We haven't woken up yet have we? Okay great. Just making sure. Because after this past weekend, I still can't believe my eyes for the most part.

Did we just see that? The Indians' offense went completely off in the first few games of spring. Flexing a muscle we didn't think was there. Granted, it's spring and if anything, with pitchers coming in every inning, some of which who may not be A) any good or B) quite up to speed. Still, it's impressive. There's enthusiasm, there's confidence, there's something different there.

Does it revolve strictly around Terry Francona? He's a big part, but he's by no means the sole reason. It's been the perfect storm as we've discussed here before. The Indians just hit it right, they got the right guy, they got some cash, they made some moves.

And it's an exciting time. Here's something that perplexes me though.

Did Michael Bourn come here because no one else was giving him a contract that he "deserved"?

He certainly came to the Indians attention when no one else was signing him and his price was most definitely, lowered a little bit.

But he wasn't robbed of anything, he didn't have to 'settle' for the deal he was given.

He earned that contract and deserves every penny of it for the way he played in his career up to this point.

I'm not about to bash Michael Bourn, or any one player mentioned.

But this post from Jon Heyman on CBSSports is quite comical.

Adam LaRoche settled for $13 million dollars for the next two years. Say that again. $13 million dollars this year, and $13 million dollars next year. He's settling for that.

Shane Victorino "settled" for a three year deal with Boston that will pay him just under $40 million, even after turning down an offer for more money from Cleveland.

Have these players been devalued by this new rule about draft picks, where players who turned down qualifying offers from their original teams lose draft picks? Let me answer that real simply. No.

These players have been reset to what their value should be. It sucks for them to play in this era, but this is baseball correcting itself. This is baseball putting a control on the outrageous spending that has been happening. This is a way for teams like Cleveland to play with the big

boys in terms of free agents. Nick Swisher may not be an Indian if he was a free agent last year.

The "trade" part of it is a little wonky. I don't agree with that so-much as losing draft picks for signing free agents part of it. Guys like Greinke and Sanchez certainly benefited a little more by not having draft picks associated to them, but they were getting paid regardless.

And here we go with the venom spewer.

“The system needs to be re-evaluated when you see a player who had a career year, has 100 RBI, 30 home runs and plays excellent defense do less well than a player who did not have a good year," said Scott Boras, the agent for Bourn and Lohse (bot not LaRoche). “A system that does not reward performance is not good for baseball."

The days of outrageous contracts are over. The MLB needs to turn this new leaf where teams like Cleveland have a chance and that contracts don't get out of control like they have been.

And then Heyman brings up the Bourn situation with the Mets? I'm pretty sure I heard the Mets offers the same deal, if not, an inferior one to Cleveland and while they had appealed the draft pick ruling, do you think if they liked Bourn enough, they would have let him get away? No, they are the Mets, they have the money.

I don't want to hear this garbage just because a few players signed with teams that were not expected, or because Kyle Lohse is still out there waiting for a team. Here's an idea Lohse. You're 34-years-old, no one is going to bust down your door with a 3-4 year offer. It's not happening. Sign a deal, get into camp, and stop letting Scott Boras tell you that you are a piece of steak and teams are waiting to feast.

And that brings me to another Boras client to start off today's rundown.

[CHOO THANKS TRIBE]

Nothing at all against Choo, not in the slightest. When he was traded, it was business, and I think everyone understood it. But the reality of it all is that **Shin-Soo Choo** brought it on himself when he signed with Scott Boras and followed the idea of testing free agency.

So as much as it is stand-up and nice to see Choo send Chris Antonetti a letter, some of the content is, well, oh well. Yup, it's oh well. Let me start with the good of it.

In the letter, which is a very stand-up thing to do, Choo told Antonetti that he is grateful for Cleveland pulling off the trade for him and giving him the opportunity to be an everyday player and that without it, there would be Shin-Soo Choo. That's very respectful and very awesome of him to say.

Then in a rather, odd, because people are not usual upfront and honest like Choo was in his letter, he mentioned how he was shocked about the move to center field. I think it is rather awesome to see someone like that be really real and just say what he's feeling and how he reacted.

That may hurt him a bit in what he's going to say.

"I know that baseball is a business," Choo wrote to Antonetti, "… but whenever I would see you in the clubhouse … and see the emotional strain on your face … I would feel really bad … I would even say to myself, 'Let's try harder and make a great team.' And I tried really hard for you … but unfortunately, the players just weren't able to answer your emotional call.

Now that I have been traded, I have so many things I feel bad about … but I firmly believe that Cleveland will change for the better. You have a lot of young and talented players … but most importantly … players that will listen and follow your leadership … As a result, I know you will get great performances and results in the near future."

