

Tomahawks From All Angles

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Friday, May 20 2011 9:00 AM - Last Updated Thursday, May 19 2011 10:10 PM



While the rain has actually stopped for a moment (allowing me to continue working on the nearly-completed Ark in the backyard) and with the Indians in the midst of a couple of odd 2-game AL Central series, perhaps now is a good time to get some odds and ends that I wanted to clear out of the system here. Getting some Tomahawks in the air every once in a while is what we do around here, so watch 'em fly...

Though this breaks my (oft-broken) moratorium on attendance, I thought that most would be interested in this as the lack of ticket sales so far this season has resulted in more gnashed teeth and furrowed brows than has really been necessary. Regardless, I'd like to report that I headed down to the Tribe ticket office to purchase some tickets from the Saturday game (DAY GAME!) on Wednesday afternoon and was told that the game was "nearly sold out". While I was able to score some tickets behind home plate in the upper deck for me and the fam, the Tribe drew nearly 34K last Friday (being rewarded by that Pronk bomb) and they've "nearly sold out" Saturday's game against the Reds.

Perhaps the "woe is Cleveland" narrative will be put to rest (at least for a while) and while I'm not going to make the leap to assert that Cleveland has suddenly become a great baseball town, it is nice to see Clevelanders respond to this team appropriately by plopping themselves back down into the green seats at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario.

If you're going on Saturday, be sure to get there early (and I don't just mean for the SS Choo jersey) as the pre-game video up on the JumboTron features video clips of the Tribe with the song ["Dog Days Are Over"](#) blaring over the loudspeakers...meaning that somebody down there gets it in terms of turning the organizational corner.

Speaking of "turning the organizational corner", I keep reading things from Indians' fans complaining about a perceived "lack of respect" from national writers or complaining that the Wahoo Warriors are not featured more prominently on a nightly basis on the 4-letter word that

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emanates from Bristol. While I understand that most Tribe fans want some recognition for this fast start and want some validation from some well-known sources that this Indians team is “for real”, color me confused as to why I should care what ESPN says (or doesn’t say) about the Tribe or what some hack writer at CBSSports or some other news aggregator suggests about the Indians.

Is this some sort of low self-esteem thing that the city has or the inferiority complex that Dan Gilbert is always exploiting?

I’m all for civic pride, positivity and fighting the good fight to defend my hometown, but if a certain ESPN writer is going to remain obstinate about his stance that the Indians are going to lose 90 games (still) without offering compelling evidence as to why he thinks that, why should I care?

Would the Indians leading each episode of Baseball Tonight or SportsCenter really make you THAT much more content about the Indians start?

Really...are the wins, and the manner in which they’re winning these games, not enough?



Perhaps I’m in the minority here, but I haven’t watched ESPN for longer than a few minutes (outside of an actual game) in more than a few years and don’t go out of my way to visit their website for anything other than stats, standings, and the occasional Jayson Stark or Buster Olney snippet that somebody sends to me. The problem is that ESPN devolved long ago into a marketing arm of the Disney Corporation and their deplorable “agenda” (and I’m not just talking about baseball) and their insufferable talking heads make me feel dumber when I accidentally find myself on the network for too long.

Don’t get me wrong, there are bright spots still there (College Gameday and well...) and they still have college basketball games that I’ll watch, but ESPN went further down the tubes from just being a marketing arm (the “Budweiser Hot Seat” was the tipping point for me) with the TMZification of the network, “creating” stories and sensationalizing “news” to the point that they dictate the news cycle, rather than simply reporting and riding that news cycle.

Anyone hear anything about Jorge Posada this week?

Truthfully, I haven't been disgusted by wall-to-wall Posada coverage because it doesn't cross in front of my face. I'm not entertained by an ESPNNewYork.com reporter pimping his book about Derek Jeter because...well, because nothing could interest me less. I'd prefer to read about the Indians or other AL Central teams or most other MLB teams...it's just that I prefer to read analysis of actual substance over the rabble-rousing that has become pervasive at the Mothership.

So why is everyone still so chained to ESPN when in this digital age of "Like" and "Follow", you can customize the manner in which you receive your information – from where and from whom?

That's not to say to simply avoid dissenting voices or opinions that differ from your own, but the ability to choose the coverage that most interests you (Twitter, Google Reader with a customized RSS feed) is almost too easy NOT to do at this point. If you want MLB coverage with an analytical and smart (aleck) slant, read Craig Calcaterra and Aaron Gleeman at Hardball Talk. If you want longer-form analysis, create a reading list that includes Joe Posnanski, Jeff Passan, the bevy of talented writers on the MLB.com Opinion page (including our guy, all grown up...AC), or Joe Sheehan at SI. If you want more stats-based analysis, do yourself a favor and subscribe to B-Pro, or read The Hardball Times, or (at your own peril) Fangraphs.

If you need TV stimulation to feed your baseball fix, anything on the MLB Network is preferable to what comes out of the WWL and MLB Network's show "Quick Pitch" harkens back to the day when highlight shows actually showed...you know, highlights and didn't let ignorant analysis and clumsy banter get in the way of watching baseball. Watch one episode of it (I think it runs all morning long) and you'll never watch Baseball Tonight or wait for MLB highlights on ESPN again.

