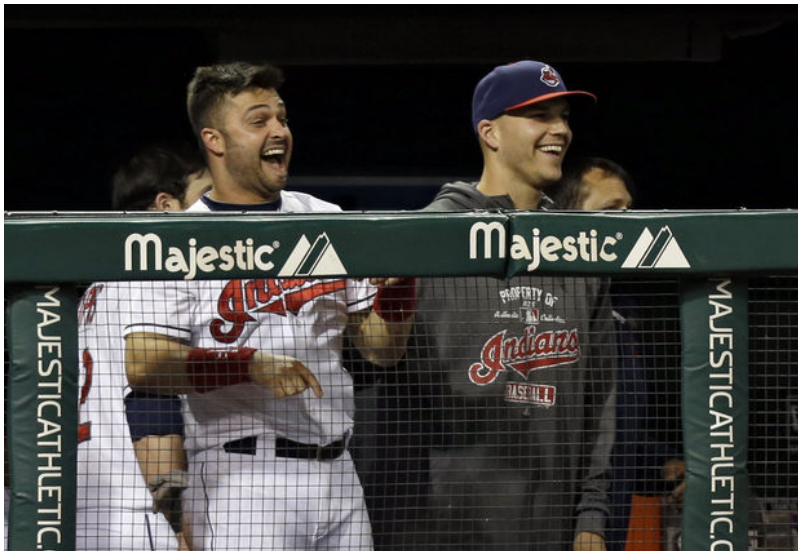


## We've Seen This Tribe Movie Before - Or Have We?

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Tuesday, May 07 2013 6:19 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, May 08 2013 8:19 AM

---



The Cleveland Indians are just a little more than one month into the 2013 season and at times it feels as if we've seen this movie before.

But is this the third film in a trilogy of disappointment or the film that reboots a once successful franchise?

The Tribe has played entertaining baseball through the first month of the season, and while it feels like they are a better team this year, a quick check of the standings tells a slightly different story. The Indians were 16-14 heading into Wednesday night's game against Oakland and riding a streak that has seen them win eight out of nine. They are currently in third place, 3 games out of first.

At this time last year the Indians were in first place with a 17-12 record and 2 games up on Detroit; in 2011 they were 22-11 and in first place by 4.5 games.

And we all know how those seasons came to an end.

So what is going to keep the bottom from falling out on the Tribe for the third consecutive year?

## We've Seen This Tribe Movie Before - Or Have We?

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Tuesday, May 07 2013 6:19 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, May 08 2013 8:19 AM

---

Most likely that will fall to the offense, which is currently tied for first in the majors in home runs, is third in team batting average and second in team OPS.

A year after the front office tried to sell fans a left field platoon of Shelley Duncan and Johnny Damon to go along with a lineup featuring up to seven left-handed batters, the Tribe now features a more, shall we say, traditional lineup.

Manager Terry Francona has done a nice job of holding the offense together as the Tribe has seen what seem like more than their share of injuries. Carlos Santana, Nick Swisher and Jason Kipnis have all missed time and Michael Bourn hasn't played since April 16 after suffering a finger injury.

But when utility infielder Ryan Raburn wins American League Player of the Week honors after hitting .591 with four home runs and nine RBI, you know things are breaking the Tribe's way.

Then there is Mark Reynolds who has quickly become one of those players where you don't want to miss his at-bat. After Monday's game, where he hit a 460-foot home run, Reynolds is hitting .300 with 10 home runs and with as many RBI as strikeouts - 27. Reynolds certainly can't keep up that ratio - after all, he has averaged 187 strikeouts a year over the past six seasons - but so far he has come as advertised.

All is not well with the offense, of course, as Kipnis is struggling with a .217 batting average and Asdrubal Cabrera has gotten an early start on his slump as he carried a .233 average into Tuesday's game.

There is also the all-or-nothing approach as the Tribe has scored three or fewer runs 16 times this year, while breaking the eight-run barrier seven times. How long the Indians can keep winning those kind of extremes remains to be season.

The big question mark coming into the season was the starting rotation and nothing has really changed.

## We've Seen This Tribe Movie Before - Or Have We?

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Tuesday, May 07 2013 6:19 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, May 08 2013 8:19 AM

---

Justin Masterson started out strong, posting a 1.67 ERA in his first four starts. But his ERA is 6.30 over his last three starts as last year's inconsistency has returned. That has helped Tuesday night's starter, Zach McAllister, take over the lead among the starters in ERA. McAllister's ERA is currently 2.63 after Tuesday night's outing, where he shutout Oakland over 7.2 innings. Veterans Scott Kazmir and Brett Myers (currently on the disabled list) are what they are at this point.

Then there's Ubaldo Jimenez.

After a streak that saw Jimenez post a 1-12 record with a 7.58 ERA in 17 starts since the 2012 All-Star break, the enigmatic starter has done just enough over his past couple of starts to tease Tribe fans into thinking Jimenez has finally found whatever has been missing since the 2010 All-Star break. But this is the third year where we've been told the Tribe has finally "fixed" Jimenez, so you'll excuse us if we remain just a bit skeptical.

For now, and probably for the remainder of the season, the rotation is what it is. The Indians don't have a lot of options outside of bringing Trevor Bauer to the majors full-time and it seems unlikely that the team can make a significant move at the All-Star break.

On the back end of the pitching staff, Monday's news that set-up man Vinnie Pestano is now on the disabled list with a sore elbow. Any time we hear a pitcher has something hurting on his throwing arm that doesn't exactly fill us with confidence.

So what do we have with this Tribe team? Well, it is still a flawed team despite the spending the front office did in the off-season. And with the team [ranking last in the majors in attendance](#), it doesn't seem likely that there will be any new money coming any time soon.

But the team has been fun to watch, more nights than not, and has kept fans engaged and talking about the team through the first 29 games of the season. And it seems highly unlikely that the Tribe will have a month like last August, when they went 5-24 as the season collapse around them.

## We've Seen This Tribe Movie Before - Or Have We?

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Tuesday, May 07 2013 6:19 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, May 08 2013 8:19 AM

---

The Tribe's main objective each season is to get Cleveland to the start of training camp for the Cleveland Browns in late July and, even though we are just through the first act of the season, the Indians are holding up their end of the bargain.

Whether this year's film has a different ending than the 2012 or 2011 editions remains to be determined.

But we like what we've seen so far.

*(Photo by The Associated Press)*