



At this point of the season, I find myself wondering which Cedar Point roller coaster to name the season after. It was pretty clear from Opening Day to the eight-game winning streak and then the 30-15 start that it was going to be a special year. A microcosm of the season was on display this week against the Los Angeles Pasadena Angels of Anaheim Newport Beach and surrounding area of the state of California.

Facing Dan Haren, Jered Weaver, and Ervin Santana, the forecast was bleak. Even though the Indians are one of four teams to beat Weaver this season (TEX, BOS, and SEA being the others), facing those three on consecutive days is depressing. The best case scenario looked like winning the series finale because Ervin Santana was 0-6 with a career ERA of over six against the Tribe.

In surprising fashion, the Indians scratched and clawed their way to a series opening win in walk-off fashion. They had the Angels closer Jordan Walden on the ropes with the bases loaded before "Please for the love of God DFA" Matt LaPorta hit into a double play and Jason Kipnis struck out in the game Weaver started.

Splitting with the Angels against Haren and Weaver is quite a feat and, though they really squandered Tuesday's game, they were in a decent position to win the series. Anaheim had every reason to look past Wednesday's matinee as they had to head to Detroit for a day game on Thursday. The Indians could play with max effort and enjoy the day off the next day.

Instead, what I saw was one of the most unequivocally pathetic games I have seen at any level

of sport in my entire life...and I referee for six year olds who can barely skate. Right from the words Play Ball, David Huff was the only Indian to care. Five errors, the most ridiculous passed ball I have ever seen, and no hits later, the Indians lost 3-1 in a game that they could have won 1-0 without getting a hit.

To put this into perspective, let me recap my Wednesday. My fiancé planned a day at the ballpark for her daycare and she picked July 27 as the day. Much to my chagrin, knowing that sitting on the metal bleachers on a sunny July day would be akin to being perched on the flat top at Benihana and the air would be like breathing inside an active volcano, I was asked to help chaperone to take the little boys to the men's room.

Luckily, it wasn't that bad on Wednesday, with occasionally hazy skies and temps in the low 80s. We were down there early enough for Wildlife Education Day, which was highlighted by a biplane flying an advertisement for Larry Flynt's Hustler Club over the ballpark repeatedly. The adults laughed, the kids had no idea, and I was feeling pretty good about the day. So good, in fact, that I put a bet down on the Indians to win at even money, after changing my mind that King Felix would end the Mariners' 875-game losing streak.

The kids began complaining about the heat around five pitches into the game, but the other adults with the group were even worse. As they complained about sweating a little, I began complaining in my head to myself about how apathetic the Tribe looked. Since I was in the company of small children and could not do my trademark swearing on the Home Run Porch, I started to feel a hole in my tongue from biting it.



As nine painful innings drew to a close, I began rooting for Ervin Santana. Part of it was the selfishness of wanting to see a no hitter. Another part of it was that I firmly believed that the

Indians deserved the ultimate embarrassment of being no hit based on how they played. I did not root for Santana until Michael Brantley stepped to the plate and promptly, and uncaringly, flew out weakly to center field. I stood and applauded Ervin Santana.

The little boy next to me, Emilio, plays shortstop for his coach pitch team. I began trying to tell him that he just saw something really special and historic and that he will probably never see another one. At between six and nine years old, not a single one of these kids knew what happened. Neither did their parents. When the kids were being picked up from daycare, my fiancé offered each parent their kid's ticket from the event, explaining the rarity of a no hitter. Many of them had no idea what that was, even though it seems to me that it's a pretty self-explanatory term.

I saw history. Embarrassing that it happened to us, but I can say I've seen one.

So, how do you, as an organization, respond to getting no hit? You do what you can to improve your team. The Indians did that getting Kosuke Fukudome. The fact that there is any angst toward this deal makes me understand further that Indians "fans" in general are beyond misinformed or just plain ignorant. The same



ones who stand on the Porch and talk about how they like Matt LaPorta. The ones who post on other Cleveland sports mediums (cough Cleveland.com cough) saying we should trade Fausto Carmona and Matt LaPorta for Hunter Pence. Maybe we can throw Austin Kearns in to get Michael Bourn.

Look, I'm going to lay this out very clearly. In getting Kosuke Fukudome, the Indians got better. How could they possibly have gotten worse? They got a guy who has gotten on base over 37% of the time this season. You know who has done that for the Indians? Josh Tomlin and Travis Hafner. You know who is the best player in Defensive WAR in the National League? Kosuke Fukudome is.

After I expressed my Luis Valbuena hatred last week, and after we saw Ezequiel Carrera drop a routine fly ball on Sunday, it baffles me that anybody would have anything against this deal. At 1.7 dWAR (and admittedly, I have no idea how it's calculated), he is .9 dWAR better than Mike Brantley, 1.7 better than Carrera, 1.4 better than Travis Buck, .9 better than Austin Kearns, .9 better than Choo. I think you get the idea. This guy is a marginal lineup upgrade but an enormous defensive upgrade.

Does Kosuke Fukudome carry us to the playoffs? Absolutely not. I can tell you this, though. If we had Fukudome for the last two in Minnesota, we are winning the Central by a half game right now. With a pitching staff that does not strike out a lot of hitters, good defense is imperative. The Indians, for the better part of two months, have not played good defense.

At the end of the day, Fukudome is a professional player. He's a good fielder, has strong on-base percentage, works counts (lead NL in pitches per plate appearance this year), and puts the ball in play. For a guy who sees over four pitches per at bat, he's only struck out 124 times in the last 217 games he has played. When you work counts, you strike out. The fact that Fukudome doesn't strike out frequently is going to help this team.

This weekend series with the Royals is enormous on so many levels for the Cleveland Indians. First, the Indians entertain Kansas City while Detroit gets Anaheim and the White Sox play Boston. Detroit gets Haren on Saturday and Weaver on Sunday, and Boston is never easy.

