

Just 72 games left. And boy is it going to be a long 72 games. The Tribe has lost 11 of its last 16 games and 19 of 26. The team limps into the break 14 games behind first-place Detroit and appears to be disintegrating on the field and in the clubhouse. In the Weekend Wrap ... Peeks points out a disturbing sign from yesterday's loss to the Tigers, he longs for Browns preseason football, and touches on the Cavaliers' recent acquisition of swingman Anthony Parker.



Why does this stretch run for the Indians feel like a football game where your squad is nursing a small lead and the other team is driving down the field as the clock winds down?

The Indians won both series they played this week and are 6-4 in their last 10 games. But the Tigers are on a 5 game heater following their sweep of the Twins and have cut the Tribe's lead in the AL Central to 4 ½ games.

To make things more gut wrenching, the Tigers come to town for three games starting Monday night in what has become the series of the season.

The Indians took the weekend series from the Royals by winning an exciting game Friday night on Casey Blake's 9<sup>th</sup> inning home run and then took game two

Saturday night on the strength of some timely hitting, poor Royal defense and a gem from Fausto Carmona. Aaron Laffey pitched into the 7<sup>th</sup>

inning on Sunday but the four runs he gave up were one more than the Tribe could muster as the Royals salvaged Sunday's game.

Paul Byrd, Jake Westbrook and CC Sabathia will square off against Kenny Rogers, Justin Verlander and Nate Robertson, respectively, Monday through Wednesday at the Jake. A sweep by either team would be devastating to the other, either in terms of playoff possibilities or psychologically. The Indians magic number for clinching the division is at nine but those numbers and the pressure of this series appear to be a couple things that concern the fans more than the players. There are still a couple weeks of baseball left and anything can happen in that time, but this series will go a long way in determining what team wins the Central title.

These kinds of anxiety producing ballgames are what you get when your wishes for meaningful September games are granted. They don't get much more meaningful than this week.

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Alright, alright. That was from September of 2007 and most certainly not this weekend. But what the hell am I supposed to write for you that hasn't been written a thousand times in the last 10 weeks? What the hell can I tell you about this Indians team that you don't already know?

They blow.

They've quit.

They're disintegrating on the field and in the clubhouse.

Their owner is either the most patient individual on the planet or he's dead and no one's talking.

I've got nothing left to tell you in regard to the baseball team folks. The best news is that the second half of the season is just 72 games long if you look at the All-Star game as the halfway point.

Even the rare wins make me scratch my head. Their 10-8 win over the White Sox on Thursday saw Kerry Wood emerge from the bullpen with two out in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning to close the door. Anything more than a one inning save from Wood is rare.

How rare?

Thursday. That's it.

Eric Wedge has had numerous opportunities to use Wood in that manner throughout the season. He had occasions before June when the season ended to extend Wood for more than three outs. But he didn't, in no small part because of Wood's injury history. So why now? Why run the risk at this point of the season? It has to be because Eric Wedge is clinging to his job by the skin of his teeth and he's hell-bent on winning any game he can. That does not bode well for seeing young players given an opportunity over the last 72 games. I don't like the chances of Matt LaPorta getting his initiation to the major leagues done and over with if Wedge is making out the lineup.

Even wasted years present opportunities. The young kids upon whom the Indians will rely heavily next season could all gain 200-300 at bats in the second half if allowed to do so. That would be the smart move. I'd tune in to at least see that. But if the organization doesn't even have enough sense to make something out of this soup sandwich of a season then I'll continue to actively ignore them.

And judging by attendance and television ratings, most people are way ahead of me.

**Etcetera**

- How completely and irreversibly crap-tastic is this Indians season (not even mentioning the fact that some fans are hoping Andy Marte is the answer)? Well, I'm looking forward to Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup> when the Browns play the first meaningful game of that month for Cleveland fans. Really looking forward to that big pre-season tilt with the Packers.

Normally I'd rather see an anesthesia-free oral surgeon followed up by a haggis dinner at the in-laws, but so deep is the disgust with the baseball team here that the really bad football team passes for hope.

Then at halftime of that ballgame we can at least re-start the Brady Quinn/Derek Anderson debate and lose ourselves in that until Cavs training camp starts in October.

I don't ask God for much, but I'd really love a Browns win that night. Not because it's meaningful in any way, but

because the talk of an 11-5 or 12-4 record will surely follow.

- Welcome to Cleveland Anthony Parker.

Parker is 6'6" and 220lbs and a perimeter shooter and defender of some repute. 34 years old is a little long in the tooth in the NBA but if Parker can do in Cleveland what's kept him in the league for seven years Cavs fans are going to watch a team this November that's much improved over the 2008-2009 version of the club that won 66 games and swept its first two playoff series.

Parker is not a sexy acquisition but he's a marked improvement over Sasha Pavlovic.

Better tomorrow than yesterday is what we're shooting for. Shaq and Parker for Wallace and Pavlovic? Done.