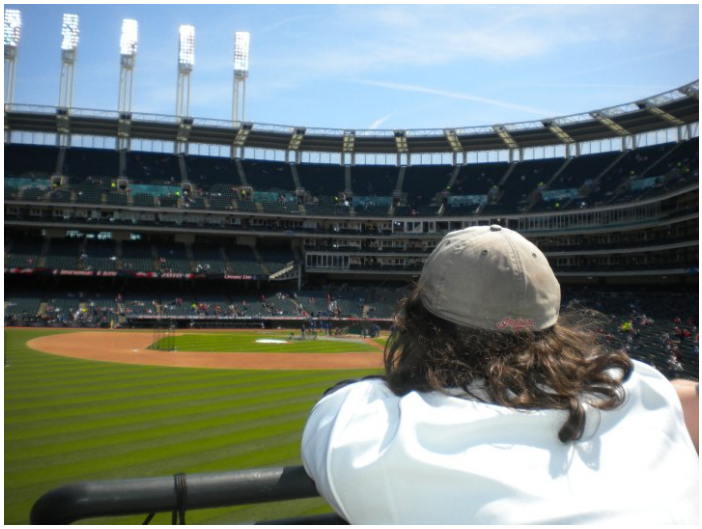

5-24. That's the record that the Indians compiled in August. Add in their four losses at the end of July and they've lost 28 out of their last 33 games. There are tons of reasons why. There's not enough talent, the starting pitching is epically horrible, and, quite frankly, they look like they've quit.

In the month of August, the Indians allowed 24 unearned runs. Their team ERA was 5.52. If you factor in the unearned runs, the team's ERA for the month was 6.38. How many games are you going to win when you can't pitch and can't play defense? Errors happen and they are a part of the game. But, the Indians gave up 37 unearned runs in the first four months of the season combined.

What about the offense? Well, this past month, they walked once every 14.75 plate appearances. In April, it was one walk for every eight PA, May was every 11 PA, June 13.7 PA, and July 10.35 PA. Is that an unwillingness to work counts? Is that an unwillingness to draw a walk? The Indians did have one of their higher pitches per plate appearance months for the season in August, so certain guys are still buying in.

Considering that the Indians have played from behind more often than not this season, they're batting .240 as a team when trailing this season. Remember when we fell in love with last year's team because we never felt like they were out of a game? At least, not for the first half of the season in 2011. Those days are long gone.

Above all, this is one of those things that cannot be quantified by stats. It's something that has

to be seen with the eye test. Having gone to a few of the games during this stretch, the atmosphere in the ballpark is just depressing. The body language of most players just looks sad. Guys aren't hustling. The pitchers just keep doing what isn't working rather than make adjustments.

This team used to be so relatable to the fans of Cleveland. They were a blue collar team that used focus and effort to compensate for a lack of talent. They embodied the city's never say die mindset. It wasn't a team full of prima donna, high-salaried players. It was a team of homegrown talent or strokes of luck that we got in trades with other teams. Even back in 2007, when there was a lot more talent on the team than there is now, it was homegrown. CC Sabathia had grown up before our eyes. Fausto Carmona was an international free agent that grew up through the minors. Victor Martinez was in the same boat.

They had an identity. They had fan favorites. There were guys on the team that made playing fun, and watching even more fun. That doesn't exist anymore. Outside of a small percentage of the 25-man roster, there are no fan favorites. There are no energy guys. Why did this city take to Jason Kipnis so much? Because he ran everything out. He's not a big guy. He's not even 6' tall, but generates a lot of power and tremendous bat speed. This season, he's worn down because, at times, the entire offense was put on his shoulders. It's his first full season in the Majors. But, he runs hard down the line every time and has worked extremely hard at second base as a converted outfielder.

By no means is Kip the most talented player in the league, maybe not even the most talented on the team. But, he understands the game. He knows that you can make up for some shortcomings by playing hard. Putting pressure on the opposition. Working counts. Using the whole field. There aren't enough players like that on the Cleveland Indians.

Carlos Santana was benched the other day for not running out a ground ball. Message sent, right? He did the same thing in the eighth inning of the following day's game.

There are too many mechanical players on this team. Guys who wake up, go to the ballpark, take their four at bats, and go home. When's the last time that any of them looked like they had any fun playing? No, losing isn't any fun. But, you don't stop losing by falling into a valley of self-deprecation about the way that things are going. Someone has to take the team by the balls and be an example.

As much as talent matters, so, too, does leadership. Consider who was on that 2007 team. Paul Byrd, Trot Nixon, Victor Martinez, Grady Sizemore, Travis Hafner, CC Sabathia, Jake Westbrook. These guys all have varying levels of talent. But, they were also all leaders. Some of them were vocal leaders, veterans who had been around the block several times and could help talk a guy out of a 5-for-35 slump. Some of them led by example, guys who gave maximum effort every time out, no matter the score, or the place in the standings. They played hard whether it was the first game of a road trip or the team's 18th straight game. Some of them were a combination of both. Some of them were just a calming influence to the rotation or the lineup.

The current Indians have very few guys like that. Consistency is an undervalued element of baseball. It's nice to know that you have a starting pitcher on the mound that will give you five-to-seven innings of two-to-four runs and keep you in the game. You know exactly what to expect and everybody knows what their job will be that day. The offense needs to score four or five runs. The bullpen should be prepared for a close game. This year, you don't know if you're going to win 3-2 or lose 18-4. That makes it very hard to prepare for each game.

The Indians have had a handful of "Players Only" meetings lately. What guy on the team stands up and speaks? What guy on the team would you want to stand up and speak? I don't see anybody that fits that bill. Jason Kipnis came out last week and spoke about personal accountability. He's 25 years old. He called out his teammates in his second season. Most players won't do that.

But, you know what? He was 100% right. That's the kind of guy this team needs more of. Not somebody who is going to sugar coat everything and pretend like it is all unicorns and rainbows. When the chips are down, some guys just shrug off the media and don't talk. Others use the PR blueprint on how to handle difficult questions, with empty answers and stupid clichés. Kipnis unloaded his frustration and rightly so. He plays with his heart every night while other guys go through the motions. He's still fighting through a slump he's been in for a couple of months now, when he could just as easily pack it in and wait until next year and start fresh. He's tired. He's hurting. He comes to the ballpark and gives max effort anyway.

The Indians are a village without a chief. They may have one in Kipnis, but he's 25 years old and veterans may just ignore him. One isn't enough. Not only does the front office need to re-evaluate the way they look at players, who they set their sights on, and make some philosophical changes, they need to put more emphasis on character and leadership qualities. Teams with leaders don't go 5-24 in a month. Teams with leaders don't go from three games

out to 17.5 games out in the span of 33 days.

The lack of leadership, the lack of talent, the lack of everything...it just screams to how far away the Indians truly are. They need more than guys who can play the game. They need guys who can help other guys between the lines, in the dugout, or in the clubhouse. They need consistent performers. They need calming influences. They need a complete overhaul of the roster.