Few things, if any one thing can galvanize a community like a winning professional team. Needless to say there hasn't been near enough of that around here lately. We have been through our share of heartache. And the Cavs, Tribe and the Browns have all contributed.

The Browns game at Dallas this weekend was a big deal. Look, I know the Browns in the end did not get it done. But in perspective this was one game, one loss for one team. The Browns stared down a long time powerhouse, America's Team on the road with a big TV audience. I grow so weary of all of the negative Facebook and Twitter comments by obviously frustrated fans about how the Browns stink. And posters take the cheap way out by blaming the coach, the refs, or even "paying off the league so Dallas would win." Negative, poor me, and I should have known comments. Get over it, and understand what you are seeing. The Browns just aren't ready yet. But for the first time in memory, they are gaining on it rapidly.

Gladly, there are a whole lot of young fans today that got to watch the Browns play a hard fought game against a proud and heritage franchise the Cowboys in Dallas. Sadly, these same young fans don't know the Browns are a proud and heritage franchise that over its entire history has done a ton of winning. Remember, the NFL was around long before the NFL/AFL merger and the Superbowl. And those championships count just as much for history, just not to ESPN. Pay no attention to them.

For all the late losses, the Browns have played hard all year long. They have belonged in every building they have played this season, and that has not always been the case in recent years. Problem is the Browns are just not blessed top to bottom with the talent needed to win every week at the games top level. But they do show up, and play hard. And that's what makes this season different.

Who knows where the Browns go this week, and in ensuing weeks to come. But the Browns seem to be coming of age. They seemed to be a bit older and more mature playing in a huge theater when it would have been easy to have a bad case of stage fright. A game like this from a clearly inferior team in the NFL, was paved possible by weeks of heartbreak and disappointment.

A good reminder. Anyone can win, that's easy. Learning to win is an art that the Browns have not yet mastered. But losses build character, tugs on your pride, and helps you dig deeper and find out things about yourself you didn't know before. You find out what's really inside. Tough losses challenges you to look at yourself honestly, in football and in life. The Browns are finding something deep previously not found. The Browns are growing from the inside, and that is the home of the beating heart. And they have plenty of it.

Like real life, we don't always get our way. That is the lesson sports teaches us more than any other. Heartache, in the end makes the good times that much sweeter. And there will be good times and winning with this Browns team. New owner with a new attitude will set the

## **A Gritty Bunch**

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stage for years to come.

Think about the young Browns this year. A change of ownership. The firing of their president, heartbreaking losses, suspensions, key long term injuries, and one of the NFL's toughest schedules. Plus, playing for a head coach that will not be here next year. And the Browns show up and compete highly week after week. It's time to grow with this team. And focus....there were years and years when the Patriots, Colts, Falcons and yes even the Steelers did not win very much.

This is a gritty bunch.