It's been a boring spring training, which is a good thing in a sense. No news is often good news. Compounding matters is the fact that spring training has been lengthened by a couple weeks this season because of the World Baseball Classic. But since this is spring training ... or some variation of it anyway, what can be concluded thus far? Gary gives us his thoughts.

The Cleveland Indians spring training is moving along at such a glacial pace, it makes the results show on American Idol each week seem positively dynamic by comparison. Blame it on the World Baseball Classic, a misnomer on the order of, "next, a very special episode of 'How I Met Your Mother.'"

I don't particularly have anything against the World Baseball Classic. If the Lords of Baseball feel that this constitutes an appropriate use of time and resources, who am I to point out that the ratings for any particular game are probably a fraction of that of the Seinfeld reruns on TBS each evening.

The real problem with it is that it's lengthened spring training this year by a few weeks. In other words, an already overlong and brutally boring exercise has gotten even longer and more boring. It's to the point where so little is happening that the main stream reporters have taken to writing stories about how the players pack for road games.
My mistake. That's what a main streamer is writing about the Cavs, a team where something substantive actually is happening. Sorry.

Anyway, as it is, spring training games are meaningless. It matters little, for example, that the Indians have one of the worst records in the American League thus far because now, thanks to the WBC most of these early games have been

rendered irrelevant as well. With teams being picked clean by various countries to fill out their WBC rosters, those that remain behind are left to face similarly depleted teams under the watchful eyes of managers and coaches who are even more skeptical about any accomplishment that might achieve anyway. It was nice to see that Beau Mills hit his second home run of the spring last weekend, but to what end? Did it really register with Eric Wedge?

But since this is spring training or some variation of it anyway, what can be concluded thus far? First, despite the fact that players basically train all year, spring training seems to feature an inordinate amount of injured players. It's one thing for a player to be slowed while rehabbing from off season surgery, it's quite another though for players to pull up lame seemingly out of the blue.

Kerry Wood, who is being counted on mightily this season, has seen very limited action due to what was described as a chronically sore back. Most fascinating is how this injury of sorts for a player that averages at least one trip to the disabled list a year has been downplayed by those with the most invested in him.

Wedge, always a study in understatement anyway, said "he's had it in multiple springs. It's just a little back soreness. We'll back him up for a few days. It's absolutely nothing to be concerned about." Hopefully that's not wishful thinking.

But Wood is back pitching for now even if we don't know for how long. Meanwhile, on the Adam Miller front, the "best prospect never to pitch in the majors" is still nursing a sore middle finger on his throwing hand. It's a finger that's been causing him problems for the better part of two seasons and still is apparently sore from offseason surgery. Again, though, Wedge is downplaying it, saying "I don't think it's anything to worry about, but we didn't want to push it." Indeed, Miller is not being pushed. He still hasn't pitched.

Then, of course, is the Indians' relative iron man, Grady Sizemore, who is one of

another handful of players who have missed time this spring. Sizemore has a groin injury and has been limited to designated hitter duties. Travis Hafner is still rehabbing a sore shoulder and has seen very limited action in 3 games. Joe Smith, the former Mets reliever the Indians are counting on and not the formerly former member and now current member of the Cavaliers, was out for several days with a viral infection. (Interesting fact: despite being absolutely the most common name you could think of, there have only been two Joe Smiths to play in the major leagues. Oddly that's the same number of Elmer Smiths who have played in the majors.) David Dellucci missed time when he smashed his left thumb in a tailgate. It was the most impactful hit he's had while a member of the Tribe. Meanwhile Shin-Soo Choo, sore elbow and all, may be playing for South Korea in the WBC, may be not. Undoubtedly an international incident is about to boil over on this one.

These sorts of minor bumps and bruises are typical of any spring training, if only because baseball players, particularly those who will definitely make the varsity, approach spring training like football players with secure jobs approach preseason training-with the kind of trepidation a 10-year does toward Sunday church services. But on the positive side, there were no mysterious "visa" issues keeping Latin American players out of camp this year.

As for those players with something to prove, spring training does hold some intrigue if you define "intrigue" as broadly as possible. Consider, for example, the fate of relief pitcher Ed Mujica. With all the various pitchers in camp, Wedge has created a pecking order of sorts. Pitchers who have the team made are confined to "B" games. Pitchers who are still under consideration for a spot on the roster will pitch "A" games. All the others, and there are plenty, are relegated to "simulated" games. That may not quite be like being banished to the Island of Misfit Toys, but it's close.

That's, unfortunately, where Mujica is hanging his hat these days. Despite having come into training camp as a player competing for a roster spot, he's been left to try to impress Wedge and company by throwing under simulated conditions, which is kind of like trying to make the field at the Masters by playing simulated holes in your backyard with a whiffle golf ball.

Ryan Garko, on the other hand, hasn't be banished like Mujica, but it's also not a good sign when you're trying out radically different positions as is Garko. Again, depending on how you want to define "intrigue" this situation probably qualifies as well.

Garko's problem is Kelly Shoppach. When Shoppach proved he could both catch and hit, it made it necessary to find a way to get both him and Victor Martinez on the field at the same time. That bought Garko a ticket back to remedial school to learn a new position and give the Indians a reason to live with his inconsistency for another year. But that's still better than the Neverland Ranch where Josh Barfield finds himself living these days.

On the grand scale, none of this is great theater but it arguably passes for interesting during the dead time that spring training has become. But fret not for its future. No matter what the players think, if there's one thing a manager likes more than the games, it's practice. To them, the more the better even when less would actually be enough more for anyone.