

Football

By Pamela Sleas

Ahh, Cleveland. Affectionately known as “the mistake on the lake,” in the heart of the great American rust belt, Cleveland, Ohio is the heartland of America. And every season (with some glaring recent exceptions) the good citizens of the greater Cleveland area come out of their homes in droves, with beer in hand, stumbling and shouting their way to the field where they can watch their beloved team, the Cleveland Browns, lose.

Though it may be twenty degrees below zero, they faithfully attend every game, their chests proudly housing the frostbite that the alcohol in their systems keeps them blissfully unaware of, their petrified nipples covered only by brown and orange paint, and the whole persona topped off with the mark of that prolific mascot – the sign of unconditional love – the Dawg mask.

The Dawg pound, where the proudest fans are quarantined, illustrates the pinnacle of a Clevelander's fervor for the Team. Not afraid to throw sharp objects at a mistaken referee, these are the fans that will stand by their men forever, win or lose.

And they will always lose. Perhaps it is too much unconditional love that has softened the various players that have funneled through the Cleveland Browns on their way to more prestigious teams, because they can come close, but they can never win. A few games, sure. A fantastic season, maybe. Even the playoffs, but God help us all, the Cleveland Browns will never win the Superbowl.

As a Clevelander myself, this breaks my heart to say, but after this weekend, I've gotten to thinking that maybe they need a little tough love. Maybe I just trusted them a little too much...

I have basic cable, and imagine my surprise when I turned on the television, and there is the orange and brown, my Team, in all their glory, beating the pants off the Pittsburgh Steelers. And rightly so. The score, if I recall correctly, was 34 to 7. *34 to 7!* And then I did something I regret. Yes folks, it was the fourth quarter and I changed the channel. I just was so happy that they were

winning and my roommates wanted to watch the P Diddy Making the Band on MTV, and I thought, sure, they can win, *this game is over*.

Imagine my surprise. My tearful father made the call first. I did everything I could to comfort him, but he's getting old now and his nerves are fragile. "They lost it, I can't believe they lost to the *Stealers*." He just kept repeating it over and over. There was nothing I could do.

So damn the Browns. There! I said it. I hope the Cleveland fans will take my lead and give those Dawgs the cold shoulder for a while. I think a healthy separation would teach them a thing or two. Maybe they would start appreciating us as fans and start winning for a change. That would make my life here in San Francisco perfect. I don't ever want to live there again, Lord have mercy, but is it too much to ask to have my home Team something to be proud of?

I can't believe I changed the channel.