The Streak Part II is over... The Indians have 18 home games left on the season (16 road games, including another 10 game swing). They'll see four playoff contenders (Oakland, Chicago, Detroit, Texas) in the final stretch. They'll see all but Oakland twice, but they have four games with the A's. If you want out now, I'd understand.

August 26th, 2012

New York Yankees - **4**

Cleveland Indians - **2**

W: Boone Logan (5-2) L: Ubaldo Jimenez (9-13) S: Rafael Soriano (33)

[BOXSCORE]

But I have a job to do and whether we all like it or not. This season has spiraled out of control. Maybe the bleeding has finally stopped. I don't know. My guess is that more losing is ahead of us and unless someone else other than Masterson steps up, there may be a few more losing streaks (albeit probably not to the magnitude of the last two) ahead.

It's no use running down the numbers. They've been ugly. The last time the Indians won back-to-back games? The last time they won a series? The last time they did anything even remotely close to putting together a winning stretch of baseball? Should we even care to worry about this ? Winning two games in a row? How about winning more than one game every week.

"We can't be talking about stringing wins together," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "We need to take it one at a time and win one before you can string two, three or four. Before we get to three, we need to win one again."

I can't really recall specifics and don't want to bore you with the awful details of the numbers. They're bad. We get it. Since early July, there hasn't been much good and that's the last traces of many of the things I just mentioned.

One thing is for sure. The Indians seem to AT LEAST be pitching better in the past week. The Mariners series wasn't superb, but it was better than the drubbings from earlier in the month. And hey, look at what they did against the Yankees. Eight runs in three games against a good lineup. A few weeks ago, eight runs was given up before the fifth inning.

It isn't all better, but at least now the team is remotely watchable on a daily basis. Watchable, but frustrating.

Which was the key in Sunday's game. Frustrating. It goes to the opportunities that this team had early. They were squandered and then with a three run second, it almost seemed impossible. They got a three-run shot on Saturday and if they didn't get that, they don't win that game.

So three runs in the second, is pretty much a death sentence.

You can just start in the first with Kipnis starting the game off with a single and a steal. Cabrera, Choo AND Santana all have an opportunity to bring him in and they all failed.

Fast-forward to the third with Hannahan on second to lead off the inning with a double. Carrera strikes out, Hannahan then advances to third on an error that allowed Kipnis to reach. Cabrera proceeds to strike out and Choo follows with a walk.

Santana AGAIN with fly ball to end the inning. Twice in one game, twice in a span of three innings.

The one time he came through was in the fifth, again with the bases juiced, he comes up and smacks the first pitch he sees right up the middle.

It would be bad news if we were sitting here and he had missed on all three opportunities. But still, this man is your cleanup hitter. He's in the fourth spot because he's supposed to pick up those runs. Not all of them, but MOST of them. He has to come through with at least a few more runs than the ones he had. With more than six runs sitting out there, he is getting paid to be the cleanup hitter.

We can talk about the pitching being horrible, but in regards to this offense. **Carlos Santana** is why they've failed. He's failed more times than not and he has not been the cleanup hitter the Indians have needed him to be.

And this game was a perfect snapshot of that. He's got the talent, the ability. He can come through in those situations. But more times than not (two out of three) he did not this year. And ultimately this is what this game came down to.

"Offensively, we just didn't execute very well early in the game," Acta said. "We had a couple of opportunities with runners at second with no outs, and we didn't end up taking advantage of it. We kind of let Freddy off the hook a couple of times."

Yeah, a couple times.

They also had an opportunity in the ninth against closer Rafael Soriano. Jack Hannahan singled to lead off the frame, only to be erased by a Zeke force out. Jason Kipnis stung a ball, bidding for his fourth hit, right up the middle that Soriano was able to somehow stop with his glove enough to pick it up and throw it to Teixeira. Really that's how the Indians are going right now. Even if they do something right, it goes wrong.

Random Details...

