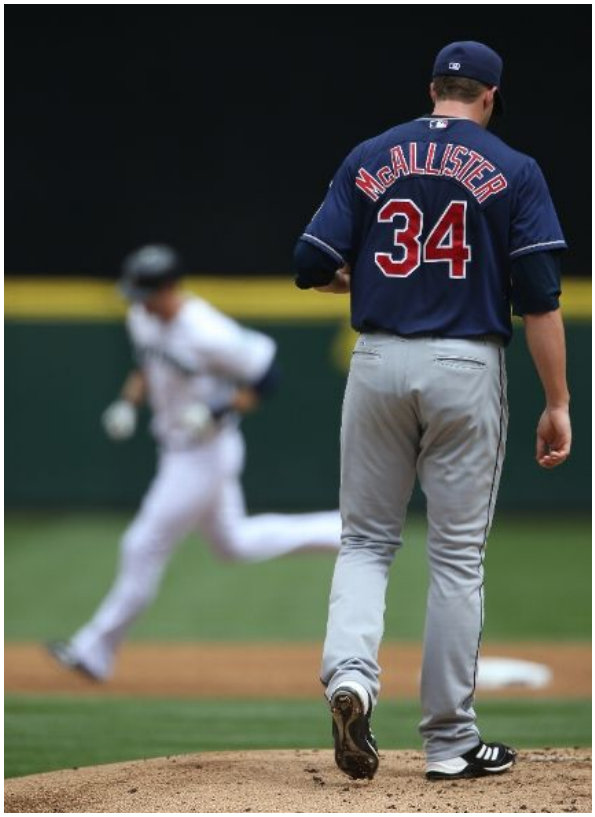

You mean today is an off day? Oh sweet mercy. I'm not sure if I can handle nine right now, I need a day. And since there's no game on Thursday, that means I don't have to agonize in a long post about losing nine. Because you know it's coming, it's likely coming.

August 22nd, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **1**

Seattle Mariners - **3**

W: Stephen Pryor (3-0) L: Vinnie Pestano (3-1) S: Tom Wilhelmsen (19)

[BOXSCORE]

I just... I'm not sure what there is left to say. You can do everything possible. You can get a more than solid starting effort from someone like Zach McAllister. You can get some offense, albeit an offense that puts up eight hits and walks six times and can only score one time on a rather weakly hit grounder to third.

It might as well be another long losing streak. Another long road trip comes to an end and it's pretty said that your losses come oh-so-close to the number of games you had on said road trip. It's also said when you go through this twice.

I feel like I've played this game before. What is.... gets in a good pitcher's duel, reliever gives up go-ahead double to guy who's struck out three times in the game already and offense can't do anything in the ninth against a former bartender.

If that was Jeopardy, I'd be Sean Connery folks. That was money.

That was what happened in a nutshell, because I'm all about providing you with the nutshell at this point in the season. In fact most of this entry will be a nutshell.

Here's the first of what is likely to be many stats (if you read other recaps), I don't usually like to take tallies and what not, but the Indians have now lost two sets of eight games in a single season since 1987. I wasn't even alive.

Now that I've completely tangented this entire discussion about... Heck I don't even think this was going anywhere. There's Bill Cosby references and impersonations going on so I'm just a good soldier at this point.

Who deserves extra credit is **Zach McAllister**, who does yet another good job at his job! Congratulations. McAllister threw the ball well and
got what he needed to do done
.

"I'm very happy with the way this guy has thrown the ball and competed for us," Acta said. "Going forward, with how valuable pitching is, as we all know, and the issue that it has presented to us this year, he looks like he could be a very important part of what we're trying to do here. He has been our most consistent guy over the last two months."

He walked three, but only gave up three hits, so really he did well. He controlled the traffic and the only thing that hurt him was the fact that he gave up just a solo home run. One mistake and it didn't cost anyone the game. You pick like he did on most nights and that is good enough to win the game. It's just when your team is on a seven game losing streak, the thing that is bound to happen is that the offense will not score.

It was once again, as it always seems to be lately, a matter of not coming through with the opportunities, because they certainly had plenty. One-for-nine in the run scoring opportunity column. Heck even the first inning when they had two on and less than two outs for Santana and Brantley. Nothing.

The common theme seemed to be double plays, as the Indians grounded into three of them. They did it in the second, third, and fourth, with Zeke Carrera being responsible for two of them. The sixth is when they scored their measly run and even had an opportunity to score more with runners on. And then in the eighth The almighty Brent Lillibridge pinch-hits for the only guy that seems to have been knocking in runs and getting hits lately in Casey Kotchman to strike out with two on and less than two outs.

That's an opportunity in a majority of the innings to score, also if you include the ninth when they put Lou Marson on and Wilhelmsen seemed to be a little out of sorts not throwing many strikes or fastballs. So a perfectly winnable game, a perfectly fine pitched game, and the downfall was the offense.

You can't even blame **Vinnie Pestano** in his first official loss of the season. He gave up the big hit that let the go-ahead run score, a wacky double by Eric Thames that landed him on third and broke a real bad 0-for-3 with three strikeout night. That man has single-handedly killed the Indians in all three games of the series. He went just 4-for-11 with four RBI, but all his hits were huge and he hit two home runs. They were just clutch hits at the right moments.

And so we sit here, eight straight once again, staring down not a return home, but a return home that will be greeted by: New York, Oakland, and Texas.

