveness, Modell promised his fellow owners that he would not run for reelection to the Indian's board in 1978. While Modell was able to come out of this squabble unscathed in the public eye, he had revealed in the process of justifying his involvement with Indians that his motives were far less driven by civic responsibility than the booster press indicated.²³

Modell's accomplishments and the accolades showered upon him by the booster press finally merged in a public forum. The Sports Media Association of Cleveland and Ohio (SMACO) chose to honor Modell along with the areas top athletes in February 1978. The night provided a stage for the culmination of Modell's civic image. With his friend Commissioner Rozelle in attendance as a guest speaker, Modell highlighted the

night as the recipient of the “Pride of Cleveland” award. Eighteen years after arriving from New York City, Modell had validation that he was no longer viewed as a carpetbagger. After Rozelle praised the Browns’ owner for his commitment to the betterment of the NFL, the microphone was turned over to Modell. “Cleveland is more than buildings,” he commented. “It is made up of people, good people. It is my home and I hope that this is where my sons will make their home.” The booster press did not fail in providing their tribute to Modell in their coverage of the event the following morning. “Modell is a man who smiles a lot and this is not a façade,” wrote Chuck Heaton (Browns beat writer). “Sure, he gets angry on occasions...even with sportswriters...but this passes quickly and is a good excuse to lift a drink or two.” Aside from the occasional letter of complaint regarding rising ticket prices or losing records, Art Modell was at the pinnacle of popularity in Cleveland. He proudly banged the drum for Cleveland, and widely garnered the support of the community in the process. Colleagues still contend that, “He did a lot of things for this community that he’ll never get credit for.” Having the booster press’s support added to the sparkling civic image that was emerging throughout the 1970s. With these facets in place, Modell had broadened his business ventures without scrutiny. Reeking of civic commitment and responsibility, however, his moves often appeared more civic-minded than they were. As the football owner branched out into promoting, investing, and consulting a troubling reality emerged away from the headlines.²⁴

TRANSLATING REPUTATION INTO DOLLARS AND CENTS

Modell's badge of civic commitment translated into more than public accolades in the 1970s. It also created opportunities for him. The former New York "hustler" had become a voice of civic responsibility, and was given the respect fitting his revered status by civic leaders, the booster press, and the public. In accordance, Modell was also given the benefit of the doubt as he began to broaden his business ventures. Modell merged the imagery surrounding professional sport and civic commitment into a series of both desired and achieved investments as will be explored. Behind the public façade, these investments revealed Modell as the entrepreneur looking to use sport and civic pride for personal profit. He had indeed cemented his presence as a commercial promoter who possessed tremendous public clout. As the decade ran its course, Modell found himself with multiple opportunities for expanding his business along a chosen "promotional" path. "For Art Modell," David Harris pointed out, "reputation, and the standing which accompanied it, also translated into dollars and cents." Cleveland Municipal Stadium, the home of his Browns, provided the first and foremost opportunity for "dollars and cents."²⁵

Municipal Stadium was the final piece of a puzzle that was Cleveland's Group Plan of 1903. Implemented by civic leaders to redevelop a depreciated section of the city into an ordered and useful collection of buildings and open spaces, the Group Plan remained incomplete by the late 1920s. The northern border of the proposed land tract had originally been set aside for the construction of a large railway passenger station that

would usher visitors into the growing metropolis. Several railroads, including the Pennsylvania Railroad and New York Central Railroad, owned the land over time, but no station was constructed. Instead, these railroads intended to expand the number of tracks running through the area. City Manager William Hopkins and civic leaders felt an expansion of tracks would be nothing more than an eyesore and put a halt to these plans. “The carrying out of such a plan would not only have rendered the whole area between the City Hall and Court House and the steamboat landing unsightly in the extreme,” argued Hopkins, “but would also have meant the certain ruin of the entire [Group Plan] into which the City, The County and the Federal Government had put upwards of forty millions of dollars.” After briefly considering turning the land into a park, it was decided the best investment for Cleveland was a facility that could be used year round for a variety of civic needs. Falling back on a suggestion originally presented in 1917, Hopkins decided on the construction of a stadium. Plans for the publicly funded stadium were approved by city politicians, and the issue went before Cleveland voters in November 1928. Receiving roughly 60% of the total vote, the Stadium Bond issue passed.²⁶

Municipal Stadium’s completion in 1931 marked not only the completion of Group Plan construction, but also a perceived step forward for Cleveland’s future ambitions. The rapid growth of the city in the first three decades of the twentieth century saw the Lake Erie port city develop into a major American metropolis. By the time of

Municipal Stadium's construction, Cleveland was the fifth largest city and third largest metropolitan area in the United States. The Stadium was part of a larger plan to propel Cleveland to positions of regional and national grandeur. The economic and cultural influence Cleveland held during the Roaring Twenties cultivated ideas of challenging Chicago as the major metropolis of the Great Lakes/Midwestern region. Furthermore, the possession of a 70,000 plus seat facility that could be used for baseball, football, soccer, and boxing encouraged civic leaders to set their sights on New York City's claim as America's sports capital. Municipal Stadium was set to rival Madison Square Garden and Yankee Stadium combined. The Great Depression put an end to these dreams regardless of their initial feasibility. The Stadium subsequently remained highly dormant until Bill Veeck returned the Indians into its confines on a full-time basis in 1947. By 1972, Cleveland found itself the landlord of an aging facility whose primary tenant, the Indians, had only reached a home attendance figure of over 1,000,000 fans once since 1955. Furthermore, the Stadium was not making money, and the city was falling further behind in its attempts to pay off the original city bonds issued for construction in 1928. In 1971 alone, Cleveland received \$579,490.92 in revenues but had expenses of \$756,449.00. When the leases for both the Indians and Browns came up at the end of 1972, Modell began the process of privatizing the Stadium.²⁷

Negotiations between Modell and the city over a new stadium lease began in earnest in 1970. Just prior to this, the city underwent a two year flirtation with building a

domed stadium downtown. Given the age of Municipal Stadium and the wear it had experienced due to nearly four decades of lakefront weather, two important issues came into play: the stadium's conditions and the desire for a modern facility. In 1968 the city hired Charles Luckman Associates of New York City to examine the feasibility of building a new domed stadium downtown or of renovating Municipal Stadium to include a dome. At the time of the announcement, a model stadium was revealed to the media and civic leaders. This prompted Modell to call the proposed facility, "the best stadium in the entire country." By the time February 1970 rolled around, Luckman's final report was announced. Neither the proposed dome nor a renovated Municipal Stadium was economically feasible for Cleveland. Projections estimated that a new dome would cost the city \$60.5 million and run a deficit of \$3,000,000 annually. Putting a dome on the current stadium would have cost \$44 million and run yearly deficit of \$2,600,000 million. As the booster press lamented a lost opportunity for civic improvement and the waste of \$120,000 in government funds to pay for the study, Modell was resigned to putting a positive spin on the situation. Realizing that Cleveland's financial conditions made such a large project all but impossible, Modell publicly stated that he and the Browns were happy at Municipal Stadium. Cleveland's plight for new or renovated sports facilities, however, was not over.²⁸

Putting his disappointment over the failed Luckman plan behind him, Modell moved forward with a new vision for Municipal Stadium. He was aided by Cleveland's

frustration over the facility's financial hardships. Frank Duman, Director of the Stadium and Public Auditorium, told the *Plain Dealer* in 1970 that, "The Stadium is a losing venture. We're always trying to reach the break-even point on operating costs." That same article hinted that Modell was looking into signing a long-term lease and taking over operations of the facility. In November 1969 Modell had initiated correspondence with Edward Baugh, Director of Public Properties, in which the latter was informed that, "The Cleveland Browns would consider any reasonable approach to the stadium situation in order to provide vital capital improvements." By early 1971 little advancement had been made on the issue, due in part to tensions in negotiations (or the lack of negotiations as Modell hints in a 1971 letter to Baugh) between the Browns owner and Director of Finance, Philip M. Dearborn. The Browns lease was set to expire following the 1971 season, and the city was in dire need of downtown attractions. But with the interests of each party so mutually bound, surprisingly little was accomplished. Both Dearborn and Modell accused each other of negotiating through the press rather than with the other party. Dearborn's reasserted claims that the city was losing money on the Stadium were rebuffed by Modell, who in turn claimed that the Browns' presence had assured profits from the stadium. He requested access to the city's financial records to be certain Public Hall and its financial woes were not added into the Stadium equation. By 1971 Modell again turned to Baugh; urging immediate discussion through a veiled ultimatum. "If you or your representative are receptive to reasonable and prudent discussion," he wrote, "the

time to initiate this venture is now. The alternative is to remain silent and wait until the Browns' lease expires." When Mayor Carl Stokes announced that he would not run for re-election, all appearances were given that the ice surrounding negotiations would soon thaw.²⁹

The new regime of Mayor Ralph Perk acted with a bit more urgency regarding Municipal Stadium. Nick Mileti's 1971 announcement that he would construct a new arena for the Cavaliers and professional hockey in Richfield, Ohio meant downtown Cleveland would further lose valuable components of its dwindling entertainment attractions. Keeping the Indians and Browns downtown was of the utmost importance for the new mayor. The booster press wondered aloud if Modell and then-Indians owner Vernon Stouffer would also be tempted to leave downtown for the proverbial greener pastures of suburbia. One astute reader pointed out in a letter to the editor that the only way for downtown to save its sports franchises and address its financial woes was to sell Municipal Stadium. Privatization was the key for restoring life and solvency to the aging facility. Modell, who was publicly negotiating with Cleveland to take over the stadium's concessions, must have salivated at such a proposal. With the city in a financial crunch, Modell could now force the issue of privatizing Municipal Stadium. By becoming the stadium operator, Modell could return to his promotional roots and extend his business ventures into more profitable directions. Within the next two years, Modell would press the city further on this issue and receive outside help from his friends.³⁰

Perk tried to persuade, some would argue “strong-arm,” Mileti to reconsider building his new arena in downtown Cleveland, but his efforts came to no avail. At the same time, Modell initiated tactics of his own, which also could be considered “strong-arm,” in his pursuit of becoming the operator of Municipal Stadium. In a very subtle move, Modell purchased 200 acres of land in the Cleveland suburb of Strongsville for \$4,000/acre (a total of \$800,000). The land was conveniently located by two highways; providing an ideal location for a possible new football stadium in suburbia. Given the Cleveland area’s preoccupation with stadium construction in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not farfetched for Modell to follow population and businesses into the suburbs without much public backlash. Building professional sports facilities in the suburbs was a pattern he had acknowledged when asked about Mileti’s Coliseum by the media. When pressed further on the Brown’s future in Cleveland, Modell responded, “I’d listen to proposals [to move to the suburbs] because I’m a realist. Nothing can be done downtown with the priorities the city has.” He even had a model of the proposed facility constructed and put on display in his office. When seen by minority owner Bob Gries, Modell assured him that his intent was purely to shake up the city. What Modell never told Gries was that a study he had commissioned revealed that construction of a stadium in Strongsville would not be cheap and would be fought by the suburb’s city council. But the illusion held more power than the reality of Strongsville stadium, and Modell’s suburban land remained a visible threat. Everyone believed Modell was going

to build a stadium in Strongsville. According to a former employee, Mayor Perk at the time came to him and said, “I’ve already lost the Cavaliers and hockey. If you move to Strongsville, downtown Cleveland is done.”³¹

Indeed, the stalemate in lease negotiations with both the Browns and Indians had put the city in a bind. In March 1973 another ill-fated plan for the development of Municipal Stadium was submitted to Mayor Perk by Edward Baugh, vice president of Christopher Associates. Costing and estimated \$36.3 million, the Christopher Plan proposed \$8,000,000 in renovations for the stadium, \$12 million for a new 4,000 car garage, and \$16.3 million for a new 20-24 story hotel/apartment building which would be located at the east end of the stadium. Christopher Associates would also operate the stadium through a lease with the city for the next 50 years. Baugh also acknowledged that both Mileti and Modell would be invited to become operating partners. For the plan to succeed, it needed the approval of Mileti and Modell as well as city officials. Ironically, Baugh was two years removed from his role in negotiating a lease with Modell while serving as director of public properties. Modell stated that he had no desire to enter into an operating partnership. In July the Indians and Browns announced they would not agree to any lease with Christopher Associates, and the proposal was dead. Both parties found the proposal’s plans for remodeling Municipal Stadium unnecessary and financially excessive, but Modell’s vote had greater reasoning behind it. When the Christopher Plan was presented to Mayor Perk, he stated that he expected a second

proposal from Sheldon Guren, president of US Realty Investments. Only weeks before nixing the Christopher Plan, Modell and Mileti had signed an agreement with Guren to work with Cleveland Stadium Corp. on all matters involving leases and renovation. Negotiating on behalf of Cleveland Stadium Corp. was none other than Guren's business partner, Art Modell.³²

"I'm tickled that Art Modell is about to become the custodian of the Stadium," wrote Hal Lebovitz upon the announcement that Cleveland officials and Modell's Stadium Corp. had reached an agreement on leasing out the facility's operations. The deal was viewed as a "win-win" scenario for each party. Cleveland was expected to save \$14 million in operating costs over the life of the 25 year lease with Cleveland Stadium Corp. Municipal Stadium was set to receive \$10,000,000 in improvements between 1975 and 1978. Modell and the Stadium Corp. were able to cut down on the financial burden of the stadium by arranging for the application of the city's 3% admission tax towards payment of bonds used towards previous renovations (totaling \$4,400,000). For many, the finances were secondary to the stability the new lease was set to provide. No one could imagine the Browns leaving a structure operated by Modell (Said Lebovitz, "...there was never a danger of the Browns moving out of the area"), and the agreement he and Mileti signed with Guren was believed to guarantee the Indians' downtown presence for at least ten years. Mayor Perk proudly boasted that, "the Indians and Browns will be here for 100 years." On August 10, 1973, Cleveland City Council

introduced an emergency resolution that made Cleveland Stadium Corp. responsible for operations and improvements to Municipal Stadium and the stadium parking lot. On October 11 the resolution was approved. Within the next eight months the lease was amended several times to deal with a variety of issues including problems negotiating with the Indians, and the Stadium Corp.'s request to have the renovation timeframe shortened to 1983 (after it had been extended from 1978 to 1986 in an earlier amendment). Regardless, Art Modell was now both landlord and tenant, and had a new means to implement the promotional skills he had developed in advertising while in New York. For all intensive purposes, Modell was on top of the world, or at least Cleveland.³³

Modell leapt into the role of the commercial promoter with his new control over Municipal Stadium. Roughly one year earlier a civic committee headed by George Steinbrenner had recommended the privatization of stadium operations; saying that future success would best be accomplished if Municipal Stadium shifted from the control of politicians to that of business-oriented management. David Harris argued that Modell saw himself as that business-oriented management in 1972, and had achieved it by 1973. The Stadium Corp.'s first major renovation project called for the construction of a ring of loges (a.k.a. luxury suites or boxes) that would hang below the bottom lip of the stadium's upper deck. By mid-July 1974, over \$1,500,000 had been spent on construction according to Modell. Art's priority at the time was to build the loges and, according to a former employee, "he figured that would be the saving part of the

stadium.” This, of course, counted against the \$10 million in renovation by the Stadium Corp. agreed upon in its lease with the city. Upon completion of the loges, an electronic scoreboard was slated as the next major project. Pre-sale of the loges (at \$15,000 each) accounted for \$500,000 in income for Modell and Guren by the end of 1974. If all 106 loges sold, they would cover their construction costs. While the booster press again praised Modell for modernizing Municipal Stadium and working towards making the facility fan-friendly for sports, concerts, and other entertainment spectacles, others wondered if loge construction was necessary.³⁴

Two major questions came out Stadium Corp.’s construction of loges. First, did the loges comply with the agreement for \$10 million in renovations? And second, if the loges were not necessary or a priority in renovation, were they instead an instant means of profit for Modell and the Stadium Corp.? After forty-three years of decay on the lake front, Municipal Stadium was in need of renovations on many levels. This was something almost everyone could agree upon, but something Modell may have overlooked. According to a former employee, “What [Art] didn’t figure out was that the stadium was built in 1931 and it needed all new electrical work, all new plumbing work. The \$10 M commitment he made zoomed.” But after spending roughly \$10,000 on repairing electrical connections, the loges became top priority. Here is where Modell differentiated between structural improvements and “potential income producers,” as David Harris points out. In 1974 and 1975, roughly \$3,700,000 of the \$5,000,000 spent

of the stadium went towards income producing efforts. Over the next two years, Harris added, Modell committed \$2,000,000 to the construction of a new scoreboard that would generate \$1,000,000 annually in advertising.³⁵

While Modell told reporters that the loges, along with parking and concessions, were needed to ensure future profits that rent from the Browns and Indians could not produce on their own, local muckraker Roldo Bartimole found the loges and the lease troubling for the city. He pointed out that the loges would only benefit the fan of distinguished taste and comfortable means with an expendable \$15,000 for a season. The average fan would not experience improved sightlines or more comfortable seating from their construction. Bartimole again pointed out that if all 106 loges were sold by the start of the 1975 season, then Modell and Guren would have \$1,590,000 of instant profit (Harris estimated that the loges were designed to generate as much as \$2,400,000 in yearly profits). More troubling, however, was the stipulation in the lease regarding the city's 3% admission tax at the stadium. In early negotiations between Modell and the city, the Browns owner insisted that the Stadium Corp. not be responsible for payment of the bond indebtedness for past improvements. In the final lease agreement Modell negotiated a major coup in agreeing to pay the bond indebtedness and property taxes on the stadium, but only after the 3% admission tax was subtracted. Essentially Modell arranged to have the city use its own money to pay for the bond debt of roughly \$4,400,000. Furthermore, the more fans Modell drew into Municipals Stadium during the course of the year, the

lower his rent would be. With the ability to host additional events aside from baseball and football, the admission tax amount would increase while the rent would equally decrease. Bartimole pointed out how the city was going to lose money to the Stadium Corp. by reviewing a 1974 rock concert. 88,000 people attended and produced a gate of \$830,000. This in turn produced \$25,000 in admission tax, as the booster press proudly proclaimed. The press failed to mention that this amount would be subtracted from the total rent, thereby creating no profit for the city. When combined with the \$14,000 the city contributed for police service for the concert, the lease lost some of its luster. The transfer of all parking and concessions to the Stadium Corp. by the city, and an additional payment of \$350,000 to the previous concession owners (who just happened to be Art Modell and the Cleveland Browns) did not position Cleveland as the benefactor Mayor Perk had earlier portrayed the city to be.³⁶

Despite the flawed nature of the Cleveland Stadium Corp. lease, early reviews from the booster press and civic leaders threw praise upon Modell for bringing life back into the “white elephant” that had been decaying on the shores of Lake Erie for years. Events such as the World Series of Rock and Roll concert and Notre Dame vs. Navy football game exuded the promise of a bright future for the stadium, and success of its new operator. Given the pomp and circumstance he was garnering, Modell looked for new ventures into which he could extend himself. Privatization of a public facility had worked once already, so Modell set his sights on Cleveland Public Hall. Riding this crest

of public accolades regarding changes at the Stadium, Modell submitted a report to the city in 1976 addressing the Cleveland Public Hall & Convention Center. In 1974 Public Hall lost \$1,500,000, and the following year lost an additional \$1,100,000. On top of its losses, the facility needed an estimated \$5,000,000 in renovations to become serviceable. Cleveland could only commit \$3,000,000 to renovations on its own. Modell's report argued that Public Hall could become a profitable facility again, but only if the city met the needed conditions. He then offered his services in operating the facility, but only if the city wished to privatize Public Hall and asked him for his assistance. Tying together notions of his civic responsibility and an eye for promotion, Modell told reporters, "I'd like to do it for the city and it would be a logical extension of what we are doing in the Stadium." A *Press* editorial seconded the notion of privatizing Public Hall, but also cautioned, perhaps leery of the stadium lease and rumors of its problems, that it could not be given away by the city. No action was taken by the city, and one year later Modell again addressed this issue. After pulling in the reins on his short-lived political ambitions, Modell told reports that he would not pursue entering politics (see aforementioned flirtation with candidacy as GOP Lt. Governor), but would again be willing to operate the Public Hall if asked by the city. Again, Cleveland officials never presented Modell with this opportunity.³⁷

In 1978 Modell again came out in the press with a plan to enhance Cleveland's downtown and further his promotional operations. Gone was his pursuit of Public Hall.

