



If you're looking for good news as it pertains to the Indians I'm afraid you should move along down the road and save yourself the time. It's not that I'm in an overly critical mood about the personnel (although there are many reasons to be exactly that) but this is a pessimism that has far less to do with the Indians roster than the rosters they're facing.

At one point years and years ago the Indians were 30-15 and were the darlings of baseball. They were getting good starting pitching, timely hits and excellent relief work.

But that's not all they were getting.

The Indians built that record and a 6-game lead in the division on the backs of bums and underachievers. Take a look at the majority of the early season games and you'll see a lot of wins piled up against teams who were under .500 at the time or who remain under .500 to this point.

There were a lot of wins against the A's, Royals and Orioles and a few more against teams that got off to horrific starts like Boston, Detroit and Seattle. The Tribe's run differential a month ago

sat at +63 and today teeters on the brink of being not differential at all at a +1.

You can blame a lineup that features Jack Hannahan and Matt LaPorta as everyday corner infielders and you can blame a lineup that features a struggling Shin Soo Choo as one of its corner outfielders. You can also look at injuries to Grady Sizemore and Travis Hafner as robbing the Tribe of a couple of its only legitimate Major League threats. You'd be partly correct in assessing a portion of the blame to those factors.

While you're lamenting the fact that Fausto Carmona has been largely useless and that Carlos Santana is following closely in Fausto's footsteps and while you're wondering what happened to the April version of Justin Masterson, take some time to look at the schedule.

The last 30 days have been brutal.

The resurgent Red Sox, the Yankees, the Rays, the Reds, the hotter than a firecracker Tigers and the first place Texas Rangers all stepped up in the last 30 or so days to bite a huge chunk of Chief Wahoo's ass. Oakland, Kansas City and Baltimore are nowhere to be found when the Indians need a break more than most teams and it doesn't look to get any better any time soon.

Just when you thought the Pirates would be the tonic for what ails you they arrive in Cleveland for the second round of interleague games winners of seven of their previous ten games and two games over .500. The Buckos have won one fewer game than the Indians, Rays and Rangers and they'd be just a half game behind Texas if they played in the NL West. This weekend is no time to collect a breath and hope things fall into place.

Right behind the Pirates in terms of coming to Cleveland are the Colorado Rockies who are 6-4 over their past ten and are winners of two straight. The Tribe might need to do some damage against both Pittsburgh and Colorado because immediately after the Rockies leave town the Indians do too as they head to San Francisco and then Phoenix for series with the Giants and Diamondbacks respectively. And yes, you guessed it; those two teams are fighting it out for the best record in the NL West, each team having won more ballgames than the Tribe has on the season.

Don't relax yet. Once the Tribe is done out west they come back east and get to face the Reds, Yankees and Blue Jays one more time.

That's a miserable stretch of games against some of baseball's best even if you're healthy and playing well. The Indians are neither. They're actually not even bringing knives to a gun fight but more like water balloons to a tank battle. One needs to look no further than the Major League schedule to understand where that positive run differential and 6-game lead went.

Teams run hot and cold during the season as evidenced by the Red Sox and Tigers slow start (and about 140 years of empirical evidence). Maybe the Tribe's suffering through an extended drought and they'll get healthy and well and back to their winning ways.

If they do they will have earned their trip to the top. If they don't they're going to be buried at the bottom with teams like the Royals that they helped bury earlier.

Awesomeness



Indians closer Chris Perez was being interviewed for the pre-game show before yesterday's game and the interviewer asked him how he liked Detroit's Comerica Park. Perez was effusive in his praise for the Detroit cooks who prepare the Indians clubhouse meals. He was especially excited that he was able to finally have a Krispy Kreme Donut Shake for breakfast before the game Thursday.

One- That sounds completely disgusting in a most delicious way.

Two- I doubt you're going to find that on too many lists of healthy breakfast options; and

Three- Dude can drink whatever the hell he wants as long as he's throwing 96mph, getting ahead in the count and then burying fools with a wicked slider.

I'm Down With the Methodology

You'll get no complaints from me regarding Manny Acta's mini-blow up yesterday after another lackluster loss in Detroit. Acta has walked the right line between comforting and cajoling his team thus far. He's switched up lineups, moved kids from Columbus up, moved his catcher to 1B and his 180lb SS to the third spot in the lineup while his 175lb CF hits cleanup.

He's tried to be supportive and he's tried to keep a stiff upper lip but even an even-tempered guy like Acta has a breaking point and Manny's nearing his. Following yesterday's game Acta said, "I'm just disappointed because these guys aren't making any progress. Some guys have been in a three-month slump, and that is not a good sign."

"They're not doing it," Acta said of his hitters. ""They're working on whatever they're failing at. We point things out. But it's not good. Some of these guys are way too talented to struggle for two or three months."

It's important to note that Acta is clearly frustrated like the rest of us. He's trying to do what he can to jump start this lineup as evidenced by the moves noted above. But Acta can only do so much (and his 3rd and 4th hitters tell me he's about out of options) and at some point the Indians will sink or swim based on if and when guys like Choo, Santana, Sizemore and LaPorta start swinging a better bat.

The last act for Manny may be to name names. That's all he's got left other than sending guys down and bringing up more overmatched kids like Cord Phelps. If it gets to that point you'll know it's time to focus on 2012.