



For the next month, this article might as well be titled View from the Couch. After going to both Saturday and Sunday's games against the Pirates last weekend, the Indians hit the road for back-to-back weekends. When they come home to kick off July, I won't be able to attend any of the games. Then, it's the All-Star break.

That will be a span of at least 33 days in between games at the Jake. That's easily my longest in-season stretch in probably seven or eight years. On some level, I don't feel all that bad about it because the Indians have lost five of the last six games I've been to by a combined score of 41-21 and looked horrible in the process.

So, with the Reds in town, I took one for the team. Even though the ballpark is a short trek for me, I stayed home for all three games. Admittedly, I was disgusted by their weekend performance against the Pirates in the two games I was at, so I felt like I needed a break. That's very unlike me, as I almost always jump at the chance to go to a game. But, I watched from my primary home than from my secondary home on the Porch.

Naturally, the Indians swept the Reds, with two of the wins in exciting fashion and the other a good, old-fashioned blowout. I'm not naïve enough to think that my presence is the reason that they lose, but as a superstitious person who does his fair share of gambling, I wasn't about to take any chances. I'd rather they win while I'm at home than lose while I'm there.

Therefore, maybe it's a good thing that I won't go to a game for a month. I'm staying optimistic about it for now, but I give it a week or so before I start to get the shakes. I'll be looking for my fix like a heroin addict. Of course, I won't go out and sell myself for money to pay for the MLB At Bat app while I'm on vacation, but I'll be ready to get back to the ballpark when the Orioles come to town.

It's really hard to stay excited about going to the ballpark when the last four games I've been at were losses to the Minnesota Twins and the Pittsburgh Pirates. All of which by three runs or more. Yet, there's still something about being at the ballpark, especially now that it's summertime. It's almost indescribable how nice it is to be outside on a warm summer night, watching baseball. Therapeutic is probably the best way to describe it. Well, except for the last four games.

In any event, the Indians are still in first place despite their awful record when I'm in attendance. Sometimes, it's really, really hard to fathom how this team is in the position that they're in. They're plagued by inconsistencies from every pitcher not named Vinnie Pestano or Chris Perez, every hitter has gone through difficult periods, and the rotation is a total crapshoot most nights.

They have the second-worst run differential in the American League, they have a rotation of guys with ERAs above 4.00, and they're incredibly bad against left handed starters with a 5-13 record and a .218 batting average. Yet, in the AL Central, it's good enough to have a lead on June 22. Baseball's such a funny game.

For good news, the Indians are 12-2 in one-run games. It's probably an unsustainable trend, but it speaks volumes about how good Vinnie Pestano and Chris Perez have been. The left-handed heavy lineup is 32-19 against right handed pitching.

Which begs the question: Are the Indians just getting lucky with the lineup construction or is this what they planned all along? Manny Acta has said on numerous occasions that the Indians will face a righty more often than not, and, to date, they've faced a right-handed starter in just under 74% of the games they've played. On one hand, it looks like a really smart maneuver by the Indians front office. With a 32-19 record against righties, that means that the Indians have won 62% of their games against a RHP and 29% of their games against a LHP.

It may be oversimplified, but if the Indians face a RHP starter in 75% of their games, that's 121.5 games out of 162. If the Indians win 62% of those, that's 75.33 wins. If the Indians face a southpaw starter in 25% of their games, that's 40.5 games. If the Indians win 29% of those, that's an extra 11.7 wins. In this division, with the way that the teams are constructed, that gives the Indians 87 wins if all the percentages work out the way they're trending.

If the Indians are looking at it in this same manner during the offseason, there really could be a method to the madness. 87 wins, with two wild cards, gives you a legitimate shot at the playoffs, and that's all a small-market team can ask for. To be honest, this is the first time I've really looked at the Indians almost all-left-handed lineup in this manner.

It's sort of a genius idea. The 2011 Indians that went 80-82 faced a righty starter in 113 games and a lefty starter in 49 games. They were 57-56 against RHP and 23-26 against LHP. What the Indians banked on this season is that the Central Division would only have a few lefties, guys like John Danks, Bruce Chen, and Francisco Liriano. Realistically, it's a fair assumption to make. The only thing that they didn't really account for is how many long relievers they'd encounter that threw with their left hand.

This whole exercise gives me a new appreciation for the Indians front office. It no longer seems coincidental to me that the team is loaded with lefties and switch hitters. Obviously, I considered the fact that the majority of starters they'd face would be righties, but the percentages are far more slanted than I thought they would be. That may change as we play the next 93 games, but it's a trend worth keeping an eye on.

Finally today, I have to mention that my father read last week's View from the Porch that was all about my childhood and my exposure to baseball thanks to him. He was genuinely touched by it and I'm not sure I've ever heard him more appreciative. It meant a lot to me and it made me wonder. I don't want to make any of you out there feel guilty, but, do yourselves a favor and talk about these things with your parents or grandparents. It'll mean more to them than some token gift. Go to dinner and talk about these memories from the past.

In today's world, where we're all so busy and inundated with technology and distractions, sometimes simple things make the most impact.