Not a pretty picture last night. After narrowly avoiding a sweep in Oakland, the Tribe headed south to Anaheim and were promptly walk off homered to death by Torri Hunter and the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim. Dellichaels is 1-25 in left field to start the season. Joe Bo is throwin' 78 MPH fastballs. And the Indians have lost four of five after starting the season 2-0. Time to panic, right? Not so says Paulie Cousineau. Just a little patience and perspective is needed.

It's been a frustrating and befuddling stretch of games for the Erie Warriors. Needing a 2-1 Sunday win to sneak out of Oakland without being swept, the Tribe got their hearts broken again last night by a Torri Hunter walk off home run. Just when the offense "comes out of its funk" (that would be relatively speaking, with their 4-run "outburst" last night) with the return of Victor to the lineup, the bullpen gives the game away in Grand fashion.

For now, let's look past JoeBo's implosion (not to mention Senor Slo-Mo looking very mortal) and try to figure out why the offense is scuffling, to say the very least, and focus on the offense ... or lack thereof.

Is the Indians' offense frustrating to watch?

Absolutely ... as the 2-1 victory on Sunday really was only made possible,

offensively at least, by a muffed double play ball off of the bat of Asdrubal and the A's decision to bypass Hafner to get to Garko (did you ever think back in 2006 that you'd be pleased that an opposing team did that?), who is one of the only players, with Grady, putting up consistently good plate appearances. Monday night's game could have been subtitled, "The Night of Opportunities Missed" as the Indians frittered away numerous chances to manufacture runs early in the game (how about two on with less than two out TWICE in the first three innings netting zero runs?) that could have given Fausto the cushion he deserved and put the game out of reach before the words "get Borowski up" pass through the Atomic Wedgie's lips..

But, back to the offense as a whole and what exactly has been transpiring. The problem with Victor's injury, knocking him out for five games, is that it coincided with a few players stumbling out of the gate and the offense simply not being able to overcome the combination of the injury and the slow starts. Specifically, the Indians have gotten little to no production from Peralta (who, despite his solo blast, seems to have forgotten to bring a bat to the plate, preferring the fishing rod that he used throughout the 2006 season), Dellichaels (who is doing nothing to quiet the clamor for The Ben Francisco Treat to make the trip West on I-90, regardless of whether or not he truly represents an upgrade), Blake (who, as always, is what he is), or Shoppach (who, despite his defensive "prowess", has half as many passed balls in six games as Victor had ALL of last year in 121 games behind the dish ... all while not exactly setting the world afire offensively). The relative inadequacies of Frank the Tank and Asdrubal (in a lineup that isn't getting production from much of anywhere except CF and 1B) are exaggerated without any other offensive support around the youngsters still adjusting to MLB.

But before anyone lifts the glass over the panic button, let's put this in perspective of something that makes this a little more palatable - seven games in the MLB season amounts to the equivalent of playing a little over one half of one NFL game in a 16-game season. So, if we're talking equivalents, we're sitting in the middle of the third quarter of the first game of the NFL season and, unless I'm missing the player that is single-handedly sabotaging the offense. As putrid as Dellichaels has been (a 1 for 25 start), "he" represents only 11% of the lineup and has reached base six times, via five walks and one double, in seven games. Bottom line, it is laughably early to start drawing conclusions or demanding action, as obvious as some of it may seem today.

The simple truth remains that the Indians are going to continue to stay in, and win, baseball games because of their strong starting pitching (hey C.C., quit hitting "snooze" ... these ones count) and the progression of relievers that looks to have picked up right there they left off last year (as long as Betancourt's Saturday performance was only a hiccup...and last night didn't make it look that way). What that means is that the offense has some time to find its footing as the early season schedule is not as difficult as it may look, assuming that the Twins and Royals fall back in line with expectations. The Indians inexplicably only play the Tigers two times over the first two plus months of the season.

Of course, if the calendar is about to flip to May, let's make sure that Angela, Phyllis, Pam, and the rest of the Party Planning Committee is in the final stages of some Bon Voyage parties if these lines are still showing up in the lineup:

Carson Kressley - .056 BA / .150 OBP / .111 SLG / .261 OPS
David Dellucci - .000 BA / .364 OBP / .000 SLG / .364 OPS
Casey Blake - .143 BA / .182 OBP / .190 SLG / .372 OPS

It's been said here often, but the MLB season is a marathon not a sprint, and coming to snap decisions based on a small amount of games or plate appearances, as much as we'd like to at this point watching the Indians go meekly into the night, is short-sighted and dangerous. What happens if Dellichaels is jettisoned prematurely and Francisco struggles as a replacement? Would we pray that the Big League Choo is healthy? Or are we looking at the dawning of the Brad Snyder Era or the Trevor Crowe Era? While that is organizational depth that the club will likely lean on as the season progresses, Choo isn't healthy, and Snyder and Crowe aren't ready.

In the big picture, the Tribe sits at 3-4 in the midst of a West Coast swing, still keeping in line with the "formula" for 90+ wins (win 2 of 3 at home, go .500 on the road) with the offense effectively still in neutral. Are things going great in the early going or are they ideal? Certainly not, and the struggles of particular cogs of the offense (Hafner and Peralta) bear watching as well as keeping the leash tight on some parts that were thought to be possible weak links heading into the season (namely, Dellichaels) to see if they are able to finally assert themselves as viable MLB options.

3-4 is no great shakes, but it could be worse.

How, you ask?

Starting the season 0-6 with an offense that was supposed to evoke memories of the 1927 Yankees, but is instead averaging three runs a game against the pitching staffs of the Royals and the White Sox, and heading into a series with the Red Sox.

Yeah, that's worse.