Um, no thanks. Two first place teams and one that is not only second, but playing good baseball and leading one of the wild cards. The Indians sure are eyeing last place now.

We will talk about this in a second but Manny Acta better not even think of falling on the sword for this team. This is not a team worth falling on the sword for. This is not a team where it was stacked and because they underachieved or whatever, they didn't do as well as they were supposed to.

"It's never been done in the history of the game where 25 guys get released," Acta said. "They should relax. If one guy is going to go, it's going to be me, not them. So relax and play the game. They're trying too hard."

This is a team that played above their heads because their manager got them to.

And I hope someone reads that.

Random Details...

The loss was indeed the first of the season for Vinnie Pestano, showing you just how good he's been and how he hasn't really surrendered many leads. He's also not had the need to come into many tie games and when he has given up the lead, the Indians have managed to get him off the hook in the few times it has happened.

This was the third straight start for McAllister that was decent and other than the less-than-two inning, nine run bombing (of which two only counted as earned runs), he's really turned in nothing but quality outings, going at least five innings in every start and only then he's only failed to go six innings four times, just three since he's been a full-time starter.

Typically Asdrubal Cabrera and Shin-Soo Choo kill their former team in Seattle. Cabrera's line as it stands is .296 average with four homers and 18 RBI in 41 games. Choo in 39 games has hit .293 with eight home runs and 26 RBI.

Together in this series? A combined 5-for-23 with one RBI. That's not good any series, and it is probably a reason you only scored five runs the entire series.

And the offense has been so bad in the past six games, they've scored just 14 runs. That's 2.3 runs per game. That's, simply not cutting it when you're giving up over five runs per game, which they did in the last six games.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

I don't particularly like talking about the slump or the losing streak or any of that. To me, it's just losses. At this point in the season, it really matters little if you win or lose. Of course it would be nice to win for morale's sake, but I'm more concerned with seeing good performances. Of course good performances would lead to more winning, so I guess in the end, the losses mean nothing, because either way, I'm not really seeing what I'd like to see.

But I guess in it all, there is Manny Acta. I know some have been calling for his head, which to me is completely insane. Acta is a good leader of men and teacher of players. He knows the game, like most managers do, and he uses logic in his reasoning for decisions he's made. He'll also always own up to his mistakes and the team's pitfalls.

But he's also stern and willing to dish out the criticism when it is deserved. I think he's a good leader for this team and would take him to manage my squad any day. What has to be said about him during this second-half falling out is how he's managed to somehow get his team to still play for him
. And don't forget how he got a team of really mediocre, compared to their competition, talented players to play above their ceiling and lead the division.

"It's challenging to keep them motivated even when you're going good," Acta said on

Wednesday. "It's a big amount of people. This is not a basketball roster. It is a challenge, but in this type of situation, yeah, it is harder, especially because you don't have that many veterans on the team."

Acta says one of the ways he does it is to show up on the next day the same he did on the last one and prepare to put his team in a game. He's losing sleep, but he's doing what he can and he says he's doing the best he can.

And really, if I'm here to pick sides, because I've seen a lot of that lately, I'm picking Manny Acta's over management. If there's a him or me case, I'm taking me because Acta is doing what he can with what he's given. He's been given a group of players that play hard and are good people and some are talented. But it isn't sufficient to do what people want him to do. It isn't his fault and I hate to see him take the blame for it.

One thing the team will have to evaluate is what they want to do with the Designated Hitter position . It really is a luxury to have it in the AL if you can use it to effectively rotate people and keep bats in the lineup where as they would normally get a day off. Some teams, like Kansas City use it for a guy who is good offensively, but not really a fit anywhere on defense with Billy Butler. And then you have teams like the Indians and Red Sox, who have guys who are pretty much the last of a dying breed, the full-time DH because quite frankly, they're either too hurt to play a position or simply, suck.

"It all depends on your options," Acta said. "Ideally, down the road, that's the way the majority of the teams are moving forward, where they can have a guy that can play a position on the field and they can rotate guys through there and keep them fresh. But if you have an ideal guy to be there, to be a force in your lineup, I wouldn't be opposed to that. You just have to weigh your options and go from there."

While I wouldn't rule it out, I think it is all but unlikely **Travis Hafner** returns to the Indians next year. It will not be easy for me to have to part with dear Pronky, and heck a few years ago, I might have had a fit over this and denied the very real likelihood the Indians let him walk. But it seems like, just reading into Acta's quote a bit, the Indians are going to start shifting to the current model. With a guy like Carlos Santana especially and people like Shelley Duncan, it makes more sense to use it as a rotation spot and fill it regularly with someone like Duncan who isn't horrible defensively, but is more useful because of his bat.

Manny Acta says that it is quite simple. The reason **Ubaldo Jimenez** is surrendered a career high number of home run balls is because he's behind in the count. There is a reason they call 2-0 and 3-1 hitters counts. It's likely you throw a fastball to them and they know that, so they're going to hack.

"It's crazy," Jimenez said. "I don't know what it is. I guess it's just that every time I fall behind in the count, I try to throw a fastball in there and they're hacking hard and getting it out of the park."

I wrote my sentence before I even read Ubaldo's quote, no joke.

So the solution is simple then, throw strikes? Right? Yeah of course. Jimenez has that little problem, but what's encouraging is that it never has been a problem. So we know there is a way to correct said issue, it's just a matter of figuring out how and how quickly it can get resolved.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a vist at The Tribe Daily , because his caught stealing percentage is higher than 12 percent.

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