As of Friday the 13th in this month of June, 2008, the Indians are 32-36, in third place, six-and-a-half games behind the White Sox in the AL Central. Skeptics of this club- and they are legion- believe that it's just about time to cut bait on the season, deal C.C. to the highest bidder, and re-tool for 2009. But is it? In his latest, Jesse goes back in time and looks at the ten seasons in which the Indians qualified for the postseason ... and where they stood in each of those seasons on June 13th.

Not that you've noticed or anything, but I generally avoid touching on the Indians in the space I'm allotted on this site. For one, we already have an extraordinary group covering the Tribe, the best in the city in my opinion- Buff, Tony, Paulie Cous- and frankly, I don't measure up. When it comes to Cleveland baseball, I'm the beatnik in *Animal House* who gave his love a cherry, and those guys are the Traveling Wilburys. I know my place. For another, I've written about the Indians before and, well, they're not exactly reserving a spot in the writers' wing of the Hall of Fame for my deep thoughts, let's just put it that way.

So no, contemporary analysis of this Tribe team isn't exactly my cup of tea. But historical analysis is. As of Friday the 13th in this month of June, 2008, the Indians are 32-36, in third place, six-and-a-half games behind the White Sox in the AL Central. Skeptics of this club- and they are legion- believe that it's just about time to cut bait on the season, deal C.C. to the highest bidder, and re-tool for 2009. But is it? A glance at the historical record- with the help of the trusty Retrosheet - might shed at least a little bit of light on the matter.

Ten times in their long history, the Indians have qualified for postseason play. I've highlighted these ten seasons, specifically, the spot in the standings the Tribe found itself on June 13. Has a Cleveland team as far out of first place as this one, on this day, ever rallied back to make the postseason? We'll find out.

June 13, 1920

After a 14-0 loss to New York, the Tribe (33-17) was in a virtual tie for first place, .006 percentage points ahead of the Yankees (34-18), and five ahead of the defending AL Champion White Sox (28-22).

Outcome

The race eventually turned into a three-team dogfight between the Tribe, Yankees, and White Sox, who heated up as the summer went on. As late as August 26, Cleveland was three-and-a-half in arrears of Chicago, but the Tribe won 25 of their next 33 and fought back to clinch the pennant on the second-to-last day of the season, thanks in no small part to the suspension of seven White Sox players in the wake of the investigation into the 1919 World Series. The Indians followed up their first-ever pennant with their first-ever World Championship, beating the Brooklyn Dodgers in the World Series.

June 13, 1948

Following a 5-3 loss to the Yankees, the Tribe (31-14) was alone in first place, three games ahead of the Philadelphia Athletics- still managed by the ancient Connie Mack- and five ahead of the Yankees. Interestingly, the Red Sox, who the Indians would meet in a one-game playoff for the American League pennant, were under .500 (22-26), in sixth place, ten-and-a-half games out. There's something to hang on for all you optimists out there. Of course, last time I checked, the ‘08 Tribe didn't have Ted Williams, Bobby Doerr, Vern Stephens, and Dom DiMaggio in the lineup.

Outcome

Thanks to a scorching 67-24 Boston run that lifted the Red Sox from seventh on June 2 to the top of the standings the Indians were in third place, four-and-a-half out, on September 6. But the Tribe rallied, winning 19 of their last 24, finished in a tie with Boston, and trounced the Sox 8-3 in Fenway in the American League's first one-game playoff to take the pennant. The Tribe then defeated the Old Town's other team, the Braves, in the World Series. (What's better than beating a Boston team in the postseason? Beating *two* Boston teams; that's what.)

June 13, 1954

Following a doubleheader sweep of Boston, the Tribe (37-17) was in first place, a game-and-a-half in front of the White Sox and three-and-a-half in front of New York. No one else in the AL was closer than twelve games off the pace.

Outcome

Despite the Yankees winning 103 games, the Tribe maintained their lead throughout the summer and clinched the pennant on September 18, with eight days remaining in the regular season. They finished the season with an AL-record 111 wins, but ran out of gas and were swept in the World Series by the New York Giants.

June 13, 1995

After shellacking the Orioles 11-0, the Tribe (32-11) was seven-and-a-half games in front of Kansas City in the AL Central. Ah, 1995... what a year. It was a surprise when this team lost.

Outcome

Trailing by five-and-a-half in the last week of June, the Royals had a chance to make things interesting as they hosted the Tribe in a three-game set at Kauffman Stadium. But when the Indians swept the series, outscoring Kansas City 14-3, the race in the Central was for all intents and purposes over. The Tribe wound up running away with the division by an incredible thirty games over the Royals. They went on to their first World Series in 41 years, losing to Atlanta in six games.

