

An Awkward Glance Ahead: The Plane Has Crashed Into The Mountain

Written by {ga=motherscratcher}

Monday, June 06 2011 9:30 AM - Last Updated Monday, June 06 2011 7:34 AM



I have an older brother, Bill (AKA Broscratcher), who I have mentioned in this space before. Bill has four things in common with Tribe second baseman Orlando Cabrera. Only three of these four things are true. See if you can guess which ones.

Both of them are reportedly great guys. Both of them used to be good baseball players. Both of them are equally capable of playing second base for the Indians at an adequate major league level. And both of them are named Orlando.

Did you figure it out? I'll post the correct answer at the end of the column.

Look, I'm not trying to pile on Cabrera. He's actually been a valuable member of the team through spring training and the early part of the season when the Indians were convincing themselves that they are a legitimate baseball team with a legitimate shot at the postseason. He's been a worthwhile addition for his reported mentorship of Asdrubal Cabrera alone.

We've all heard the reports about how Orlando helped convince Asdrubal to unleash his hidden Cecil Fielder. Maybe it helped; maybe it had nothing to do with anything, but Asdrubal Cabrera is a better player this year than I ever thought he would be. That's worth Orlando's salary right there.

At the beginning of the season he came through with some clutch hits. He looked rejuvenated. He looked like the veteran glue holding together a talented upstart team ready to take the league by storm a year or two earlier than hoped.. He was more than a Trot Nixon pie in the

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face mascot.

Now? He's done. Clearly. I wish he'd throw a pie in someone's face. At least that would be something. His OBP is .275 and his OPS is .590, and that's after a halfway decent start to the season. These are dreadfully bad numbers. Numbers that cannot be ignored any longer. He's a good guy and a good teammate, but the 36 year old infielder from Cartagena, Columbia* is done.

How many of you, after reading "Cartegena" immediately think of Romancing the Stone? What a fantastic movie that was. I must have seen that movie 50 times before I understood the campfire scene. Remember that scene? Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner Overdrive For those of you who haven't seen it, why taking a stroll through the Columbian jungle, Douglas and Turner come upon an old plane that has crashed. They take refuge for the night and Douglas keeps throwing huge packages of Columbian weed on the campfire. Only I was a kid and had no idea that was happening. That scene took on a whole different meaning when I realized what was in those packages.*

It was kind of like when I realized that Woo says to the Dude "ever thus to deadbeats" before pissing on the rug in The Big Lebowski.

***Rememeber how hot Kathleen Turner used to be? Watch Romancing the Stone again. It's true. Try explaining that to someone less than 26 years old. They would never believe you. In fact, if you know someone between the age of 16 and 26, show them current pictures of Kathleen Turner and Kelly McGillis. Try to explain to them that these two women were arguably two of the biggest sex symbols of the 80s. They'd never believe you.*

If you showed them pictures of Turner from Romancing the Stone and McGillis from Top Gun, or better yet, that scene in Witness where she inexplicably flashes Harrison Ford, they'd never believe you. They'd accuse you of photoshopping, as if people our age (I just assume that everyone reading this is the exact same age as me, 36) have any idea how to use such a thing as photoshop.

I can't say that I blame them, though. It's kind of BS when you think about it. Every decade has their sex symbols. You can go back to the 50s and you have Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn

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Monroe. Jump up to Raquel Welch in the 60s and the Bo Derrick/Farrah Fawcett 70s. If you jump to the 90s and aughts you have women like Halle Berry, Cameron Diaz, and Angelina Jolie to choose from. What do all of these women have in common? They all maintained.

The 80s? Kathleen Turner and Kelly McGillis. By 1995 they both looked like they drank from the wrong Grail. I'm telling you. We got gypped.

What was I talking about?

Oh yeah. Orlando Cabrera. He's as useful at second base for the Indians as my brother. The difference being my brother didn't ground into two double plays yesterday.

It would be different if there was not other viable alternative. There is. Two, actually. Cord Phelps and Jason Kipnis. Everyone thinks of Kipnis as the second baseman of the future, and he may be. But Cord Phelps is older* and he's tearing up AAA right now.