Of course, that's if you need your national MLB fix from avenues that don't run through Bristol and, if you're around these parts, you're aware that the hunger for Tribe information is best satiated by a steady diet of news that doesn't show up on the majority of Clevelanders' doorsteps every morning...wink, wink, nudge, nudge.

The bottom line is that if ESPN's coverage of sports and baseball infuriates you, simply change the channel or stop visiting their site. While this assumption that ESPN is still the rainmaker out there is hard to ignore, enough better outlets and voices exist out there to inform, entertain, and enlighten to make ESPN obsolete...something that it became in my universe a few years ago, and I'm no less informed, just less infuriated.

Speaking of things that work hard to make themselves obsolete, I was unfortunate enough to hear a local sports talk radio conversation (and it was a conversation that included Paul Hoynes) while in the car recently revolving around when Acta was going to move Santana down in the lineup because of his "struggles" at the plate. Normally, I dismiss the blather that comes through my car radio from local shows because it's so misinformed that it actually embarrasses, but this rhetoric seems to be accepted by the general public as fact, largely because Santana's

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Batting Average is still .227...which is embarrassingly stupid as a starting point in the conversation.



Thus, allow me to stand up on this soapbox here and point this out – Carlos Santana has been one of the best hitters in the American League for going on a month now and to assert anything different from that is willful ignorance and simple stupidity.

If you think that's harsh, a quick search with this keyboard and this mouse shows that in the last 30 days, The Axe Man has an .875 OPS, [good for 15th in the AL and you can click all over the headers on that Fangraphs leaderboard](#) if you want to see where Santana ranks in some of the other (standard and advanced) stats...and it's near the top. In those 30 days, he's hit 10 extra-base hits in 23 games, including 4 HR in just 81 plate appearances. Perhaps most impressively, since April 18th, he's walked more (22 BB) than he's struck out (18).

If you want some perspective on that last part, the only players in the AL that have walked more than they've struck out over the last month WHILE posting an OPS over .800 are Jose Bautista, Miggy Cabrera, Carlos Santana, and Mark Teixeira.

In that order...

Please spare me the Santana is struggling because "his BA is .blahblahblah" (and not just because the usefulness/uselessness of Batting Average conversation is not one I'm interested in having) and that he should be moved down in the lineup because he's a young player who is not ready to anchor a lineup because he's been doing it already for a month right now and the

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feeling still persists that he's just scratching the surface.

In terms of players that anchor a lineup, I'm not sure if you saw the fun little bracket from Andrew Clayman as to [which player in Indians' history would be the most deserving to be remembered as a statue outside of Progressive Field](#), other than Rapid Robert. The criteria is interesting and the breakdown of the "brackets" presents some frivolity that is a nice little detour while everyone looks at run differential, regression, and sustainability.

In terms of one of the "options" in the bracket, while I am (obviously) too young to remember Rocky Colavito, I did get an interesting e-mail from [a group that is spearheading an effort to put The Rock into Cooperstown](#). They come [arm ed with comparative stats](#) and are attempting to gather signatures on [a petition to garner some momentum for the Veterans' Committee to consider Colavito](#) for Hall of Fame induction.

While I'm generally loathe to engage in these HoF discussions (that get more acrimonious with each passing year, holding my interest less and less) it is something that is worth your time and fun to look at The Rock's case for Cooperstown.

Finally, while I realize that the talk has turned some to whether or not the Indians are going to be "buyers" or "sellers" come the Trade Deadline, let's all look at a calendar and realize that the Trade Deadline is more than two months away. That means that there's more baseball to play from now to July 31st to what's been played from Opening Day to now. Seriously...

Realizing that it may be fun to imagine the Indians making the phone calls instead of answering the phone at the end of July, let's all hold off on the "you know what the Indians could really use X and also Y" talk until we get to...I don't know, mid-June or so?

The next month is going to reveal a lot about the Indians, given their upcoming schedule and it is worth remembering [what Al wrote when he was sitting in the captain's chair this past weekend](#) in terms of the Indians having internal options for their current "deficiencies" (2B, 3B, RHRP, RH OF) that are likely to be exhausted before the Indians go out and consider acquiring any players to fill their "needs". And really, that's the thing about sitting here in mid-May, identifying "needs" as what is lacking today may suddenly become a strength (through internal promotion or further steps taken for a current player) and things that look to be "strengths" right now may be adversely affected by health and regression.

That said, there's nothing wrong with taking joy out of the idea that [the Twins are probably going to be "sellers" come July](#) with even their own fans acknowledging that the team is filled with Unloadable contracts and unattractive veterans, mixed in with a batch of young players that have underwhelmed, all with

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their payroll increasing and playing in a shiny new ballpark that was supposed to catapult them past the ALDS.

Meanwhile, the national media will have to find another team to point to as a small-market team doing things the right way and competing in the face of competitive imbalance and with a payroll smaller than the pitching staff of the “haves”.

Actually, there’s one I’m thinking of right now...