Instead, he and former Cleveland Stadium Corp. partner Sheldon Guren announced that they were considering four locations for a downtown arena. It was presumed that Modell would operate the facility if erected. Modell pointed to a “growing dissatisfaction” with the Richfield Coliseum as the reason for the renewed interest in a downtown arena. Interestingly enough, Modell would not discuss the merits of the Coliseum and did not specify as to whom held this “growing dissatisfaction” he had mentioned. Emerging problems between the Cavaliers and the Coliseum in lease negotiations, and a public call for a new arena to serve Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, and/or Cleveland State University made by an Ohio Court of Appeals judge, however, gave credence to the project. Modell and Guren asserted that any similarity in timing between their proposal, the negotiations at the Coliseum, and the judge’s desire for a new sports facility was purely coincidence. The arena never left the planning stages, but the proposal again demonstrated the amount of respect Modell garnered from the booster press and civic leaders. An editorial warned the public not to get overly excited about the prospects of a new downtown arena, but quickly reversed its tempered excitement by putting greater stock into the project because of Modell’s involvement. While the arena plan was an opportunity unfulfilled, it was still an opportunity that not many others would have had acknowledged by the booster press and civic leaders.³⁸

Even though Modell was not able to take control of the operations of Public Hall or build a new arena downtown, he was not without other opportunities in the traditional,

central city. In 1976 the downtown Sheraton Hotel is placed in receivership to Modell. Judge John T. Patton recommended that the hotel, in the heart of the city and one of the few facilities with banquet space for conventions, be placed under Modell's watch given the Stadium Corp's apparent success. Patton argued that Modell possessed the business experience and confidence of the financial community to save the hotel from bankruptcy. As the hotel's ward, Modell was responsible for finding a buyer. "This town has been good to me for 16 years, and I hope I can do something in saving a Cleveland landmark that is vital to the success of Cleveland," he said following the judges decision. He also assured reporters that it was very unlikely that he would take on ownership of the hotel himself. Modell was praised for his commitment to restoring "the health, vitality, and attractiveness" of downtown Cleveland. Using the good name he held in the business community and receiving court approval, Modell borrowed \$150,000 to cover operating expenses for the Sheraton over the next three months, and ensure that the hotel and banquet space would remain open for business.³⁹

Modell gave up receivership of the Sheraton to Sam Miller in March 1977 when he became head of a group of local investors called "Save the Square" who were looking to purchase the hotel. "I didn't even want the appearance of a conflict of interests," Modell reported. Within the coming month Modell's group arranged to purchase the hotel for \$4,000,000 and put \$10,000,000 in renovations into the facility. Three local banks had already agreed to lend the group \$7,000,000 in total, and each individual member of

“Save the Square” would put in \$1,000,000 apiece to cover the balance. In an act that would greatly anger Bob Gries, who was now a partner with Modell in Cleveland Stadium Corp. as well as the Browns, Modell committed \$1,000,000 from the Stadium Corp. to cover his share. It was also interesting to note that Sam Miller’s wife was Ruth Miller, who served as community development director for Mayor Perk and was also in charge of tax abatements for Cleveland. One month prior to purchasing the Sheraton, Modell defended tax abatements given to National City Bank, one of the banks lending money to “Save the Square.” In the course of defending the abatement program as a necessary means for inducing downtown construction and development, he also announced that his group would request \$10,000,000 worth of tax abatements to cover proposed renovations to the Sheraton. In spite of the apparent conflicts in interest at play, no criticism emerged from the booster press. On August 8, 1977 Modell’s group, now officially named Public Square Hotel Co. Ltd. placed the only bid on the Sheraton at a sheriff’s auction. The winning bid was for \$2,519,334. Public Square Ltd. had earlier purchased the first and second mortgages on the Sheraton for roughly \$3,000,000. The group then began the process of downsizing the hotel (going from 800 to 540 rooms) and reopening as part of the Stouffers Hotel chain. These plans were temporarily disturbed by the Local 10 of the Hotel, Motel, Restaurant and Bartenders Union which attempted to block the sale after nearly 250 union workers were laid off and were set to be replaced by non-union workers already in the Stouffers system. Modell took the brunt of public

abuse from union protesters, who called him “anti-union” and threatened to picket Municipal Stadium during Browns games. Once again Modell was defended, this time by a Stadium Corp. employee who took Modell’s records of working with unions to the booster press, but it was becoming more evident that the multiple opportunities Modell was receiving and acting upon were not based in the civic-minded responsibility in which they were framed.⁴⁰

Despite the praise heaped upon Modell for his continued civic-minded gestures in saving the Sheraton and reviving Municipal Stadium, the extension of financial commitments began to take its toll on the Browns owner, privately if not publicly. Earlier warnings from area businessmen when he took over the stadium that \$10 million was too little to reasonably improve the stadium and that the venture was a poor financial risk came to fruition. Even prior to this, however, Modell was arranging and rearranging his finances. In 1971 Modell had Cleveland Browns Inc. undergo a disproportionate redemption of stock that would in turn distribute cash back to team stockholders. Modell traded in 22% of team stock (leaving him with 48% of team stock) in order to receive \$4,000,000. Several minority partners would later sell out and Modell was there to buy their stock, giving him 53% of the team. The Browns then took out a bank loan of \$7 million to make payments on the stock redemptions. By 1974 the Browns were still \$8,000,000 in debt for this bank loan. Upon agreeing to the Stadium Corp. lease with Cleveland, Modell was informed by Sheldon Guren that he could not continue as a

partner and would not be able to contribute any money to the venture. US Realty was involved in a “major real estate scandal” according to Bob Gries, leaving Guren incapable of continuing in the Stadium Corp. Modell, now on his own, was subsequently forced by the banks to put up his shares of stock in the Browns and his land in Strongsville as collateral. Modell, in the meantime sought out a new partner, and targeted Gries in the process. In the Spring 1976, Modell got Gries to buy into the Stadium Corp. which was then restructured so Modell controlled 80%, Gries 10%, and various others 10%. Part of the restructuring also had the Stadium Corp. purchase the land once earmarked for a football stadium in Strongsville from Modell for \$4 million, providing the Browns owner with a huge profit on his former investment and putting the Stadium Corp. \$3,000,000 in debt.⁴¹

The controversy surrounding the Cleveland Stadium Corp. and Art Modell reached its pinnacle in 1978 when allegations came forward that the city was being short-changed in rent payments. Modell’s Stadium Corp was accused of making huge profits at the expense of the city. Specifically, Stadium Corp. was responsible for paying a minimum annual rent of \$150,000 as well as \$384,000 to cover the bond indebtedness and property taxes (as mentioned earlier). However, the city’s 3% admission tax was then deducted from that total; making up the final rent payment. The Indians paid an annual rent of \$250,000 to the Stadium Corp. that also could have been technically deducted from Modell’s payments to the city. Bartimole reported in 1977 that the Stadium Corp. paid

the city less than \$1000 for all of 1976 given the system put forth in the lease. “They sent a check for \$700 to \$900,” Bartimole quoted a city official as saying. The Stadium Corp. controlled all concessions, two restaurants, stadium parking lot no. 1, and all revenue from scoreboard advertising and television. Combined, this package was estimated to bring in approximately \$5,000,000 in net profits. *Ohio Magazine* and Bartimole called the stadium lease a sweetheart deal, and Harris mentioned it was one of the top ten leases in the NFL. The booster press ignored the story, most likely based on Modell’s comfy relations with the media. Modell argued that the admission tax total “just about equaled the payment for property tax and debt.” When the story made its way into *Check-Off*, the NFL Players Association newsletter, Modell claimed it was an effort to poke fun of the Browns owner, and later had his lawyer state that the charges were “inaccurate and totally misleading.” Mayor Dennis Kucinich eventually called for an audit to make sure the city was receiving its fair share, while Bartimole called for the city to tear up the lease arrangement with the Stadium Corp. But as 1978 wound to a close, Cleveland found itself with the more pressing matter of city default, and Art Modell and the Stadium Corp. became minor issues.⁴²

Art Modell entered the 1970s as the essence of Cleveland’s football team. Combining his sports connection with a variety of activities framed as civic-minded in nature, he transformed himself into one of Cleveland’s most prominent civic leaders and the city’s favorite “adopted” son. As a commercial promoter, he looked beyond his

entrepreneurial efforts in professional football and entered into a variety of new business ventures designed at continuing his aura of civic responsibility while simultaneously producing profits. But the formula did not work. Poor choices on the part of Modell and the deteriorating economic conditions of Cleveland worked against the Browns owner in the long run. Modell was emblematic of the changing fortunes of the city he had come to call his home. Unfortunately for both Modell and for Cleveland, this was not a problem that could easily be remedied. As t-shirts and banners proclaiming “Losing is a work of ‘Art’” became commonplace in and around Municipal Stadium on game days in the late 1970s and beyond, they pointed less and less at the diminishing performance of a football team. Instead, and perhaps unbeknownst to those who donned that phrase, “Losing is a work of ‘Art’” was a poignant reminder of the perils facing the sports entrepreneur when desire, and perhaps ego, surpassed sensibility and responsibility.

CHAPTER 12

EPILOGUE

Everybody loves an underdog, and Cleveland's collapse in the late 1970s handed the city an opportunity to fill that role. It resulted in efforts to regain local pride and national redemption. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s civic leaders fought to enact fiscal responsibility, stir downtown development and retail, and restore Cleveland's tarnished image. By 1994 it appeared that the city had bounced back and, in the process, become an example of urban renewal for all America. The "Mistake on the Lake" shed the stigma of smoke-stained buildings, a polluted lakefront, a desolate downtown stricken with crime and devoid of nightlife, and an attitude of hopelessness. Cleveland's facelift and an image makeover resulted from new downtown development, including the construction of the sixty-three floor Society Center, and greater levels of political cooperation than had been seen while Dennis Kucinich's was mayor. The 1978 default, according to Mayor George Voinovich, forced the city to get its fiscal house in order which gave Cleveland voters reason to be confident in the city again. Cleveland was suddenly the "Comeback" or "Renaissance" city and the darling of a national media poised to cover this reclamation project.¹

Professional sport was integral in the renewal process, as Cleveland's franchises were at the heart of downtown's development and entertainment efforts. Two decades worth of failed proposals to replace Municipal Stadium with a domed structure, renovated facility, or other sport complex finally gave way to the construction of new downtown sporting facilities. In May 1990 residents of Cuyahoga County voted in favor of a sin tax (on alcohol and cigarette purchases) that would fund the construction of a new baseball-only ballpark and an arena on the old Central Market district. Four years later Jacobs Field and Gund Arena opened, adding to downtown's new luster. Before a MLB work stoppage cancelled the remainder of the 1994 season, the Indians and Jacobs Field brought an excitement downtown that had not been seen since the halcyon days of Bill Veeck. The retro-style ballpark, with light towers designed to mimic the smokestacks of the neighboring steel mills, was filled to capacity almost nightly as the young Indians began their 1990s dominance of the AL Central Division. While Gund Arena strategically brought the Cavaliers back to downtown Cleveland, Jacobs Field brought the spotlight to the city. The Indians and their new park symbolized a union between an organization exhibiting an eye for talent and responsibility and a fan base hungry for a winner and a point of civic pride. Fan support was indeed strong, and eventually led to a MLB record 455 game sellout streak. Cleveland was suddenly a thriving sports city.²

By all appearances, Cleveland could have been the envy of almost any other American metropolis. Underneath downtown's shiny new façade, however, the same problems that had plagued the city over the previous forty years continued to erode the cultural and economic foundation. Cleveland's public schools remained in a shambles; population figures continued to show that the city was shrinking; and Clevelanders lacked the skills to adapt to a technology-based service economy. Reiterating Alison Isenberg's contention from the Introduction, this continuing decline was in many ways the product of human actions. The link between decline and human actors was no more evident in professional sport than with Art Modell. The flurry of problematic business ventures he invested into during the 1970s ate away at his personal and corporate finances. His hopes to renovate Municipal Stadium with help from the city were pushed aside when the city placed its energies into making Gateway a reality. Modell was angered that Cleveland put its efforts into the support of the Indians, losers for past three decades, and the Cavaliers, who played in a facility still deemed "attractive and functional." He had given Cleveland a winning franchise and stayed downtown when others left, only to have his team lose out on the new facility sweepstakes. Modell's anger and disappointment culminated in the 1995, mid-season announcement that he was moving the Brown's franchise to Baltimore. While Modell and Cleveland officials played the blame-game, Clevelanders were left negotiating the sense of community and cultural identity they could elicit from a lame duck franchise and its legacy.³

Cleveland, like other cities, traveled down the rough road of urban decline and survived, but was not reborn into the nostalgic visions of a utopian past. Troubles still existed, and those that were not readily evident were usually festering below the surface. In reality, utopian visions never existed as they have been remembered. Through the urban landscape and images of downtown, individuals and communities reflected upon their own lives and experiences and subsequently assigned value to them. Professional sports exist within this understanding and are part of the cultural narrative tied to community and place. They are the subject of constant negotiation between fans, owners, athletes, and civic leaders, yet the multiple meanings professional sports construct are very real. As seen in the issues and stories raised in this study, sports produce an arena for argument and understanding on a broader level just as the American city is a place of gathering and conflict, of integration and negotiation. Cleveland, like other cities, continues to negotiate its image and the meaning explicated from it, and its three professional sport teams continue to contribute to community image. Sharon Zukin called Midwestern, Rust Belt cities, “landscapes of devastation,” and Cleveland—city and sport—fell into that category. The depths of the 1970s ended, but its memories and records stand as reminders. Kevin Lynch reminded us that, “To live in this environment, whatever the economic or social problems encountered, seems to add an extra depth to experience, whether of delight or of melancholy or of belonging.” That is the joy the city.⁴

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CHAPTER 1

¹ Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 157, 173 and Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1976), 3, 180, 263; Porter references the Chamber of Commerce's advertising slogan in the Fifties and the "Laugh In" joke about the city. "The best location in the nation" was used in reference to Cleveland's 500 mile proximity to many major American centers of trade and commerce, ranging from St. Louis to New York City.

² Growing up cheering for losing teams, I learned very quickly that there is an undeniable link between city and sport and a community's attitude and identity. I vividly remember watching the David Letterman skit in question with my mother and father one summer night in the late 1980s. A picture of someone's front lawn with the word "LOSER" burnt into the grass was shown to the audience. Letterman promptly told them that it was the Cleveland Indians' infield. I found myself laughing along with the studio audience since I was fully aware just how bad the Indians were, but also felt uncomfortable at the negative reference made to my favorite baseball team and hometown. As an undergraduate between 1991 and 1995 I was fortunate enough to witness the rejuvenation of the Indians franchise and some very successful Cavalier teams. Yet, I was reminded by some close friends from Chicago in some very colorful terminology that Cleveland was not a winner, and "never would be." The connections a community makes with a winning franchise and how it reflects on a city's image have propelled stadium construction, expansion franchises, and team relocations, all in the name of being "major league" and, more importantly, a winner.

³ Stephen Hardy, "Entrepreneurs, Organization, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians" *Journal of Sport History*, 13 (1986): 14-16, 20-24; Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1-2; and Sharon Zukin, *Landscape of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), 31, 41, 54.

⁴ For studies that establish the sport-city nexus in modernizing America, see Melvin Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Stephen Hardy, *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, and Community, 1865-1915* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982); Steven Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Gerald Gems, *Windy City Wars: Labor,*

Leisure, and Sport in the Making of Chicago (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997); and Stephen Hardy, "Sport In Urbanizing America: A Historical Review" *Journal of Urban History* 23, (September 1997): 676-681. The *Journal of Urban History* will hence forth be listed as *JUH*.

⁵ Charles Euchner, *Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). See also, James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Mark Rosentraub, *Major League Losers: The Real Cost of Sports and Who's Paying For It* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); and Michael N. Danielson, *Home Team: Professional Sports and the American Metropolis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁶ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities, and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993), 210-212; and Brian Wilson and Philip White, "Revive the Pride: Social Process, Political Economy, and a Fan-Based Grassroots Movement," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 19 (2002): 119-148.

⁷ Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 16-18.

⁸ Porter, *Cleveland*, 3-16, 299; Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 166-179; and William D. Jenkins, "Before Downtown: Cleveland, Ohio, and Urban Renewal, 1949-1958," *JUH* 27 (May 2001): 483. Porter refers to this syndrome when he calls Cleveland a "yo-yo city" or a city on a seesaw. He further argues that Cleveland is a "big small-town" that is sensitive to criticism yet fails to make a steadfast move in any direction. For information on the Rustbelt, please see Sabrina Deitrick and Robert A. Beauregard, "From front-runner to also-ran—the transformation of a once-dominant industrial region: Pennsylvania, USA," 52-71 and Richard Florida, "The industrial transformation of the Great Lakes Region," 162-176, in Phillip Cooke, ed, *The Rise of the Rustbelt* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

⁹ This argument does not mean to imply that professional sports can neatly define one voice of opinion for a city of such diversity. It would be irresponsible and impossible to label every citizen as a sports fan or to imply that one unanimous meaning emerged from this collection of voices. Yet sport remains a readily identifiable cultural institution in the city. As has been the case with Cleveland, professional sport is presented as an instrument for civic uplift and morale boosting by civic leaders.

¹⁰ Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (1938): 18-24. See also Hardy, *How Boston Played*, 17-18, and Adelman, *Sporting Time*, 7.

¹¹ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1960). Quote found on page 91.

¹² Isenberg, *American Downtown*, 306-308; Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 256-259; and Larry Ford, *America's New Downtown: Revitalization or Reinvention?* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 3, 23-27.

¹³ The works of Warren Susman and Thorstein Veblen further provide a foundation for understanding the emergence of the "individual" within the new consumer culture. Just as the individual sought to stand out from the crowd, a city looks to break away from the community of cities and come to the foreground on its

own. See, Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: New American Library, 1953), 164-182; and Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 237-251.

CHAPTER 2

¹ The name of the city was eventually shortened to Cleveland by a newspaper which omitted the “a” in order to fit the name across the top of the page. The change in spelling eventually became official. “Cleveland” will be used from this point forward.

² Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 2nd Ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 7-14 & 77-99. For more on the founding and early history of Cleveland, see William Ganson Rose, *Cleveland: The Making of a City* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), and Edmund H. Chapman, *Cleveland: Village to Metropolis*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, OH: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1998).

³ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 101-131; and David C. Hammack, Diane L. Grabowski, and John J. Grabowski, eds, *Identity, Conflict, & Cooperation: Central Europeans in Cleveland, 1850-1930* (Cleveland, OH: The Western Reserve Historical Society, 2002), 2-8.

⁴ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 101-131; and Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 17-32.

⁵ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 10; Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland: From George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1972), 329.

⁶ William H. Robinson and David Steinberg, *Transformations in Cleveland Art, 1796-1946: Community and Diversity in Early Modern America* (Cleveland, OH: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996), 120-121; and Ronald R. Weiner and Carol A. Beal, "The Sixth City: Cleveland in Three Stage of Urbanization," Thomas F. Campbell and Edward M. Miggins, eds., *The Birth of Modern Cleveland 1865-1930* (Cleveland, OH: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1988), 24-52.

⁷ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 136-142; and Porter, *Cleveland*, 52 & 72-75.

⁸ John J. Grabowski, *Sports in Cleveland: An Illustrated History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 6-26, 64.

⁹ Grabowski, *Sports in Cleveland*, 7-14; Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 289 & 301-313. The Forest City Club was founded as an amateur club in 1865. Its shift to a semi-pro organization upon hiring three professionals to aid the team's performance caused several of the amateur players to resign in protest. The inclusion of professionals did not help the team win, and Grabowski contends that the team dropped out of the National Association of Professional Baseball Players in 1872 with a 6-15 record in mid-season.

¹⁰ Russell Schneider, *The Indians Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 12-13, 16; David Quentin Voigt, *American Baseball: From the Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 306; and Seymour, *Baseball: Early Years*, 314-315 & 355.

¹¹ Ellen J. Staurowsky, "Sockalexis and the Making of the Myth at the Core of Cleveland's 'Indian' Image," in C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling, eds., *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascot Controversy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 82-106; Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 164; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 16-22, 187-188; and Franklin Lewis, *The Cleveland Indians* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), 76-88.

¹² Scott Longert, *Addie Joss: King of the Pitchers* (Cleveland, OH: The Society for American Baseball Research, 1998), 114-123; and Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 27, 134-135.

¹³ Voigt, *American Baseball*, 248-249; Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 140; and Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 228-229.

¹⁴ Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 153-159; Henry P. Edwards, "Tribe To Become Cleveland Owned Ball Club Today," *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (to be cited *PD*), November 2, 1927, 22; Stuart Bell, "Barnard Set For Baseball Throne," *Cleveland Press* (to be cited *Press*), November 2, 1927, 1, and Stuart Bell, "Bradley Will Make Check For Million," *Press*, November 3, 1927, 30.

¹⁵ Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 190-197; and Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 146-147. See also, John Sickels, *Bob Feller: Ace of the Greatest Generation* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, Inc., 2004).

¹⁶ Grabowski, *Sports in Cleveland*, 47-54.

¹⁷ Grabowski, *Sports in Cleveland*, 54-55; "Cleveland Pro Gridders Disband," *PD*, September 6, 1936, 1-B; "Cleveland Back In Pro Grid Loop," *PD*, September 15, 1936, 18; and James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 57.

¹⁸ Bill Levy, *Return to Glory: The Story of the Cleveland Browns* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1965), 40-41; George E. Condon, *Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 283-286; editorial "The Rams Stay Here," *Press*, June 12, 1941, 8; Henry Andrews, "Rams Sold to Reeves and Levy for \$140,000," *Press*, June 11, 1941, 10; Jack Clowser, "Rams Sold; Games to Be Played Here," *Cleveland News (News)*, June 11, 1941, 1, 13, and "Rams Set for New Start, Name Evans General Manager," June 12, 1941, 14; George Peters, "Billy Evans Engaged as General Manager by Rams' New Owner," *PD*, June 12, 1941, 18. Information was also provided by Dr. Melvin Adelman from notes for his manuscript on the All-America Football Conference.

¹⁹ Gene Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory: The Story of Cleveland Barons Hockey* (Euclid, OH: Blue Line Publications, Inc., 1994), 11-13; Ed Bang, "Between You and Me," *News*, May 18, 1937, 12; and Stuart Bell, "In This Corner," *Press*, November 16, 1929, 11.

²⁰ George Condon, *The Man in the Arena: The Life & Times of Al Sutphin* (Cleveland, OH: The A.C. Sutphin Foundation, 1995), 47-48; Stuart Bell, "In This Corner," *Press*, November 6, 1929, 12; "Hockey

Returns to Cleveland At Elysium This Saturday,” *PD*, November, 11, 1929, 23; and editorial, “Hockey Comes Back,” *PD*, November 15, 1929, 12.

²¹ Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 15-16; and Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 47-48; and John Dietrich, “Holmes Weathers Hockey Storm With Support of Fans; Reform Badly Needed,” *PD*, March 24, 1935, 3-B. Shinny is often equated with pick-up games of hockey played outdoors on any frozen body of water.

²² “Montreal maroons Offered To Sutphin,” *PD*, May 9, 1937, 1-B; and Paul Jacobs, “Minor League—but mighty Good,” *Sport Life*, February 1949, 79.

²³ Chapman, *Cleveland: Village to Metropolis*, ix-x, xvii, 149.

²⁴ Frank Gibbons, “Lightning Strikes and a Diamond ‘Fit for Kings’ Is Built,” *Press*, January 13, 1953, 16; Peter Jednick, *League Park*, 3rd ed. (self-published: 1992), 3-7; Grabowski, *Sports in Cleveland*, 12-13; Peter Jednick, *Cleveland: Where the East Coast Meets the Midwest* (Cleveland, OH: self-published, 1980), 65-75; J. Thomas Hetrick, *MISFITS! Baseball’s Worst Ever Team* (Clifton, VA: Pocol Press, 1991), 54; and Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 354-356. For more on the connection between transportation and baseball cross-ownership, see Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era*, revised ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 56-57. For more on stadium construction in the early twentieth century, see G. Edward White, *Creating the National Pastime: Baseball Transforms Itself, 1903-1953*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 20.

²⁵ Frank Gibbons, “18,832 Turn Out for Opener but Naps Find Poverty in New ‘Palace,’” *Press*, January 17, 1953, 8; and Jednick, *Cleveland*, 73-75. The Plain Dealer article mentioned was cited in Rose, *Cleveland*, 635.

²⁶ Condon, *The Man in the Arena*, 52; Sam Otis, “Hockey With Us Again,” *PD*, November 13, 1929, 26; and Stuart Bell, “In This Corner,” *Press*, November 6, 1929, 12.

²⁷ “Building Contract Is Signed fro Sutphin Group’s New Arena,” *News*, May 11, 1937, 13; “Three-Year Dream Comes True, New Sports Palace Is Started,” *News*, May 17, 1937, 12; Carl Shatto, “Sign Contract For Ice Arena,” *Press*, May 11, 1937, 1, and “Ground Broken For Arena,” May 17, 1937, 26; editorial, “The New Ice Arena,” *Press*, May 11, 1937, 12; Stuart Bell, “We Get Sports Arena at Last And Fans Will See in Comfort Will Help Develop Ice Game,” *Press*, May 17, 1937, 26; Ed McAuley, “The Arena: A Simple Name and a Simple Virtue,” *News*, November 10, 1937, 12; Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 16-22; and Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 51-64.

²⁸ Editorial, “The Arena, as Promised,” *News*, November 11, 1937, 5; editorial, “The Arena Opens,” *Press*, November 10, 1937, 10; Carl Shatto, “\$1,000,000 Sports Palace to Be Opened Tonight,” *Press*, November 10, 1937, 12, and “Dazzling Throng Attends Gala Opening of New Arena,” *Press*, November 11, 1937, 1, 24, 26; Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 16-22; and Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 51-64.

²⁹ Philip C. Suchma, “The Selling of Cleveland Municipal Stadium: The Linking of Progressive Era Ideals With the Emerging Consumer Culture,” *Sport History Review* 31 (November 2000): 106-107; and Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 166-168.

³⁰ Suchma, “The Selling of Cleveland Municipal Stadium,” 102 & 106-113.

³¹ Suchma, "The Selling of Cleveland Municipal Stadium," 112-116; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 358-359; Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 171; "Council Fight Blocks New Car Pass; Indians Accept Stadium Lease Terms," *PD*, May 17, 1932, 1; editorial, "Into The Stadium!" *PD*, May 17, 1932, 16; Gordon Cobbledick, "5 Stadium Games Planned By Tribe," *PD*, February 24, 1937, 19; and Chad O. Skinner "Baseball Is Step Nearer Stadium," *PD*, April 10, 1937, 15.

³² The *Sporting News* quote was found in Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 355.

CHAPTER 3

¹ Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 7, 10-13; Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 211-214; and Robert Lewis, "The Changing Fortunes of American Central-City Manufacturing, 1870-1950," *Journal of Urban History* 28 (2002): 573-574. Teaford lists the quote from a Cleveland planner to an article (not named), *Plain Dealer (PD)* July 4, 1940, 18.

² Teaford, *Rough Road to Renaissance*, 25-26.

³ *What's Ahead for Cleveland?* W.P.A (O.P. No. 665-42-3-314); Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1976-1996*. 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 150-151.

