

80 Reasons Why the 2011 Tribe Was Like a Jelly Donut

Written by {ga=jonathanknight}

Saturday, October 01 2011 11:00 AM - Last Updated Friday, September 30 2011 10:30 PM

It's a typical Wednesday morning. You show up for another mundane day at the office and discover someone brought in a box of donuts for everyone to share.



In that moment, you're both surprised and tickled at the spontaneity and pure serendipity of the arrival of these donuts and are genuinely appreciative of whoever brought them in.

Alas, as you examine the variety of the donuts, you can't help but feel a tinge of disappointment. No cream- or jelly-filled, no chocolate-covered, no sprinkles. You didn't really expect a donut anyway, but if you're going to be offered one, you'd like a better selection than this.

This little playlet also sums up the Indians' 2011 season, which arrived unexpectedly like a box of donuts on a Wednesday morning. Once you actually checked out the colorful box that initially trumpeted its own magnificence, you discovered that what was inside wasn't as great as you thought in that surprising first moment.

But what the hell - it's donuts!

And considering it's been a while since the Indians brought anything in for breakfast, beggars can't be choosers.

Many of us (myself included) got caught up in the excitement after the Tribe's fast start in April

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and May and came down hard on them when reality set in during June and July. Rather than simply celebrating the reality of donuts, we bitched that they weren't as good as they could have been and started to badmouth whoever it was who brought them in (probably Greg from Purchasing).

But now that the sugary donut powder has settled and the Indians came across the finish line with a barely-under-.500 record and a second-place finish in the division, it's time to examine and appreciate what they accomplished this season - all done almost entirely ahead of schedule.

As much as we would like to see the Indians playing the Yankees right now instead of the Tigers, the 2011 season was one to remember for a myriad of reasons.

Off the top of my head, here are 80 - one for each victory the Tribe collected over the past six months.

1. Twelve walk-off victories

2. Twenty-three wins in their last at-bat

3. Thirty-five come-from-behind victories

4. Asdrubal Cabrera becoming a bona-fide all-star

5. Carlos Santana becoming a bona-fide power hitter

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6. Justin Masterson emerging as a top-notch starting pitcher

7. Josh Tomlin emerging as an almost-top-notch starting pitcher

8. Chris Perez becoming the most consistent closer the Indians have had since Mike Jackson

9. Jim Thome's return

10. The Jim Thome statue announcement

11. Jason Kipnis

12. The phrase "We Are All Kipnises"

13. The "What If?" commercials

14. Travis Hafner's three-run homer to rally the Indians in the ninth to beat the Mariners

15. Asdrubal Cabrera's suicide squeeze to deliver a 1-0 win over the Red Sox on a foggy afternoon in April (and, if you think about it, knowing that one play kept Boston out of the playoffs)

16. Winning the season series over the Red Sox

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17. Beating the Yankees on the Fourth of July

18. The triple play started by a diving catch of a foul-pop by Carlos Santana

19. The red caps with the block C

20. Kosuke Fukudome

21. A 500,000-ticket increase in season attendance (or 6,000 more fans at every home game)

22. The epically adorable Katie Witham becoming STO's roaming reporter during game telecasts

23. Carlos Santana's game-winning grand slam to beat the Tigers

24. Taking five of six from the Reds & winning the season series for the first time since 2005

25. Naming the tunnel on Eagle Avenue between the bleachers and the parking garage "Rally Alley"

26. Shelley Duncan's September

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27. Winning a game on a walk-off walk

28. Winning on a walk-off hit batter

29. John Adams getting a commemorative plaque placed at his seat in the bleachers

30. Jim Thome hitting a home run on Jim Thome Night

31. The term "Thomecoming"

32. The Bullpen Mafia

33. Vinnie Pestano not only having an awesome name, but awesome stuff

34. Joe Smith having awesome stuff despite having a boring name

35. Winning eight straight after getting shellacked in the season's first two games

36. Winning 14 straight home games

37. The silent first pitch on opening day in honor of Bob Feller

38. Jason Kipnis's 5-for-5 night

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39. Scoring 19 runs in one game against the Royals

40. Travis Hafner's grand slam to beat Toronto after the Indians entered the ninth trailing by four

41. Travis Hafner actually playing the majority of the season and looking like a true power hitter

42. Winning the season series from Minnesota for the first time in four years

43. Having the ninth-best offense and 10th-best pitching staff in the American League - and still contending for most of the season

44. Manny Acta getting thrown out on purpose in the first inning of the season finale to give Tim Tolman a chance to manage a game before stepping down as bench coach due to his battle with Parkinson's disease

45. Mitch Talbot pitching eight shutout innings in his first start of the season

46. David Huff looking like Mel Harder in his first four starts

47. Fausto Carmona dropping his ERA from 30.00 after opening day to less than 4.00 a month later

48. Sweeping four series in April

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49.Sweeping the Tigers in their first series with all three wins in their last at-bat

50.Justin Masterson cajoling the team to rent Jack Hanahan a private plane to return home for the birth of his child

51.Jack Hannahan hitting three of his eight home runs for the season in a 24-hour period

52.The five-hour, 16-inning victory over Oakland on Aug. 31

53.Having the best batting average in the American League in April (thus demonstrating what this team is capable of with a little offense)

54.Justin Masterson and Josh Tomlin starting the season a combined 9-0

55.The Indians and Royals battling for first place in two different series

56.Stretching their winning streak over the Tigers at Progressive Field to 13

57.Their first series win in Oakland since 2002

58.Posting a winning record against the AL East

59.Winning four games after trailing going into the ninth inning

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60. Winning a team-record 18 games in April

61. The comeback win over Boston on ESPN that pushed the Tribe's record to 30-15

62. Jason Kipnis winning a game with his first major-league hit

63. Ezequiel Carrera driving in the winning run to beat the Reds with a perfect drag bunt on his first major-league pitch

64. Cord Phelps winning a game with his first major-league home run

65. The one thing Austin Kearns did all season was hit a home run to beat the Yankees

66. Sweeping eight series for the season

67. Going 11-7 in interleague play - their first winning record against the National League since 2005

68. Jeanmar Gomez and Carlos Carrasco both providing hope for the future

69. Michael Brantley emerging as a potential star

70. Having a better record than the Astros, Cubs, Mariners, Mets, Orioles, Reds, Rockies, Twins, and White Sox - all of whom had higher player payrolls

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71. In terms of overall players' salaries, each Indian victory cost \$780,000 - compared to the Phillies' \$1.6 million per win, the Red Sox' \$1.9 million per win, and the Yankees' \$2.1 million per win

72. Indians' pitchers going more than 70 straight innings at one point without allowing a home run

73. Beating Mark Buehrle...twice

74. Taking two out of three on the road against playoff-bound Arizona

75. The Columbus Clippers winning a second straight Triple-A national championship

76. That May 1, 2011 will always be remembered for the Indians scoring three runs in their last at-bat to beat the Tigers...and the death of Osama bin Laden

77. Grady Sizemore hitting four home runs with nine RBI in his first 10 games back after having his bionic knee repaired

78. The Indians sitting in first place for 96 days - after a grand total of none in each of the previous two years

79. Beating Ozzie Guillen 11-2 the last time they faced him as White Sox manager

80. Setting up 2012 as something even more special

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The last six months were something to remember - perhaps not to cherish, but you have to admit we certainly had a lot more fun this summer than we ever thought we would.

Farewell, 2011 Cleveland Indians. Thanks for being a jelly donut on a Wednesday morning.

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