Jason Davis drives me crazy.

I am having a hard time putting my finger on exactly what it is that drives me crazy about him, other than the obvious fact that he's neither our #2 starter nor our closer by now. These are unfair and hasty expectations to put on a young pitcher, but by golly, that's what I thought Jason Davis was going to become. And he may still. Who the heck knows? He drives me crazy.

It would help if he were better or worse.

If he were better, he would have a defined role on the team and we'd be talking about whether that role is best-suited for him or if he's best-suited for it. If he were worse, I could simply give up on him. But he isn't, and so I can't. Which drives me crazy.

I started looking into Davis' statistics and his scouting reports and stuff like that, and I got a mess. I was expecting high walk rates, which I didn't get, although I did get (relatively) high ERAs and HR rates. I was expecting a low GB/FB ratio because I think of him as a classical power pitcher, and it turns out he isn't. I

wanted something to scream at me, and all I got was a bunch of numbers milling around like Chess Club guys at the high school party, mumbling to themselves and occasionally laughing a bit to loudly at something that wasn't really funny.

This drove me crazy. So I stopped doing it.

Instead, I tried to look at why you do or do not give up on young pitchers. These may not be the most representative comparisons to Davis (especially the left-hander, which Davis is not), but they came to mind and drove me crazy in one way or another as well.

The Good Decision That Didn't Work Out: Jeff Shaw

I always grumbled when I watched Shaw have success later in his career: how could we have let that guy get away? And Shaw used to take the opportunity to bad-mouth Cleveland as well, saying that he "never got an opportunity" to pitch for the Tribe. Shaw was a #1 overall pick, who ...

(Wait a minute, let me stop there: I had no freaking idea that Jeff Shaw was the NUMBER ONE OVERALL PICK. Number one overall! Jeff Shaw! I had trouble with that. It turns out that this was the January JUCO portion of the old split draft. I'm move on now.)

... made the big league club in 1990, where he pitched poorly, but hey, he was a rookie. His next season he was a relief specialist: not a closer, but an oft-used arm, and he put up respectable numbers. Well, I mean, sorta. His 3.36 ERA was better than the league-average 4.14. His WHIP was okay. But he had a 31/27 K/BB ratio in over 72 innings. What was he throwing, gunk? The next season he was truly atrocious (and sent down). He became a six-year minor-league free agent and the Royals signed him, then turned around and traded him to Montreal.

Now, I remembered him as being good in Montreal, but he wasn't, really. He was

okay. Montreal granted him free agency, picked him up again, traded him to the White Sox, who let him go to free agency, and the Reds picked him up for the bargain price of $450K.

And then he was *great*.

Now, at the time, there was very little reason to think that Jeff Shaw was going to become great. He had some pedigree, to be sure, so there's a temptation to believe there's something there, but his K rates were awful, his K/BB ratios abysmal, and he simply didn't get guys out. It's nice to have young arms in the system, but at some point you have to protect the ones who earn protection, and Jeff Shaw was not that guy. So I retroactively apologize to the Tribe brass of the past for denigrating their decision: despite his future success, releasing Shaw made sense.

Whereas trading Steve Kline made NO sense.

The Simply Bad Decision: Steve Kline

Look, I'm not here to tell you that Steve Kline is the greatest pitcher in Tribe history or that he's been Cy Young since he left or that we'd have won a World Series if we'd Only Kept Steve Kline (gnash, gnash). Who knows? I'll tell you this, though: there's a significant argument that the Tribe doesn't GO to the World Series in 1997 if it weren't for Steve Kline. In April that season, the pitching staff was a shambles due to injuries. On comes Kline, a lefty who is (correctly, one could argue) viewed as more of a bullpen guy, but is asked to do yeoman's work and put in a buncha innings and a spot start. Which he did, going 3-1: he was basically the bright spot for the Indians. If they'd have gotten off to a start like the '05 Indians, the other teams in the Division might have gotten off their collective duffs and done something to challenge Cleveland. Maybe this is over-romanticizing a bit (who am I kidding? It's over-romanticizing a LOT: Kline had an ERA of 6 and a WHIP over 1.8, but the man did keep the season afloat), but Kline really did make a significant positive contribution during a tough stretch for a battered staff. For which, of course, he was traded to Montreal for Jeff

Juden.

Man, I was livid. I hate giving up left-handed pitching anyway, and there was no reason why Kline couldn't have moved to the 'pen (Assenmacher was already clearly not the Paul of '95 by then) after the starters returned. The point is, sometimes you can tell trading away a guy is a bad idea EVEN IF HE'S NOT PUTTING UP GREAT NUMBERS. Anyway, long story short, Kline has been a very valuable pitcher for many years (including a key part of a couple Cardinals runs), and we got a guy with a reputation for being a knuckleheaded flake who turned out to be a knuckleheaded flake. We got bupkes.

Which, ironically, is what you get from a lot of guys who drive you crazy.

The Guy Who Isn't Actually Good: Willie Martinez

Do you remember Willie Martinez? Man, I remember Willie Martinez: I traded him to Minnesota in a package with Richie Sexson for whichever of David Ortiz, Todd Walker, and Matt Lawton I could get. (It was kind of a long time ago.) Martinez was, at various points in the mid-90s, the One Guy who was clearly going to have big-league success. He wowed 'em in Akron, and it was only a matter of time before he moved up to Buffalo and on to Cleveland and isn't young pitching great?

Well, *great* young pitching is great. Mediocre young pitching is more common and less satisfying, especially when it might not even be young. Willie Martinez simply never made the adjustments or strides or whatever the hell it is a young(ish) pitcher does to get to the bigs, and we let him go. This was much the same route as Shaw, in that he was picked up by the Twins, but never went on to Shaw's success. Heck, he didn't go on to Jason Davis' success. He was bad, he stopped pitching, that's enough of that. Nothing to see here, move on, please.

So what can we conclude from this? That Jason Davis is not the first pitcher to drive me crazy.

Here's my guess: I'll look at the numbers a little more, maybe try to convince them to hold still and stop muttering Monty Python quotes, maybe actually reach a conclusion, but off the top of my head:

Best Case Scenario: Kevin Millwood

Distressingly Plausible Scenario: Jeff Juden

Reasonable and Fair Scenario: Eric Plunk