Walks, Baserunning Mistakes Fuel Loss Before Big Walkup Crowd

Three quick questions. How old were you when you were taught to never make the first or third out at third base? How about when you were taught to freeze on a line drive and see it through the infield? Remember your little league coach strolling out to the mound and telling you to throw strikes and let your fielders make the plays?

The Cleveland Indians forgot how to perform each of these basic tasks last night and it cost them a chance at winning their series with the Seattle Mariners. It was the first time the Tribe got to take a look at young Mariner phenom Felix Hernandez and they seemed to be unimpressed. They managed to knock him out of the game in the fifth inning, after scoring single runs in the first, second and fifth innings, and two runs in the fourth.

Of course the first inning could have been much bigger, but for the second consecutive night, Jason Michaels went blank on the bases. After Jhonny Peralta singled for the third straight hit before “King Felix” got an out, Michaels stopped at second base, read the media guide, then took off for third after Ichiro threw home. Michaels was thrown out at third base by about 20 feet, again taking a runner off the bases with Travis Hafner coming to the plate. There was another base running folly in the sixth, when Casey Blake wandered to far off third base on a line drive hit by Jason Michaels.

For the second consecutive night, the Indians were not able to get

people out when they most needed to. Through 4 innings, Tribe starter Jason Johnson was in control. He allowed two hits and no walks through those innings, before imploding. In the fifth, Johnson allowed 2 doubles and a homer cutting the Tribe lead to 4-3. THEN things got real ugly for the Indians pitching staff. Over the last 3 1/3 innings, the combination of Johnson, Rafael Betancourt, Scott Saurbeck and Fernando Cabrera combined to allow 6 runs on 4 hits and 9 walks. Yes 9 walks.

The game was played before the biggest walk-up crowd in the history of Jacobs Field. 8,510 patrons who previously did not have tickets for the rubber match of this series jammed into lines at the crowded ticket windows before this one started.

The Indians have now lost 2 straight to see their record fall to 6-3. They will open a three game series in Detroit, starting Friday April 14. Jake Westbrook will take the mound in game one of the series, and will be followed on Saturday afternoon with the Major League debut of top Indian prospect Fausto Carmona.