June 13, 1996

After beating Kenny Rogers and the Yankees 6-2 in the Bronx, the Tribe (42-22) was in first place, a game-and-a-half in front of the White Sox in the AL Central.

Outcome

The mercurial White Sox lost eight in a row in late June and eight of nine in late July, but still hung stubbornly in the race until mid-August, when another swoon, this one consisting of eleven losses in fourteen games, put them ten behind the Tribe and effectively out contention. Cleveland clinched the division on September 17 and cruised home by fourteen-and-a-half over Chicago. The Indians were then stunned in the Division Series by Baltimore, led by the expectorating Roberto Alomar.

June 13, 1997

The idle Indians (32-28) were perched at the top of a tightly bunched Central, with just five games separating them from the last-place Minnesota Twins.

Outcome

The Indians spent most of the summer of '97 playing flat, lifeless baseball, saved only by their talent and the refusal of anyone else in the division to step up and legitimately challenge them. This was, of course,

the year of the infamous White Flag Trade , when the White Sox, despite being just three-and-a-half out, threw in the towel by dealing Wilson Alvarez, Danny Darwin, and Roberto Hernandez to the Giants at the trade deadline. Cleveland finally got hot in August, using a 17-7 run to build a substantial lead and eventually winning the division by six over Chicago and eight over the Brewers, who were still in the American League back then. The Tribe then went on their Cinderella run to within two outs of a World Championship.

June 13, 1998

Idle on this day, the Tribe (38-26) had a fluffy eight-and-a-half game lead in the Central over Minnesota.

Outcome

Running hot and cold for the remainder of the summer, the Indians yawned their way home, winning the AL Central by a comfortable nine games despite an uninspiring 89-73 record. For the second year in a row, they were the only team in the division to finish the season over .500. Cleveland defeated the Red Sox in the Division Series and lost a hard-fought ALCS in six games to the 114-48 Yankees. The Tribe was the only team to defeat New York's juggernaut in the 1998 postseason.

June 13, 1999

After beating Cincinnati 7-3 behind ex-Red Dave Burba, the Tribe (40-20) was nine-and-a-half up on second-place Chicago in the AL Central.

Outcome

It didn't get any tougher for the Tribe, as once again they were the only club in the Central to finish with a winning record. They clinched the division on September 8, nearly four weeks before the end of the season, and coasted home with a 97-65 record, a whopping twenty one-and-a-half games in front of the White Sox. The Indians then blew a 2-0 lead and lost to the Red Sox in the Division Series, costing Mike Hargrove his job in the process.

June 13, 2001

After beating Milwaukee 5-2 on a tenth-inning walk-off bomb by Jim Thome, the Tribe (40-22) was in second place, a half-game behind front-running Minnesota in the AL Central.

Outcome

By July 14, Cleveland had fallen five games behind Minnesota. Then the Twins, a callow version of the club that would dominate the Central for the next three seasons, fell apart. They lost 29 of their next 38;

Cleveland took over first place for good on August 12 and held on to win the division by four games before losing in the Division Series to Seattle. It wasn't a case of the Indians winning the division- they were a so-so 31-26 in August, September, and October- as much as it was a case of the Twins losing it. That Minnesota team was very young and largely unaccustomed to the rigors of the pennant race, unlike the veteran White Sox of this season.

June 13, 2007

After beating the Marlins in an inter-league affair in Unincorporated Dade County, the Tribe (38-26) was in the first place, a game ahead of Detroit.

Outcome

The Indians and Tigers swapped paint throughout the summer in a hotly contested division race. Despite a woeful 7-14 stretch spanning July and August, Cleveland never fell further than two games back of Detroit, thanks to the Tigers hitting their own slump at about the same time. The Indians took over first place for good on August 17 and blew away the Tigers with a 31-12 finish, taking the division by eight games over Detroit. They then knocked off the Yankees in the Division Series and lost the ALCS in seven to eventual World Champion Boston.

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Remarkably, of the ten times the Indians have made it to the postseason, only once- in 2001- have they not been in first place on June 13, and in 2001 they were just a half-game out. Of course, ten years out of 108 is a pretty small sample size, and what the Indians did in 1920, 1948, or even last year has little to do with the situation in which they find themselves in the here and now. But it isn't exactly cause for optimism. To qualify for the playoffs in 2008, the Indians would have to do something they've never done in over a century of play.

Can they do it? For your sakes, I'll leave that to the experts.