⁴ William D. Jenkins, "Before Downtown: Cleveland, Ohio, and Urban Renewal, 1949-1958," *Journal of Urban History*. 27 (2001): 471-472, 483-493; Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 133-136; and Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 147, 150-152.

⁵ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 149-150; editorial, "Wake Up, Cleveland," *PD*, March 10, 1946; 24-A; and editorial, "Cleveland Faces Forward," *PD*, May 5, 1946, 22-A. Further reports in the *PD* indicate that the \$55 million public improvement program was passed by Cleveland voters, with \$800,000 going towards lakefront development. See editorial, "Cleveland Is Prepared," *PD*, May 19, 1946, 22-A.

⁶ Jack Clowser, "Rams Sold; Games to Be Played Here," *Cleveland News (News)*, June 11, 1941, 13; Bill Levy, *Return to Glory: The Story of the Cleveland Browns*. (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1965), 40-41, 57-58; and George E. Condon, *Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 284.

⁷ Porter, *Cleveland*, 138; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 58-59; Condon, *Cleveland*, 284-285. Dr. Melvin Adelman kindly provided me with portions of the manuscript and notes from a forthcoming and yet unnamed book on the All-America Football Conference. Further use of materials from this source will be cited as "Adelman, AAFC." For brief newspaper coverage of the Rams' relocation from outside of Cleveland, see Roscoe McGowen, "Cleveland Rams Transfer Eleven to Los Angeles," *New York Times (NYT)*, January 12, 1946, 87; and Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times," *NYT*, January 15, 1946, 18. Financial figures for the Rams were found in James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 420.

⁸ Condon, *Cleveland*, 285; Hank Messick, *The Silent Syndicate*. (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 10-13; Adelman, *AAFC*; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 39-41; and Paul Brown with Jack Clary, *PB: The Paul Brown Story* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 119-120.

⁹ Jack Clowser, "Football Limelight New to McBride," *Press*, February 10, 1945, 9; Franklin Lewis, "Random Thoughts on Pro Football and New Leagues," *Press*, February 16, 1945, 24; John Dietrich, "Jack in the Box," *PD*, July 29, 1945 16-A; John Dietrich, "Jack in the Box," *PD*, February 10, 1946, 3-C; and Adelman, *AAFC*.

¹⁰ Brown, *PB*, 119-121, 123-124; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 42-43, 46-47; Condon, *Cleveland*, 286-287; Jack Clowser, "'Football Dynasty in Cleveland' Is Brown's Coaching Aim," *Press*, February 9, 1945, 22; and John Dietrich, "Paul Brown Signs 5-Year Contract to Coach New Pro Grid Team Here," *PD*, February 9, 1945, 1. Financial figures for Leahy's contract offer come from Adelman, *AAFC*. For newspaper articles on McBride, see Clowser, "Football Limelight New to McBride," *Press*, February 10, 1945, 9; and John Dietrich, "McBride Is Specialist in Tackling 'Impossible' Jobs," *PD*, February 10, 1945, 13.

¹¹ Paul Brown, "Brown Faces New Task Here With no Illusions," *PD*, February 11, 1945, 16-A; "Paul Brown Visits City on Week End," *PD*, March 25, 1945, 2-C; "Brown Sign 2 Stars for New Grid Team," *PD*, April 1, 1945, 1-C; John Dietrich, "Jack in the Box," *PD*, March 17, 1946, 2-B; Gordon Cobbledick, "The Cleveland Browns," *Sport* (November 1952): 72-73; and Levy, *Return to Glory*, 48-56.

¹² Thomas G. Smith, "Civil Rights on the Gridiron: The Kennedy Administration and the Desegregation of the Washington Redskins," *Journal of Sport History* 14 (1987): 193-194; Thomas G. Smith, "Outside the Pale: The Exclusion of Blacks from the National Football League, 1934-1946," *Journal of Sport History* 15 (1988): 276; Bob Yonkers, "Willis Tries Out With Browns, May Open Way for Negro Players in All-America," *Press*, August 6, 1946, 21; "Name Bill 'Deke' Willis Coach at Kentucky State," *C&P*, April 21, 1945, 6-B; Cleveland Jackson, "Bill Willis Looms as First Negro in All-American Circuit," *C&P*, August 10, 1946, 9-B; Cleveland Jackson, "Marion Motley Joins Bill Willis At Brown's Pro-Football Camp," *C&P*, August 17, 1946, 10-B; Cleveland Jackson, "Bill Willis, Marion Motley to Encounter Dixie Bred Stars as Cleveland Browns, Miami Seahawks Open All-American Conference Play," *C&P*, September 7, 1946, 8-B; and Cleveland Jackson, "Cleveland Browns Trample Miami Seahawks; 60,135 Watch Willis, Motley Shine," *C&P*, September 7, 1946, 8-B. Several of the article headlines noted "All-American" rather than "All-America" for the AAFC. They were listed as they were printed.

¹³ Cleveland Jackson, "Headline Action," *C&P*, November 23, 1946, 9-B; and Cleveland Jackson, "Athletic Renaissance Highlights Sports World Through 1946," *C&P*, January 4, 1946, 8-B. Also, Jackson, "Bill Willis Looms as First Negro," 9-B; Jackson, "Marion Motley Joins Bill Willis," 10-B; Jackson, "Bill Willis, Marion Motley to Encounter Dixie Bred Stars," 8-B; and Jackson, "Cleveland Browns Trample Miami Seahawks," 8-B.

¹⁴ Melvin L. Adelman, "Making Money (Lots of It) In Professional Football in the Late 1940s: The Case of the 1946 Cleveland Browns," *Football Studies*. 7 (2004): 11-14; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 69-74, 224-225; and editorial, "Champion Browns," *PD*, December 24, 1946, 6.

¹⁵ Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 51-55; John Sickels, *Bob Feller: Ace of the Greatest Generation* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, Inc., 2004), 128-131; and "Feller Fans 12 to Defeat Tigers," *PD*, August 25, 1945, 1, 3.

¹⁶ Franklin Lewis, *The Cleveland Indians* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), 234-235; and Sickels, *Feller*, 141.

¹⁷ Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 232-234; and Bill Veeck with Ed Linn, *Veeck as in Wreck* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 87-88, 102.

¹⁸ Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 234-235; Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 89-96; Frank Gibbons, "Attorneys for Owners Confer on Indians' Sale," *Press*, June 19, 1946, 1, 8; Frank Gibbons, "Crosby May Join Hope in Indian Deal," *Press*, June 20, 1946, 1, 5; Frank Gibbons, "Bradley Rates Tribe as Good Bargain," *Press*, June 20, 1946, 30; Frank Gibbons, "Club Directors to Meet; Grabiner Due Here Today," *Press*, June 21, 1946, 34; and Frank Gibbons, "Tribe Sold, Veeck Moves In," *Press*, June 22, 1946, 1, 2.

¹⁹ Editorial, "Good Luck, Mr. Veeck," *PD*, June 24, 1946, 8; editorial, "Sale of the Indians," *Press*, June 20, 1946, 10; Henry Andrews, "Tribe Fans Favor Change, Like Veeck, Want Boudreau Kept on Team," *Press*, June 22, 1946, 2; Franklin Lewis, "Union Club 'Boys' Leave Indians as They Found 'Em," *Press*, June 22, 1946, 11; Harry Andrews, "The Common Touch: Bill Veeck, Tribe's New Boss, Sweats Out Twin Bill With 'His Fans,'" *Press*, June 24, 1946, 13; Franklin Lewis, "Veeck Finds Fan With Century Note Who Prefers Sun," *Press*, June 25, 1946, 22; Howard Preston, "'It Was Time for a Change'—Bradley," *News*, August 1, 1946, 10; and Condon, *Cleveland*, 278. Condon used the term 'limped' because Veeck had been injured while serving as a marine in the South Pacific and was on crutches. His left foot and leg were later amputated because of the injury.

²⁰ Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, July 14, 1946, 18-A; Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 103-105, 113-115, 118-132; Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 239, 241; Condon, *Cleveland*, 278-279; Harry Jones, "Veeck Runs One-Man Chautauqua Circuit in 'Selling' Indians to Ohio Baseball Fans," *PD*, January 18, 1948, 3-C; "Arrest of 'Czar' Veeck Asked in Council," *Press*, 1946 (no date or page on copy); Frank Gibbons, "'Veeck's Varieties of '46; in Stadium Debut Tonight," *Press*, July 23, 1946, 13; and editorial, "Bill Veeck's Circus," *PD*, July 28, 1946, 14-A.

²¹ Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 119-124; editorial, "Veeck Does His Part," *PD*, October 13, 1946, 22-A; and Preston, "Time For a Change," *News*, August 1, 1946, 10.

²² Don Deleighbur, "After Baseball Victory, Demands Negro In Professional Football Leagues," *C&P*, November 17, 1945, 7-B; editorial, "Jackie Robinson's Major League Debut," *C&P*, April 26, 1947, 4-B; Charles H. Loeb, "Editorial in Rhyme," *C&P*, April 26, 1947, 4-B; and Cleveland Jackson, "Headline Action," *C&P*, April 26, 1947, 9-B. See also the editorial cartoon, "We Wish Robby Success," *C&P*, April 27, 1947, 4-B.

²³ "Negro Players Request Tryouts With Indians," *Press*, August 10, 1942, 20; Cleveland Jackson, "Buckeyes Sign White Pitcher; Depart For Spring Training," *C&P*, March 23, 1946, 8-B; Jimmie N. Jones, "Defy Alabama Cops; White Ball Player Rejoins Negro Club," *C&P*, April 13, 1946, 8-B; Cleveland Jackson, "Indian Owner Would Hire Qualified Negro Players," *C&P*, July 20, 1946, 9-B; Robert Peterson, *Only The Ball Was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1970), 197, 201; "Negro Leagues Make Joint Protest To Mr. Chandler," *C&P*, November 24, 1946, 7-B; and "Here's Negro Leagues' Protest," *C&P*, November 24, 1946, 7-B.

²⁴ Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 170-180; Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 243-248; James Overmyer, *Effa Manley and the Newark Eagles* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993), 235-239; Cleveland Jackson, "Bill Veeck Impressed By Scout's Report On Negro Star," *C&P*, June 28, 1947, 8-B; "Player Joins Team Tomorrow—Veeck Indicates Majors Now Have Taken Down All Bars Against Colored Performers," *NYT*, July 4, 1947, 16; Cleveland Jackson, "Believe Newark Star Headed For Indians," *C&P*, July 5, 1947, 1-A; Cleveland Jackson, "Larry Doby Breaks Into Lineup On First Day With Team; Plays At First," *C&P*, July 12, 1947, 1-A; editorial, "Congratulations Larry Doby, Many Thanks, Bill Veeck," *C&P*, July 12, 1947, 1-B; Charles H. Loeb, "Editorial in Rhyme," *C&P*, July 12, 1947, 4-B; Cleveland Jackson, "Headline Action," *C&P*, July 12, 1947, 9-B; Cleveland Jackson, "Cleveland Indians Prepare Sepia Infielder For Vital Role," *C&P*, July 19, 1947, 9-B; Frank Gibbons, "Indians Sign Negro Star," *Press*, July 3, 1947, 1, 18; editorial, "Indians Sign Negro Star," *Press*, July 3, 1947, 6; Franklin Lewis, "Veeck Jumps Field to Acquire Negro; Sees More on Way," *Press*, July 3, 1947, 18; Franklin Lewis, "Big-League Chance Awaits Larry Doby as He Joins Tribe," *Press*, July 4, 1947, 10; editorial, "Pulling for Larry Doby," *PD*, July 4, 1947, 14; "Doby Believes He Will Make Grade As Infielder With Tribe," *PD*, July 4, 1947, 20; Harold Sauerbrei, "Larry Can Make Big Hit With Bat," *PD*, July 4, 1947, 20; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, July 6, 1947, 18-A; and Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, July 27, 1947, 18-A.

²⁵ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 140-141, 210-211; Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 181-192; and Condon, *Cleveland*, 279-280.

²⁶ Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 97, 138-148; editorial, "Veeck Does His Part," *PD*, October 13, 1946, 22-A; Preston, "Time For a Change," *News*, August 1, 1946, 10; Ed McAuley, "Names Indians Likeliest to Stay," *News*, August 8, 1946, 14; Franklin Lewis, "Veeck Only Bringing Tribe Up to Date; Miracles Later," *Press*, July 6, 1946, 10; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 58-59, 478-479; and Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 242, 245-246.

²⁷ Lewis, "Veeck Finds Fan..." *Press*, June 25, 1946, 22; Dan Taylor, "Cleveland's Pro Sports Promotions in Capable Hands," *Press*, October 16, 1946, 36.

²⁸ Gene Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory: The Story of Cleveland Barons Hockey* (Euclid, OH: Blue Line Publications, Inc., 1994), 35, 37, 64-65; George Condon, *The Man in the Arena: The Life & Times of A.C. Sutphin* (Cleveland, OH: The A.C. Sutphin Foundation, 1995), 76; and Paul Jacobs, "Minor League—but mighty GOOD," *Sport Life*. (February 1949): 79. Hergesheimer returned to the Barons in December 1942 after NHL stints in Chicago and Boston failed. His return stint in Cleveland was interrupted by military action. In 1946 he was traded to the Philadelphia Rockets.

²⁹ Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 76; and Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 85-86.

³⁰ Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 76; and Taylor, "Cleveland's Pro Sports Promotions..." *Press*, August 8, 1946, 36.

CHAPTER 4

¹ John J. Grabowski, *Sports in Cleveland: An Illustrated History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 83-87; George E. Condon, *Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 279-280; Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 139; Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1976-1996* 2nd Ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 147, 154.

² Gene Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory: The Story of Cleveland Barons Hockey* (Euclid, OH: Blue Line Publications, Inc., 1994), 98-99; Paul Jacobs, "Minor League—but mighty GOOD," *Sport Life* (February 1949): 78.

³ George Condon, *The Man in the Arena: The Life & Times of A.C. Sutphin* (Cleveland, OH: The A.C. Sutphin Foundation, 1995), 167; Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 100-101; Jacobs, "Minor League, 78-79.

⁴ Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 79-80; Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 103-109; Jacobs, "Minor League, 78.

⁵ Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 108; Jacobs, "Minor League, 40. Kiczek claims that Clarence Campbell and members of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings attended a playoff game against Buffalo while Jacobs states that it was a game at Providence in the first round of the playoffs. Since Buffalo is a natural stop in travel between Toronto and Chicago, I chose to use Kiczek's information.

⁶ Condon, *Man in the Arena*, 168-172; Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 118-119. The transition from Sutphin to the new ownership with General Manager Jim Hendy renewed Cleveland's hopes that the city would gain an NHL franchise. This chapter does not discuss the subject to great lengths because Chapter 6 is specifically focused on the topic.

⁷ Bill Levy, *Return to Glory: The Story of the Cleveland Browns* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1965), 223, 225; Paul Brown with Jack Clary, *PB: The Paul Brown Story* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 193.

⁸ Levy, *Return to Glory*, 80-82, 224, 225; Browns, *PB*, 183-185; James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 345.

⁹ Levy, *Return to Glory*, 101-102; Brown, *PB*, 191; "Fans Remember Browns, Too," *Cleveland News (News)*, October 12, 1948, 11; and editorial cartoon by Lou Darvas, "Okay, Boys---the Storm Is Over," *Cleveland Press (Press)*, October 13, 1948, 28.

¹⁰ "Football Hopes Rise," *Plain Dealer (PD)*, December 19, 1948, 22-A; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 86, 223; Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 343-344. See Table 9.8, "Average Per-Game Attendance, NFL and AAFC, 1946-1949," in Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 344.

¹¹ Brown, *PB*, 176-179, 189-191, 192-195; "Football Hopes Rise," 22-A; Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 343-346.

¹² Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, October 24, 1948, 4-C; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 101-108; Brown, *PB*, 191.

¹³ Franklin Lewis, "The Browns Are On The Spot," *Sport* (September 1950): 61; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 91-93, 97-100; Brown, *PB*, 196-203, 211-213.

¹⁴ Brown, *PB*, 230-231; Gordon Cobbledick, "Are the Browns Over the Hill?" *Sport* (November 1953): 33, 64-65; and Bob Yonkers, "McBride Raps Browns' Fight on Cash Split," *Press*, December 30, 1952, 1, 10. The roster that Paul Brown fashioned during his first decade as Browns' coach captured individual glory, as well as team glory, as witnessed through the many players inducted in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. These players are Len Ford, Frank Gatski, Lou Groza, Otto Graham, Dante Lavelli, Mike McCormack, Marion Motley, Bill Willis, and Paul Brown himself. Information found in *Cleveland Browns 2005 Media Guide*.

¹⁵ Levy, *Return to Glory*, 117-118; Brown, *PB*, 230-231; and Cobbledick, "Are the Browns Over the Hill?" *Sport* : 33, 64-65.

¹⁶ Harry Jones, "Veeck Runs One-Man Chautauqua Circuit in 'Selling' Indians to Ohio Baseball Fans," *PD*, January 18, 1948, 2-C; editorial, "Vivent Les Indians," *PD*, February 29, 1948, 18-A; "Ills of World Are Forgotten to Boost Tribe," *PD*, April 21, 1948, 1.

¹⁷ Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 377-379; Franklin Lewis, *The Cleveland Indians* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), 255-258; Harry Jones, "Indians Win, Hold First With Boston," *PD*, September 26, 1948, 1-A; Harry Jones, "Indians Clinch Tie For Pennant, 8-0," *PD*, October 3, 1948, 1-A; Roelif Loveland, "Hard-Way Victory Sends City Wacky," *PD*, October 5, 1948, 1-A, 7-A; Jack Kennon, "Off the Record..." *News*, October 6, 1948, 10; editorial, "When Lou Boudreau Hit That First Homer," *Press*, October 5, 1948, 18; and "Clevelanders Clutter Streets in Wild Demonstration as Indians Win Pennant," *Press*, October 5, 1948, 20. See also editorial cartoons depicting Cleveland's obsession with the Indians during the pennant race: "Yes, We Too Have Our Problems," *PD*, September 26, 1948, 1-A; "Good News Today," *PD*, October 3, 1948, 1-A; "And You Can't Tie THAT!" *Press*, October 5, 1948, 18.

¹⁸ Ray Dorsey, "Clean Up Drive On In City For Series," *PD*, October 6, 1948, 1, 9; editorial, "Make It Big League," *PD*, October 7, 1948, 10; and editorial cartoon, "Company's Comin'!" *PD*, October 6, 1948, 16. For post-World Series validation of the clean-up efforts, see editorial, "Yes Sir, Our Townsmen Really 'Sold' Our City," *Press*, October 13, 1948, 14.

¹⁹ John Sickels, *Bob Feller: Ace of the Greatest Generation* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2004), 201-203; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 60-62, 420-426; Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 269-273.

²⁰ Lewis, *Cleveland Indians*, 274-276; Condon, *Cleveland*, 280; Sickels, *Bob Feller*, 204; and editorial cartoon, "Whoopee!" *PD*, October 8, 1948, 14.

²¹ A.S. "Doc" Young, "Sportivanting," *Call & Post (C&P)*, April 3, 1948, 6-B; "Doby Bidding For Regular Berth, Raps Out Five Hits in Two Games," *C&P*, April 3, 1948, 6-B; Charles E. Loeb, "Larry Doby Makes The 'Big Time' ", *C&P*, April 24, 1948, 1-A; photograph of Bill Veeck speaking with youth from the Friendly Inn Settlement, *C&P*, April 24, 1948, 12-A; A.S. "Doc" Young, "Cold, Unbiased Figures Prove Larry Doby's Right To Be An Indian," *C&P*, September 25, 1948, 7-B; "They're Really Our Indians," *C&P*, October 9, 1948, 1-A, 14-A; A.S. "Doc" Young, "Larry Doby Outstanding Star As Indians Win World Series," *C&P*, October 16, 1948, 1-A, 13-A; and "Letters to the Editor," *C&P*, October 23, 1948, 4-

B. In the aftermath of the World Series one editorial hoped that the Indians would not bring Satchel Paige back in 1949, feeling his clowning too closely fit the “Amos ‘n Andy” stereotype. See, W.O. Walker, “Down By The Road,” *C&P*, October 23, 1948, 4-B.

²² Bill Veeck with Ed Linn, *Veeck As In Wreck* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 208-209; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 62-63, 327-328; Condon, *Cleveland*, 278-280; Gordon Cobbledick, “Plain Dealing,” October 6, 1954, 27.

²³ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 63-67; Franklin Lewis, “‘Fearing Yankees’ an Old Disease in Tribe Brass,” *Press*, January 5, 1952, 11; Ellis Ryan, “I’ll Let Indians Do My Talking About Flag,” *Press*, May 30, 1952, 21; editorial cartoon, “Unhappy Hunting Ground,” *Press*, May 6, 1952, 32; Ed Bang, “Between You and Me,” *News*, May 12, 1952, 25. See also a special section on Cleveland’s “golden era” in Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 433-443.

²⁴ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 427, 433-443; Bang, “Between You and Me,” *News*, May 12, 1952, 25; editorial, “Hail Indians! Next Little Job Is Grabbing Series Crown,” *News*, September 20, 1954, 12; editorial, “Now Let’s Win the Series, Be a Courteous City,” *News*, September 27, 1954, 10; editorial, “A Big ‘Welcome!’ To Series Throngs,” *News*, October 1, 1954, 10; Murray Seeger, “Crepe Is Strung For Dead Indians,” *PD*, October 3, 1954, A-1, A-8; and editorial cartoon, “In Memoriam,” *C&P*, October 9, 1954, 1-A.

²⁵ “River Oil Fire Perils Clark Bridge,” *PD*, February 8, 1948, A-1; Ed Bang, “Just Between You and Me,” *News*, October 12, 1948, 11; Bob Yonkers, “Dramatic Victories, Record Crowds Featured Local Sports Scene in ‘48,” *Press*, December 30, 1948, 8; Charles Haughney, “And Grandma Will Mean 1948 in Cleveland,” *News*, December 31, 1948, 5; and Harold Sauerbrei, “Indians, Browns, Barons Give Cleveland Big Year,” *PD*, December 26, 1948, 1-C, 4-C.

CHAPTER 5

¹ Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1976-1996*. 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 157.

² Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 4-5, 180; Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 75-76; Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 155-157; Ray Dorsey, “May Asks Advisers To Streamline City’s Finances, Tax System,” *Plain Dealer (PD)*, August 6, 1955, 1-A; editorial, “Vote Yes Tuesday,” *PD*, February 5, 1956, 2-B; Ray Dorsey, “Voters Defeat City Tax Levy,” *PD*, February 8, 1956, 1-A; editorial, “Major Crossroad Ahead,” *PD*, January 13, 1957, 4-B; editorial, “Vote Tomorrow and Vote YES,” *PD*, January 20, 1957, 1-A; and Eugene Segal, “Tomorrow’s Vote to Decide on Levy,” *PD*, January 20, 1957, 1-A.

³ See Table 9 in Teaford, *Rough Road*, 124. Porter, *Cleveland*, 15, 174; Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 154-155; editorial, “Parasitical Suburbs,” *PD*, April 12, 1953, 2-B; Al Andrews, “Here Is What’s Behind Today’s Suburban Trend,” *PD*, April 14, 1957, 1-B; “population—A Growing Problem,” *PD*, June 30, 1957, 1-B; and Julian Krawcheck, “Are Cleveland Suburbanites Snooty Toward the City?” *Cleveland Press (Press)*, September 22, 1960, 26.

⁴ Stephen Hardy, *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, and Community, 1865-1915* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 17-20. Also, for more on the use of newspapers in constructing a cultural text, refer to Oriard, *Reading Football*, 16-18.

⁵ George Condon, *The Man in the Arena: The Life & Times of A.C. Sutphin* (Cleveland: The A.C. Sutphin Foundation, 1995), 77, 80-81.

⁶ Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 328-329; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, October 6, 1954, 27; and Wilson Hirschfeld, "Indians Calling In \$900,000 In Stock," *PD*, July 7, 1952, 1.

