

## Moving Day on A Lazy Sunday

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

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Now officially at the halfway point of the season (no...seriously, add up the W-L total), the Indians still find themselves at the top of their division despite the cavalcade of obituaries that have been written about the team in the past month. The excitement of the hot start was tempered by their June swoon and yet the Tribe has emerged to go 8-6 in their last 14 games and, while that may not cause any Cleveland-area printers to fire up their machines for playoff tickets, given the performance over the previous 22 games (6-16), it's a step in the right direction.

Really, isn't that what this season is about...steps?

In their last 162 games (the first 81 this year, the last 81 in 2010), the Indians are 81-81 and (again) while that may not mean that anyone needs to start blocking off Euclid Avenue for a ticker-tape parade, the express elevator that this franchise seemed to be riding downward since the end of the 2007 season seems to be heading upwards just as quickly. Don't take that to mean that the Indians are right back where they were in the Fall of 2007, but they're still at the top of their division in July and have the opportunity in a flawed division to, at the very least, stick around.

Of course, whether they're able to stick around for the final half of the season is going to largely depend upon the sustainability of the success of the front-end-of-the-rotation and the back-end-of-the-bullpen as well as the offense finding some rhythm for the team to find its pace.

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That said, there was [a great analogy from a Tom Verducci article on SI.com](#) in which he compares the month of July in a baseball season to “moving day” in a golf tournament, explaining the comparison thusly:

*What a Saturday is to a golf tournament (moving day), July is to the baseball season. It's the one month that forces clubs to decide whether they are playoff worthy or not -- to determine whether they are buyers or sellers. As such, you are at the mercy of the schedule this time of year.*

Given what we've seen from the Indians this season, I can't tell you how much I love this analogy as the Indians were the surprise of the “Thursday round”, as pundits all over decried the Indians as a mirage who would come flying back to Earth eventually, the way that so many early-round leaders in golf tournaments do. In the month of June (and [Jordan Bastian has all the sordid details](#) so I don't need to go too far into them), the Indians fell back to the pack...again, as so many early-round leaders in golf tournaments often do on Friday, perhaps overwhelmed by their surprising position or simply as they revert (or is it regress) to what they actually are.

So here we are, stepping up to the tee box on “Moving Day” as the month of July figures to reveal perhaps what the true 2011 Indians' season will be remembered for. As high as the hopes were in April and May, the depths that they plumbed in June were just as extreme. Perhaps the Indians' 2011 season is no different than that of the 2003 Royals, a team whose path R [any Jazayerli describes in a piece at Grantland writing](#) , “the Royals shocked everyone by winning 16 of their first 19 games. They led the division by seven games at the All-Star break. No one thought it would last, and it didn't. They coughed up the lead by August and finished seven games back.”

After the month of June, the overwhelming feeling on the North Coast is that the Indians were sure to follow a path blazed by those surprising Royals (and, let's face it...they still might), but the recent resiliency that the team has shown, particularly since the injury to Choo has been both a revelation and a reason for hope. Playing in NL parks without Choo and with Hafner limited to one plate appearance a game (don't say at-bat, because it seems like more often than not he walks), the Indians have shown some toughness as their recent performance has given birth to the idea that the Tribe is not willing to step aside and let the Tigers and White Sox battle it out for the AL Central, as so many pundits predicted as the Indians were being swept by the Giants...who can sweep the Tigers with a victory in Motown today.

If July is really going to be instructive as to what the rest of the season holds, the question emerges as to whether the Indians can hang around and perhaps take advantage of what looks like a largely favorable schedule. While I realize that one of the favorite traditions on the North Coast is to examine the Browns' schedule and say (with a great amount of certainty, I might add) which games are “winnable” and which are not, here's what the month of the July looks like for the Indians heading into today's tilt on the shores of the Ohio River:

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