There's a lot of heart and good meaning in what Choo said, but I think it is rather interesting how he feels bad. He feels bad for what? I mean, trading Choo was the right move, he was gone after this year. But that could have not been if it was up to him. The Indians could have given what they gave to Michael Bourn to Choo if he so desired.

I'm not going to debate if that is the right move or not, it is a moot point. But Choo shouldn't feel bad. This is the situation he ended up in and I'm sure he's grateful for the chance in Cincinnati, with a bonafied playoff contender this year and the chance to gain a good penny in free agency if he has a great year, but don't feel bad about how things ended. They had to end because of the unwillingness Choo had to work out some sort of a long term deal, something the Indians are willing to do with players if they are willing to listen.

Choo wasn't willing to listen, so save the sorry and enjoy Cincinnati. Thanks for everything, you have shown the feeling is mutual, and good luck. The letter is stand up, but don't apologize for what didn't happen. Apologize for not playing well, even though you don't need to, because the effort was always there.

[CARRASCO RETURNS, BAUER DEBUTS, DICE-K AND KAZMIR BEGIN]

What a busy Sunday it was for the Indians with a split squad game. All eyes were on the pitching with a few starters going, all of which are fighting for those last few rotations spots.

Reds - 0 | Indians -3

[BOXSCORE]

Let's start with the win over the Reds, which was the third in as many days and the exact opposite of the first two games. Unlike the first few which were offensively explosive, the Indians shut the Reds down completely.

One hit... Yup, one hit. It was given up by Rich Hill, who also walked a pair, just not a good afternoon for him, but he didn't give up a run, which isn't bad at all.

Everyone else, shut it down. **Zach McAllister** set the tone with two scoreless, one walk and a pair of strikeouts. He was followed by **Daisuke Matsuzaka** who also pitched two scoreless frames and walked one. Great debuts for both starters as they got the opportunity to send out their first shots in the battle for the rotation. Matsuzaka said that his fastball was right where he expected it to be and that he battled some strong wing conditions .

Relievers included Cody Allen, who was impressive with a pair of strikeouts and Preston Guilmet, who got the save.

The offense didn't need to do much, but it was Omir Santos who had a big double to knock in a pair to act as the Indians offense. He also scored the other run after Carlos Moncrief knocked him in.

Mark Reynolds had a pair of hits and Ben Francisco was 1-for-2. Sandy Alomar Jr. was the man in charge as Francona and Brad Mills headed on the road with the other half of the team.

Indians - 7 | Brewers - 4

[BOXSCORE]

Rightfully, all eyes were on **Carlos Carrasco** as he made his first appearance of 2013 , more than a year removed from his Tommy John surgery. Verdict?

"My arm's great," Carrasco said. "I got too excited today for the first time. It was my first outing

today. I've got a couple more. This is what happened and I can't do anything about it."

Carrasco only pitched one inning and he struggled. But it is not the stats that mater at this early juncture. He gave up four runs (three earnd) off four hits and walk. It would be the only runs the Indians gave up on the day though as the offense battled back.

Like Matsuzaka in the other game, the Indians had another comeback pitching going in this one and he turned in similar results. **Scott Kazmir** went two scoreless with one hit and a strikeout. He was followed by the debut of **Trevor Bauer**, who pitched two scoreless with a pair of hits and two strikeouts.

Also pitching was David Huff, who pitched two innings too, striking out a pair. He very much could find himself in a battle for some roster spot if he pitches well. Nick Hagadone picked up the save with a pair of strikeouts.

The Indians started with a pair of runs before Milwaukee's first runs in the bottom of the frame, and then added two more every other inning. In addition to Carlos Santana hitting a two-run shot, the big game came from **Ezequiel Carrera**, who hit a solo shot, walked twice, stole a base, and scored twice. Definitely a good start to his claim for the fourth outfield job.

Mike McDade, Mike Aviles and Cord Phelps knocked in the other runs, with Phelps walking twice and collecting a hit. Jeremy Hermida had three walks and scored a run.

Next Game: The Indians will be on the road for real this time, with all of their team as they take on the Athletics at 3:05. Justin Masterson gets the start and Ubaldo Jimenez is also scheduled to pitch.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Brett Myers made the start on Saturday and even though he started, it was a familiar role going

just a few innings. Eventually, he'll transition into going deeper and he is conditioning as a starter from the outset. He's not calling it a transition though, noting that that he's done the starting thing his whole career and that last spring was the first time he didn't prepare as one, if anything, it's a return to normalcy.

There was, however, a little dust-up with rookie Donald Lutz of the Reds after Myers hit him.