⁷ Ed McAuley, "Rift In Tribe's High Command Hits Club," *Cleveland News (News)*, December 4, 1952, 1; Red Smith, "Ryan's Worries Started When Attendance Dipped," *News*, December 5, 1952, 31; Franklin Lewis, "Front Office Fiasco Sets Tribe Back to 'Cry-Baby' Era," *Press*, December 6, 1952, 8; Frank Gibbons, "Directors, Not Hank, Put Pressure on Ryan," *Press*, December 5, 1952, 53; "Hornbeck in Running if Ryan—," *Press*, December 5, 1952, 53; Forrest Allen, "Trace Dolin Group Cash in Tribe Control Battle," *Press*, December 9, 1952, 1; and Franklin Lewis, "Real 'Dirty Fuss' May Be Result of Tribe Right," *Press*, December 10, 1952, 27. Attendance figures found in *1993 Cleveland Indians Media Guide* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Indians Baseball Club, 1993), 230.

⁸ Forrest Allen, "Ryan Won't Sell Indians Stock," *Press*, December 10, 1952, 1; Frank Gibbons, "Unpredictable Ryan Keeps Pals Guessing," *Press*, December 10, 1952, 1; Harry Jones, "Tribe Finishing Stock Transfer," *PD*, January 17, 1953, 14; "Tribe Stock Shifts in 'Civic Pride Deal'," *Press*, January 19, 1953, 27; Harry Jones, "Indians Sold for \$3,961,800," *PD*, February 15, 1956, 1, 33; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 330; and *Indians Media Guide*, 230.

⁹ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 330-331; Jones, "Indians Sold for \$3,961,800," *PD*, February 15, 1956, 1, 33; Harry Jones, "Daley Once Usher at Indians' Games," *PD*, February 15, 1956, 31; Harry Jones, "Pinch Hitting," *PD*, February 19, 1956, 2-C; Milt Ellis, "Tribe Sale Ratified, Profit Is \$3,000,000," *PD*, March 1, 1956, 25; and editorial, "Growth Stock," *PD*, March 3, 1956, 12.

¹⁰ James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sport* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 134-135; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 71, 343-344; "Veeck Is Back, Empty Stadium Seats Target," *PD*, March 15, 1957, 33; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, March 16, 1957, 25; Chuck Heaton, "Tribe Decision on Greenberg Ouster Is Due Tomorrow," *PD*, October 15, 1957, 1, 29; Gordon Cobbledick, "Tribe Survival Here Is Seen as Key in Greenberg Decision," *PD*, October 16, 1957, 1, 29; and Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, July 14, 1957, 2-C.

¹¹ Chuck Heaton, "Tribe Directors Oust Greenberg," *PD*, October 17, 1957, 1, 33; editorial, "A Tough but Right Decision—," *PD*, October 17, 1957, 16; "New Tribe Boss Must Rebuild Club," *PD*, October 17, 1957, 33; and Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 343-344.

¹² Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, August 19, 1962, 2-C; "Mike Wilson of Indians Dies at 74," *PD*, August 20, 1962, 1; editorial, "Myron H. Wilson, Jr.," *PD*, August 20, 1962, 22; Hal Lebovitz, "Wilson's Vote Decided Battle for Tribe Control," *PD*, August 20, 1962, 31; Robert Dolgan, "Daley Is Key Man in Indian Deal," *PD*, November 21, 1962, 25; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, November

15, 1962, 61; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, November 21, 1962, 25; and Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 331-332, 345.

¹³ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 79-82, 331-332; and *Indians Media Guide*, 230.

¹⁴ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 332-333; George J. Barman, "Stouffer to Purchase Indians; Paul Says," *PD*, August 14, 1966, 1-A; Hal Lebovitz, "Now Indians Here For Good...Hal," *PD*, August 14, 1966, 1-C; Richard Passan, "New Board to Be All Clevelanders," *PD*, August 14, 1966, 1-C; "Board Members Pleased by Sale," *PD*, August 14, 1966, 1-C; and editorial, "Stouffer Anchors Tribe Here," *PD*, August 14, 1966, 6-AA.

¹⁵ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 83-88, 332-333; Bob Sudyk, "Group opposes N. Orleans, seeks Tribe," *Press*, October 1, 1971, D-1 & 2; Bob Sudyk, "Does Stouffer really want to sell?" *Press*, October 2, 1971, B-1; Bob Sudyk, "Indians—state of confusion" *Press*, October 19, 1971; Chuck Heaton "Asking Price: \$9 Million; Bid: \$6 Million," *PD*, April 29, 1971, 1-E, 2-E; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, May 2, 1971, 2-C; editorial, "Superdome Beats Our Weather," August 18, 1971, 12-A; "Mileti offer to buy Indians hinges on Kettering okay," *Press*, February 23, 1972, A-1; "Stouffer awaits word, Mileti mum," *Press*, March 1, 1972, C-1; Bob Sudyk, "Here's who owns Indians," *Press*, July 6, 1972, A-1 and B-1; John Bryan, "Hard Cash Would Clinch Mileti's Dreams," *PD*, March 12, 1972, 2-AA. Dino Lucarelli, former public relations director for the Barons, Indians and Browns at various points in his career, also noted the toll the stock plunge took on Stouffer. He said Stouffer responded through cost cutting measures that eventually gutted the Indians farm system and scouting. From Interview with Dino Lucarelli, March 28, 2003 at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

¹⁶ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 480-481, 486-487; Terry Pluto, *The Curse of Rocky Colavito: A Loving Look at a Thirty-Year Slump* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 36, 37-38; and "Tribe Trades Norm Cash for Demeter, Hometown Rookie," *PD*, April 13, 1960, 23.

¹⁷ Harry Jones, "Frank Lane to be Indian Boss," *PD*, November 12, 1957, 1; Gordon Cobbledick, "Lane Calls Indians' Infield Top Problem," *PD*, November 13, 1957, 1; editorial, "Welcome, Frank Lane!" *PD*, November 13, 1957, 10; Harry Jones, "Lane Arrives to Ascertain Needs of Ailing Indians," *PD*, November 13, 1957, 29; Harry Jones, "Indians Won't Hire Boudreau," *PD*, November 14, 1957, 1; "Harry Jones, 'Settle for Second? Gladly, Says Lane,' *PD*, November 14, 1957, 33; "Lane's Plan: Flag 'Soon as Possible'," *PD*, November 14, 1957, 33; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, November 14, 1957, 33; editorial, "Frank Lane Steps In and Repairs a Blunder," *PD*, November 15, 1957, 34.

¹⁸ Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 73-75, 136-137; and Pluto, *Curse of Colavito*, 42-43.

¹⁹ Pluto, *Curse of Colavito*, 39-40; and Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, April 18, 1960, 33.

²⁰ Pluto, *Curse of Colavito*, 38-39; Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," April 18, 1960, 33; and Regis McAuley, "Kuenn-Rock Duel Highlights Opener," *Press*, April 18, 1960, 39.

²¹ Pluto, *Curse of Colavito*, 44-48; "Colavito Fans Out for Lane's Scalp," *Press*, April 18, 1960, 1, 39; McAuley, "Kuenn-Rock Duel," 39; "Stengel Says Tigers 'Got Dandy in Rock'," *Press*, April 18, 1960, 39; Frank Gibbons, "Lane Proves He Has Guts of a Burglar," *Press*, April 18, 1960, 39; editorial, "Frank Lane on the Spot," *Press*, April 18, 1960, 28; letters to the editor, "Fuel for Lane's Ears," *Press*, April 20, 1960,

42; Harry Jones, "Tribe Gets Kuenn In Colavito Trade," *PD*, April 18, 1960, 1, 33; Harry Jones, "Colavito Stunned by Lane Trade," *PD*, April 18, 1960, 33; Chuck Heaton, "Colavito Cheered as Tribe Arrives," *PD*, April 18, 1960, 33; Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," April 18, 1960, 33; Hal Lebovitz, "Fan Clubs Weep, but Struggle On," *PD*, April 19, 1960, 30; and Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, April 21, 1960, 39.

²² Chuck Heaton, "Score hit in Eye by Line Drive," *PD*, May 8, 1957, 1, 31; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, May 8, 1957, 31; editorial, "Hang On, Herb," *PD*, May 9, 1957, 16; Chuck Heaton, "Socre Has Sight in Right Eye," *PD*, May 9, 1957, 1; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, May 24, 1957, 33; and "Score Hopes to Pitch Again Early in July," *PD*, June 2, 1957, 3-C.

²³ Editorial, "The Cleveland Indians—I," *PD*, September 29, 1957, 4-B; editorial, "The Cleveland Indians—II," *PD*, September 30, 1957, 18; and editorial, "The Cleveland Indians—III," *PD*, October 1, 1957, 16.

CHAPTER 6

¹ Gene Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory: The Story of Cleveland Barons Hockey*, (Euclid, OH: Blue Line Publications, Inc.: 1994), 118-120; Gordon Cobbledick, "Sutphin Sells Control of the Arena," *Plain Dealer* (*PD*), April 26, 1949, 1; "Arena Syndicate Includes Others," *PD*, April 27, 1949, 27; "'The Sutphin Plan' Included in Arena Sale," *Cleveland News (News)*, April 26, 1949; "Sells Arena Shares at \$100 Each," *News*, April 27, 1949, 19.

² "Nomination To Hockey Hall of Fame: Jim Hendy," *New York Rangers Clipping Files (NYRCF)*, June 1968; "Jerry Mitchell, "Over the Thin Blue Line," Publication Unknown, NYRCF, January 25, 1961; "Jim Hendy to be Honored Posthumously," NHL News Release, NYRCF, February 25, 1970; "Cleveland Manager Top Hockey Executive," *Springfield Daily News*, NYRCF, January 16, 1961; Geoffrey Fisher, "Hendy's Career Touched Nearly All Ice Bases," *The Hockey News*, NYRCF, February 4, 1961. Page numbers were not always listed or visible on items from the New York Rangers Clipping Files, and will be listed when possible.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Cobbledick, "Sutphin Sells Control of the Arena," *PD*, 1; "Arena Syndicate Includes Others," *PD*, 27; "'The Sutphin Plan' Included in Arena Sale," *News*; "Sells Arena Shares at \$100 Each," *News*, 19; Editorial, "Sutphin Sells Arena, Barons; Do We Get Big League Hockey?" *Cleveland Press (Press)*, April 26, 1949, 14; Isi Newborn, "New Owners Seen Likely to Keep Barons in American League," *Press*, April 26, 1949, 30. It was later revealed that the Minneapolis businessmen were a front for a syndicate headed by Detroit partners. "Rand Reveals Additional Names on Arena List," *News*, May 13, 1949, 13; "Detroit Men In Arena Control," *PD*, May 13, 1949, 25; and Newborn, "Sports Magnate Norris Rumored Arena 'Angel'," *Press*, May 13, 1949, 40.

⁶ Cobbledick, "Sutphin Sells Control of the Arena"; "'The Sutphin Plan' Included in Arena Sale:" and Newborn, "New Owners Seen Likely to Keep Barons in American League."

⁷ Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, April 27, 1949, 24.

⁸ Franklin Lewis, "Big-League Hockey a Little Close Now but Not at Hand," *Press*, April 27, 1949, 28.

⁹ "Head of U.S. Hockey Loop to Manage Arena," *News*, May 16, 1949, 13; Isi Newborn, "Hendy, Veteran Ice Loop Head, Named Chief of Arena and Barons," *Press*, May 16, 1949, 33; "Hendy Slated to Be Officer of Arena Corp.," *PD*, May 17, 1949, 18; Franklin Lewis, "Hendy, a Nice Guy, Faces Tough Job With Double Title," *Press*, May 18, 1949; Isi Newborn, "Seem Likely to keep Barons in American League," *Press*, April 26, 1949; and Jack Ledden, "Hendy's Shrewd Trades Keep Barons on Top," *The Sporting News (TSN)*, January 11, 1950, NYRCF.

¹⁰ Lewis, "Hendy, a Nice Guy." Lewis likens the "personalizing" of Hendy's new jobs to "country store stuff," which he equates to shaking the customers hand and separating the "people from the folk."

¹¹ Ed Bang, "Between You and Me," *Cleveland News (News)*, January 1, 1952; Ledden, "Hendy's Shrewd Trades," NYRCF. Hendy's ability to trade veterans to NHL franchises or fellow AHL teams in exchange for younger, talented stars was an oft-repeated theme in the success of his Barons. This theme will be further examined in the course of this study.

¹² Ledden, "Hendy's Shrewd Trades," NYRCF; Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 120-138. Frederick "Bun" Cook coached the Barons from 1943 to 1956, during which time his teams won five Calder Cup titles. Also, note that in hockey two points are awarded for a win, and one point for a tie.

¹³ Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 140-141; Ed Bang, "Between You and Me," *News*, March 4, 1952, 19; Geoffrey Fisher, "Barons' Hendy Protests Reds' Use of 'Home Town' Officials," *News*, March 24, 1952, and "AHL Officials Got Raw Deal Hendy Claims," *News*, March 25, 1952, 19.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Fisher, "Barons Ready to Move To Nation Hockey Loop," *News*, March 26, 1952, 12; Isi Newborn, "AHL Seen Doomed; Barons Consider Filing NHL Entry," *Press*, March 28, 1952, 40; and Franklin Lewis, "Bits and Bites of Sports," *Press*, March 31, 1952, 34.

¹⁵ "Barons to Apply for N.L. Charter," *PD*, March 28, 1952, 20.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Fischer, "Barons' 'Big League' Verdict Due in Week," *News*, May 2, 1952, 33; "Hendy Confers in Toronto," *Press*, May 8, 1952; "Barons to Get NHL Verdict Wednesday," *Press*, May 9, 1952; and Isi Newborn, "National League Expected to OK Barons Tomorrow," *Press*, May 13, 1952, 27; Isi Newborn, "Barons Post \$50,000 With NHL," May 14, 1952; and Isi Newborn, "Arena Stockholders Expected to Comply with NHL Demands," May 15, 1952, 18. The NHL Board of Governors who would vote on the Barons applicant consisted of Donat Raymond of the Montreal Canadiens (a later report in the *Plain Dealer* indicated that William Northey would represent the Candiens), Arthur H. Ross of the Boston Bruins, John R. Kilpatrick of Madison Square Garden (New York Rangers), James Norris, Sr. of the Detroit Red Wings, Connie Smythe of the Toronto Maple Leafs, and William J. Tobin of the Chicago Blackhawks.

¹⁷ Isi Newborn, "Arena Stockholders Expected to Comply With NHL Demands," *Press*, May 15, 1952, 18; Isi Newborn, "Barons Still Undecided on NHL Bid," *Press*, May 28, 1952, 12; John Dietrich, "Barons Given Until June 1 To Meet N.L. Requirements," *PD*, May 15, 1952, 16; John Dietrich, "Barons' Future

Still In Doubt,” *PD*, May 28, 1952; and Geoffrey Fischer, “NHL Welcomes Barons—With Strings Attached,” *News*, May 15, 1952.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Fischer, “Barons Need Time to Clear Stock Hurdle,” *News*, May 29, 1952; Geoffrey Fischer, “Kroesen to Buy \$50,000 Block or Arena Stock,” June 5, 1952, 15; and Franklin Lewis, “Bits and Bites of Sports Soaked Over the Weekend,” *Press*, May 26, 1952, 32.

¹⁹ “Arena Chief Goes to NHL Meeting,” *Press*, June 13, 1952; “Barons Get OK Today From NHL,” *Press*, June 17, 1952; “NHL Makes Barons Wait for Decision on Entry,” *Press*, June 18, 1952; “This Is Barons Big Day,” *News*, June 17, 1952; Geoffrey Fischer, “Barons’ Franchise Blocked by Norris,” *News*, June 18, 1952; “NHL to Ask How Barons Got Money,” *News*, June 19, 1952; and “N.L. Delays Decision on Baron Franchise,” *PD*, June 18, 1952, 21;

²⁰ “Legal Action Hinted if Barons’ Bid Is Refused,” *PD*, June 27, 1952, 14; Fischer, “Barons’ Franchise Blocked by Norris,” Geoffrey Fischer, “NHL Has Choice—Barons or Court,” *News*, July 2, 1952; and “Wings, Rangers, Hawks Blocking Barons, Report,” *Press*, June 27, 1952, 22.

²¹ Franklin Lewis, “After 25 Years Big Time Hockey Comes to Town,” *Press*, May 15, 1952, 18; Geoffrey Fischer, “NHL Welcomes Barons—With Strings Attached,” *News*, May 15, 1952, 24; Geoffrey Fischer, “Let Joy on Ice Be Uncontained! NHL Ruling Near,” June 28, 1952, 8; John Dietrich, “Barons Given Until June 1,” 16; and Isi Newborn, “Barons Ready for NHL With Farm System,” *Press*, May 16, 1952.

²² Dink Carroll, “Playing the Field,” *Montreal Gazette(MG)*, March 31, 1952 (NYRCF), and June 3, 1952; Jim Vipond, “Sports Digest,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1952, (NYRCF); Jim Vipond, “Sports Digest,” *Globe and Mail* June 18, 1952 (NYRCF); Vern De Geer, “Good Morning,” *MG*, May 17, 1952 (NYRCF); Paul Chandler, “Fair Game,” *Detroit News*, March 2, 1952 (NYRCF); Al Nickleson, “Cleveland Entry Approved by NHL,” *Globe and Mail*, June 11, 1952 (NYRCF); “Will N.H.L. Accept Barons?” (Canadian Press report in an unnamed Toronto Paper—clippings from NY Rangers Press Files on the Cleveland Barons), May 14, 1952; and “Odds Against Barons Being Accepted In NHL,” (No paper or date listed—NY Rangers Press Files).

²³ Isi Newborn, “Barons Seen Continuing in AHL Another Year,” *Press*, July 3, 1952, 17; John Dietrich, “National League Rejects Barons’ Bid For Franchise,” *PD*, July 3, 1952, 13; Geoffrey Fisher, “‘Back to Salt Mines’ For Snubbed Barons,” *News*, July 3, 1952; Howard Preston, “Man in the Grandstand,” *News*, July 5, 1952, 11; Dink Carroll, “Playing the Field,” *MG*, July 4, 1952; Al Nickleson, “Borrowed Bucks Bar Barons NHL Entry,” *Globe and Mail*, July 3, 1952; and “Barons Barred on Technicality,” (no paper listed—NY Rangers Press Files), July 3, 1952.

²⁴ Ibid; Gordon Cobbledick, “Plain Dealing,” *PD*, July 4, 1952, 27; Franklin Lewis, “Barons Lose Out on ‘Strange’ Money in NHL Rebuff,” *Press*, July 3, 1952, 17; and Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 145-147. I surmise that Sutphin ultimately chose to forego an NHL franchise because he was content with the profits he made in part through an AHL payroll, and feared that an NHL payroll would seriously cut into those profits. This point is not adequately addressed in the local press or subsequent books, and will be the subject of future research.

²⁵ Geoffrey Fisher, “Barons’ Opener Set Back Week,” *News*, October 9, 1952, 30; Geoffrey Fischer, “Ice Loops ‘Bury Ax,’ Barons Open Saturday,” *News*, October 10, 14, 1952, 14; Jim Hendy, “Major League

'Grabs' Peril Baseball, Hockey," *News*, October 10, 1952, 31; Isi Newborn, "AHL Moguls Wrangle Over Player Recall Issue," *Press*, October 7, 1952, 31; Isi Newborn, "Wrangle Delays Barons Opener," *Press*, October 9, 1952, 60; Isi Newborn, "Barons Set for AHL Go Sign," *Press*, October 10, 1952, 42; Isi Newborn, "Warring Hockey Moguls May Compromise Today," *Press*, October 13, 1952, 28; and "AHL Yields On Recall Rule," *Press*, October 14, 1952.

²⁶ "News Opens Slogan Contest For 1952 Hockey Barons," *News*, October 20, 1952, 15; "College Boy, Dentist Tops in News Contest," *News*, October 31, 1952; Franklin Lewis, "Big Time Hockey Still 'Next Year' as Barons Start," October 18, 1952, 8; and Franklin Lewis, "Bits and Bytes of Sports," *Press*, October 20, 1952. Pittsburgh drew 2,200 fans to its home opener and Providence drew 2,880 according to Lewis.

²⁷ Isi Newborn, "Barons Issue Challenge to NHL Champion," *Press*, March 19, 1953, 26; Isi Newborn, "NHL Challenge Rejected, Barons Prep for Finale," *Press*, March 20, 1953; Geoffrey Fisher, "Barons Dare NHL to Put Up Stanley Cup," *News*, March 19, 1953, 25; and Geoffrey Fischer, "N.H.L. Chief Calls Barons' Chances 'Worse Than Ever!'" *News*, March 20, 1953, 27. The timing of the Barons challenge was also deemed bad by Campbell because James Norris, Sr. had passed away in December, 1952 and the NHL was still sorting out the ownership of the Detroit Redwings.

²⁸ Geoffrey Fisher, "OK, NHL, You Shut Door on Barons, Eh?" *News*, December 1, 1952, 25; Geoffrey Fischer, "City of Champs? Barons Pave Way," *News*, April, 17, 1953; Ed Bang, "Between You and Me," *News*, April 4, 1953; and editorial, "Whatever League They're In, Barons Play Big-Time Hockey," *Press*, April 18, 1953, 6.

²⁹ Fisher, "City of Champs?"; Geoffrey Fischer, "Take Quick Look at Bower, He Won't Be Back in '54," April 3, 1953; John Dietrich, "Bower Back on Barons' Roster," *PD*, August 25, 1957, 7-G; and Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 180-187, & 225. Ferguson went to the Montreal Canadiens for \$20,000 in compensation as was dictated by an agreement between the AHL and the NHL.

³⁰ For information on the Hendy syndicate, see Isi Newborn, "Barons' Sale Near; Hendy Heads New Group," *Press*, January, 17, 1955; Isi Newborn, "Hendy Gets New 5-Year Contract to Boss Barons for Local Owners," June 16, 1955; Franklin Lewis, "Barons' Sale Would Open Door to Big Leagues," *Press*, January 18, 1955, 31; "Barons' Sale to Cleveland Group Likely," *PD*, January 18, 1955, 24; John Dietrich, "TV Competition Barons' Problem," *PD*, January 19, 1955, 26; and John Dietrich, "Grove, Long-Time Ice Fan, Heads Barons' New Organizing Committee," June 16, 1955, 26. For information on Hendy's death, see "Jim Hendy, 54, Dead," *New York Times*, January 16, 1961, (NYRCF); "Cleveland Manager Top Hockey Executive," *Springfield Daily News*, January 16, 1961 (NYRCF); Isi Newborn, "Hendy Was Barons' Greatest Asset," *Press*, January 16, 1961; and Geoffrey Fisher, "Hendy Did Job In Big League Style," *The Hockey News (THN)*, January 28, 1961; and Geoffrey Fischer, "Hendy's Career Touched Nearly All Ice Bases," *THN*, February 4, 1961. For a brief synopsis of the demise of fan attendance, see Isi Newborn, "Hockey Dying Here? Barons Get Test Case," *Press*, January 23, 1962, C-1; editorial, "Barons' Fight to Top Deserves Home Support," *Press*, March 16, 1962, A-18; Phil Hartman, "Hockey Future in Doubt Here," *Press*, November 13, 1962, B-1; Frank Gibbons, "Los of Gordon Blow to Hockey," May 7, 1963, D-1; editorial, "The Sad Face of Hockey," *Press*, May 11, 1963, 8; letters to editor, "Fans Worried About Future of Hockey Here," *Press*, May 11, 1963, 8; and Jim Braham, "Hockey Crowds in Sharp Decline," *Press*, April 1, 1967, B-1. The NBA team Bright referenced was the Cincinnati Royals, who played roughly eight games a year in Cleveland during the late 1960s.