I know he's only hitting .269 (jeeze, only!) but it isn't fair that Ichiro can hit eighth in a lineup. Speaking of Ichiro, how about Santana throwing him out at second from his knees? Laserrrr

Honest question: Would you take Freddy Garcia at 99-years-old or Ubaldo Jimenez right now? Sure he couldn't complete five innings, but more times than not this year he'll at least give you a few solid innings. For the price? I'd take a Freddy Garcia over Ubaldo. His ERA is a run better and he isn't as much of a headache.

That's ultimately what we've come to. Jimenez was not bad in this one. He went give, gave up three runs, only walked one. But it's just a ho-hum start, and after reading the excellent point Paulie C. made in the latest Lazy Sunday about Ubaldo , in which he puts on display a quote that really does make it look like Ubaldo doesn't care, I don't really care either.

If the Indians are in a position to get rid of Tony Sipp in the offseason, they probably should. I'd rather go with Esmil Rogers back there and take my chances with Nick Hagadone. Rogers tossed two scoreless innings and he at least has a live arm to fall back on when his control might not be there. I'm sick and tired of watching Tony Sipp go out there and just get run-down.

[ROTATING ON AN AXIS]

There's always a lot after the weekend, so where to start, where to start...

Might as well start with the starting pitching, not just because it has the word start in it, but because I'd rather get the most ugliest of things out of the way.

As insane this sounds, the Indians are contemplating moving to a six-man rotation once rosters expand next week. Say that again? The Indians are contemplating moving to a six-man rotation once rosters expand next week.

No, I'm not going to say it again, it doesn't matter how many times you hear it, it doesn't make any more sense...

"There's a chance that we might call up a starter," Acta said. "We're discussing a plan of probably going with a six-man rotation, which will help some of the younger kids and also some of the guys who have been here the whole year, with their innings. That's not etched in stone yet, but that's part of the plan if we call up one of the starters."

Well, when you put it THAT way then yes it does make sense. But consider the two candidates to add to the mix are David Huff and Jeanmar Gomez, well, yeah... The whole point is to limit innings and I get that, but the move isn't because the Indians are so overwhelmed with depth and want to get a look at someone else without removing anyone, it's because the lot of the bunch absolutely suck.

If it does happen for Huff, it could be his swan song. I can't see him sticking around on that 40-man another offseason and the Indians have clearly moved on from the idea of him being anything of importance to them.

Don't expect that sixth spot to be occupied by Carlos Carrasco this season. He will begin pitching in the Arizona League though
.

The few starters that are actually watchable right now? Well Zach McAllister is in there, but at

the top is still **Justin Masterson**. He's not really pitching like an ace, hasn't since last year, but he's at least capable of going out there at more than a flip of the coin and being good. The inconsistency, as we've talked about all season, has plagued him, but he has broke off another good streak as he is prone to do.

"That's been the tale of this season," Masterson said. "It's not like, 'What team is going to show up?' but 'What Justin, at times, will show up?' But the last three or four have been good. ... Overall, I like where we're at."

Manny Acta believes Masterson has been more consistent in the second half than in the first. The numbers slightly indicate that Acta is correct (better ERA, better record), but whatever the case, his start on Saturday was much needed to break the Indians latest slide. And he did it against the Yankees, which is always a nice bonus.

"[If] I get better balance, I stay back, I drive through the ball a little bit better," Masterson said. "[It's about] staying balanced and letting the ball do the work."

I've said this before, but I will say it one more time. I love Justin Masterson. He's a good pitcher, capable of starting in any rotation in the game. He would be lower-end on some of the more stacked rotations (LAA, Philly) but more times than not, he'll be in the middle to upper-end of a rotation.

I don't think he's a number one though and the Indians need to recognize that. They probably do, and that's probably why the acquired Ubaldo Jimenez. Whether they recognize it or not, I doubt there's anything they can do about it at this juncture. Masterson would be a fantastic number two if he could pitch behind a bonafied-ace-stud of a pitcher. But he can't, not in Cleveland, not right now. So he has to take on the burden of being that number one guy.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN - JUSTIN TOOLE EDITION]

[redacted]