What a wonderful (if perhaps surprising) weekend of baseball in the AL Central! Not surprising? Well, if I'd told you that one pitcher from the Twins-Indians series would end up 0-2, that one of the AL Central's Big Three would go 1-2, that one pitcher from the Twins-Indians series would throw a shutout, that one of the Big Three would blow a game because their right-handed setup man coughed up a lead, and that someone in the Twins-Indians series would hit a two-out grand slam, how many would you have answered right on Friday morning? One, maybe? Two? You're lying.

1) Putting the "Yo!" in "yeoman"

You have to appreciate that Jake Westbrook might have been a little pumped for Sunday's getaway game, facing Johan Santana with his offense on a hot streak, and the other two free-agent signings were making their first starts for the Tribe. Jason Johnson in particular has been desperate to pitch for a team that finishes the season over .500. Well, if Johnson throws more 7-inning 4-hit shutout starts and Westbrook continues to beat All-Star opponents with an ERA under 2, he may get his wish. Byrd's start wasn't much to write home about, although the key there was that he couldn't find the damned plate, but Johnson and Westbrook combined:

14 1/3 IP6 H3 BB24:13 GB:FB ratio1 extra-base hit (a double against Johnson)

By the way, Johnson needed 86 pitches to get through 7 innings. Hard to get fatigued needing fewer than 90 pitches before handing the keys to the setup man.

2) Chicks dig the longish ball

It may be the home runs that draw all the attention of SportsCenter and steroids

investigators, but they aren't the only hits that do extra damage. Admittedly, (3) home runs drove in 6 of the 11 runs Friday, but the three doubles played a major role Saturday, and three more Sunday helped supplement Perez' home run off Santana (in particular, Boone's double drove in the other two runs). The team is, on the whole, doing a terrific job of waiting for the right pitch and doing something with it. Eight walks in three games might not sound like great plate discipline, but that's because plate discipline is not equivalent to drawing walks. Plate discipline is also working pitchers and getting balls to drive, and the Tribe did both this weekend. Kyle Lohse (who is, admittedly, still Kyle Lohse) couldn't finish his fifth inning before tossing his 99th pitch; Scott Baker threw 58 strikes and 30 balls, but needed 4 1/3 innings to get that far, and Johan the Great hit the 100 pitch mark with an out in the sixth. Compared to Jason Johnson's economical outing, these guys looked positively extravagant.

3) The confused time-traveller reads the box score

A fan from October 2005 visited me and looked over my shoulder as I looked over the box scores. He started with Friday's game:

"2-out RBI: C Blake. Did we sign some new guy Charlie Blake or something? That can't be Casey, right? I mean, if there's one thing you can depend on, it's that with runners on a two outs, Casey makes an out." &quot ;No, that's Casey, and he broke the game open with a grand slam."
"Okay, but I think there's something wrong with the software that spits these out. See? It says the same thing in Saturday's box score: 2-out RBI: C Blake. I mean, you can apply the Blind Squirrel Theory once, but ..."
"Yes, he drove in another 2-out run on Saturday."
"They got a typo here: IBB Broussard. Nobody intentionally walks Ben Broussard."
"He was hitting over .300 at the time, and they wanted the right-hander to face Boone."
"Well, THAT makes sense."
"Who promptly doubled in two runs."
"Do I have to go back?"

Seriously, for as much crap as Casey Blake took last year, he looks like a different guy at the plate. First off, he's stopped making the Charles Nagy Face. Second,

he looks like he's seeing the ball really well. Third, he's hitting bloody four hundred. It may be time for some writers to admit that Casey Blake could possibly be, in fact, a major-league hitter.

(By "some writers," well ... that would be me. Nice start, Casey.)

4) Box Score Follies:

.379, .346, .231., .391, .375, .333/.300, .348, skip, ..400

That is the list of first-week batting averages, where the Perez/Broussard platoon is split. The eighth slot is skipped because Ramon Vazquez does not exist. The time-traveller refused to believe either that this was the Indians in April, or that slots 7 and 9 represented Aaron Boone and Casey Blake. He was delighted that Coco Crisp was starting so well. I hated to shock his system more than I had to.

