

An Awkward Glance Ahead: Triumphant Return Edition

Written by {ga=motherscratcher}

Monday, April 18 2011 10:30 AM - Last Updated Monday, April 18 2011 12:11 PM



119. Keep that number in mind. It's a ridiculous number, an unattainable number. It's the number of games that the Indians are on pace to win this year. It's about seven more wins than the 1995 Indians would have won if the season hadn't been shortened due to the strike. It's more wins than any team has ever won in a season ever.

The Indians are not going to win 119 games. It is not going to happen. "We know that you knob. We aren't stupid." is what you are all undoubtedly saying to you computer screen. But, here's the thing; I don't think you do. From what I'm gathering, everybody* is expecting the Indians to roll through the season the same way they rolled through the first two weeks. Even as I write this it takes a lot to convince myself that it won't happen. That's how excited I am about this team.

**Well, everybody except Keith Law, Rob Neyer, and Craig Calcaterra who are saying the Indians aren't for real. Don't hold it against them. What the hell are they supposed to think? They'll come around.*

But it won't happen 119 wins will not happen. I'm sure of it. I'm pretty sure. (My God, wouldn't it be great if they did, though?) STOP! See? See how easy it is to get sucked in? Don't let it happen.

"Wait, man. Aren't you the guy that has been shoving the 'Merchant of Hope' and all of that other BS down our throats for the last 2 weeks?" Yes, yes I am. And I'm still that guy. But now it's getting real.

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The last two weeks have been fun in a "we have to ride that train while it's chugging along" sort of way. I believed. But not really. I'm no dope after all. I had hope but didn't REALLY believe. Not if I'm being honest anyway.

But, after another week of watching, this team feels different. Don't they? This doesn't feel like a team that is going to fall off a cliff. I believe that this team can contend in this division this year. I think they will. But they're not going to win 119 games (probably*). No where near actually. Because of this, the Indians will likely play significantly worse the rest of the way than what we've been treated to in the first few weeks of this incredible season. It doesn't mean they are a bad team. It's just inevitable.

**Dammit. Stop that.*

Why am I bringing this up right now? Why do I care so much about managing expectations? Good questions. The answer is selfish really. I don't want to have to read a bunch of stupid reasons that explain why the Indians aren't playing as well in the future as they've played so far, when the only real reason is that it's simply impossible.

The first order of business is Grady Sizemore. Grady made his triumphant to the starting lineup and the top of the order yesterday and promptly went 2/4 with a double and a towering home run. It was glorious. It really was. It was Grady's first home run since August 27, 2009.*

**I know, I know. It's a small sample size. But Grady is hitting .500. His OBP is .500. He's yet to strikeout. And his SLG is damn near incalculable. I think it's approaching infinity or something. But, what if he can keep that up for the rest of the season?*

Before the game there was a lot of discussion about where Grady should be hitting when he came back. Opinions were all over the place. Personally, I preferred he hit 7th initially before moving him back to the top of the order after he got his feet wet. But, I was OK with them just starting him out at the top. After all, he's historically done his most damage in the leadoff spot.

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Here's what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid of a bunch of people blaming Grady Sizemore and Manny Acta when the Indians inevitably cool off a bit. And then they will declare Shapiro an idiot. Just wait, it will happen. You will get a bunch of people bemoaning the fact that the chemistry of the team was ruined when Grady was put at the top of the order, as if chemistry is some magical element that begets winning if you are one of the teams lucky enough to stumble upon it.

Let me tell you something. Chemistry is real. There is absolutely such a thing. But it isn't responsible for winning. It's the other way around. Winning causes good chemistry. Good chemistry by itself doesn't mean a thing. Teams with great chemistry have that chemistry because they are winning.

In 2007 the Tribe had great chemistry. Why? Because they were good. Grady was killing it at the top of the lineup, Hafner was one of the most fearsome hitters in the league, CC was lights out, Victor was the best catcher in the league, Fausto Carmona had his best season ever,...it all came together that year. The Indians had some really good players who were playing really well.

