For those that missed it, the normally centered Eric Wedge absolutely lost it on Jensen Lewis and the rest of the Indians bullpen Saturday night after the team blew a 7-0 lead to the defending AL Champion Tampa Bay Rays. In this week's Lingering Items, Gary touches on the out of character tirade by the Tribe skipper, and also talks about Wedge's handling of Matt LaPorta and the disappointing starts to the season by Jhonny Peralta and Grady Sizemore.

Now that's what I'm talking about.

Following up just a bit on the latest conventional wisdom when it comes to Cleveland Indians manager Eric Wedge, apparently he too knows when he's starting to see the writing on the wall. No sooner had his players given him a vote a confidence came the second punch, a vote of confidence from his general manager Mark Shapiro.

Wedge knows he's in trouble. His team is playing as bad as any Indians team he's had and more and more fans are calling for him to join Romeo Crennel on the list of formers when it comes to Cleveland coaches. Give Wedge credit though, if he's going down he's going down swinging, which is more than can be said for most of the players on the team, content are they to usually watch strike three to blow by them.

Channeling his inner Lou Pinella, Wedge absolutely blistered his pitching, particularly his bullpen, in the media for squandering a 7-0 lead on Friday night, losing to the Tampa Bay Rays in the most inglorious way possible, a walk-off home run on a 3-2 pitch.

The tirade was so out of character for Wedge it was easily the most refreshing sports moment in Cleveland sports this year, outside, of course, of almost anything the Cavaliers have done. With almost perfect pitch, Wedge let both the fans and his general manager know that he, too, sees what every one else sees and he isn't happy with the players sitting out in the bullpen night after night, and that goes for Luis Vizcaino, the latest band aid acquired by Shapiro.

One can only imagine how Shapiro reacted to that tirade. Make no mistake about it, though, Shapiro could not have been happy. This wasn't just Wedge expressing his displeasure with a simple loss. It was Wedge telling Shapiro "get me someone who can throw a damn strike that doesn't end up on the other side of the wall." It was the first public fissure in a relationship that until Friday seemed to be symbiotic.

It might be fair to point out that perhaps Wedge had something to do with the loss. Though he had been ejected earlier, Wedge was managing from inside the clubhouse and weirdly called for Vizcaino to start the ninth inning with the score tied. This was "by the book" managing at its worst. Not wanting to supposedly waste closer Kerry Wood in a tie game, Wedge instead gave the ball to a guy that was out of baseball until Shapiro through him a lifeline. Scottie Bailes, you're next.

But for one day, that is just niggling. The overriding theme is that there is a pulse in the Indians' dugout. Even if this thing never turns around under Wedge, at least fans now know that for once a coach wearing a Cleveland uniform was fed up with another crappy product he'd been handed and had the courage to say so publicly. Welcome, finally, to the big leagues Eric Wedge. For your sake, hopefully it's not too late.

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Now for some niggling.

One of the main gripes about Wedge is that he's generally far too reluctant to make any significant changes hoping instead that players will find their own way out of the darkness.

In this regard it was interesting when Paul Hoynes of the Plain Dealer opined earlier in the week that Wedge's strategy with Jhonny Peralta is starting to pay off just as it did last season. The premise from Hoynes was that when Peralta was struggling last year, Wedge finally had seen enough and sat him down for a few games. Afterward, Peralta began to find his stroke and stopped playing like a zombie and went on to hit .276! Call Cooperstown. According to Hoynes, the same held true this year as well.

That's one way to look at it, I suppose, but here's another. Peralta has a track record of indifference. If it took Wedge 8 weeks into last season to recognize it and react to an ultimately good result, why is it that Wedge didn't react sooner than last week this season when Peralta was down literally the same path? Peralta has more than proven that he's a player that needs a swift kick every now and then and Wedge treats it as if that's news.

Wedge is now facing the same issue with Grady Sizemore. At the moment, there is "talk" about moving him down in the order. How much talk does it take? Sizemore isn't producing in the leadoff spot and is struggling more than at any point in his short major league career.

No one is suggesting that the Indians give up on Sizemore. He's a significant piece to this puzzle and will be until he's a free agent. But what is being suggested is that while Wedge and his brain trust talk and talk and talk and talk

and talk and talk game after game after game after game after game after game, Sizemore's strike outs become more frequent and his average sinks ever lower.

This is the core of one of Wedge's main problems as a manager. Ever cautious of developing into a knee-jerk reactionary, he consciously goes in the other direction to the detriment of his team. He waits far too long for problems to resolve on his own. This team could well benefit by some active managing and instead he is content to merely tinker.

It may be tricky, as Hoynes suggested, dealing with a veteran who is struggling, but it's not impossible. It's not even that hard, actually, especially if you're a veteran manager and you're dealing with an established major leaguer still in a learning mode. But as long as Shapiro and the enablers he's courted in the local media continue to treat these issues as if they are more intricate than statehouse politics, nothing much will change and the team will continue to founder.

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While Wedge has been reluctant to address the Sizemore issue, at least he's moving other players around a bit, looking for a spark from somewhere. Peralta, mercifully, has been moved to third base where his lack of range and hustle are less of an issue. Asdrubal Cabrera, one Indian playing with some heart, has been moved to shortstop, at least temporarily, a far more natural position for him. And as out of character as his tirade about the bullpen was, at least as much out of character was Wedge's decision to play both Matt LaPorta and David Dellucci at the same time on Saturday.

There's been a spirited debate on the message boards and among some of the writers on this site and in the local media about what exactly is this Indians' plan with respect to LaPorta and Dellucci. As these things often do in debates where the stakes are small, it's resulted in its share of bruised hearts and broken rhythms.

Whatever camp you may be in with respect to these two players, the more basic question is whether or not a strategy even exists. On the one hand it sure looks like they are being platooned even if that wasn't the stated intent at the outset. On the other hand it more looks like there simply is no plan but rather a series of random acts by Wedge, such as putting LaPorta in left while Dellucci is the designated hitter.

It's hard telling exactly what the fascination is with Dellucci outside of the fact that he's a veteran player Wedge had dropped in his lap by Shapiro sporting a contract he didn't much deserve. With LaPorta, one of the team's prime prospects, the starting premise was that he needed to play every day in Columbus.

Well, that lasted about as long as the starting premise with the bullpen, except it shouldn't have. LaPorta is essentially a spare part on a major league team that is struggling mightily. He's not helping much because he hasn't had much opportunity. Wedge has never been good at figuring out how to work in players in the first place and he's showing that again with LaPorta. Given that and given what's taken place, what exactly is the point in keeping him with the Indians?

What makes this all the more interesting is that Wedge says he will work LaPorta in at first base given the supposed glut of outfielders at the big league level. Even with LaPorta's huge upside as a hitter, putting LaPorta at first base to compete with both Victor Martinez and Ryan Garko makes as little sense as just about everything else. It just trades one glut for another and to what end?

If LaPorta's at first then that means Martinez is either the designated hitter or behind the plate. If he's behind the plate, then Kelly Shoppach is sitting. If Wedge does put LaPorta at first then pick a scenario with the remaining players and it doesn't matter, the Indians are a weaker team for that game.

This is not, by the way, an anti-LaPorta rant. I'd rather see the Indians clear their outfield gut by putting a fork in Dellucci's career with the Indians in favor of

LaPorta. But this seems to be too obvious of a solution on a team that shouldn't necessarily play for next year right now, but at least ought to have one eye on that.

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Given Shapiro's fascination with bullpen reclamation projects, this week's question to ponder: Who is higher on Shapiro's speed dial, Jamie Easterly or Victor Cruz?