CHAPTER 7

¹ Chuck Heaton, "Graham Agrees to Join Browns," *Cleveland Plain Dealer (PD)*, September 4, 1955, 1-C; Bob August, "Graham's Return to Prime Beaten Browns for Title Defense," *Cleveland Press (Press)*, September 3, 1955, 11; photo, "Otto's Back," *Press*, September 6, 1955, 27; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, December 4, 1955, 2-C and "Plain Dealing," December 25, 1955, 2-C; Franklin Lewis, "Otto to Paul in '51: 'I'll Make It Up,'" *Press*, December 20, 1955, 32, "Otto 'Never Doubted' Success of Comeback," December 23, 1955, 10, and "Browns Acted Like Champs All the Way," December 27, 1955, 32; Heaton, "Graham Called 'Finest' By Brown, Plays Last One Here," *PD*, December 11, 1955, 1-C, and "Graham & Brown Firm Dissolution Marks End of Era in Pro Football," December 28, 1955, 25; and editorial, "We Salute the Greatest Player—and Team," *PD*, December 28, 1955, 10.

² Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, December 28, 1955, 25; Chuck Heaton, "Browns May Get Shot at Passing Ace in Pro Football Draft," *PD*, November 2, 1956, 34; and Bob August, "No. 1 Brown to Be FB," *Press*, November 27, 1956, 29.

³ Dick Schafrath interview in *Jim Brown: All-American*, HBO Sport Documentary, Home Box Office, Inc. 2003; Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 21-29.

⁴ Jim Brown with Steve Delshon, *Out of Bounds*. (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 1989), 68-69.

⁵ Bob August, "No.1 Brown to Be FB," *Press*, November 27, 1956, 29; Jim Brown with Myron Cope, *Off My Chest* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 33-35; Paul Brown with Jack Clancy, *PB: The Paul Brown Story* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 241-243; Bill Levy, *Return to Glory: The Story of the Cleveland Browns* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1965), 140-142; and Jim Brown interview in *Jim Brown: All-American*, HBO, 2003. Purdue's Dawson was drafted by the Steelers, Notre Dame's Hornung by the Green Bay Packers (1st overall), and Stanford's Brodie by San Francisco.

⁶ Brown, *PB*, 219-249; Interview with Jim Brown, "Playboy Interview: Jim Brown," *Playboy* 15 (February 1968): 51-54; Brown, *Off My Chest*, 33-35 & 44-46. References to the national media's criticism of Paul Brown were found in Levy, *Return to Glory*, 133-142.

⁷ "Why Paul Brown Was Dismissed" *Cleveland Call & Post (C&P)*, January 19, 1963, 1A; Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, June 13, 1953, p. 21; Frank Gibbons, "New Owner to Find Brown's the Boss," *Press*, January 6, 1961, D-1; and Brown *PB*, 230-232. These works expand on the sale of the Browns from McBride to Jones. Brown, in his autobiography, also addresses this rumor and suggests that McBride was pressured by his son in this regard. Brown also comments on his dealings with both McBride regarding the sale and with Jones (and other key members of that ownership syndicate), and how tensions did exist. Regarding Brown's stock holdings in the team, he states in his autobiography that he received 5% of team stock in his initial contract. When Modell signed Brown to a ten-year contract extension in 1961, it gave Brown the option to purchase 10 shares of stock per year. See Brown, *PB*, 121, 265. For information on McBride's links to organized crime see "Cox Says M'Bride Spoke For Capone," *PD*, April 13, 1950, 1, 4; Harold Hinton, "Football Owner Denies Gang Link," *NYT*, January 18, 1951, 23; Dan E. Moldea, *Interference: How Organized Crime Influences Professional Football* (New York: William and Morrow Company, Inc., 1989), 68-71, 76, 82; and Hank Messick, *The Silent Syndicate* (New York:

MacMillan, 1967), 10-14, 192-197, 256. The relationship between Paul Brown and Art Modell is discussed further in Chapter 11.

⁸ Brown, *PB*, 262-266; Doug Clarke, "Fall from Glory: The Wrecking of the Browns," *Cleveland Magazine*, 4 (December 1975): 141-146; and Bob Sudyk, "The Rise and Fall of Paul Brown," *Cleveland Magazine*, 5 (October 1976): 56-59.

⁹ Brown, *Off My Chest*, 73-74; Brown, *Out of Bounds*, 101-105

¹⁰ Brown, *PB*, 262-266; and Levy, *Return to Glory*, 181-191. Paul Brown also expresses his belief that Modell manipulated his relationships with players and coaches to turn them against the head coach. Modell has since denied this belief and many of the comments attributed to him, yet sports journalists continued to link "ego" into the equation that led to Brown's termination as coach. See, Abe Zaiden, "Nice Guy, Trying to Be Mean," *Cleveland Magazine*, 1 (September 1972): 31-34; Clarke, "Fall from Glory," 141-146, 200-208; and Sudyk, "The Rise and Fall of Paul Brown," 56-59, 93-101. For additional player reaction to the firing of Paul Brown, see Bernie Parrish, *They Call it a Game* (New York: Signet, 1971), 99-103; and Bob Dolgan, "What Players Think About The Firing," *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn't Call*, ed. Hal Lebovitz (Cleveland, OH: Ra-Ka, Inc., 1963), 12-14, 30.

¹¹ Hal Lebovitz, "This Is Arthur Modell," *The Play He Didn't Call*, 6-7, and Gibbons, "It Was Like the Terminal Tower Toppling," *The Play He Didn't Call*, 8, 26. See Paul Brown's comments in Brown, *PB*, 284. The newspaper strike lasted from November 28, 1962 until April 8, 1963. See Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 219.

¹² Editorial, "The Sagging Saga of Paul Brown," *C&P*, January 19, 1963, 2C; "Why Paul Brown Was Dismissed," *C&P*, January 19, 1963, 1A; and William "Sheep" Jackson, "From the Sidelines," *C&P*, January 19, 1963, 7C.

¹³ Letter to the Editor, "Wrong Brown Left," *Press*, May 9, 1963, C-8; Brown, *Out of Bounds*, 104-105; and *Playboy* interview, February 1968, 54.

¹⁴ Terry Pluto, *When All The World Was Browns Town: Cleveland's Browns and the Championship Season of '64* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 52-55.

¹⁵ Hal Lebovitz, "Inside Blanton Collier," *The Play He Didn't Call*, 20-21; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 224 (appendix); and Tex Maule, "Big Brown Boom," *Sports Illustrated* (to be cited as *SI*), October 7, 1963: 17-19.

¹⁶ Pluto, *When All The World Was Browns Town*, 96-120; Levy, *Return to Glory*, 1-22, 226; and "The Big Hand To Blanton Collier," *Press*, December 14, 1964, A-1.

¹⁷ Pluto, *When All The World Was Browns Town*, 121-161; and Levy, *Return to Glory*, 23-38.

¹⁸ Bob August, "Forward and Back, Brown Picture Bright," *Press*, December 29, 1964, C-1; editorial, "Nothing Like a Championship," *PD*, December 28, 1964, 16; editorial, "The Champs," *Press*, December 28, 1964, B-14; and editorial, "Cleveland in the Big Time," *Press*, December 30, 1964, A-8. The argument that the NFL Championship earned Cleveland the right to call itself the "Home of Champions" harkens

back to the 1948 assertion that the city was the “City of Champions.” The difference, and an obvious one, was the presence of three separate champions in 1948 and only one team in 1964.

¹⁹ David K. Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in White America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 104-122; Othello Harris, “Muhammad Ali and the Revolt of the Black Athlete,” in Elliot J. Gorn ed, *Ali: The People’s Champ* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 54-69; and Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*, 2nd edition (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 85. See also Preston H. Smith III, “The Quest for Racial Democracy: Black Civic Ideology and Housing Interests in Postwar Chicago,” *Journal of Urban Studies* 26 (2000): 132-133.

²⁰ M.J. Heale, “the Sixties in America: History, Politics and Protest (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 111; Douglas Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete: The 1968 Olympic Protests and Their Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 113-114; Wiggins, *Glory Bound*, 104-122; David W. Zang, *Sports Wars: Athletes in the Age of Aquarius* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), 96-118; Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 31-35; Harris, “Muhammad Ali and the Revolt of the Black Athlete,” 54-69. Also vital to understanding the perception of professional black athletes and the larger protest movement in the late 1960s is Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*, 21-29. For brief descriptions of racial democracy and social democracy, see Preston H. Smith III, “The Quest for Racial Democracy: Black Civic Ideology and Housing Interests in Postwar Chicago,” *Journal of Urban Studies* 26 (January 2000): 132-133.

²¹ Frank Gibbons, “Jim No Longer the Quiet Brown,” *Press*, January 25, 1962, D-1; Brown, *Out of Bounds*, 81, 125; and Bobby Mitchell interview in *Jim Brown: All-American*, HBO, 2003. Brown’s quote on the 1960s was also found in Thomas R. Hietala, “Muhammad Ali and the Age of Bare-Knuckle Politics,” *Ali*, 127.

²² Maule, “Big Brown Boom,” *SI*: 17-19; and Pluto, *When All The World Was Browns Town*, 47-50, 176-178. See *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn’t Call* for several articles that cover the speculated role Jim Brown played in Paul Brown’s firing. Also see Pluto, *When All the World Was Browns Town*, 47-50, 62.

²³ Brown, *Out of Bounds*, 66-67; Brown, *Off My Chest*, 169, 171.

²⁴ Jim Brown Interview, *Playboy*, 62-64, 66; Tex Maule, “The Curtain Falls on a Long Run,” *SI*, July 25, 1966, 20; and Terry Troy, ed. *Cleveland Classics: Great Stories from the North Coast* (Altona, Manitoba: Friesens Corporation, 2004), 24. See video footage of the NIEU’s Ali press conference with Brown, and other athletes in *Jim Brown: All-American*, HBO, 2003. Also see Hietala, “Muhammad Ali and the Age of Bare-Knuckle Politics,” *Ali*, 137. It was hinted that Pepsi Cola Co. released Brown from his contract because they felt he was too closely aligned with the radical elements of the Black Power movement.

²⁵ Maule, “The Curtain Falls on a Long Run,” 18-24; and Pluto, *When All The World Was Browns Town*, 178-179. See also, Cleveland Browns Press Release, June 16, 1966 and letter from Jim Brown to Arthur Modell, July 5, 1966. Found at <http://www.helmethut.com/JBretire.html>.

²⁶ Editorial, “No. 32 Ends His Run,” *Press*, July 14, 1966, A-20; Bill Scholl, “Collier Won’t Push the Panic Button,” *Press*, July 14, 1966, D-1, and “Overcast Skies Catch Mood at Brown’s Camp,” July 15, 1966, B-

4; "Brown Picks Movies and Racial Cause," *Press*, July 14, 1966, D-1; Bob August, "Modell Is 'Happy That It's Resolved,'" *Press*, July 14, 1966, D-1; Hal Lebovitz, "Jim Brown Quits Football," *PD*, July 14, 1966, 1; Editorial, "Brown Leaves Game as Superstar," *PD*, July 14, 1966, 18; Editorial, "Judicious Jim Brown," *C&P*, July 23, 1966, 8B; and William "Sheep" Jackson, "Jim Brown Hangs Up That Famous No. 32," *C&P*, July 23, 1966, 10B, and "From the Sidelines," July 23, 1966, 10B.

CHAPTER 8

¹ Felcia G. Ross Jones, "Mobilizing the Masses: The *Cleveland Call And Post* and the Scottsboro Incident," *The Journal of Negro History* 84 (1999): 48; Estelle Zannes, *Checkmate in Cleveland: The Rhetoric of Confrontation During the Stokes Years* (Cleveland, OH: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 7-9; and Yong Hyo Cho, "City Politics and Racial Polarization: Bloc Voting in Cleveland Election," *Journal of Black Studies* 4 (1974): 402-405.

² Zannes, *Checkmate in Cleveland*, 7-9, 11; William D. Jenkins, "Before Downtown: Cleveland, Ohio, and Urban Renewal, 1949-1958," *Journal of Urban History* 27 (2001): 475-477; Thomas R. Hietala, "Muhammad Ali and the Age of Bare-Knuckle Politics," in Elliot J. Gorn ed, *Ali: The People's Champ* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 125. For more on the desegregation of Cleveland Public Schools and the violence that resulted, see Leonard Nathaniel Moore, "The School Desegregation Crisis of Cleveland, Ohio, 1963-1964: the Catalyst for Black Political Power in a Northern City," *Journal of Urban Studies* 28 (2002): 135-157. Quote found on p. 145.

³ Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 147-148.

⁴ Marc E. Lackritz, "The Hough Riots of 1966" (Senior Thesis, Princeton University, 1968), 37-40. Mr. Lackritz's thesis can be found as an e-book through the Cleveland Memory Project and can be downloaded at www.clevelandmemory.org/hough/

⁵ Zannes, *Checkmate in Cleveland*, 17-24; and Lackritz, "Hough Riots," 5-6.

⁶ Zannes, *Checkmate in Cleveland*, 25-29; and Lackritz, "Hough Riots," 7-16. For letters on Hough, see "Readers Forum," *Cleveland Plain Dealer (PD)*, July 24, 1966, 7-AA. The letter suggesting the use of Indians' games as distractions from free-time was written by Michael Kaye.

⁷ Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 236-237; Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 166-169; and Zannes, *Checkmate in Cleveland*, 58-59, 73, and 105-107. Celeste was a practicing lawyer who had previously served as mayor of the west side suburb of Lakewood, Ohio.

⁸ Zannes, *Checkmate in Cleveland*, 132-145, and Porter, *Cleveland*, 241-242.

⁹ Bill Levy, *Sam Sipe, & Company* (Cleveland, OH: J.T. Zupal & P.D. Dole, Publishers, 1981), 167-168; Chuck Heaton, "Five Players Defy Browns," *PD*, July 23, 1967, 1, 12; and "Five Browns Refuse to Report," *Cleveland Press (Press)*, July 22, 1967, B-1. .

¹⁰ Heaton, "Five Players Defy Browns," 1, 12; "Stokes, Modell Statements," *PD*, July 23, 1967, 11; "Five Browns Refuse to Report," *Press*, July 22, 1967, B-1; and Bill Scholl, "No Talks So Far With Absentees," *Press*, July 24, 1967, D-1. Of note, quarterback Jim Ninowski also did not show for the start of training camp for personal business reasons

¹¹ "No. 32 Swings at Modell; Art Calls Him 'Inaccurate' ", *PD*, July 28, 1967, 49; "Jim Brown's Statement on Browns' Five Holdouts," *Press*, July 28, 1967, C-3; Chuck Heaton, "Kelly, Wooten Back; Williams Goes," *PD*, August 8, 1967, 29; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Dealing," *PD*, August 8, 1967, 29; Bob August, "Holdouts Back With Browns, Williams Traded," *Press*, August 7, 1967, A-1; and Bill Scholl, "Kelly Faces Heavy Pressure," *Press*, August 8, 1967, B-1.

¹² Michael E. Lomax, "Conflict and Compromise: The Evolution of American Professional Football's Labour Relations 1957-1966," *Football Studies*, 4 (2001): 21-31; and Bernie Parrish, *They Call It A Game* (New York: Signet, 1971), 210.

¹³ "Five Browns Refuse to Report," B-1; Bill Scholl, "No Talks So Far With Absentees," *Press*, July 24, 1967, D-1; Bob August, "No Choice for Modell—He Has to Fight," *Press*, July 24, 1967, D-1, and "Grid Rebels to Give In," July 28, 1967, D-1. For more on Parrish's take on the holdout, see Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 113.

¹⁴ Heaton, "Five Players Defy Browns," 1, "'Strike' by 5 Browns Is Big Mistake," July 24, 1967, 63, "Modell—'Position Unchanged'," *PD*, July 25, 1967, 33, and "Plain Talking," *PD*, July 25, 1967, 33.

¹⁵ "Bavasi Rebuffs Koufax, Drysdale," *New York Times* (NYT), February 28, 1966, 33; Leonard Koppett, "Holdout of Koufax and Drysdale Baseball's Top Shoptalk," *NYT*, March 13, 1966, 202; Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times," *NYT*, March 16, 1966, 34; "Drysdale Hints at Compromise; He and Koufax Weigh Film Pact," *NYT*, March 17, 1966, 48; "Drysdale, Koufax to Make Film; Continue Their Dodger Holdout," *NYT*, March 18, 1966, 46; "Drysdale Fears He'll Miss Season," *NYT*, March 24, 1966, 54; Peter Bart, "Koufax-Drysdale Pitch: A Fight Against 'Slavery'," March 27, 1966, 203; "Koufax and Drysdale Reject Dodgers' Offer of \$210,00," *NYT*, March 30, 1966, 50; and Bill Becker, "Koufax and Drysdale Agree to One-Year Contracts Totaling Over \$210,000," March 31, 1966, 47. For mentions of the Koufax-Drysdale holdout in Cleveland papers see Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks...", *PD*, July 27, 1967, 51; and Williams, "Sports Writers Grill Stokes, Lawyer for Browns Holdouts," *C&P*, July 19, 1967, 1A. For a sampling of national media references see A.S. "Doc" Young, "Good Morning Sports," *Chicago Daily Defender (CDD)*, August 3, 1967, 32; Shirley Povich, "This Morning...", *The Washington Post (Post)*, July 25, 1967, from Pro Football Hall of Fame clipping files (PFHOF); Marvin Durslag, "Dilemma Of Negro Athlete," *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner (LAHE)*, July 26, 1967, PFHOF; Cliff McWilliams, "Sports in *The Intelligencer*," *The Wheeling Intelligence (WI)*, July 29, 1967, PFHOF; Peter Waldmeir, "Jim Brown Gives Browns Bad Advice on Bargaining," *The Detroit News*, July 30, 1967, PFHOF; and William N. Wallace, "Sports of *The Times*," *NYT*, August 1, 1967, 36.

¹⁶ Povich, "This Morning...", PFHOF; Steve Perkins, "Browns' Stirke Hit," *Dallas Times Herald (DTH)*, July 26, 1967, PFHOF; McWilliams, "Sports in *The Intelligencer*," *WI*, July 19, 1967, PFHOF.

¹⁷ Heaton, "Five Players Defy Browns," 12; "Stokes, Modell Statements," *PD*, July 23, 1967, 11; and "Stokes Rips Back at Art," *PD*, July 25, 1967, 63.

¹⁸ Heaton, "Five Players Defy Browns," 1, Heaton, "'Strike' by 5 Browns Is Big Mistake," 63, Heaton, "Modell—'Position Unchanged'," 33, and Heaton "Plain Talking," July 25, 1967, 33. See also, editorial, "5 Browns Fumble," *PD*, July 25, 1967, 12. The emphasis on "too generous" is from the author and not from the text.

¹⁹ Bob Williams, "Sports Writers Grill Stokes, Lawyer for Browns Holdouts," *Cleveland Call & Post* (*C&P*), July 19, 1967, 1A; William "Sheep" Jackson, "Coach Collier Gives Browns Strong Pep Talk," *C&P*, July 29, 1967, 10B; William "Sheep" Jackson, "From the Sidelines," *C&P*, August, 5, 1967, 12B; and William O. Walker, "Down the Big Road: Jack Clowser 'Finally Does An Unsportsman Like Thing,'" *C&P*, August 12, 1967, 4B. In an attempt to better gauge any implications of the 1967 holdout by five Cleveland Browns and the 1968 incident involving John Wooten and Ross Fichtner within multiple black communities, the author examined the following black newspapers: *Cleveland Call & Post*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Daily Defender*, *New Jersey Afro-American*, and *Los Angeles Sentinel*. Only the *Call & Post* and *Defender* covered both stories with their own staff. The *Courier* and *Afro-American* each had columnists write about the 1968 incident, but either used UPI stories on the 1967 holdout or failed to cover the story. The *Sentinel* covered each event in the briefest manner; providing a picture with a caption for one aspect of each event—a photo of Jim Brown following his public statement in 1967 and pictures of Wooten and Fichtner following their releases in 1968. Sheep Jackson's mention of the 200 players in the AFL and NFL who were holding out was the only example found that mentioned a specific number of players. There were references to other holdouts, but all of them involved individual players rather than a collective group.

²⁰ Young, "Good Morning Sports," *CDD*, August 3, 1967, 32; and Lawrence Casey, "Sports Ledger," *CDD*, August 3, 1967, 33.

²¹ "Sound Off," *PD*, July 26, 1967, 31; and "Sound Off," *PD*, July 30, 1967, 3-C. In the July 26th edition of "Sound Off," Carl Stokes wrote a letter as a mayoral candidate in which he addressed the debate over Cleveland's desire for a new stadium. Chuck Heaton, who had edited the section, quickly responded at the end by stating, "Any other Cleveland mayoral candidates wish to Sound off?" The statement, in comparison to his responses to other letters, contains an element of sarcasm at best.

²² Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks...", *PD*, July 27, 1967, 51; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, August 8, 1967, 29; and August, "No Choice for Modell," D-1. For letters to the editor see "Sound Off," *PD*, July 26, 1967, 31; July 27, 1967, B-2; and July 30, 1967, 3-C; and "Defense of Browns Hurt Stokes' Chances," *Press*, July 29, 1967, A-9. For a collection of letters written to and by Carl Stokes during the 1967 mayoral elections, see Carl Stokes Papers, Mss. 4800, Container 1, Folder 15, Western Reserve Historical Society.

²³ "No. 32 Swings at Modell; Art Calls Him 'Inaccurate'", *PD*, July 28, 1967, 49; and "Jim Brown's Statement on Browns' Five Holdouts," *Press*, July 28, 1967, C-3.

²⁴ "No. 32 Swings at Modell," 49; and Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, July 28, 1967, 49. The *Press*, while printing portions of Brown's statement, did not respond to it with editorials or print any letters to the editor which addressed the issue. Their silence, especially when compared to the coverage of the *PD*, remains an odd contrast in how the two Cleveland dailies addressed the holdout in general.

²⁵ Merv Harris, "Brown Backs Browns' 5 Holdouts," *LAHE*, July 27, 1967, PFHOF; Waldmeir, "Jim Brown Gives Browns Bad Advice on Bargaining," *Detroit News*, July 30, 1967, PFHOF; Dick Young,

“Young Ideas,” *New York Daily News (NYDN)*, July 30, 1967, PFHOF; and Gene Roswell, “Jimmy Brown...And the Browns,” *New York Post*, August 2, 1967, PFHOF.

²⁶ Jackson, “From the Sidelines,” *C&P*, August, 5, 1967, 12B; Young, “Good Morning Sports,” *CDD*, August 3, 1967, 32; and Casey, “Sports Ledger,” *CDD*, August 3, 1967, 33.

²⁷ Bill Scholl, “Beach tells why he filed pro football suit,” *Press*, June 11, 1971, B-1; Chuck Heaton, “Browns Release Beach,” *PD*, July 21, 1967, 41; and Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 167.

²⁸ Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 167-168; and Scholl, “Beach tells why he filed pro football suit,” B-1. Following his playing career Beach worked as the coordinator of the Mayor’s Council on Youth Opportunity for Mayor Carl Stokes and later attended law school at Yale. See “Suspect ‘Upset’ By Clash On Lease,” *NYT*, July 29, 1968, 15; “Poverty Funds Linked to 4 Charged in Cleveland Police Slayings,” *NYT*, April 31, 1969, 30; and “U.S. Grand Jury Calls N.F.L. Clubs,” *NYT*, November 11, 1970, 79. Stacking was one of the foremost areas of study during the early years of sport studies and remains a topic of study.

²⁹ Brown, *Out of Bounds*, 57.