But, you still can find people who will tell you that Trot Nixon and his 79 OPS+ was somehow responsible for the chemistry because he started throwing pies in peoples faces. Seriously, that's what they think. Don't get me wrong, I like Trot Nixon. I like pies in the face. I'm not a party pooper. It was good times all around. Yet, do you know how many games the Indians would have won that year without Trot Nixon throwing pies around? I do. According to his WAR they would have won 97, one more game than they won with him.

Now, I feel like I've gotten a little sidetracked and am unfairly and unnecessarily sullyng the good name of Trot Nixon for reasons unknown. That is not my intention. My intention is this. I want to impress up my readers (both of you) that chemistry comes after you start winning. Why does it seem like the Indians have such great chemistry so far this year? It's because they've won 11 of their first 15 games, and that's a hell of a lot of fun. And you aren't going to somehow ruin it by taking Brantley out of the leadoff spot, especially for a guy like Grady who has the potential to hit 25 HR with an OBP around .380. With all due respect to Brantley, who is a fine fellow, I don't want to take the bat out of Grady's hands 100 times over the course of the season because I'm afraid it will affect the chemistry.

That's not to say that Grady will perform at that level. He did from 2005-2008, but that was a long time a quite a few injuries ago. But if he can perform at that level, then he is Ricky

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Henderson to Brantley's Juan Rivera. This isn't to disparage Juan Rivera. He was a good player, and if Michael Brantley turns into Juan Rivera, I'll take it. But neither of them will ever be confused with Grady Sizemore in Grady Sizemore's prime.

If you are still unconvinced that chemistry should not be an issue with this team, let me try to explain it a different way. What if you took me and a bunch of my idiot friends and gave us Indians uniforms. Then you rolled us out there to play the Indian's schedule. How do you think we'd do? Personally, I doubt that in a full season we'd win more than 50 games.

I'd be the strange guy that nobody is quite sure that they like, but they let me hang around because every once in a while I say something funny. Paul Cousineau would be able to articulate all of the reasons that we aren't any good. Steve Buffum would have a mental breakdown trying to figure out which one of us is the most fungi like. Al Ciampi would be the franchise saving prospect at AAA who should have been called up by now. Brian McPeck would become famous for dragging Charley across the cold cuts at the post game spread ala Yogi Berra.

We would suck, but damn would we have a good time. They would nickname us the Jolly Assholes or something. We would be the first team ever with a boatload of chemistry who didn't win anything.

You don't win because of chemistry; you have chemistry because you're winning.

What's going to happen, and I feel powerless to stop it, is the Indians will lose a few games while Sizemore bats leadoff and everyone will begin saying things like "Shapiro and Acta screwed up the chemistry and now they're losing. Then they will call the Dolans cheap. It's going to happen.

You won't hear it from me, though. I've got no problem screwing with chemistry if it's to put a guy with Grady's potential back at the top of the order where he's going to get the most at bats. Especially after yesterday, the more I see of him the better.

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But they aren't going to win 119 no matter who is leading off. So get that out of your mind right now. I don't think they will do much better than get within 10 games of that.

No worse than 15. That seems reasonable.



An Awkward Glance at the Indians

There are some of you who will read all of that and think I'm down on the Indians. Nothing could be further from the truth. It only took two weeks and I've reached a point where I am completely convinced that this team, this year, will contend. I'll be very disappointed with any other outcome. I think this team is the best team in the AL Central and should make the playoffs. Once there, well, anything can happen.

They won't continue to win at this clip, but they should continue to win. And that winning should start tonight in Kansas City where, in the bizzaro world of MLB, the Royals are currently the Indians main competition for the top of the division.

The Indians roll into KC for a four game series and face a team that is being lead by one time MLB top prospect Alex Gordon to a 10-5 record, despite inexplicably losing to the Seattle Mariners. But, if you think the Indians are playing over their heads, consider that the Royals RBI leader is Jeff Francour.

