Great piece here from Erik Cassano, laying the blame for the early season weather fiasco squarely at the feet of Bud Selig and his goons. As a result, the Indians have not played a game in nearly a week, will be playing their home opener in Milwaukee tonight, and could potentially have to play a doubleheader versus the Mariners on the day after the scheduled end of the regular season. Only in Cleveland ...

In Cleveland, we like to count the ways fate smites us on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. Our failures in sports are only representative of whatever else makes us grind our teeth about living here, warranted or unwarranted.

So the fact that the Indians lost their first four home games to a nonstop onslaught of lake effect snow this weekend is merely the garnish on a plate of shoveling backaches and wheels spinning atop snow drifts, a frozen nightmare we thought we left behind more than a month ago.

Alas, this April is putting the "crap" in "crapshoot."

It's almost like the season never started. Buried somewhere in this frozen, white landfill are the buds of what was shaping up to be a pretty good start for the Tribe. A 2-1 series to start the season in Chicago, followed by a 4-0 lead that was nixed by a snowout Friday, one out shy of making the Indians' record 3-1.

Now, that start has been iced. Like a pack of shadow-startled groundhogs, the Indians have been forced back underground, relegated to indoor batting practice, lifting, stretching, and maybe some service-concourse long toss when no one else is around.

When the season resumes Tuesday in a bizarre neutral-site "home" series versus the Angels in Milwaukee, no one knows what shape this club will be in. Already, the cold weather has claimed the quadriceps of Victor Martinez, who will be on the shelf for two weeks at least. Who knows what the long, cold layoff did to the creaky arms of Joe Borowski and Roberto Hernandez?

No one bound to Earth can control the weather, so if you're looking for someone immediate to blame, don't look in the direction of the schedule-makers, who have an extremely difficult job pi ecing
together a 180-odd day schedule of daily games with minimal inconvenience for all involved, while taking into account weighted divisional play,
interleague

play, travel distance between cities and -- yes, the weather.

You can start by blaming the city of Cleveland for failing to secure the funding to build a retractable dome on the current Gateway site, as was discussed in the mid-80s. You can blame the Gateway project managers for building a ballpark before advancements in technology made retractable-roof venues like Seattle's Safeco Field, Phoenix's Bank One Ballpark and Milwaukee's Miller Park -- the Tribe's overnight hostel for the next three days -- commonplace structures.

A roof would have saved the Seattle series. That's a fact, and that's also a pointless bit of information now.

If you're looking for someone to blame in two months, when three wins in four games against the rebuilding Mariners would have really helped the Tribe in the pressure-cooker AL Central race, then you can point your judgmental finger straight at the Major League Baseball offices in New York City. But aim higher than the mouse-clickers who put the schedule together. Aim right for the Prince of Dimness himself, Commissioner Bud Selig.

It's Bud's brain trust who makes matchups like Seattle versus Cleveland rather infrequent. It's Bud's brain trust who thought it would be a good idea to pile
interleague
play on top of an unbalanced schedule in which divisional games account for nearly half the season for most teams. Bud Selig is the reason why Seattle and the
Los
Angeles
Angels were scheduled to make their only Cleveland appearances of the season in early April, when snowstorms are far from out of the question.

When a team is required to play 17 or 18 games a year against each of its division rivals, and then 18 to 20 interleague games, the matchups that suffer are the intraleague, non-divisional m atchups
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It's why the Tribe's classic rivalries with the Yankees and Red Sox, rivalries that go back a century, have lost some of their familiarity. It's also why, by mid-September, if we have to watch one more Indians-Royals game, the urge to gouge our eyes out with a butter knife is unbearable. I can only imagine Royals fans feel the same way.

It's also why baseball officials were sent scrambling to find some way, any way, to get every inning of this three-game series between the Indians and Angels played, even at the expense of three actual home dates at Jacobs Field. It will cost Tribe fans three chances to see their team in person, on top of the four they already lost. It's hard to believe all four games against the Mariners will be made up unless it impacts the playoff race at season's end.

That's something else to consider. Let's put the cart before the horse for a second and say that if the playoff race is tight and the Indians are involved, they might be forced to play a makeup

game -- or even (egads!) a doubleheader -- against the Mariners the day after the regular season was supposed to end. That game or doubleheader could cost the Indians a playoff berth, and even if they make it in, chances are they'd have to turn around and play Game 1 of a playoff series the next day. Not great for arranging your pitching staff.

This entire fiasco of relocating a series and the "will they/won't they" of the four missed Mariners games could have been avoided if the Mariners and Angels were slated to visit Cleveland again later this year. The make-up games could have been spaced out, paired in day-night doubleheaders with regularly-scheduled games, and maybe one mutual off-day could have been used for a make-up game.

Instead, the Indians will now go from an unscheduled bit of extended offseason to a neutral-site series, with the threat of four makeup games dangling over them likely the entire season.

The snow clouds will part soon, and the snow will melt. But the Bud Selig regime and their knack for making poor, short-sighted decisions is a cloud that isn't leaving baseball any time soon.