"I said something to the umpire," Myers said. "I said, 'He's got to get out of the way of that, doesn't he?' Because he didn't move at all. The umpire came out. I don't know if he said anything to [catcher Lou Marson] or whatnot. It wasn't anything. Maybe he thought I said something to him."

With a runner on first and two outs, Myers definitely misfired the pitch and hit Lutz on an accident, so he was implying that Lutz made no effort to get out of the way. Not sure if he needs to make an effort, especially if he isn't crowding the plate, but Lutz probably didn't need to glare.

How about the start **Ryan Raburn** is off to thus far? In three games the guy has four hits, three of them home runs, with five RBI and a walk. With a bench spot up for grabs, he definitely is one of the favorites because of a few things. One is versatility in what he can play for you, and two in his experience at the major league level.

Turns out Raburn was a target that Terry Francona suggested when he first came aboard. Francona is grateful that the Tigers non-tendered him and made him available for the Indians.

"He had a tough year. That happens," Francona said. "If he would've had a good year, we wouldn't have had a chance to get him. You have a guy with talent that the Tigers felt deserved the chance to be their starting second baseman. So there's something there."

And he could be on the Indians bench as a rebound player. That's just being smart with how you add someone in the offseason. If it doesn't work, no harm at all. If it does, you got another solid bench guy who can come in and start if an injury happens. And so far, so good with his

spring performance. Not that he's paying much attention to anything else other than that .

"I can't worry about too much other than coming out and playing every day like it's my last," Raburn said. "I don't have the luxury of having a roster spot. So far, everything is working and I feel great, though. I know I'm only two games in, but I just want to keep making quality at-bats and see where it takes me."

Raburn added that he thinks he figured out what went wrong with his swing last year and he's zoned in on the issue in an attempt to fix it. Looks like he has it working so far. He also owned up for how bad he played in Detroit in 2012 and is ready to move on and win a spot with the Indians.

Random Bits

- **Jason Giambi** is competing for a spot on the bench and as a part time DH and pinch hitter, but he'll have to do it with monitored at-bats . Francona says he doesn't want to run the veteran into the ground before the season even starts. So Giambi better make the at-bats worth it. He may not even need to have the stats to make the team though, a guy like him can make it on reputation alone, especially if he shows he is of value and putting up good at-bats, regardless of result.

- **Chris McGuiness** will see corner outfield time this spring, which will only help him make the roster as a Rule V pick this winter. That first base spot went from being unanswered with an opportunity, to being very tight in a short amount of time, so the more he can do, the better.

- He won't make the team, likely headed for Columbus, but **Juan Diaz** definitely has left an impression on Terry Francona . Diaz has a chance to build on that with Cabrera going to play in the WBC, meaning he and Aviles are the primary shortstops.

- **Joe Smith** threw a bullpen session on Saturday and nothing but good comments have come out from it. He notes that the earliest he'll pitch in a game is next week.
- Terry Pluto notes that Asdrubal Cabrera came into camp down 15 pounds . That's really good.
- Everyone got excited when the Indians first lineup was first put out there last Friday. Francona says not to read into it and that it means "nothing" in the grand scheme of how his lineup will look come April. Bourn was the only guy you can expect to be in the same spot and that he has to put more thought into what the whole thing will look like.

- Francona pretty much made the Indians marketing department's job easy as all get out. He came up with a slogan for the 2013 season . Goodbye "What If". Behold "This is Tribe Town" after Francona gave a great quote about how he spent his early life in Cleveland while his dad was a player and that Cleveland is a "Tribe Town".

- Kudos to the marketing squad for acting really quickly and adding a Michael Bourn replica jersey to the promo schedule for September. Hopefully September will still be worth watching and make the fact that a cool promo is going on just a secondary reason to attend a ball game in Cleveland.

- Every year, every team does their own photo day. I always find enjoyment of scrolling through the pictures. Unfortunately, there are no real weird things like in years past, or some really unfortunate pictures. If there are, I can't find them. Okay just kidding, Asdrubal's is really silly .
But if you'd like to see all 191 available,
you can visit Zimbio
. One picture that did result from the day that was humorous, but nowhere to be found online is one of Francona in a bigger hat
, which he had printed and hung up with the caption "I demand respect" under it. He demands respect? I demand that picture.

Finally, in case you missed it, check out my spot on the Lada-Parsons Project on NoStaticRadio. You can
listen to their whole episode here
. Thanks to Justin and Steve for having me on.

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Nino is in full baseball mode here and on The Tribe Daily , his own Indians blog. Don't miss all the fun, photoshopped Indians players, and LOLTribe ridiciulousness.

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