

Well, we're less than 20 games into the 2008 season, and here's what Erik Cassano sees: a Major League team that is trotting out a pitcher who is throwing arrow-straight, 82-mph fastballs and calling him their closer. Moreover, this is a team with World Series aspirations. Papa Cass isn't really peeved at Borowski so much as he's peeved at Mark Shapiro for going back to the well with JoeBo after catching lightning in a bottle with him a year ago.



It will happen. Somehow, some way, Joe Borowski will eat through the notorious resolve of the Indians' brass.

Like caustic acid, Joe Bo will slowly destroy the stick-to-your-guns, stay-the-course philosophy of Eric Wedge and Mark Shapiro that says you should never rush to any conclusions, be patient to a fault and let things play out over months, not days or weeks.

Forty games is supposed to be the magic number, we're all told. You can't make a judgment on any player, any team, until you've passed that milestone game sometime in May.

Well, we're less than 20 games into the 2008 season, and here's what I see: I see a Major League team that is trotting out a pitcher who is throwing arrow-straight, 82-mph fastballs and calling him their closer. Moreover, this is a team with World Series aspirations.

I'm not really peeved at Borowski so much as I'm peeved at Shapiro and his roundtable

of eggheads who agreed that picking up his option over the winter was a good idea. And, no, this isn't a case of hindsight being 20/20. The Ivy League-educated brains who run this shop saw the same stat line, the same ghastly peripheral stats and the same 5-plus ERA we all saw out of

Borowski

a year ago. They saw the same pitcher ducking and dodging his way to 45 saves that we all did.

There is cost-effective. And then there is common sense. Common sense should have told any decision-maker with an office high atop Progressive Field that maybe, just maybe, Joe Bo caught lightning in a bottle last year and maybe, just maybe, it was asking too much of him to re-create his '07 success, which netted him an American League saves title, but was otherwise tentative at best.

As far as option-year pickups, the Tribe already has Titanic-caliber and Lusitania-caliber disasters to their credit with

Borowski

and Aaron

Fultz

, who was so bad he didn't make it out of spring training with the club.

But Fultz was at least just the second lefty in the bullpen. Borowski is charged with making sure that leads become wins. In two of four save situations so far this year, he has -- in spectacular, homer-surrendering fashion -- failed to do so.

I'm going to venture to say this isn't a slump. Borowski is less than three weeks from his 37th birthday. He arrived on the Tribe's doorstep after the '06 season with a unhealthy right shoulder that caused the

Phillies

to renege on what would have been a multiyear

contract offer. Chances are, the Indians squeezed the last juice out of Borowski's

arm last season.

Unfortunately, the Indians, ever cost-conscious and not wanting to interrupt the perceived

chemistry that made one of baseball's best bullpens in '07, overplayed their hand

and decided to gamble on
Borowski
for one more year.

Maybe the Tribe's big thinkers can be forgiven for not anticipating Borowski's arm going bad as quickly as it has. Maybe no one could have foretold
Borowski
coming to spring training with a lifeless fastball parked in the low 80s on the radar gun. But any baseball executive worth his reputation should be able to look into the future and see the day when his aging closer with a bad shoulder is going to hit the wall.

So far, it looks like the Tribe's leaders didn't. Or if they did, they did their best to ignore it and think happy thoughts. That worked in Peter Pan, but it surely won't in the American League pennant race.

As long as the Indians continue to trot Borowski out there with his overmatched batting-practice fastball to continue to blow saves, it's a poor reflection first and foremost on the Indians, not
Borowski
. His stat line has been dropping plenty of hints over the past year that the end of his productive playing days might be near.