0: the number of innings the Indians trailed in the series. Ho hum. (Wow.)

5) That's a very large man doing very large things

Before getting flummoxed by Mr. Santana, Travis Hafner had a brisk 4-for-4 (+ 1 BB) day with 2 HRs followed by a brisk 3-for-3 (+ 1 BB) day with 1 HR. Even taking a collar he still got a walk, but then, would you throw this man a strike?

6) When does the headline about Brandon Phillips being arrested come out?

Did I miss it? Was it buried on Page Eight and I skipped over it? Because that is the only conceivable explanation for Phillips being in Suckcinnati and the hologram of Ramon Vazquez being at second base this weekend. I'm thinking maybe he was caught stealing from an orphanage? Maybe apprehended trying to sell Mark Shapiro's car to an undercover agent? Even with the power of the Internet, I'm coming up blank. Perhaps they're waiting for the papers to be served.

Seriously, Ramon Vazquez is completely worthless. Seven plate appearances. Five strikeouts. Zero hits, walks, HBP, errors by opponents, catcher's interferences, balks, repeals of Daylight Savings Time, Tony Danza script rejections ... nothing good has happened when Ramon Vazquez steps into a batter's box. I have to draw the only obvious conclusion: just as with a co-ed softball team which does not have its quota of female players, the Indians are being forced to take an "automatic out" and there is no actual Ramon Vazquez. Speak not of him to me. He is but a myth. The Joe Inglett Era cannot start too soon for me. I'd take the Stubby Clapp Era at this point. Maybe the Three Dead Lemmings And A Sharp Stick In The Eye Era. Anything.

7) Have I mentioned I hate the Minnesota bullpen?

Yes, I know we hit a couple of mooks on Friday (Guerrier was claimed off waivers from the Pirates, and Eyre is ... who the heck is Eyre?). But Saturday marked the debut of the Pitcher Most Likely To Cause Me Spleen Damage in Liriano, who tossed 2 2/3 scoreless innings with 4 Ks, followed by Jesse Crain, whom I already hated. Sunday it's more of the same, where at least we hit Rincon but couldn't score off him, and more goddam Jesse Crain (3 Ks in a perfect eighth: 10 strikes, 3 balls). Thank God for Kyle Lohse remaining Kyle Lohse.

8) Our bullpen, now, that's a group of lovable guys

It's good to see Ferd Cabrera shake off his preposterous opening performance,

although it's instructive to point out that Friday's scoreless inning (with 2 Ks; 9:4 strike-to-ball ratio) lowers his ERA to 27.00. Miller gave up a bomb but threw strikes (and K'd 3). The other two games were the Gil-n-Bob Show, where Mota set up Merely Big Bob. Mota still concerns me for some reason. I can't put my finger on it, but he's just kind of ... hittable, y'know? Hard to complain about a guy with a zero ERA setting up two saves in a row, but ... I dunno. Wickman gets his first "Really Big Bob Patented Save" (copyrighted before this season, hence "Really") Sunday, putting the tying run on base before closing it out. It just wouldn't be the same if it was easy, y'know?

9) Around the Division: It couldn't happen to a nicer bunch o' guys

Maybe Detroit sweeping Kansas City is impressive.

Nah, the Royals still suck. But they're nice enough to take two of three from Chicago, including Saturday's game where Cliff Politte coughed up a 3-2 lead by giving up 2 in the bottom of the 8th to induce a nice 4-3 loss. A couple things, though: Javier Vazquez looks nasty in person: I'd swear his fastball rises. I don't care what the gun says, it moves like a mother. And Ambergris Bourgeous or whatever his name is looks like an Actual Closer for the Royals.

Detroit finally lost, although I'm thinkin' that by the end of the season, taking 5 of 6 from KC and Texas is not going to inspire much awe. Still, Jim Leyland might be one of the top five managers of the last fifteen years, and he's got them playing good ball. Chris Shelton frightens small children and dogs. Might be a tough series next weeked.