After the Royals series, the Tribe head to Minnesota for a weekend series against the Twins. The first game is scheduled to be Fausto Carmona vs Brian Duensing who's claim to fame is

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that I once pulled 2 of his autos out of the same box of 2010 Topps Chrome. I was not pleased.

The Twins are down right now with a 5-10 record. Justin Morneau is back but so far is not the same. Supercatcher Joe Mauer is on the DL with leg weakness allegedly due to some kind of virus. Right now this is a team on the ropes and the Indians should take advantage where they can.

The Indians should expect to end this week long road trip no worse than 4-3, but to be honest; I might be disappointed with that. I'm calling 5-2.

Now, to get down to nicknames. I received a handful of emails last week with some suggestions. I'm not as good at being the decider as I thought I might be. What I'm going to do for now is to give a few different possibilities on the list and see what sticks.

I'd like to thank all who are contributing. I'm trying to keep straight who made the nicknames, but I'm sure I'll get some wrong. If I don't know I just mark it down to society, but I'm trying to lean toward all new, originals anyway.

My problem right now is that I'm the decider and am having a heck of a time deciding anything. What I decided to do for a couple of weeks is put down multiple entries for some players until a front runner emerges, as they usually do.

I'd also like to recognize TCF Tribe writer and the owner/operator of [The Tribe Daily Blog](#) , Nino Colla. He's been constructing and maintaining a nickname list of his own for quite a while and was nice enough to help get me started on this list.

Here's what I have so far:

Michael Brantley.....Pudding Jones (Mike Kramer)

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Asdrubal Cabrera.....Droobs (Society)

Shin-Soo Choo.....Big League Choo or BLC (Steve Buffum)

Carlos Santana.....The Axe Man (Owen)

.....Supernatural (Bill Kramer AKA Broscratcher)

Travis Hafner.....Pronk (Society)

.....Hugh Hafner (Dave Regimbal)

Orlando Cabrera.....Orly (Steve Buffum)

Matt LaPorta.....Connie (Owen)

Travis Buck.....Buck Naked (George Costanza)

Shelley Duncan.....Sloth (Society)

.....Hawkman (Nino Colla)

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Jack Hannahan.....That Pederast (Fletch)

.....Supermanahan (Jordan Bastian)

.....Banana Hannock (Timothy Wittig)

Austin Kearns.....The Kearnal (Nino Colla)

Adam Everett.....Dapper Gent (Mike Kramer)

Grady Sizemore.....Cup-a-Joe (Mike Kramer)

Lou Marson.....Tofu Lou (Steve Buffum)

Fausto Carmona.....The Bug Tamer (Owen)

Carlos Carrasco.....Carrot Top (Gary Benz)

.....Car Squared (Nino Colla)

Justin Masterson.....Sidearmy Nelson (Mike Kramer)

Josh Tomlin.....Toots McGillicutty (Mike Kramer)

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Mitch Talbot.....Flapjacks McGoo (Mike Kramer)

Chris Perez.....Kenny Powers (Society)

.....Pure Rage (Chris Gimenez)

Rafael Perez.....Rafael Obama is Perez (Gary Benz)

Tony Sipp.....Sippin-da-Juice (Mike Kramer)

Chad Durbin.....Chaz Badoinkadoink (Mike Kramer)

Vinnie Pestano.....Pasta Vinnie (Mike Kramer)

Justin Germano.....Germano Helmet (Mike Kramer)

Frank Herrmann.....Homer (Owen)

Kelvin De La Cruz -

Jeanmar Gomez -

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Nick Hagadone -

David Huff -

Josh Judy.....Judge (Mike Kramer)

Corey Kluber -

Zach McAllister -

Hector Rondon -

Joe Smith.....Marquez Smiff (Steve Buffum)

Jess Todd.....Uncle Jess (Mike Kramer)

Jason Donald -

Jared Goedert.....Joe Dirt (Gary Benz)

Luis Valbuena.....Baby Louie (Nino Colla)

Ezequiel Carrera -

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Trevor Crowe.....Fungus (Steve Buffum)

Nick Weglarz.....The Baconator (Mike Kramer)

Please feel free to weigh in with suggestion on new nicknames, or existing nicknames that you like or dislike. I think this thing is starting to take shape.

