

## Hop on my Indians Bandwagon!

Written by {ga=tribefan6180}

Tuesday, April 12 2011 5:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 12 2011 12:06 PM

---



10 games into the season, the Indians are 8-2 and sitting pretty in first place in the AL Central. Welcome back to the Tribe bandwagon, Cleveland. Those of us who stuck it out the last few years sure have missed you.

No, really, we have. I know it sounds sarcastic (and there's a shred of it that is, you fair-weather featherheads), but mostly it's completely sincere.

In an ideal world, we who have the masochistic tendency to stick it out through the bad years just because we cannot stop watching the Indians, no matter how much we wish we could, would turn up our noses when the bandwagoners came running. But we need those people. Our Tribe needs those people.

Our fanbase needs numbers more than it needs pride. We the ever-loyal are proud enough to make sure everyone knows we were the ones who hung in there all these years, but we're not too proud to accept newcomers to bolster our anemic fan base.

## Hop on my Indians Bandwagon!

Written by {ga=tribefan6180}

Tuesday, April 12 2011 5:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 12 2011 12:06 PM

---

This is not the time for snobbery. Baseball, generally speaking, is not a snob sport under any circumstances. If you really want a sport whose fan base is shrouded in exclusivity, then I suggest you go watch golf. Baseball is for the masses, even those who show up late to the party.

Sure, we who stuck it out through the bad times wish everyone were as loyal and dedicated as we've been, but that doesn't mean we don't want them around now if they weren't. We want everyone to care about this team, to buy tickets for games, to walk around town sporting Indians apparel, even if they only do it when the Tribe is playing winning baseball.

Yes, I'm annoyed when I can't get a ticket because they've all been snapped up by people who don't know a balk from a walk, but I'm more annoyed when I'm sitting in a stadium with just 11 other people, half of whom are reading the paper or talking on their cell phone rather than watching the game. It's just simply better to take in a ballgame with a packed house. Better for the team and better for any fan, no matter their level of dedication to the Tribe.

Good teams that draw in bandwagoners are also what create new, life-long fans. Your eight-year-old is not going to look at a team that loses 99 games and announce "Sweet! Count me in for life!" But most kids will take to a team that's even moderately successful, and then later stay at least somewhat loyal to them even through the leaner years. That's what creates a fanbase that's built to last over the long haul.

## Hop on my Indians Bandwagon!

Written by {ga=tribefan6180}

Tuesday, April 12 2011 5:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 12 2011 12:06 PM

---

Then there's the crowd factor for the team in terms of tipping the balance of a game in their favor. There's a reason people spend so much time talking about home field advantage. It's a legitimate edge over the competition. True, it won't help a hopelessly overmatched team overcome an outstanding opponent, but in a close contest, the crowd matters.

Players are aware of the crowd. Having 40,000 screaming people behind you when you're trying to drive in a run won't magically make it happen on its own, but it sure as hell is going to make you try a lot harder to get it done yourself. And the bottom line is that that only works with big attendance numbers.

I don't care if they're the most loyal fans in the world - 40 people who've loved you through thick and thin cannot have the same crowd impact on a game as 40,000 people who are there only because the team is winning can. And even if you were part of that original group of 40, you'll still take the help of the other 39,960 less dedicated fans if it means it gives your team an edge.

The fact of the matter is that these fair-weather folk are the kinds of fans who make up the majority of most fan bases. The Browns fan base may in fact be the only exception to that in the world, in any sport. Seriously, you think all those people in New York would be fighting each other to overpay for tickets year-in and year-out if the Yankees weren't in perennial playoff contention? Trust me, there were more empty seats in Yankee Stadium when that team struggled early last season than there are in most stadiums where the team is only half as good as they were. No, those people are the FIRST to jump ship.

## Hop on my Indians Bandwagon!

Written by {ga=tribefan6180}

Tuesday, April 12 2011 5:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 12 2011 12:06 PM

---

Granted, we're only 10 games into the season. Most of the potential bandwagon is still lurking in the shadows, not yet buying tickets or sitting down to watch the Tribe every night of the week. The Indians will have to keep this up for months to get them to show themselves, and if the team falls off the wagon soon, even those who've already come out to play will disappear. The team's wider appeal is tenuous at the moment, but you can tell it's starting to spread.

Cleveland fans are starved for a successful team. The Tribe has had one good year in its last 10 (2007). The Browns have been really bad for a really long time. And the Cavs short-lived success went right down the drain when that spotlight-loving Judas skipped off to South Beach. Cleveland is a dyed-in-the-wool sports town desperate for a winner, and thus the fans will come forth much quicker here when there's even a small hope for success than they would in other cities.

And personally, I can't wait. I'd rather be whining about how I can't get tickets to see my oh-so-successful team than crying alone in a corner of Progressive Field over my oh-so-terrible one.

So now's your chance to come back to the Tribe, Cleveland. Hop on our bandwagon before it's full. We'll welcome you with open arms.