³⁰ Terry Pluto, *When All The World Was Browns Town: Cleveland’s Browns and the Championship Season of ‘64* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 77-79; Brown, *Out of Bounds*, 57; and Chuck Heaton, “Plain Talk,” *PD*, August 6, 1968, 33. For implications of the varying levels of perceived interaction by Brown in the holdout, see Oates, “An Athletes’ Union?” *LAHE*, July 25, 1967, PFHOF; Harris, “Brown Backs Browns’ 5 Holdouts,” *LAHE*, July 27, 1967, PFHOF; Waldmeir, “Jim Brown Gives Browns Bad Advice on Bargaining,” *Detroit News*, July 30, 1967; Young, “Young Ideas,” *NYDN*, July 30, 1967, PFHOF; Wallace, “Sports of *The Times*,” *NYT*, August 1, 1967, PFHOF; Roswell, “Jimmy Brown...And the Browns,” *NYP*, August 2, 1967, PFHOF; Heaton, “Plain Talk,” *PD*, July 28, 1967, 49, and “Plain Talk,” August, 8, 1967, 29. See also Jim Brown and Paul Brown interviews in *Jim Brown: All-American*, HBO, 2003.

³¹ Julian Krawcheck, “Wooten Accuses Fichtner of Bias,” *Press*, July 2, 1968, A-1; Tom Place, “Browns Hit by Feuding,” *PD*, July 3, 1968, 31.

³² Krawcheck, “Wooten Accuses Fichtner of Bias,” A-1; Place, “Browns Hit by Feuding,” 31; Bob August, “2 Teams Looking for a Leader,” *Press*, July 5, 1967, B-1. Fairview Park is a west side suburb of Cleveland. Paul Wiggin was a white defensive end and team captain who, according to Fichtner, was one of the more popular players on the Browns.

³³ Burt Graeff, “‘I Don’t See How I Can Still Play Here’,” *Press*, July 3, 1968, C-1; Place, “Browns Hit by Feuding,” *PD*, July 3, 1968, 31; and Hal Lebovitz, “Hal Asks...,” *PD*, July 4, 1968, 1-B.

³⁴ August, “2 Teams Looking for a Leader,” B-1; Lebovitz, “Hal Asks...,” *PD*, July 4, 1968, 1-B; “Fichtner, Wooten Have Their Say to Sports Ed,” *C&P*, July 13, 1968, 8B; and William “Sheep” Jackson, “From the Sidelines,” *C&P*, July 20, 1968, 9B. Find letters to the editor in “Sound Off,” *PD*, July 7, 1968, 6-C, July 10, 1968, 33 and July 24, 1968, 35; and “Note to Wooten: Stick to Football,” *Press*, July 6, 1968, A-11. See endnote #44 for further information on the lack of press coverage by the nation’s black newspapers. Sam Lacy of the *New Jersey Afro-American* noted in his column that there was a bit of irony

in having black athletes singled out for not mingling with whites after so many years of asking them to keep to themselves after breaking the color line in pro sports. See Sam Lacy, "A Bit of This and That and That," *Afro-American*, July 27, 1968, 13.

³⁵ "Browns to Air Many Problems, Not Just Race," *Press*, July 9, 1968, C-1; and Chuck Heaton, "Browns Meet Here," *PD*, July 9, 1968, 31.

³⁶ Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 167-172.

³⁷ "Wooten and Fichtner Are Out," *PD*, July 20, 1968, 23; Chuck Heaton, "Collier Tells Browns: 'We Expect Loyalty'," *PD*, July 22, 1968, 35; Bob August, "Sour End for Two Fine Players," *Press*, July 19, 1968, C-1; Bill Scholl, "No Deal Seen For Ousted Duo," *Press*, July 19, 1968, C-1; and Bill Scholl, "Collier Wants to Forget About the Past," *Press*, July 22, 1968, D-2. Another column that expressed sadness over the release of Wooten and Fichtner is, Regis McAuley, "In This Corner," *Press*, July 20, 1968, B-2. McAuley recalls fond childhood memories of the black family living behind him as he lamented the racial friction on the Browns.

³⁸ Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 28-30; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, July 30, 1968, 29; "Boycott of Browns, Cards Is News to Players," *PD*, August 3, 1968, 22; Chuck Heaton, "Wooten, NFL Boss Rozelle Huddle," *PD*, August 5, 1968, 35; and William "Sheep" Jackson, "The Real John Wooten Story," *C&P*, August 24, 1968, 2A.

³⁹ William N. Wallace, "Browns Shedding Divisive Legacy," *NYT*, July 31, 1968, 45; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, August 6, 1968, 33; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks...", *PD*, August 8, 1968, 73; and "Browns Form committee to Handle Gripes," *PD*, August 9, 1968, 45.

⁴⁰ "Bill Willis to Present Marion Motley," *C&P*, July 13, 1968.

CHAPTER 9

¹ William F. Miller, "Superstar Mileti Makes American Dream Come True," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* (*PD*), February 13, 1972, 3-AA; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk: Mileti fades from the sports scene," *PD*, March 4, 1975, 1-D.

² Cleveland, in the late 60s and early 70s, suffered elevated levels of urban decline. Just as the city had risen rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century, it declined at drastic rate. More evident was its drop from a position as an elite American metropolitan center to one of the many cities suffering Rustbelt decline (i.e. a loss of industry and population, and subsequently dollars, to both the suburbs and to the growing American Sun Belt regions—South and West). See Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 156-181. For a broader overview of urban decline in America's traditional urban centers and the measures taken to combat this decline, see Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 383.

³ Hal Lebovitz, "Mr. Mayor: Time for a New Arena," *PD*, January 23, 1968, 29. Lebovitz argues that a new civic arena is needed to lure the NBA and NHL to Cleveland. For background on the expansion of

professional sports during the late 60s and early 70s, see James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 294-332.

⁴ “Deal Very Near on Barons,” *The Press*, September 6, 1968, B1; Hal Lebovitz, “Barons’ Sale Looms Tonight,” *PD*, September 6, 1968, 47; Hal Lebovitz, “Notes-off the cuff,” *PD*, May 11, 1968, 49; and Hal Lebovitz, “Notes-off the cuff,” *PD*, August 31, 1968, 27. Lebovitz indicates in his May column that the stock had originally sold at \$10 a share. Not until rumors of the sale did the stock rise above its original value. At the time of the sale, Bright had accumulated approximately 13,000 of the 19,000 shares of team stock.

⁵ Bob August, “Barons, Arena Set to Go as \$2,000,000 Package,” *Press*, September 9, 1968, C1; Tom Place, “New Baron Owner Plans Renaissance,” *PD*, September 10, 1968, 57-58; Hal Lebovitz, “Big-Time for Arena,” *PD*, September 10, 1968, 57; Tom Place, “Arena to Become Swinging Place Under Mileti Control,” *PD*, September 10, 1968, 58; and “New Baron Boss Ready, Eager,” *Press*, September 10, 1968, C1. It is of interest to note that Lebovitz states that Mileti will complement both Art Modell of the Browns and Vernon Stouffer of the Indians in sports promotion in Cleveland. Stouffer departs the sports scene in 1972, and Modell and Mileti seemingly exist in silent conflict for press.

⁶ For a more detailed description of Mileti’s promotion of the BGSU-Niagara game, see Joe Menzer and Burt Graeff, *Cavs: From Fitch to Fratello* (Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 1994), 1-2. From their interview with Mileti, Menzer and Graeff elaborate, albeit briefly, on the relationship between the Barons and the Arena. They argue that the Barons had their choice of dates for their schedule and were able to reserve all weekends except four: two for the Ice Capades and two for the Ice Follies. They comment that not even the Barnum and Bailey Circus was able to visit the Arena. It should also be noted that the success of the BGSU-Niagara game was due in part to a strong alumni presence in the Cleveland area and the presence of two players on Niagara: future NBA star, Calvin Murphy and Manny Leaks, who had played his high school ball at Cleveland’s East High. See also, August, “Barons, Arena Set to Go as \$2,000,000 Package,” C-1; and Place, “New Baron Owner Plans Renaissance,” *PD*, September 10, 1968, 57-58.

⁷ Bob August, “Barons, Arena Set to Go as \$2,000,000 Package,” C-1; “New Baron Boss Ready, Eager,” *The Press*, September 10, 1968, C-1; “Sale of Barons OK’d,” *PD*, September 20, 1968, 53-54; “Arena Sale is Official,” *PD*, September 28, 1968, 45; Dick Feagler and Michael D. Roberts, “Can Nick J. Mileti and Winston Churchill Make the Coliseum Go?” *Cleveland Magazine*, 3 (October, 1974): 77-78; and John Kostrzewa and Peter Phipps, “How Mileti Wooed New York Investors” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 8, 1981, A1, A8. McKenna was also the vice president and partner at Lombard, Vitalis & Paganucci, Inc., a New York financial firm. See, “Nick Mileti: ‘Just expect things are going to be tough...then enthusiasm helps’,” *PD Sunday Magazine*, March 5, 1972, 7-8, 10. The Kettering Corporation was established by the family of Charles Kettering of Dayton for financial investment purposes. Charles Kettering made his fortune with General Motors after inventing the automobile self-starter. See, William Miller, “Superstar Mileti Makes American Dream Come True,” *PD*, February 13, 1972, 3-AA. Paul Bright, who had purchased as much of the Barons’ stock as he could in the months preceding the sale for roughly \$7 a share, received upward of \$20 after the expenses of the liquidation of the team and assets. From Russell Schneider, “If Anyone Can Make the Barons Go, Nick Is the Guy,” *PD Sunday Magazine*, January 5, 1969, 43.

⁸ Gene Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory: The Story of the Cleveland Barons* (Euclid, OH: Blue Line Publications, Inc., 1994), 265. At the time of the purchase, the Barons were coming off a season where they finished at

28-30-14 and in last place in the AHL's Western Division. Also, Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks...Can Arena Become THE Place?" *PD*, November 10, 1968, 2-C. This interview with Mileti addresses his planned changes for the Arena and ways to endear the Barons to the community. While many of Mileti's responses consisted of public relations rhetoric, they also indicated his desire to stabilize his current assets before he began pursuing new assets. Schneider, "If Anyone Can Make the Barons Go, Nick Is the Guy," 43.

⁹ Rich Passan, "Mileti: Bush League City in Some Ways," *PD*, February 5, 1969, 69-70. Mileti complained that the city needed to support all of its professional sports franchises, not merely the Browns. He further argued that football, baseball and hockey needed to be supported just like the zoo, Playhouse Square, or any other civic institution. As for Cleveland's public leaders, he called upon them for support, stating that a continued lack of support would only indicate that these leaders were losers. For the attendance figures, see Kiczek, *Forgotten Glory*, 272.

¹⁰ Chuck Heaton, "Mileti Sticks Foot in Mouth," *PD*, February 7, 1969; "Sound Off—letters to the sports editor," *PD*, February 16, 1969, 9-C. While Heaton chides Mileti for failing to endear himself or his team to the city, he also admits the problems of the Arena and the uphill battle Mileti faces. For a range of comments regarding Mileti's comments and Heaton's response, see letters to the sports editor in "Sound Off," *PD*, February 16, 1969, 9-C; "Sound Off," *PD*, April 6, 1969, 6-C; and "Sound Off," *PD*, April 13, 1969, 6-C.

¹¹ Photograph—"Boasts Muni Hockey," *PD*, April 23, 1969, 1-C. The photograph shows Mileti presenting Mayor Carl Stokes with a \$1,000 check for youth hockey leagues sponsored by the Barons. Also, Schneider, "If Anyone Can Make the Barons Go, Nick Is the Guy," 43; Bill Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 125-127.

¹² Promotional poster for the Cleveland Barons circa 1969, Cleveland Barons folder, The London Life Hockey Resource Centre Archives. Toronto, ONT. The poster was a promotional item available for sale at Barons' games and via mail order. Along with its "unique" approach to showing the gender-friendly nature of hockey, it also provided information on the current team, the AHL, the history of hockey in Cleveland, and explanations of basic rules and penalties. Also, Russell Schneider, "If Anyone Can Make the Barons Go, Nick Is the Guy," 43; Rich Passan, "Mileti: Bush League City in Some Ways," 69-70; and Veeck, *Veeck as in Wreck*, 125-127.

¹³ "Barons Seek NHL Franchise," *PD*, June 10, 1969, 1-A; Bill Scholl, "Arena: 17,000 Seats and Balcony?" *PD*, June 10, 1969, B-1. The NHL's minimum seating requirement for an arena was 12,500 as of 1969. Mileti was excited, in part, because the Arena's renovation would meet that requirement after only one side was completed. See also, "Arena Plan for the Future," *Press*, June 12, 1969, G-1.

¹⁴ Hal Lebovitz, "Mileti Can Do It," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 1-F; "NHL, Cleveland Need Each Other" *PD*, June 11, 1969, 14-A; Bob August, "Mileti Rates a Hand," *The Press*, June 11, 1969, G-1; and "Barons' Mileti Thinks Big," *The Press*, June 12, 1969, B-4.

¹⁵ Hal Lebovitz, "Mileti Can Do It," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 1-F; "Barons Bid Chilled," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 1-F; and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 12, 1969, 69. In labeling Cleveland as a bad sports town, Campbell pointed to the Indians franchise in 1964, when the team considered relocating.

¹⁶ Bill Scholl, "Vote of 5 Men Holds Key to Barons' NHL Ambitions," *Press*, June 11, 1969, G-4; and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 12, 1969, 69. Access to the University Club was granted only to members of the Arena Club, which used the aforementioned club's bar and dining room. Only season ticket holders of the \$4 box seats were given access to the Arena Club. Aside from access to the dining facilities, Mileti also provided club members with a special shortcut between the Arena and University Club.

¹⁷ "Oil Slick Fire Damages 2 Rive Spans," *PD*, June 23, 1969, 11-C; and "Cleveland: Where the River Burns," *PD*, June 24, 1969, 10-A. The Cuyahoga River, as pollution continued to mount in the post war years, had been known to catch ablaze on occasion. The Cuyahoga fires were immortalized in song by Randy Newman in "Burn On," which made the following reference, "'Cause the Cuyahoga River/Goes smoking through my dreams/ Burn on, big river, burn on." See, Randy Newman, "Burn On" *Sail Away*, Warner Brothers Records, Inc., 1972. Doug Clarke, "A Halloween Trick; Barons Spurn NHL," *Press*, November 1, 1969, B-1, B-3; and Rich Passan, "Barons Will Not Seek NHL Franchise," *PD*, November 1, 1969, D-1, D-2. It should also be noted that Baltimore declined the opportunity to submit an application for the same reasons that Mileti has specified: the franchise fee and method of player distribution.

¹⁸ "Barons Seek NHL Franchise," *PD*, June 10, 1969, 1-A; Hal Lebovitz, "Mileti Can Do It," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 1-F; "Barons Bid Chilled," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 1-F; "NHL, Cleveland Need Each Other," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 14-A; August, "Mileti Rates a Hand," G-1; "Barons' Mileti Thinks Big," *The Press*, June 12, 1969, B-4; Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 12, 1969, 69; "Mileti's Magic," *PD*, October 2, 1969, 2-B; Passan, "Barons Will Not Seek NHL Franchise," 1-D; Clarke, "A Halloween Trick: Barons Spurn NHL," B-1; and "Mileti's Decision," *PD*, November 2, 1969, 6-AA. Also, Doug Clarke, "Cleveland Was Out of the Running for Franchise in '70," *Press*, November 4, 1969, C-1. In this phone interview, Campbell defended both the franchise fee and the method of player distribution. The 1969 fee of \$6 million, he argued, was not inflated when considering the 1967 expansion fee of \$2 million was undervalued. He added, "It's never been the privilege of the purchaser to set the price." As for the expansion player draft, Campbell stated that "a better quality player" would be available this time around, even though the existing teams could freeze four more players and two goalies on their rosters.

¹⁹ Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 294-332.

²⁰ For an early mention of Mileti's interest in pursuing an NBA franchise for the 1970-1971 season, see Chuck Heaton, "Notes-Off the Cuff," *PD*, June 7, 1969, 1-C. Also, Hal Lebovitz, "Mileti Can Do It," *PD*, June 11, 1969, 1-F. The unspecified ABA franchise turned out to be the Pittsburgh Pipers. See, Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 5, 1970, F-1.

²¹ Also included in Cleveland's professional basketball history was the Cleveland Pipers of the American Basketball League in the early 60s. George Steinbrenner owned the team. The Pipers, with Jerry Lucas, won the inaugural championship, and then attempted to join the NBA amidst rumors the ABL would fold. When the ABL threatened an anti-trust suit, the Pipers ceased efforts to switch leagues. The ABL then folded in 1963. See Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 323. Also, Menzer and Graeff, *Cavs*, 2-4; "Royals Please", *PD*, March 9, 1968, 8; "PD Charities Given \$15,000 by Modell," *PD*, April 20, 1968, 49; "Bid for ABA Confirmed," *PD*, August 21, 1968, 33, 35; Hal Lebovitz, "Notes-Off the Cuff," *PD*, August 31, 1968, 27; and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, December 8, 1968, 2-C. In terms of expansion, the ABA offices stated to the *PD* that they considered no city higher than Cleveland regarding expansion. For two examples of fan reaction, see letters to the editor in both "Sound Off," *PD*, January 5, 1969, 3-C; and "Queen City Royals," *PD*, July 20, 1969, 7-AA.

²² Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, January 18, 1970, 2-C. Lebovitz hints at the end of his column that, if the NBA should fall through, other professional basketball options were in the works. Also, Graeff, "NBA: Two Big Questions," *Press*, January 19, 1970, C-1; and Bill Nichols, "Check in Hand, Mileti Awaits NBA's Terms," *PD*, January 19, 1970, 1-D.

²³ Burt Graeff, "NBA May Raise Its Entry Fee," *Press*, January 20, 1970, B-1; Bill Nichols, "Terms Go Up, Up; Deadline Monday," *PD*, January 21, 1970, 1-D; and Burt Graeff, "NBA Candidates Hit by \$1 Million Switch," *Press*, January 21, 1970, D-1. The addition of four teams rather than two affected the college draft thusly: instead of two expansion teams receiving the first and second picks in the draft, four teams would now draft in slots seven through ten. The expansion teams would draft ahead of all playoffs teams from the previous season, but after the established franchises that did not reach the postseason. See, Bob August, "Cleveland to Drop NBA Bid," *Press*, January 23, 1970, D-1.

²⁴ Graeff, "NBA Candidates Hit by \$1 Million Switch," D-1; Bob August, "Cleveland to Drop NBA Bid," *Press*, January 23, 1970, D-1; Bill Nichols, "Mileti Will Say 'No,'" *PD*, January 26, 1970, 1-D, 3-D; "Sound Off," *PD*, January 28, 1970, 3-D; Hal Lebovitz, "Notes-off the cuff," *PD*, January 24, 1970, 1-C, 3-C; and Burt Graeff, "Mileti's in a Muddle on NBA Expansion," *Press*, January 24, 1970, B-1, B-4. It was in Graeff's "Mileti's in a Muddle" article that links to possible ABA expansion were first made.

²⁵ Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, January 18, 1970, 2-C; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 5, 1970, F-1; Bill Nichols, "City Acquires NBA Franchise," *PD*, February 7, 1970, 1-A, 2-C; Hal Lebovitz, "At Long Last NBA Is Here: Whoopie!" *PD*, February 7, 1970, 1-C; "Pro Cage Welcome," *PD*, February 8, 1970, 6-AA; and "New Team in Town," *Press*, February 7, 1970, A-4. On the same day the PD announced that Cleveland would receive an expansion team, Lebovitz revealed that Mileti had negotiated with the ABA to purchase the Los Angeles Stars within a week if the NBA denied the compromised terms. Lebovitz, though, lauded the final outcome, arguing that the ABA still is not the NBA and that Mileti made the correct choice. See, Hal Lebovitz, "Notes-Off the Cuff," *PD*, February 7, 1970, 1-C, 2-C.

²⁶ Nichols, "Mileti Will Say 'No,'" 1-D, 3-D; Bill Nichols, "City Acquires NBA Franchise," *PD*, February 7, 1970, 1-A; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, February 8, 1970, 1-D; Burt Graeff, "Mileti May Make NBA Stock Public," *Press*, February 9, 1970, C-1; Burt Graeff, "How Did Mileti Get Money? That's a Military Secret" *Press*, February 10, 1970, B-1; Milt Widder, "Mileti Widens Fiscal Base," *Press*, February 11, 1970, B-8; and Menzer and Graeff, *Cavs*, 4-6. According to the 1973 Cleveland Cavaliers Media Guide and information provided by the Cavaliers' Human Resources Division, members of the original ownership syndicate included: Nick Mileti, Leo C. McKenna, Theodore M. Kenneth H. Kirtz, Garvey, DeArva G. Barton, Alva T. Bonda, Charles W. Bonner, Bruce Fine, Harold R. Lynn, Richard H. Miller, Louis A. Mitchell, David J. Olderman, Arnold R. Pinkney, Peter Shimrak, Stephen Zayac Jr., and Joseph T. Zingale. Zingale later became owner of Cleveland's entry into World Team Tennis—the Cleveland Nets.

²⁷ Burt Graeff, "Mileti's Troubles Just Starting," *Press*, February 9, 1970, C-1; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 8, 1970, 2-D; and Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, February 8, 1970, 1-D, 2-D.

²⁸ Jerry Kirshenbaum, "He Has The Word From Sicily" *Sports Illustrated*, January 27, 1975, 24-27; "Marshmallow Empire" *Time*, February 18, 1974, 59-60; and Feagler and Roberts, "Mileti and Churchill," 85-87. Much more on the relationship with Mileti and his investors will be discussed later.

²⁹ Hal Lebovitz, "Mr. Mayor: Time for New Arena," *PD*, January 23, 1968, 29; Douglas Bloomfield, "Report Snags Dome Stadium," *PD*, February 12, 1970, 1-A; "Stadium Study a Waste of Money," *PD*, February 12, 1970, 12-A; George E. Condon, "And Then the Roof Fell In" *PD*, February 13, 1970, 9-A; and "Sports Facilities Need 'New Look,'" *PD* November 22, 1970, 6-AA.

³⁰ Doug Clarke, "Mileti plans to build \$17-million coliseum," *Press*, June 17, 1971, A-1, A-7; Doug Clarke, "Lavish Is the Only Word for Mileti's New Coliseum," *Press* June, 18, 1971, A-4; "Coliseum plan is hailed and bewailed," *The Press*, June 17, 1971, A-1, A-6; Bill Nichols, "Mileti Target Date For Coliseum is 1972," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-A, 10-A; "City Values Shift to Suburbs," *PD*, March 1, 1970, 6-AA; and George Rasanen, "Exodus of '60s Drains City," *PD*, June 14, 1970, 1-A, 11-A. It should be noted that the *Cleveland Call & Post*, the city's historic black paper, provided little coverage on professional sports issues. Instead, its focus had shifted to neighborhood issues. Sports items tended towards recreational, scholastic, and collegiate coverage instead of professional items. Its coverage on the Coliseum announcement merely repeated the basic information found in the *PD* and the *Press*. No mention was given as to the impact the move would have on fans from Cleveland's predominantly black neighborhoods on the near East Side. See also, William Hickey, "Nick Mileti," *PD Friday*, October 8, 1971, 2-3. See Table 16, Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance*, 205; and Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland*, 168-181.

³¹ Dan Coughlin, "Vernon, Art Applaud," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D, 2-D; Rich Passan, "NHL Franchise for Cleveland?" *PD*, February 3, 1971, 1-F, 2-F; "Coliseum Plan is Hailed and Bewailed," *Press*, June 17, 1971, A-1; and Rich Passan and Dennis Lustig, "NHL Shows Interest," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D, 2-D. In the interview with Campbell regarding the NHL coming to Cleveland, the league president indicated that following the failed expansion bid of 1969 Mileti had since pursued the purchase and move of the struggling Pittsburgh franchise. NHL owners, although highly concerned with the status of Pittsburgh, voted against selling and moving the team. For corroboration of Modell's claim that the Coliseum was built too far from the traditional fanbase see, Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 2, 1978. Lebovitz asks his readers if they would go "24 miles for a soda."

