

Early season momentum is such a tenuous thing in baseball. And Erik Cassano thinks that an all-important good start for the Indians might have been dealt a blow in Friday's home opener. In his latest, Papa Cass hits on the opener, the scheduling fiasco that will ensue with the Mariners, and the smooth move pulled off by Grover in getting this one thrown out.



Early season momentum is such a tenuous thing in baseball. An all-important good start for the Indians might have been dealt a blow in Friday's home opener.

In driving snow, with Indians starter Paul Byrd up 4-0 and one out away from ending the top of the fifth and making the game official, Mariners manager Mike Hargrove picked then to launch into a tirade about how his batters couldn't see the ball because of the snow.

The umpire crew, Hargrove and Eric Wedge proceeded to have an animated discussion about whether the game should continue. Hargrove won, the game was called, and the Mariners got away with a snow-aided non-game that nixed 4 2/3 innings of no-hit ball from Byrd, who was none too happy afterward.

For all we know, the inconsistent Byrd might not go 4 2/3 innings without giving up a hit for the rest of the season.

"When they finally called the game, (the Mariners) were laughing and high-fiving each other in the dugout like they'd gotten away with something," Byrd told The Plain Dealer. "And they did."

Byrd wasn't so angry with the fact that the game was called as with how it was called.

Snow showers wreaked havoc with the game all day, delaying the start by almost an hour and then causing two more delays while the game was in progress. There was ample time for the umpire crew to make a decision on the game before it got to within an out of becoming official.

Crew chief Rick Reed told reporters that "both managers had legitimate gripes" when they came out to argue the fate of the game in the fifth inning. The Indians had a 4-0 lead and didn't want to see it go up in a puff of smoke. The Mariners might not have been in a 4-0 hole had Adrian Beltre not made three weather-aided errors at third base. The Mariners almost certainly would have had a hit if not for the snow.

It's understandable that everyone involved wanted to get the game in. Friday's situation was as much on the schedule makers as anyone. The schedule makers placed Seattle's only trip to Cleveland this year at the start of April, where anyone with half a brain knows parka versus sunscreen is a 50-50 proposition.

Saturday's make-up doubleheader was also snowed out, turning this entire weekend into an all-out scheduling fiasco. It means the teams need to play back-to-back doubleheaders Sunday and Monday, or find a way to play a one-day makeup doubleheader later in the year.

It's difficult to assess blame because the weather can't be controlled. But I still get the feeling that the Indians somehow had the rug pulled out from under them by the way things went down Friday. And now they have until Sunday afternoon to stew over it.

The Indians have had enough trouble getting off to good starts in recent years. They don't need to be blindsided by a combination of bad weather, bad scheduling and umpires who wait until the last possible moment to pull the plug on a game.