

Lessons Learned in the First Week of the Indians' 2011 Season

Written by {ga=tribefan6180}

Thursday, April 07 2011 9:00 PM - Last Updated Thursday, April 07 2011 9:05 PM



You know those people who are always running around telling everyone "baseball is boring?". I hope they all saw the first week of the Indians season this year. Boring it most certainly wasn't.

The Tribe certainly gave us plenty to think about (some of it good, and some of it very bad) in their first week on the field in 2011. Here are just a few of the things I learned while watching the Indians kick off their season.

1. There's no crying in baseball on Opening Day, but maybe there should be, as there is clearly no pitching either.

There's nothing more depressing than being down 14-0 on Opening Day in your home ballpark. A 14-run deficit in the fourth inning is about as great a harbinger of doom as you can get. Obviously, the pitching has looked much better since that game, but it makes for some very serious concerns regarding our supposed ace.

I have to say, I was probably more upset that Carmona appeared to be laughing his way

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through his meltdown than I was about the 10 runs he gave up. I'm not sure why Fausto seemed to think this was so funny (hopefully this was just some bizarre nervous reaction?). Perhaps I missed the humor in the situation: is there a joke I haven't heard that starts with, "Adam Dunn walks into a bar after hammering you for extra bases multiple times" or something?

I really hope someone gave Carmona a good talking to about his performance in the Opener. 82 pitches thrown in three innings? OK Nuke, time to put on the garters and start breathing through your eyelids.

2. Ozzie Guillen will always have something to say that is neither kind nor objective nor particularly accurate...but it will probably be entertaining.

The day before the opener, Ozzie said it was "stupid" to open the season in Cleveland because it was supposed to snow.

As it turned out, a lot of things happened in the Opener in Cleveland that might be described as "stupid", but the weather wasn't one of them. And as Chris Perez astutely pointed out, "Like Chicago is so much better."

I'll give Ozzie a pass this time since every time the camera caught sight of him, he looked like he'd been on a two-week long bender. Kenny Williams must run a tight ship.

3. The Indians will sell out Progressive Field on Opening Day, play like a rookie-ball team, and then complain when you don't show up there again for the rest of the year.

After packing the house on Opening Day, the Indians set a new record attendance low on Saturday. And then they set another one on Sunday.

I guess someone finally found a way to mathematically prove the Indians were eliminated from

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playoff contention on the second day of the season.

All of this was best summed up by the fan who, when the White Sox scored their 14th run (and went up 14-0) in the Opener, yelled from the stands "You're ruining my birthday." I feel your pain, buddy. I went to an Indians game on my birthday once too. It was an 11-inning loss that also included a two-hour rain delay. NEVER again.

Still, I'm not sure folks not showing up for games in April in 40-degree weather means no one is going to show up in June. So maybe Ozzie really was onto something with that "stupid to play in Cleveland in April" comment. Clearly, he was just trying to help improve turnout at our ballpark.

4. Meet your team's best hitters after week one of the season...Carlos Santana, Travis Hafner, Michael Brantley, and...Jack Hannahan?

Obviously we expected this from Santana, and it's about time Hafner remembered how big his paycheck is. As for Brantley, I'm glad he's coming around because he made me look like a complete idiot last year for predicting he might be the second-coming of Kenny Lofton.

And then there's Jack Hannahan. Wait...what? Does this mean the batting average black hole over at third base has finally been closed up? Let's take a chance and say yes! Man, I love this time of year when you can make outrageous claims like this based on tiny sample sizes and get away with it.

5. Choosoooo...where are you?

And then there's the bad news at the plate. The team's best hitter last season, Shin-Soo Choo, is now batting .100 after a week. He struck out four times in one game, earning the dreaded Golden Sombrero.

Luckily, I don't think it will take Choo too long to right himself (he's already looked much better in

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the Boston series). Still, Lou Marson is hitting .667, and Choo is batting .100. I don't care if he's only had three at-bats; if Lou Marson's average is almost seven times better than yours, it's time to get it together.

6. The Magical Bathrobe of Jensen Lewis

Something amazing happened when Justin Masterson put on the bathrobe left behind by Jensen Lewis last week during the Tribe's exhibition game against the Clippers in Columbus.

Kind of a disaster on the mound all last season, Masterson looked like he was headed that way again based on how he pitched in Spring Training. But then he put on the bathrobe and turned in a stellar seven innings in the Tribe's first win of the season, giving up just seven hits and one run.

Clearly, Fausto needs to wear the bathrobe.

7. The baseball gods have smiled upon Cleveland; Infield defense has dramatically improved.

Triple plays are usually mostly luck, but the one the Tribe turned last Sunday made for a nice effort symbolizing just how much the defense appears to have improved.

The Indians, admittedly by their own internal stats, had the worst infield defense in the league last year. Chris Antonetti did a great job of addressing those concerns this off-season, and bringing in Hannahan at third, Orlando Cabrera at second, and Adam Everett as a backup to complement Asdrubal Cabrera at short and Santana and Marson behind the plate. I'll even give a nod to LaPorta, for whom I have much lower standards, for making it through a week standing over there at first and not screwing anything up.

8. Ladies and Gentlemen, we have ourselves a winning record!

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As of Thursday morning, the Indians record stands at 3-2. That's good for a tie in the standings at second place in the Central, and a better winning percentage than almost half the teams in the AL.

It's also good for a tie with the Yankees, and better than their fellow AL East big guns Tampa Bay and Boston, who are both (mwahaha) 0-5. So put that in your pipe and smoke it.