**He's actually only about 3-4 months older than Kipnis, but doesn't it seem like he's been around for much longer?*

It's time to give one of these kids a shot. It's past time. My vote is for Cord Phelps right now. He's .303/.394/.502 at AAA Columbus right now. Any way you slice it that's got way more potential than what Orly Cabrera is giving us right now.

That doesn't mean we'd have to DFA Orlando, although it's not like I'd lose sleep if we did. I see it as a decision between Orlando Cabrera and Adam Everett. Honestly, I think Everett's better. I think he's more useful at third, and I think he's probably a better hitter. Probably.

But, if the difference between making the playoffs and not making the playoffs is Adam Everett, the Tribe is already screwed. I say, turn Orly into the utility infielder if he's that great in the clubhouse. Call up Cord Phelps. Let's see what the kid can do.

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Orly can still get into sme games here and there. He's not horrible against left handed pitching. He's useful as a veteran presence. But, he's no longer an every day starter. Not for a team looking at the playoffs, anyway. Another thing that Orlando Cabrera has in common with my brother?...No team is making the postseason with either of those guys as the second baseman. That doesn't mean that I don't love and appreciate them.

But, for the love of God, give me Phelps. It's time.



An Awkward Glance At The Indians

The plane has crashed into the mountain.

Paul Cousineau went all Big Lebowski on us in the Lazy Sunday yesterday, much to my admiration and approval. His main point, if I understood him correctly*, was that the Indians, despite bad pitching and bad hitting, are holding steady. And rather than panic, we should be happy that water is being tread and the Indians are maintaining their hold on the Central Division.

**Paul's Lazy Sunday column was a Swiss Watch. If you've yet to read it I encourage you to do so immediately.*

The Tribe, like the Dude, abides.

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I like this approach. It appeals to me. I like to consider myself a laid back sort of guy, just like the Dude. Heck, I even took my interweb handle, motherscratcher, from the Coen Brother's masterpiece Raising Arizona*.

**No, not that motherscratcher.*

But, there is another part of me. A Cleveland part of me, that thinks...no...a part of me that is absolutely convinced that the plane has crashed into the G****mn mountain!

This is my concern, dudes.

I'd like to be able to hang around with Pauly drinking Caucasians and believing nothing is #\$\$^%&* here, man. Nothing is #\$\$^%&*.

But I can't. I could rationalize it last week when the Tribe was going up against the likes of Lester, Beckett, Price, and Shields. Those are great pitchers and you are happy to make it through that gauntlet with everything intact and no worse for wear. And the Indians did that.

But this last series was a different story. The Indians didn't just get swept, at home, in a four game series against the Rangers. They got their asses handed to them. They saw, first hand, what happens when you find a stranger in the Alps. And it scares me. The pitching has fallen back to earth and over the last month, the Tribe is displaying some of the worst hitting this side of Tony Pena Jr. Orly Cabrera has a .483 OPS since the calendar turned over to May, and that pederast Hannahan's isn't much better.

This sweep by the Rangers just felt different. Against the Red Sox and Rays, we ran up against some great pitching. We came through OK but lost a few games. It happens. Against the Rangers I felt like the Tribe was completely outclassed and I never really felt like we were going to win once we fell behind.

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That's not to say that we can't ever beat the Rangers; it just shows that there is a lot of work to do to get back on that horse, and things might not be as easy as they appeared a few short weeks ago. The reality is that the Indians have lost 9 of their last 12 games, and that's hard to explain away.

What has to happen now is to stop the bleeding and get a bit of a spring back in our step. The first chance is going to come starting tonight in a 3 game series against the Twins, who have been awful this year, but have strung together a nice little four game winning streak. Of course that nice little four game winning streak came on the heels of the Twins losing 10 of 12 over the last few weeks, so it's hard to make the claim that the Twins have figured it out.

If the pitching that the Tribe faced against the Red Sox and the Rays was quantifiably good, and the Rangers pitching was sneakily good*, the Tribe will have run out of excuses for continuing their offensive slide into bolivian. The Twins starting pitching, for lack of a better word, kind of sucks.