³² "Fans Reaction Mixed," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D, 2-D; "Poll Shows Fans Favor Mileti Plan," *Press*, June 17, 1971, A-6; "Coliseum Plan is Hailed and Bewailed," *Press*, June 17, 1971, A-1; "Sound Off," *PD*, June 23, 1971, 4-F. See two specific letters: one entitled "Three Cheers for Nick" and the other called "Mixed Feelings." In "Sound Off," *PD*, June 27, 1971, 10-B.

³³ "Love Story in Akron," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 2-D;

³⁴ Robert Daniels, "Coliseum Will Stand in Lush Countryside," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 10-A. From Richfield Historical Society Clipping File scrapbook: Doug Zemba, "Richfield Residents React to Coliseum," *Sun-Courier*, June 24, 1971; and Feagler, "Richfield Challenges Roman on Coliseum," *Press*, August 8, 1971.

³⁵ Allen Wiggins, "City Officials Blame Each Other—but Not Mileti—for Coliseum Site," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 10-A. Stokes blamed the council for holding up any productive legislature that would enhance the Gateway location. City council countered, arguing that Stokes had never sufficiently negotiated the Gateway project to Mileti. Also, "Coliseum Plan is Hailed and Bewailed" *Press*, June 17, 1971, A-1; "Fans are Mixed," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D; Chuck Heaton, "Mileti fades from sports scene," *PD*, March 4, 1975, 1-D. Perhaps in the ultimate instance of irony, the Coliseum is eventually replaced in 1994 by Gund

Arena, which is built in on land in a restructured version of the Gateway district. The success of the very situation he declined marked the end to Mileti's failed vision in Richfield.

³⁶ Doug Clarke, "Mileti—Walter Mitty's Top Moment," *Press*, June 17, 1971, F-1; Bob August, "Fresh NHL Outlook" *The Press*, June 18, 1971, C-1; "New sports arena," *Press*, June 17, 1971, C-4; and "Mileti: remember Cleveland," *The Press*, June 21, 1971, A-6.

³⁷ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D; George Condon, "Will Peninsula Need Penicillin?" *PD*, June 23, 1971, 13-A; Robert Dolgan, "Hooray for the Richfield Barons," *PD*, July 4, 1971, 3-C; and "Mileti: Coliseum Is My Only Goal Now," *Akron Beacon Journal (ABJ)*, December 12, 1972, A-1, A-20.

³⁸ Amos A. Kermish, "Nick Mileti: Entrepreneur, miracle man—can he make Coliseum pay off?" *PD*, May 25, 1975, sec. 4.3. According to this story, "Mileti purchased the first land for the Coliseum for \$126,099. In all, records at the Summit County recorder's office show Mileti spent \$769,099 for 600 acres."

³⁹ At this point that the majority of the in-depth coverage on the Coliseum was relegated to Akron media. The *Beacon Journal* had a definite interest in Mileti's dealings and his court cases, while the Cleveland media shifted their focus away from Mileti. Eventually, Mileti again made headlines in Cleveland with his purchase of the Indians and pursuit of an NHL expansion team. These events coincide with, but grossly overshadow, his confrontations with environmentalists and politicians, and legal cases regarding the Coliseum. In many ways this neglect by booster press can be seen as either "out of sight, out of mind" or sour-grapes. For coverage of the legal proceedings, see Wilma Kollert, "Foes Launch Fight Against Mileti Coliseum," *ABJ*, July 23, 1971, 7; James Toms, "Mileti Coliseum OK'd By Appeals," *ABJ*, January 5, 1972; James Toms, "Mileti Opponents To Appeal To Ohio Supreme Court" *ABJ*, January 20, 1972; James Toms, "Mileti's Coliseum Gets High Court OK," *ABJ*, March 17, 1972; "Coliseum Foes Take Plea To High Court" *ABJ*, May 20, 1972; "Coliseum Foe's Suit Tossed Out," *ABJ*, August 3, 1972; and Russ Musarra, "The Rough Trail of Coliseum Proposal," *ABJ*, December 10, 1972, A6. Also, "Mileti: Coliseum Is My Only Goal Now," A-1, A-20; Letter to residents of Richfield Township from the Richfield Township Trustees, August 1971 from Richfield Historical Society; "'EPOC' Enlightened Public Opinion Committee Policy Statement," August 1971 from Richfield Historical Society; and "COPE Newsletter," August, 1971, v. 1, no. 3. EPOC stands for Enlightened Public Opinion Committee Policy Statement, and served as a grass-roots group representing the "voice of Richfield" that supported the Coliseum. For more literature on the economic value of an arena read, Charles C. Euchner, *Playing the Field: Why Sport Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Michael N. Danielson, *Home Team: Professional Sports and the American Metropolis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ Scott Bosley, "Herbert Delays Mileti Coliseum Project," *ABJ*, May 9, 1972, D-1, D-10; Charles Lally, "New Mileti plans Go To The State," *ABJ*, December 20, 1972; Ronald D. Clark and Daly Smith, "State Eyes Costly Mileti Sewer Plan," *ABJ*, January 9, 1973, A-1; "Coliseum Sewer Pact Set" *ABJ*, March 13, 1973; and Russ Musarra, "Mileti Spadework Surprise To All," *ABJ*, March 16, A-1. For the aftermath of the groundbreaking, see Charles Lally, "Mileti Busy 297 More Acres," *ABJ*, April 11, 1973, A-1; William Kezziah, "Mileti Can Continue Coliseum Work," *ABJ*, April 11, 1973, A-1; William Kezziah, "Court Starts Study Of Testimony In Mileti-EPA Case," *ABJ*, April 13, 1973.

⁴¹ Musarra, "The Rough Trail of Coliseum Proposal," A6; "Seiberling: Move The Coliseum," Letter to the Editor, *ABJ*, December 26, 1972; Charles Lally, "Mayor Wulff Raps Mileti Water Plan," *ABJ*, Date Not

Listed—from the Richfield Historical Society Clipping Files; Joe Rice, “Gilligan Caught In Middle of Crossfire Over Coliseum,” *ABJ*, December 10, 1972, A-1, A-7; “Richfield Curbs Future Coliseums,” From the Richfield Historical Society Clipping File (No author, paper, or date is provided with article); Doug Ophager, “Wulff Raps Tri-County on Sewer Delay,” *ABJ*, October 17, 1973

⁴² Musarra, “Rough Trail of Coliseum Proposal,” A6; Kermisch, “Nick Mileti,” sec. 4.3; Joseph E. Kuebler, “It’s \$25 Million Project—All Privately Financed,” *ABJ*, October 20, 1974, F6; and Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 261-262. Porter argues that Perk, in more than a mere attempt to draw Mileti back to Cleveland, was trying to frame himself in the image of a developer and a leader.

⁴³ Musarra, “The Rough Trail of Coliseum Proposal,” A6; Rich Passan, Mileti Stays With Coliseum,” *PD*, June 15, 1972, F-1; “Terminal Plan is Grandiose” *PD*, June 17, 1972, 12-A; Harry Stainer, “Perk Reveals \$100-Million Plan,” *PD*, June 11, 1972, 1-A; and John Kostrzewa and Peter Phipps, “How Mileti Wooed New York Investors” *ABJ*, June 8, 1981, A1, A8.

⁴⁴ Musarra, “The Rough Trail of Coliseum Proposal,” A6; Joe Rice, “Gilligan Caught In Middle of Crossfire Over Coliseum,” *ABJ*, December 10, 1972, A-1, A-7; “Mileti: Coliseum Is My Only Goal Now,” A-1, A-29; and Ralph J. Perk Manuscript Collection, MS No. 4456, Container 55, Folder 851, Letter from Joseph Thomas of McDonald & Company to Nick Mileti, March 26, 1973.

⁴⁵ Kostrzewa and Phipps, “How Mileti Wooed,” A1 & A8; Feagler and Roberts, “Mileti and Churchill,” 78-80; and Kermish, “Nick Mileti,” sec. 4.3. Also see, Doug Clarke, “‘Going like hotcakes’ at new Midwest Coliseum” *Press*, November 17, 1973. Original costs called for loges to be leased for a 10 year period and a one time cost of \$250,000. The price for a loge was later amended to \$10,000 to be paid over the same time frame. If 124 of the 144 total loges could be rented out, original projections showed, the Coliseum would earn \$31million. For advertising efforts for the Coliseum see, Richfield Historical Society, Coliseum Folder, Letter from Mileti to Summit, Portage, and Medina County Businessmen, circa November 1973; and promotional flier for the Coliseum Club, no date. These two items aimed to impress the potential loge client by expressing both the luxuries that accompanied a loge, but also the status and business opportunities it could offer. The letter, on Coliseum stationery, is headed with a quote from Winston Churchill that Mileti readily adopted: “My tastes are simple...I only like the very best.” This was Mileti’s boast about the Coliseum—location, facility, entertainment—the entire time.

⁴⁶ Kostrzewa and Phipps, “How Mileti Wooed,” A1, A8; Feagler and Roberts, “Mileti and Churchill,” 78-80; and Kermish, “Nick Mileti,” sec. 4.3.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Also, “Coliseum opens with a smash,” *PD*, October 28, 1974, 4-B. This editorial congratulates Mileti on the wonderful opener for the Coliseum—a Frank Sinatra concert. It also notes that the hockey game scheduled for the following night (Oct. 27th) was postponed because of problems with the ice-freezing equipment. This is treated as one of the kinks that needed to be worked out rather than an indication of the problems the facility would face.

⁴⁸ Feagler and Roberts, “Mileti and Churchill,” 78-80; and Charles Lally, “Coliseum stock shifts revealed” *ABJ*, September 6, 1975. Eventual shifts in stock and in the power structure of Ohio Sports Center Inc. left Mileti with 45% ownership and Kettering with 10% after Chase forced them to include businessman Sanford Greenberg to take over operations of the financially struggling Coliseum.

CHAPTER 10

¹ Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 332-333, 433-443; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *Cleveland Plain Dealer (PD)*, August 1, 1971, 2-C; Dennis Lustig, "Indians Linked With N. Orleans," *PD*, August 13, 1971, 4-A, 2-B.

² Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 87-88; "A.L. Crowds Slashed," *Cleveland Press (Press)*, October 1, 1971; Bob Sudyk, "Group opposes N. Orleans, seeks Tribe," *Press*, October 1, 1971, D-1, D-2; Bob Sudyk, "Does Stouffer really want to sell?" *Press*, October 2, 1971, B-1; Bob Sudyk, "Indians—state of confusion" *Press*, October 19, 1971; Chuck Heaton "Asking Price: \$9 Million; Bid: \$6 Million," *PD*, April 29, 1971, 1-E, 2-E; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, May 2, 1971, 2-C.

³ Sudyk, "Group opposes N. Orleans, seeks Tribe," D-1, D-2; and Sudyk, "Indians—state of confusion," C-1, C-2.

⁴ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, August 15, 1971, 2-C; Russell Schneider, "Schneider Around," *PD*, August 15, 1971, 3-C; and editorial, "Superdome Beats Our Weather," August 18, 1971, 12-A. Dino Lucarelli, former public relations director for the Barons, Indians and Browns at various points in his career, asserted that part of Vernon Stouffer's problems with the Indians resulted from substantial losses in stocks. These losses, in turn, led to cost cutting measures that eventually gutted the Indians farm system and scouting. From Interview with Dino Lucarelli, March 28, 2003 at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

⁵ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, August 18, 1971, 1-E; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, August 22, 1971, 2-C; George Condon, "Let's Share Out Problems, Too," *PD*, September 5, 1971, 2-AA; Bob August, "New Orleans deal—road to disaster," *Press*, September 30, 1971, F-1, F-3; Bob August, "Another sore point in Orleans deal," *Press*, November 11, 1971, F-1; and Don Robertson, "Shame on the American League," *Press*, September 27, 1971, C-1.

⁶ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, September 12, 1971, 2-C; Bob Dolgan, "The End of Something," *PD*, September 19, 1971, 5-C; and editorial, "New Orleans Indians?" *PD*, October 5, 1971, A-8.

⁷ "Mileti to Buy WKYC Radio," *PD*, January 13, 1972, 1-A; and "Nick Mileti buys WKYC; sale price \$20 million?" *Press*, January 12, 1972, A-1.

⁸ Bob Sudyk, "Stouffer boosts Orleans plan," *Press*, December 2, 1972, F-1; Bob Sudyk, "New Orleans, Washington court Tribe," *Press*, December 2, 1972, F-1 F-2; Bob Sudyk, "Orleans bid splits A.L. owners," *Press*, December 3, 1971, ; Bob August, "Vernon Stouffer: Say it isn't so," *Press*, December 8, 1971, F-1; Russell Schneider, "D.C. Group Eyes Indians' Franchise," *PD*, December 2, 1971, 1-G, 3-G; and Russell Schneider, "Share Tribe Pitch Made," *PD*, December 3, 1971, 1-D, 2-D.

⁹ Bob August, "Vernon Stouffer: Say it isn't so," *Press*, December 8, 1971, F-1; Dennis Lustig, "Indians Linked With N. Orleans," August 13, 1971, *PD*, 4-A and 2-B; and editorial "Memo to Stouffer: Sell to Locals," *PD*, December 8, 1971, 14-A.

¹⁰ “Mileti offer to buy Indians hinges on Kettering okay,” *Press*, February 23, 1972, A-1; “Stouffer awaits word, Mileti mum,” *Press*, March 1, 1972, C-1; Bob Sudyk, “Here’s who owns Indians,” *Press*, July 6, 1972, A-1, B-1; John Bryan, “Hard Cash Would Clinch Mileti’s Dreams,” *PD*, March 12, 1972, 2-AA; and Ray De Crane, “More money on deck for Mileti,” *Press*, March 9, 1972, A-1, B-7.

¹¹ Doug Clarke, “A guest opinion: It’s scary that Nick is our only Mr. Big,” *Press*, February 24, 1972, F-1; Bob Sudyk, “Nick Mileti, five others buy Indians,” *Press*, March 6, 1972, A-1; Bob Sudyk, “Tribe burden lifts for Stouffer,” March 6, 1972, B-1; and Russell Schneider, “Indians Are Sold to Mileti,” *PD*, March 6, 1972, 1-A.

¹² Bob Sudyk, “Mileti awaits decision at owners’ meeting,” *Press*, March 8, 1972, G-1; Bob Sudyk, “Mileti a hit but plan isn’t,” *Press*, March 9, 1972, F-3; Bob Sudyk, “Some questions, answers on Tribe snag,” *Press*, March 9, 1972, F-1 and F-3; and Bryan, “Hard Cash Would Clinch Mileti’s Dreams,” 2-AA.

¹³ Sudyk, “Mileti a hit but plan isn’t,” F-3; Bob August, “A.L. hands Mileti new ground rules,” *Press*, March 13, 1972, C-1; Doug Clarke, “Dudley Blossom 3d Tribe stockholder?” *Press*, March 16, 1972, E-1; “Cronin assumes Mileti will meet demands,” *Press*, March 18, 1972, B-1; “Working capital is hang-up,” *The Press*, March 10, 1972, C-1; and Bryan, “Hard Cash Would Clinch Mileti’s Dreams,” 2-AA.

¹⁴ Chuck Heaton, “Blossoms, Miller Join Mileti Group,” *PD*, March 23, 1972, 1-F; Jim Braham, “Mileti Is Tribe’s New Owner,” *Press*, March 22, 1972, A-1; and Bob Sudyk, “Here’s who owns Indians,” A-1, B-1.

¹⁵ Doug Clarke, “Mileti—Walter Mitty’s top moment,” *Press*, June 17, 1971, F-1; and Russell Schneider, “Schneider Around,” *PD*, February 24, 1974, 5-C

¹⁶ “New era for the Indians,” *The Press*, March 6, 1972, A-6; Hal Lebovitz, “Timing Is Right for Mileti,” *PD*, March 6, 1972, 1-D; “Brighter Prospects for Tribe,” *PD*, March, 7, 1972, 10-A; Bob Sudyk, “Nick Mileti, five others buy Indians,” *Press*, March 6, 1972, A-1; Letters to the Editor, “Readers’ Forum,” *PD*, March 12, 1972, 7-AA; Chuck Day, “Miller to be active in Tribe’s affairs,” *The Press*, March 23, 1972, F-3; Bob Sudyk, “Can Mileti’s Miracle Work on Boudreau Blvd,” *The Press*, March 23, 1972, F-3; Jerry Kirshenbaum, “He Has the Word from Sicily,” *Sports Illustrated*, January 27, 1975, 24-27.

¹⁷ “New Era for the Indians,” *Press*, March 6, 1972, A-6; August, “Some reasons to buy Tribe,” *Press*, March 6, 1972, B-1; Marjorie Schuster, “Mileti’s already on first base,” *Press*, March 11, 1972, A-5; Lebovitz, “Timing Is Right for Mileti,” 1-D; Chuck Heaton, “Plain Talk,” *PD*, March 7, 1972, 1-D; letter to sports editor (Mileti Another Veeck), “Sound Off,” *PD*, March 12, 1972, 7-C; Bob Dolgan, “Nick Can’t Play Second Fiddle,” 9-C; and Kirshenbaum, “He Has the Word From Sicily,” 26.

¹⁸ Dolgan, “Nick Can’t Play Second Fiddle,” *PD*, March 26, 1972, 9-C; Bob Dolgan, “People Believe in Mileti,” *PD*, April 23, 1972, 10-C; and Dick Feagler and Michael D. Roberts, “Can Nick J. Mileti and Winston Churchill Make the Coliseum Go?” *Cleveland Magazine* 3 (October, 1974): 80-81.

¹⁹ Dolgan, “Nick Can’t Play Second Fiddle,” 9-C.

²⁰ Dolgan, “People Believe in Mileti,” 10-C.

²¹ “Sound Off,” March 12, 1972, 7-C; letters to editor, “Readers Forum,” *PD*, March 12, 1972, 7-AA; and letters to editor, “Readers Forum,” *PD*, March 26, 1972, 9-AA.

²² Kirshenbaum, “He Has the Word from Sicily,” 26.

²³ Phone interview with Brian O’Neill, former Executive Vice President of the NHL, September 24, 2003. Mr. O’Neill noted that the NHL had earmarked certain cities for franchises in its first big wave of expansion in 1965. While Cleveland did not submit an application, mostly because no individual was willing to pursue such a venture, it is not likely that Cleveland was one of the cities the NHL earmarked. The converse portrayals of Cleveland as favored city by the booster press and the undesirable location by the NHL remained a continuous theme in 1969 and 1972.

²⁴ Bob August, “Fresh NHL Outlook,” *Press*, June 18, 1971, C-1; Bob August, “Cleveland good bet for NHL franchise” *Press*, September 28, 1971; Doug Clarke, “Cleveland NHL spot on line again” *Press*, October 27, 1971; and Doug Clarke, “NHL may be here in 1974, IF...” January 26, 1972; Passan, “NHL Franchise for Cleveland?” *PD*, February 3, 1971, 1-F; and Kirshenbaum, “He Has the Word from Sicily,” 26.

²⁵ Hal Lebovitz, “Hal Asks,” *PD*, June 4, 1972.

²⁶ The \$100,000 performance bond Mileti submitted to the WHA, with similar bonds submitted by every other owner in the new league, was used to sign the Chicago Blackhawks’ star winger Bobby Hull. Hull’s signing was designed to give the league instantaneous credibility.

²⁷ Many columnists cautioned readers that while the WHA might eventually fail, enough success could force a merger or the absorption of a few teams. Cleveland and Mileti could finally make the “big leagues” of hockey if they were successful enough on and off the ice.

²⁸ Interview with John Halligan, Historian for the National Hockey League, August 8, 2003 at the National Hockey League Offices, New York, NY. Halligan was employed by the New York Rangers franchise at the time of the World Hockey Association’s formation. Mileti justified such animosity when he raided the Boston Bruins to sign goalie Gerry Cheevers. Mileti had also reportedly flirted with several members of the New York Rangers in his quest to give the Cleveland Crusaders some star power. Mileti’s contract to Cheevers, \$1.4 million for seven years, was thought to have contributed to the eventual financial instability of the Crusaders. Also, Lucarelli Interview.

²⁹ O’Neill Interview, September 24, 2003. It was intimated that Campbell, although never a huge fan of expansion, did not hold grudges against individual cities. Instead, the NHL president had problems dealing with various individuals in the process. Mileti, one may assume, was one of these individuals.

³⁰ Rich Passan, “Passin’ the Puck” *PD*, June 8, 1972.

³¹ Chuck Heaton, “Plain Talk,” *PD*, March 4, 1975, 1-D.

³² Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 89-90; and *1993 Cleveland Indians Media Guide*, 230.

³³ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 25, 1972, 1-C. This column is a direct response to an earlier one by Bob Dolgan that had implied Mileti's public presentation had changed with the addition of the Indians. This change was marked by a tightening of the wallet. Lebovitz responds the Mileti was never a huge spender, but also comments on the additional strains he took on with his empire's growth. As was often the case for Lebovitz and the press, the column ends wishing Mileti luck and with the notion of, "if anyone can do it, Nick will be the man."

³⁴ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, July 8, 1973, 2-C; and "Readers' Forum," *PD*, April 16, 1973, 12-A. Six letters given the section headline, "Mileti Draws Boos and Cheers," exhibit the range of views fans held towards Mileti. Two letters chastise Cleveland leaders and sports fans for trying to blackmail Mileti and for not supporting the WHA Crusaders. One letter from the Northeastern Ohio Sierra Club argues the damage the Coliseum will do to both the Richfield area by its inclusion and to downtown Cleveland by its absence. The remaining three letters complain in a variety of forms of how Mileti has forgotten any goodwill gestures towards the fans in pursuit of top dollar. Lebovitz notes that the 1971 Bat Day drew over 50,000 fans, and that the 1972 crowd of more than 23,000 would have been greater if not for a weekend of heavy rains (another crowd of 50,000 was expected). Based on such numbers and on the loss of fans seen on Helmet Day, Lebovitz concludes that Mileti's decision to link Bat Day to a fast food chain would cut out one-third of the overall attendance. This, in turn, would mean a loss of \$10,000 from attendance for the sake of having someone else pick up the cost of the little league bats.

³⁵ Philip Suchma, "The Selling of Cleveland Municipal Stadium: The Linking of Progressive Era Ideals With the Emerging Consumer Culture," *Sport History Review* 31 (2000): 100-119; editorial, "Cooperation Needed at Stadium," *PD*, August 9, 1972, 14-A; editorial, "Downtown Best Sports Location," *PD*, August 26, 1972, 8-A; and Hal Lebovitz, "Let's Keep Browns, Indians Downtown," *PD*, October 27, 1972, 2-C.

³⁶ "Tribe's Stadium Lease in Jeopardy," *PD*, August 8, 1972, 1-D; Edward P. Whelan, "Mileti Feuding Called Publicity Ploy," *PD*, November 4, 1972, 6-C; Letter from Frank M. Dunham to Nick Mileti, September 27, 1972, Ralph J. Perk Collection, MSS No. 4456, Container 55, Folder 851; and Richard R. Hollington, Jr. "Statement," Perk Collection, Container 55, Folder 851. One of Mileti's accusations had been the failure of city officials to appoint a specific individual to negotiate with the Indians, as per his request. Hollington countered by naming the appointee. In a later letter from Mileti associate Theodore Garver (of Jones, Day, Cockley & Reavis) the city was asked to include City Council representation in the negotiation process, and was reminded to proceed immediately seeing as the Indians' lease had expired. See letter from Theodore Garver to Herbert R. Whitney, December 28, 1972, Perk Collection, Container 55, Folder 851.

