



The Tribe kicked off their 2013 campaign in fine fashion with two big wins last week in Toronto, and we rejoiced!! Then they lost three straight and we were depressed. Only elevator races provide more ups and downs than following our sports teams. But don't fret. There are still about 156 games left for us to get our manic-depressive meds straight and organized.

Life Advice...

Uncle Brian is going to give you all a little piece of advice as we ease our way into a week of real baseball: treat the season like you would treat your kids because in many ways they develop in the same way.

What the eff am I talking about?

I'm talking about how we (and I'm damn sure included here) fail to inject the proper amount of perspective over a single game or even a single week with the Indians. I tweeted before the first pitch last Tuesday that we were likely just three hours away from either unbridled, misguided optimism or three hours away from abject despair and loathing.

I was only half-kidding.

We're so passionate about our sports here and so desperate for a winner that we tend to over-react from at-bat to at-bat, inning to inning and game to game. It makes for such a manic

ride that Margot Kidder would think we're bat shit crazy. Part of it is our inferiority complex in play. Our city and our teams haven't...umm..well...had any streets re-named The Boulevard of Champions for some time. We crave wins badly. We're, shall we say, pressing a bit?

That's where the kids and this baseball season come in. We all saw the moves the moves the Indians made this season and determined that the team was better. Maybe we even (in the dark recesses of our mind though we won't make such proclamations public) believe the Indians can contend for a playoff spot. Maybe it's just that extra wild card spot baseball created but we don't care.

Like some parents see greatness (even where there isn't any) in their offspring, we see a season with hope and promise. And being the desperate nut cases that we are, we want the Indians, little Johnny in this case, to hurry the hell up and be that doctor we think he can be despite the fact that the only thing he's done so far is make reasonable decisions as to his crayon selection.

We have high hopes for Johnny. He's like to thumb through books and he knows his ABCs and, dammit, the kid has potential. But the kid is going to spill his milk and he's going to step in dog shit as opposed to stepping around it and he's going to screw things up because that's the nature of life and baseball.

If Johnny leaves his books at home and forgets to study, that 'D' he gets on a report card when he's 12 isn't going to stop him from achieving greatness. If Johnny and his buddy hide in a drainage ditch and throw beer bottles in front of traffic passing down the street that doesn't mean little Johnny is doomed to work for \$0.35/HR in a prison metal shop. If Johnny gets kicked off the high baseball team when he's a senior for getting stopped by the police with a car full of drunk friends (despite the fact Johnny isn't drinking) that doesn't mean he's doomed to walk the streets as a wino until he dies broken and lonely.

All of those things (completely made up, of course) seem like about the worst thing in the world to the parents of little Johnny. But they are just the natural and painful events of life that only partly shape who Johnny is.

Likewise, with the Indians, not every loss should be analyzed and torn apart to find the cancer

destroying the team from within. Not every cough is cancer. Not every bump on the head is a traumatic brain injury. Sometimes in sports (and in life) someone else is just better than you are on a given day, game or job interview.

It happens.

In baseball, to the very best teams on the planet, it happens pretty much 40% of the time. The very best players on the planet fail (sometimes spectacularly and always in front of millions of people watching in one form or another) 65-75% of the time.

When Tribe closer Chris Perez got touched up by Jose Bautista last Wednesday night it didn't mean Perez was dog crap or that he was doomed for a season of failure. It meant a really, REALLY good hitter made the most of a Perez mistake and did what great hitters do to mistakes: he hit it about 800 feet and tied a baseball game that the Indians eventually won anyway.

Just like the very best teams lose 60 games every season the very worst win that many. It's the remaining 40 or so that determine your lot in sporting life. But our propensity for magnifying all these early Indians games isn't healthy and probably isn't the best way to approach the season. We don't need to get torqued off about the early struggles of Asdrubal Cabrera and Jason Kipnis. But because of who we are and what we want we tend to over-analyze their performance in the first week of the season. If Cabrera and Kipnis hit a stretch like the one they are going through to start this season for a week in July as opposed to the opening week of the season not nearly as much emphasis would be placed on their struggles.

Brett Myers' abysmal outing Thursday night doesn't mean he's horse crap. Not in and of itself. Myers has a long history of relative Major League success. Even in those successes, which span multiple seasons, he's thrown some horse crap games. It happens. But not every poor series, poor game, poor outing or poor at bat is a harbinger of doom.

Like I said, no one is more sarcastic than I am. But I catch myself calming down an hour or so after a game (and its corresponding Twitter –bombing) and putting it in the proper perspective. Each game is a small cross-section of a much larger creature and in and of itself one game, even one week of games, isn't going to tell you what animal or kind of team you're looking at.

We should definitely watch each game the Indians play and attempt to figure out what kind of team we're dealing with. Just like we should monitor our kids' activities and transgressions and successes and keep those in perspective. Just because little Johnny scores a youth league soccer goal doesn't mean he's headed to England to play for \$55million a season. Just because little Johnny steals a pack of gum from Fox's Delicatessen when dared to do so by a group of friends doesn't mean he's going to turn out to be Clyde Barrow.

This Indians season is 5-year old Johnny right now. Let's see what happens next before we call the psychiatrist or write his Valedictorian speech.

Meanwhile, In Berea...

Some quick thoughts on the Browns:

~ You know what scares me, other than razor blades?

The fact the Browns signed Jason Campbell scares me. Campbell is a mediocre player if ever there was one. That's not the scary part. The Browns sign these kinds of guys all the time. If that scared me I'd never leave the house. No, that's not what frightens me. What frightens me is that I can't find enough faith in Brandon Weeden to definitively say that Weeden is heads and shoulders better than Campbell.

And I know how 'blah' Campbell truly is. And I'm truly looking for reasons to just let Weeden run with the position for a year.

And yet...

~ When the Browns hired Defensive Coordinator Ray Horton I wondered out loud about who

was going to play the 'thumper' linebacker inside the 3-4 defense next to D'Qwell Jackson. With the Browns signing only pass rushing LBs and backups and with the team cutting Chris Gocong (who's plenty big enough to play that spot) the answer is somewhat clearer: no one is going to play that 'thumper' LB spot.

It seems to me that Horton is far more likely to employ an inside line-backing corps of D'Qwell clones. I think Horton may decide that foregoing size and strength in favor of speed is the best way to go this season. Yes, the Browns could still utilize the draft and late free agent signings to get a big, physical linebacker to put next to Jackson, but right now it appears Horton is more likely than not going to line up either L.J. Fort or James-Michael Johnson next to DQ and let those guys fly around to the football.

All three of those ILBs are about 6'0" and 235-240lbs and all can run. And you can get away with that if your DL is ridiculously good up front. I think the Browns think the strength of their defense is that defensive line and they're going to roll the dice with speed behind the big boys and hope the D-linemen can occupy enough blocking up front to free up those fast linebackers.

If that's the way they go I like Fort to win the spot. He has a motor that doesn't quit and puts himself in position to make plays. He'll have to diagnose quickly and get through traffic, but the guy is always around the football.

Lastly...

It's a sad state of affairs when I'm forced to root for a tool like Rick Pitino to win a national championship. But hell if that's not exactly what I'll be doing Monday night when Pitino's Louisville team takes on Michigan in the NCAA title game.

Go 'Cards!

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