The pitching the Indians will face includes former Indian Carl Pavano, who is almost as old as Orly Cabrera, who is almost as old as me, which is ridiculous for a major league ballplayer. Also starting for the Twins will be Fransisco Liriano, who was once good, and one day may be again, but as of right now he is decidedly not. At least not while he's walking almost as many batters as he's striking out.

Starting off the game tonight will be Scott Baker, who is actually halfway decent, but has not pitched in a game that the Twins have won in over a month. If the Indians want to get back on track, they have to win two of these three games, minimum, to finish off the homestand.

As soon as the Twins leave the tropical paradise that is northeast Ohio in June, the Indians are off to New York City to play the Yankees in a four game set. This will not be easy. Especially for Josh Tomlin who is scheduled to start one of the games and is the opposite of a ground ball pitcher.

Tomlin has had success this year by craftily cajoling opposing batters to pop up fly ball after fly

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ball to no disastrous effect. The occasional home run that he's given up, which happens when you give up a lot of fly balls, have more often than not been of the solo variety. That may also be the case when he's pitching in Yankee Stadium next Sunday. All I know is that I'd hate to have to rely on Orlando Cabrera, Adam Everett, and Austin Kearnes to try to match the Yankee's Home Run for Home Run. Because the Yankees will hit some.

The other pitchers the Tribe will face include our former friends Captain Cheesburger and Bartolo Colon. I have still not forgiven Sabathia for the interview he did during a Cavs game a few years ago, BD (before decision), where he told the sideline reporter that LeBron should come to New York because "there's nothing like winning a championship in New York".*

**This was the season after he was traded by the Indians. Man was I pissed off after seeing that interview, which I saw live. I remember thinking "FU CC! You know what there's nothing like?! Winning a Championship In Cleveland! That's because nobody's done it in a half century you rotund piece of crap!" But I'm nothing if not level headed so I was able to calm myself down. At least I was able to until I read his comments about a year ago talking about the Indians and how he thought they should have kept the team together for a few more seasons in order to have a shot to win the World Series. Yeah fat boy, because I'm sure Cleveland had a pretty good shot to sign you to a two year contract you disingenuous A-Hole.*

I don't begrudge CC for taking the money. I would have done the same thing. Just don't insult my intelligence, minimal as it may be, with some bullcrap about keeping the team together for a few more years, as if that was possible. And don't leave and immediately court the best athlete in the history of Cleveland sports because winning a championship in New York is such a "rare" thing, or some such shit. Just eat your cheeseburgers, pitch you games, and don't pretend like you ever gave a crap about my town.

Fat boy.

The worst part is that, in retrospect, with Isaiah Thomas likely back with the Knicks in some capacity, there's no team in the NBA that I'd rather have LeBron on right now.

Dammit, I got myself all worked up. Where was I?

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Oh yeah, Bartolo Colon. Apparently he's somehow rejuvenated his career by sucking the stem cells out of recently aborted pig fetuses or something. I saw something similar on an episode of South Park once, although I never suspected it was real. I have no idea what to think about that guy.

No matter what, the Indians have six games next week. Three of them are against a bad team that is playing well right now. The other three are against a good team (with a starting rotation hell bent on putting Old Country Buffet out of business) that is playing exactly how they should be playing. And the Indians are playing their worst ball of the entire season. But, our boys will not be going up against the caliber of pitcher that they saw frequently a week and a half ago, and they will not be facing a lineup as daunting as that of the Rangers. This is a great week to turn things around and get back on track.

I hope the way I've been feeling the last couple days is wrong. I hope the plane hasn't crashed into the mountain. I hope Pauly C is right and the Tribe is just abiding. But those are the words of the Stranger. I prefer some words straight from Walter's mouth to my ears.

Nothing is F***ed here, dude. C'mon, you're being very undude.

Maybe that's it. Maybe I'm just being undude here. I want to believe that. I choose to believe that.

4-2 for the Tribe next week with Cord Phelps leading the charge.

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