³⁷ Harry Stainer, "Plan Unveiled for Stadium's Development," *PD*, March 11, 1973, 1-A; Harry Stainer, "Pay Stadium Bonds, Perk to Tell Modell," *PD*, July 8, 1973, 1-A; Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, March 11, 1973, 1-C; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, April 29, 1973, 2-C; Hal Lebovitz, "Sigh of Relief," July 15, 1973, 1-C; Amos A. Kermisch, "Christopher Stadium Plan Scuttled," *PD*, July 7, 1973, 1-A; Amos A. Kermish, "Perk and Modell Agree on Stadium Lease Plan," *PD*, July 13, 1973, 1-A; and editorial, "Stadium Plan is Good News," *PD*, July 13, 1973, 2-B. The Christopher Plan called for \$8,000,000 in renovations on the Stadium, which would then be run by Christopher Associates. Another \$3,000,000 would be paid to the city to cover the costs of unpaid bonds, after which Cleveland would relinquish ownership. Neither Mileti nor Modell expressed any interest in acting as partners with Christopher in owning and operating the Stadium.

³⁸ Jim Braham, "Nick Mileti now is in pro football, too," *Press*, October 3, 1973, C-1; Bob August, "New Mileti venture is disquieting," *Press*, October 4, 1973; Bill Nichols, "Mileti grid team won't play here," *PD*, October 4, 1973, F-1; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, October 4, 1973, F-1; "Mileti grid sale-\$500,000 profit," *Press*, October 23, 1973; "An 'Angel' for Mileti," *PD*, October 24, 1973; Kirshenbaum, "He Has the Word From Sicily," 25; and Feagler and Roberts, "Mileti and Churchill," 84. Mileti also considered moving his franchise to Tampa, Florida, but was warned off by Edward DeBartolo who had several business interests in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area and was looking to get an NFL franchise for the area. See, Dennis Lustig, "Eye Tampa for pro football," *PD*, October 5, 1973, 1-E.

³⁹ Russell Schneider, "Schneider Around," *PD*, October 21, 1973, 10-C.

⁴⁰ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, July 8, 1973, 2-C; and Russell Schneider, "Schneider Around," *PD*, October 5, 1973, 1-E.

⁴¹ In 1973 Mileti's teams combined to lose \$3.5 million. See "Marshmallow Empire," *Time*, February 18, 1974, 59-60; Kirshenbaum, "He Has the Word from Sicily," 24-27. Also, Burt Graeff, "Mileti rips Fitch as a 'front-runner,' says he tried to force end to contract," *Press*, May 10, 1976, B-1; Bob August, "Mileti in fight he can't win," *Press*, May 10, 1976; Bob August, "A minority report on Fitch vs. Mileti," May 31, 1976. The Cavaliers 1975-1976 season, referred to as the "Miracle in Richfield," saw the former expansion team defeat the defending NBA champion Washington Bullets in the Eastern Conference semi-finals before falling to the Boston Celtics in the conference finals. It was supposed to have marked the arrival of the Cavaliers, but remained the team's high point until a second showing in the Eastern Conference Finals in the 1991-1992 season.

⁴² Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, March 4, 1975, 1-D; Schlesinger, "Shaker industrialist buys hockey control from Mileti," *Press*, March 3, 1975, A-1; Burt Graeff, "Coliseum II," *Press*, March 4, 1975, C-1; editorial, "Focusing on the Coliseum," *Press*, March 4, 1975, A-6; John Kostrzewa and Peter Phipps, "How Mileti wooed New York investors," *ABJ*, June 8, 1981, A1, A8; "The losses just kept piling up," *ABJ*, June 9, 1981, A1, A10; and "Mileti prospered as others lost," *ABJ*, June 11, A1, A13. As the Coliseum neared its opening, its management had not procured parking or concession services. In a rush to hire these services, they signed a 10 year deal that limited the amount of income the Coliseum would receive; a detail lamented later. Mileti fired John Lemmo, operations manager at the Coliseum, and C. Charles Jowaiszas, Coliseum president in 1975 following reported disputes. Jowaiszas told the *Akron Beacon Journal* in 1981 that he and Mileti did not share the same standard of integrity. Mileti, in turn, stated he had no idea what was meant by that statement.

⁴³ "Marshmallow Empire," *Time*, February 18, 1974, 59-60; Kirshenbaum, "He Has the Word from Sicily," 24-27; Kostrzewa and Phipps, "How Mileti wooed New York investors," A8

⁴⁴ In 1973 Mileti's teams combined to lose \$3.5 million. Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 10, 1976, 1-D; "Marshmallow Empire," *Time*, February 18, 1974, 59-60; Kirshenbaum, "He Has the Word from Sicily," 24-27; Kostrzewa and Phipps, "How Mileti wooed New York investors," A8 and "Mileti prospered while others lost," A13; and Feagler and Roberts, "Mileti and Churchill," 83.

⁴⁵ Feagler and Roberts, "Mileti and Churchill," 90; Amos A. Kermisch, "Nick Mileti: Entrepreneur, miracle man—can he make Coliseum pay off?" *PD*, May 25, 1975, sec. 4.3; Bob Sudyk, "An appraisal of Nick Mileti," *Press*, February 6, 1973, C-1; Bob Sudyk, "New lifestyle of Mileti West," *The Press*, January 25,

1980, A-1, C-1; Bob Sudyk, "Tracing Nick Mileti's footprints in the sand," *The Press*, February 5, 1980, C-1, C-2; Bob Dolgan, "Off on another dream," *PD*, February 10, 1980; Bill Nichols, "Mileti to sever ties with Cavs," *PD*, February 5, 1989, 1-D; and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 6, 1980, 1-B.

CHAPTER 11

¹ I graciously defer any credit for the phrase, "Losing is a work of 'Art'" to any of the many Browns fans who donned this phrase on t-shirts and signs while heading into games during the lean years of the early 90s. Perhaps no phrase better articulated the frustration of the average fan with the poor play of their hometown team and the blame they placed on the team's owner, Arthur Modell. Similarly, the symbolic mocking was also seen in another popular caricature: "The Three Stooges: Larry, Curly, and Mo-dell."

² Stephen Hardy, "Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians," *Journal of Sport History*, 13 (1986), 14-16, 20-23. For an example of scholarly treatment of contemporary owners/entrepreneurs see Charles Euchner, *Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Falling more into the category of a popular history, another example that points more in the direction of understanding the wholeness of the sports entrepreneur's business ventures (both sport and non-sport related), see David Harris, *The League: The Rise and Decline of the NFL* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986).

³ Seymour Raiz, "The Drummer Who Didn't Leave Town," *Cleveland* (Greater Cleveland Growth Association publication), 1972, 71.

⁴ Gordon Cobbledick, "Plain Dealing," *Cleveland Plain Dealer (PD)*, June 13, 1953, 21; Frank Gibbons, "New Owner to Find Brown's the Boss," *Cleveland Press (Press)*, January 6, 1961, D-1; and Paul Brown with Jack Clary, *PB: The Paul Brown Story* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 230-232. These works expand on the sale of the Browns from McBride to Jones. The *PD* column addresses rumors that McBride sold the team because he feared the wave of success was at an end and that the team was too old to compete further. Brown, in his autobiography, also addresses this rumor and suggests that McBride was pressured by his son in this regard. Brown also comments on his dealings with both McBride regarding the sale and with Ryan (and other key members of that ownership syndicate), and how tensions did exist.

⁵ Brown, *PB*, 262-266. Brown also expresses his belief that Modell manipulated his relationships with players and coaches to turn them against the head coach. Modell has since denied this belief and the comments attributed to him, yet sports journalists continued to link "ego" into the equation that led to Brown's termination as coach. See, Abe Zaiden, "Nice Guy, Trying to Be Mean," *Cleveland Magazine*, 1 (September 1972): 31-34; Doug Clarke, "Fall from Glory: The Wrecking of the Browns," *Cleveland Magazine*, 4 (December 1975): 141-146, 200-208; and Bob Sudyk, "The Rise and Fall of Paul Brown," *Cleveland Magazine*, 5 (October 1976): 56-59, 93-101.

⁶ Hal Lebovitz, "This Is Arthur Modell," *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn't Call*, ed. Hal Lebovitz (Cleveland, OH: Ra-Ka, Inc., 1963), 6-7; and Frank Gibbons, "It Was Like the Terminal Tower Toppling," *Paul Brown*, 8, 26. The newspaper strike lasted from November 28, 1962 until April 8, 1963. See Philip W. Porter, *Cleveland: Confused City on a Seesaw* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 219.

⁷ James Drake, "Big Brown Boom," *Sports Illustrated* (to be cited as *SI*), October 7, 1963, 17-19. See *Paul Brown: The Play He Didn't Call* for several articles that cover the speculated role Jim Brown played in Paul Brown's firing. Also see Terry Pluto, *When All the World Was Browns Town* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 47-50, 62.

⁸ Tex Maule, "The Curtain Falls on a Long Run," *SI*, July 25, 1966, 18-24. See also, Cleveland Browns Press Release, June 16, 1966 and letter from Jim Brown to Arthur Modell, July 5, 1966, <http://www.helmethut.com/JBretire.html>.

⁹ Zaiden, "Nice Guy, Trying to Be Mean," 31-34.

¹⁰ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, September 3, 1978. In looking at the timeframe of the Browns under Modell's ownership that fits with this study (1961-1978), there is a decisive difference in team performance and fan reaction (gauged in home attendance) between the first nine years and the latter nine years. Between 1961 and 1969, a period undeniably influenced by Paul Brown, the Browns' overall record was 84 wins, 38 losses, and four ties, with an average home attendance of 73,611 per game. From 1970 to 1978, when Modell became the public face and internal force of the team, the Browns' record was 63 wins, 63 losses, and two ties. Cleveland football fans noticed and attendance dropped for six straight seasons beginning in 1970. The overall average for home attendance during the latter nine years was 68,846 per game. Team records and attendance found at the Cleveland Browns official website: www.clevelandbrowns.com. For information on the hiring of Forrest Gregg, see Bill Levy, *Sam, Sipe, & Company: The Story of the Cleveland Browns*, (Cleveland, OH: J.T. Zubal & P.D. Dole, Publishers, 1981), 185-191; and Chuck Heaton, "Plain Talk," *PD*, July 9, 1976, 1-E.

¹¹ The following citations collectively add to the understanding of Modell as the Brown's face and the force behind the team. Bill Scholl, "Modell to be more active," *PD*, August 20, 1975; Bob August, "Modell faces critical decision," *Press*, January 3, 1975; Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," February 1, 1976 and September 3, 1978; and Don Robertson, "The timid Browns," *Press*, December 5, 1977, B-5. For more on the fallout between Modell and Gregg see, "Modell wasn't some answers," *Press*, November 28, 1977; Chuck Heaton, "'We need help,' says Modell," *PD*, December 5, 1977, 1-D; Bill Scholl, "Are Modell, Gregg on the outs?" *Press*, December 5, 1977, C1-2; Doug Clarke, "Browns were 'dead and buried team'—Gregg," *Press*, December 5, 1977, C4; Bob August, "Gregg's future cloudy," *Press*, December 6, 1977, C1; and Tim Rogers, "Blame fate, not Gregg, for Browns' troubles," *Press*, December 6, 1977, C2. Just as had been the case when Modell fired Paul Brown, the termination of Forrest Gregg's tenure as coach was not without justification. Team performance aside, several players implied that Gregg's attitude and coaching style were laced with "unnecessary" tirades. The booster press had also picked up on this. See Levy, *Sam, Sipe, & Company*, 195-191.

¹² The quote from an unnamed source comes from Harris, *The League*, 39.

¹³ Clarke, "Fall from Glory," 141.

¹⁴ Harris, *The League*, 37-39; Raiz, "Drummer Who Didn't Leave Town," 42-43; and Clarke, "Fall from Glory," 141-142. Also, Dick Zunt, "Proud night for sports, city," *PD*, February 14, 1978, 3-C. Also note in regards to the Cleveland-New York sports rivalry in football, prior to the NFL-AFL merger, Modell's Browns had gone 10-6-1 against the New York Giants. See Levy, *Sam, Sipe, & Company*, 232-233

¹⁵ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, August 24, 1975, sec. 3.2, and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, August 4, 1977. Lebovitz was arguably one of the most prominent and influential promoters for Modell during this time period. As sports editor for the *Plain Dealer*, he wielded influence on his readers and on the material published on a daily basis. Fellow *PD* columnist, Chuck Heaton was mentioned by Bartimole as another Modell shill. Additional information came from an interview with Dino Lucarelli, March 28, 2003, Cleveland Browns Stadium. Mr. Lucarelli is the current Director of Alumni Relations for the Cleveland Browns, and was previously employed in similar positions with the Cleveland Barons in the 1960s and the Cleveland Indians in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

¹⁶ For information on the purchase of WJW by Modell and Gib Shanley see, "Art, Gib won't change WJW radio's style," *Press*, September 4, 1976; and William Hickey, "WJW Radio sold to Modell, Shanley group," *PD*, September 4, 1976, 1-A. For the criticism of Modell's media relationships see, Doug Clarke, "Clarke on Sports," *Press*, February 18, 1978, C-1; "And Speaking of the Press," *Ohio Magazine*, 1 (May 1978): 13; and Roldo Bartimole, "Censorship at the Press" and "Kamm-Modell association unhealthy," *Point of View* (to be cited as *POV*), 10 (March 18, 1978): 1-4. Bartimole was known as a local muckraker in Cleveland. *POV* was a newsletter he produced beginning in 1968 that was critical of the Cleveland power structures and civic elite.

¹⁷ Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 200-203; John E. Bryan, "Cleveland Gropes in Gloom While Others Revitalize," *PD*, August 13, 1972, 1-A; and Robert H. Snyder, "Population losses erode old cities' financial base," *PD*, December 31, 1978, sec. 2.2. Bryan's article notes that Cleveland had lost 125,147 persons to the suburbs in the 1960s, and had also lost 46 manufacturing companies 3,808 retail establishments as well. For the full interview in the *PD*, see Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, September 3, 1978, sec. 3.2. According to the GCGA, "Mr. Modell was indeed a very active member of the GCGA Board and served on the Executive Committee for many years (1982-1988). He was integral link in terms of his leadership and financial contributions to the greater Cleveland area." In letter to the author from Carole Shaver, Executive Officer, Greater Cleveland Growth Association, February 3, 2004. Also, John Leo Koshar, "Shining up Cleveland's image," *PD*, December 10, 1978, sec 7.3. For more elaborate demographic statistics see, "Selected Characteristics: City of Cleveland," January 1972, Ralph J. Perk Collection, Mss. 4456, Container 47, Folder 696, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), Cleveland, OH.

¹⁸ For background on Modell's involvement in bringing the NBA to Cleveland, see "Royals Please", *PD*, March 9, 1968, 8; "PD Charities Given \$15,000 by Modell", *PD*, April 20, 1968, 49; and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 8, 1970. For local media coverage of Modell's tenure as Grand Jury foreman see Bus Bergen, "Modell, CWRU prof to head Grand Jury," *Press*, September 1, 1975; Bus Bergen, "Keep Grand Jury system, report by Modell urges," May 18, 1976; "Modell, Lewis named foremen of grand juries," *PD*, September 1, 1975; editorial, "Topflight Choices," *PD*, September 9, 1975; and editorial, "Modell asks laws to aid crime victims," *PD*, May 18, 1976.

¹⁹ Joseph D. Rice, "Rhodes-Modell slate lures Browns boss," *PD*, March 4, 1977; Roy Mayes, "Modell hints at run on Rhodes slate," *Press*, March 4, 1977; "Modell gave \$1,000 to Rhodes' opponent," *PD*, March 5, 1977; "Modell says he's out of politics," *Press*, May 5, 1977; and William F. Miller, "If asked, Modell would run convention center for city," *PD*, May 19, 1977. For more information on Modell's frustrations with professional football, see Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 2, 1976, 1-C.

²⁰ Raiz, "Drummer Who Didn't Leave Town," 42-45, 71. For more information on Nick Mileti, see the previous chapters (9 and 10).

²¹ Bob Sudyk, "Modell interested in joining Indians, will meet with Rozelle on 'conflict'," *Press*, April 26, 1977; Bob Sudyk, "Stockholders' arms open to Modell," *Press*, April 27, 1977; "Modell may go to bat to aid ailing Indians," *PD*, April 26, 1977; and "Modell will be able to help Tribe," *Press*, April 30, 1977.

²² Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, August 4, 1977; Phil Hartman, "Paul not essential to sale of Indians, Modell says," *Press*, November 21, 1977; and Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996, 335.

²³ Harris, *The League*, 323-325.

²⁴ Chuck Heaton, "Modell deserving of Pride award," February 14, 1978, 1-C; and Dick Zunt, "Proud night for sports, city," *PD*, February 14, 1978, 3-C. Also, Lucarelli interview, March 28, 2003.

²⁵ See Hardy, "Entrepreneurs," 20-23; and Harris, *The League*, 39.

²⁶ For more on the construction of Municipal Stadium, see Philip C. Suchma, "The Selling of Cleveland Municipal Stadium: The Linking of Progressive Era Ideals With the Emerging Consumer Culture," *Sport History Review*, 31 (November 2000): 100-119. Also, see letter to the City Council of Cleveland, January 5, 1925, William R. Hopkins Collection, Mss. 3774, Container 1, Folder 19, WRHS.

²⁷ See, Suchma, "Selling Municipal Stadium," 106-116; 1993 *Cleveland Indians Media Guide* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Indians Baseball Club), 230; Schneider, *Indians Encyclopedia*, 354-362; and "Report on Revenue and Expenditures Attributed to Stadium in 1971," (No Author or Date), Ralph J. Perk Collection, Mss. 4456, Container 80, Folder 1247, WRHS.

²⁸ Hal Lebovitz, "Domed Stadium Step Closer," *PD*, June 16, 1968, A-1; editorial, "Stadium Plans Need Thrust," *PD*, June 17, 1968, 20; Bill Nichols, "\$120,000 Pledged for Stadium Go-Ahead," June 18, 1968, 1; editorial, "New Stadium Gets Great Start," June 18, 1968, 16; Bill Nichols, "Modell Calls Stadium 'Best in Entire Country,'" *PD*, June 18, 1968, 37; "Domed Stadium Pronounced Dead by All Concerned," *Press*, February 11, 1970, A1; Douglas Bloomfield, "Report Snags Dome Stadium," *PD*, February 11, 1970, 1-A; editorial, "Stadium Study a Wasted of Money," *PD*, February 12, 1970, 12-A; and George E. Condon, "And Then the Roof Fell In," *PD*, February 13, 1970, 9-A. Note that the \$120,000 payment for the Luckman study came from city, county, and state public funds in the amount of \$40,000 each.

²⁹ Dan Coughlin, "Can Stadium Be Domed," *PD*, May 6, 1970, 1-E; editorial, "Stadium Plan, Pro and Con," *PD*, April 17, 1971, 8-A; and Lebovitz, "Notes off the cuff," *PD*, April 17, 1971, 1-C. See also, letter from Philip Dearborn to Art Modell, September 4, 1970, Carl B. Stokes Papers, Mss. 4370, Container 29, Folder 524, WRHS; letter from Modell to Dearborn, September 14, 1970; and letter from Modell to Edward Baugh, February 19, 1971.

³⁰ Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D; Dan Coughlin, "Vernon, Art Applaud," *PD*, June 18, 1971, 1-D; letter from Thomas Bodle, "Sound Off," *PD*, June 27, 1971, 10-B. For more on Modell's negotiations over stadium concessions see, letter from Modell to Perk, March 13, 1973, Perk Collection, Container 79, Folder 1228; and Harris, *The League*, 41.

³¹ For newspaper coverage of Mayor Perk's various attempts to influence Mileti's location for the Coliseum, see, Harry Stainer, "Perk Reveals \$100-Million Plan," *PD*, June 11, 1972, 1-A; "Perk tries to force Mileti downtown," *Press*, March 28, 1973, A1; and "Perk Advises Firms to Drop Mileti Loges," *Press*, March 29, 1973. For more on Modell's reaction to Mileti's move see, Coughlin, "Vernon, Art Applaud," 4-D. For information on the proposed Strongsville stadium see, Harris, *The League*, 40; and Hal Lebovitz, "Let's Keep Browns, Indians Downtown," *PD*, October 10, 1972; Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, February 4, 1973; and Hal Lebovitz, "Hal Asks," *PD*, March 18, 1973. Also, Lucarelli interview, March 28, 2003.

³² For coverage in the booster press see, Harry Stainer, "Plan Unveiled for Stadium's Development," *PD*, March 11, 1973, 1-A; Harry Stainer, "Pay Stadium Bonds, Perk to Tell Modell," July 8, 1973, 1-A; "Modell and Mileti React Warmly to Stadium Plan," *PD*, March 11, 1973, 12-A; and Amos A. Kermisch, "Christopher Stadium Plan Scuttled," *PD*, July 7, 1973, 1-A. See also, letter from Edward J. Baugh to Modell, February 26, 1973, Perk Collection, Container 55, Folder 851; and inter-office memo from Norman Krumholz, Director of City Planning Commission to Perk, March 23, 1973, Perk Collection, Container 55, Folder 851. Krumholz tells Perk that he recommends "disapproval" of the Christopher plan unless it is modified because it appears to be a much better deal for Christopher, Inc. than for Cleveland.

³³ Amos Kermisch, "Perk and Modell Agree on Stadium Lease Plan," *PD*, July 13, 1973 1-A; editorial, "Stadium Plain Is Good News," *PD*, July 13, 1973, 2-B; and Hal Lebovitz, "Sigh of Relief," *PD*, July 15, 1973, 1-C. See also, City Resolution 636-73, October 11, 1973, Perk Collection, Container 81, Folder 1257; Ordinance No. 1514-73, Adopted August 10, 1973, *City Record (CR)*, 1381-1382; Ord. No. 1973-73, Adopted October 29, 1973, *CR*, 1668; Ord. No. 252-74, Passed February 11, 1974, *CR*, 454-455; Ord. No. 1618-74, Passed July 29, 1974, *CR*, 1563; and Ord. No. 903-75, Passed, June 16, 1975, *CR*, 1264-1265.

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³⁵ Chuck Heaton, "Notes...off the cuff," *PD*, August 25, 1973, 1-C; Lucarelli interview, March 28, 2003; and Harris, *The League*, 236-237

³⁶ Harris, *The League*, 236-237; and Bartimole, "Modell, Guren 'Steal' Stadium from Cleveland," 1-4.

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⁴⁰ Norman Mlachak, “Sam Miller receiver for Sheraton Hotel here,” *Press*, March 8, 1977; Christine J. Jindra, “Purchasers’ agreement averts closing of Sheraton,” *PD*, April 9, 1977; “Modell defend National City tax abatement,” *Press*, July 1, 1977; Harry Stainer, “Modell defends tax abatement for building projects,” *PD*, July 1, 1977; Bus Bergen, “Sale goes through on downtown hotel,” *Press*, August 8, 1977; William Carlson, “Modell combine buys Sheraton,” *PD*, August 9, 1977; and Norman Mlachak, “Modell blistered in hotel dispute,” *Press*, August 11, 1977, and “Modell defended in labor dispute,” August 12, 1977. Also, Harris, *The League*, 237-238; and Roldo Bartimole, “The Stink,” *POV*, 10 (July 1977), 4.

⁴¹ Harris, *The League*, 38 196-198, & 234-236.

⁴² Roldo Bartimole, “Modell-Guren Pay Less Than \$1,000 for Stadium,” *POV*, 9 (March 1977), 1-2; Roldo Bartimole, “Modell Charges Indians \$250,000 Stadium Rent Under City Lease,” 10 (February 1978), 1-2; Roldo Bartimole, “Fringe Benefits Benefit Modell Firm,” 10 (March 1978), 1 & 3; “Modell Scores Financial TD,” *Ohio Magazine*, 1 (December 1978): 11; and “Modell calls charges unjustified,” *PD*, December 24, 1978, sec. 3.3.

EPILOGUE

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³ Poplar, *Fumble!*, 167, 283-315; Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2.

⁴ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), 77; Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1960), 92; Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 4-5.