Well, at least they avoided the sweep. But no one outside of Cleveland Indians announcer Matt Underwood actually believes, as Underwood said after the final out Sunday, that all is once again well with the Indians. The season is just six games old, but in his latest, Gary sees some reason to fret a bit about the Tribe offense. Most notably the lack of quality at bats, the lack of production from the corner outfield spots, and the fact that Pronk looks like the same guy as last year.

Well, at least they avoided the sweep. But no one outside of Cleveland Indians announcer Matt Underwood actually believes, as Underwood said after the final out Sunday, that all is once again well with the Indians. Rather, had the Indians found a way to once again lose to the Oakland A's, more than a few flat screens around northeast Ohio would have been in need of the Best Buy Geek Squad.

Until the Tribe found a way to squeak out Sunday's 2-1 win, the highlight was the fact that only two of the three games found their way on local television. Sitting through two of them was more than enough to bring back a whole host of last season memories of what this team looks like when it doesn't hit. It isn't pretty in the same way that a head-on car crash isn't pretty.

If there was a bright spot, and geez that would be hard to find, it had to be Cliff Lee, who pitched twice as well as the rest of the team played. For most of the game, it looked like it was Lee's turn in the "hard luck loser" box pitching for a

team that was treating Oakland's Joe Blanton like he was Josh Beckett.

Sticking with the Cliff Lee theme for a minute, in a weekend that was discouraging on several levels Lee looked nothing like the pretender who was up there last year nibbling at the corners, treating every hitter as if he was David Ortiz and otherwise getting his brains beat in every five days until he took up permanent residence in Buffalo. In his first start of this season, Lee looked mostly confident and mostly willing to challenge the awfully young A's lineup. If that seems like faint praise, it's really not considering that the rest of the Indians lineup was much less willing to take on that challenge for most of the three game series.

A microcosm of the weekend's offensive futility was the 7th inning of Sunday's game. After Jason Michaels grounded out, Andy Marte and Kelly Shoppach singled. The As then walked Grady Sizemore, the only Indians player putting together decent at bats these days. Asdrubal Cabrera was up next and hit a perfect double play ball to As first baseman Daric Barton. Barton bobbled it long enough to keep the Indians out of the double play, although Barton was able to get Cabrera at first. The Indians, however, tied the game at 1-1. Give Cabrera the gift RBI.

With first base open, the As decided to intentionally walk Travis Hafner, which made some sense historically but not if you have access to the hitting charts of Hafner's last 140 or so games, bringing up Ryan Garko, who traditionally hits Blanton well. After falling behind in the count, Garko walked on a 3-2 pitch to bring home the Indians second run. That brought on Santiago Casilla who proceeded to strike out Jhonny Peralta.

If you’re on optimist, you’d say at least the Indians took the lead. If you’re a realist, you know that this was the Indians best opportunity to break out of the offensive slump that’s gripped them over the last four games. Instead, they ended up with two runs as the result of an error (though it won’t appear in the box score as such) and a walk. The Indians didn’t come any closer to scoring the rest of the game and were left to protect what was a tenuous lead at best.

But the reason the Indians avoided the sweep is the reason they have a chance to be special—good pitching. When Lee was done after 6 2/3 innings, the pitching triumvirate that was so strong last season, Rafael Perez, Rafael Bentancort and Joe Borowski kept the As off the board. In truth, they were hardly challenged.

Indians Manager Eric Wedge, never one to register much of a pulse publicly, nonetheless hit the nail on the head, the best hit of the weekend actually, when he said that that the main problem with the offense is the lack of quality at bats. In each of Friday’s and Saturday’s losses, the Indians struck out 10 times. Not every strike out occurred while the Indians batter had his bat on his shoulder, it only seemed like it. And it wasn’t as if they were facing the Red Sox. Justin Duchscherer, which is at least as hard to spell as it is to say, baffled the Indians on Friday and teammate Dana Eveland, another pitcher unknown outside of the most hardcore of fantasy league players, did likewise on Saturday.

On Sunday, all Blanton did was what he normally does, give up hits.

The only problem is that other than the aforementioned 7th inning, the Indians couldn't string them together. In fact, as a measure of the lost weekend that the Tribe offense had, only twice in three games did it have two consecutive hits in an inning, the 7th on Sunday and the 6th inning on Friday. In fact, Friday's 6th inning was a whole lot like Sunday's 7th. Shoppach led off the inning with a single. Sizemore followed with another. Cabrera walked to load the bases, bringing up Peralta who hit into a double play, brining home a run. Hafner was up next and struck out looking, naturally.

The obvious counterpoint to all of this is that the season's just six games old. There always are going to be stretches where it seems like every opposing pitcher is throwing softballs and stretches where it seems like they're throwing BBs. The sheer length of the season is often underappreciated leading to drive-by analysis that lacks context. But on the other hand this is a team that is largely a carryover from last season and its weekend offensive struggles seem much more like a continuation of a pattern firmly established than a typical seasonal blip. If Tribe General Manager Mark Shapiro were more like Browns General Manager Phil Savage, he already would have seen enough, either David Dellucci or Jason Michaels or both would be on their way to Seattle and Ben

Francisco would be on his way from Buffalo.

But the one thing that you can't ever look like you're doing in baseball is panicking. And that's exactly what it would look like if Shapiro were to acknowledge what everyone can see is true—that without more offensive production from their outfield, the Indians are going to have a lot of hard luck losing pitchers this season.

It's true that the Indians best hitter, Victor Martinez, sat out his fourth straight game, but his presence isn't going to solve everything or even most things. Offensively, this is a flawed Indians line-up and will remain so as long as guys like Michaels, Dellucci and Andy Marte get significant playing time. Throw in the disturbing tendencies of Peralta to take weeks off at a time, Casey Blake being Casey Blake, and Hafner still unable to return to the form he had before he got married and you can see why the Indians scored six runs all weekend against a very average Oakland team.

But baseball, like golf, always offers a chance for immediate redemption. For the Indians, they'll have to find it in Anaheim against a team far better than the one they faced this weekend. And if all goes as it usually does in baseball, then the Indians will end up averaging 10 runs a game against the Angels. But

if things don’t turn around then, don’t look for it for awhile for after the Indians board that charter plane following Wednesday’s afternoon getaway game, they’re headed back to Cleveland to face, again, that dynamic one-two punch of Eveland and Duchscherer and the mighty, mighty A's.