An Awkward Glance at the Cavs

It's finally over. The Cavs made a bit of noise at the end of the season and karma should be pleased. The Cavs end the 2010/2011 campaign with a record of 19-63, and they needed to win four of their last 6 to do it.

They finish with the second worst record in the NBA, right behind (ahead?) of the Minnesota Timberwolves who finished with 15 straight losses*. This guarantees that the Cavs will have no worse than the 5th pick in the draft.

**childs play*

The Cavs also have the Clippers pick. The Clippers finished with the 8th worst record so unless something crazy happens, they should be picking at about that spot as well.

So, for this year of futility and embarrassment, the Cavs will probably walk away with something resembling Derrick Williams and Kemba Walker. Now, tell me, doesn't that get you excited? Yeah, me neither.

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It's been painfully obvious for some time that a really weak draft has become epically weak due to the lack of a CBA for the NBA. Players like Jared Sullinger and Perry Jones are staying in school. And it isn't that I necessarily wanted either of those guys, but anything that depletes the talent pool is going to be bad for a team picking twice in the top ten.

What it all means is that it's very unlikely that the Cavs get a future NBA star this year. Honestly, they will be lucky if they land one player who can be a future piece of a playoff caliber team.

But we have to hope, right? I'll just find it a lot hard to hope if what I'm hoping for is that Kemba Walker is an NBA point guard.

Basically, what I'm saying is go to church and pray that the Cavs get Kyrie Irving. If that happens, everything else is gravy.



Actor in my Movie

Dean Cameron

Dean Cameron was right in my wheel house for a long time. He was in a lot of stuff that I loved. He was cast as Jeff Spicoli in the TV adaptation of Fast times at Ridgemont High in the mid 80's. Like all of these shows, it didn't last long. I never saw it, and apparently nobody else did

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either. But the fact that he was cast as Spicoli has to be a good thing, right? He also had a recurring role on Alf, but TV was not Dean's destiny.

Dean's destiny started with his legend making turn as Francis Chainsaw Grempe in the 1987 tour de force Summer School. If you didn't recognize the name but are between the age of 32 and 40, you probably know who he is now. In one of the most underrated and rewatchable movies of the 80's Dean played arguably the most memorable role.

That role is enough to get him into my movie, but it's not why he is.

Dean was also in one of my favorite movies of the early 90's, Men At Work, where he played the vital role of "Pizza Man." That movie is just chock full of awesome, from the Brother's Estevez, Keith David, and John Getz who plays someone called Maxwell Potterdamn III, one of the absolutely douchiest names in cinematic history. This is the movie that taught me that a phrenologist is someone who feels and interprets the size of Walt's asshole. It is a great movie, and Dean plays what I think the funniest role.

Pizza Man is also enough to get Dean a role in my movie, but it is not why he does.

Dean Cameron is in my movie because of Ski School. Glorious wonderful Ski School. Dean plays a guy named Dave Marshak who finds himself in a ridiculous alpine struggle with a bunch of rich ski-bullys. It's pretty much the same situation that Stan Marsh found himself in a few years back on South Park. As far as that goes it's a pretty run of the mill movie. What is not run of the mill, is the nudity.

You have to remember, this was back in 1990 before every thing you ever wondered about was but a click away. No, back then teenage boys had to work for their porn. You had Cinemax and if you were lucky some Playboys one of your friends swiped from his dad's closet. Ski School was a gold mine, but it was also done well enough to not be relegated to the "Friday Night After Dark" section of the Cinemax lineup that everybody's parents knew about.

And there was Dean Cameron as your tour guide to it all. He was like a cross between Bode

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Miller and Hugh Hefner.

And for that, he's in my movie.