On the heels of what will certainly be dubbed “the worst call in baseball history” by some talking head in the coming 24-hour news cycle, let’s certainly give Armando Galarraga his due as he completely flummoxed an Indians’ lineup en route to what should have been a perfect game. While the focus will be on Jim Joyce and whether instant replay should be introduced into close plays on the bases, as an Indians’ fan, was anyone else sitting there, inning after inning, dreading that this perfect game was going to happen?

Of course, seeing history is seeing history, but the Indians’ lineup was so thoroughly overmatched by Galarraga (who has spent more time in AAA than MLB this year) and the night was devoid of a hard-hit ball by an Indian until Grudzielanek’s blast in the 9th (and you had to think that the Perfecto was coming when Austin Jackson made that catch). The Tribe sent pop-up after nubber after softly hit line drive out into the field as Galarraga provided the pitches that perfectly summarize the Indians’ ineptitude at the plate to date this year – no rhythm, no life, no feeling that the team is ready to break out.

Watching the game, was there ever a hitter that strode to the box that made you think that “this is the guy” or “this guy will get on base”?

For me, that feeling never came, right up to the final out…and the one after that.

Nevertheless, while the 2010 Indians will not become a footnote in history (at least tonight), let’s get those Tomahawks down the first base line to see if Jim Joyce is paying attention yet…

_____

Lost in the debate over whether Justin Masterson should remain a starter, how in the world Dave Huff isn’t going to miss a start after taking a batted ball off of his head, hoping (beyond hope) that the Faustastic One has returned (ERA now at 3.53 with no BB in 8 IP tonight), and evaluating Jake Westbrook’s trade value (more on that in a bit) is the fact that Mitch Talbot has quietly put together a tremendous start to the 2010 season.

While I remain baffled as to how The Fury has succeeded (what with the low K rates, the nearly 1-to-1 K/BB rate, the BABIP that has risen without appreciably worse results, and some sort of

preternatural ability to get out of jams), Talbot has clearly been the most pleasant surprise on a team in need of them.

Looking at Talbot's body of work to date, I realized something – Mitch Talbot (all 26 years of him) is still technically a Rookie and (while end-of-the-season awards in MLB are just about the most useless "achievements" I can think of) Mitch Talbot actually has a legitimate shot at consideration for American League Rookie of the Year.

As I said, being named AL ROY doesn't really earn you all that much (paging Ron Kittle, Bob Hamelin, Angel Berroa, Ben Grieve, and Pat Listach), but in a season in which Indians' fans need something to cheer for, taking on the cause of "The Fury for AL ROY" is as good as any these days.

Perusing through the other candidates, there's no question that Texas' Neftali Feliz has certainly made a case out of the Rangers' bullpen and Talbot's former Durham Bull teammate Wade Davis has performed admirably in the Tampa rotation. The early "lock", Austin Jackson, has come back to Earth a little bit (and I should note that Jackson has struck out 57 times in 49 games for the Kitties), though he figures to stay in the mix, and his teammate Brennan Boesch figures to get some attention from the voters who haven't learned that RBI is not the definitive measure of a hitter. The Orioles' Brian Matusz may get some consideration as he is a highly-touted prospect, although his numbers pale in comparison to that of Talbot.

And that's the amazing thing when you put Talbot's numbers thus far in the context of all AL starters and not just Rookies (and I'll include the meaningless "wins" stat because that's what BBWAA voters will consider) this year:

Wins – 6 (1st among AL Rookie Starters, tied for 4th among all AL starters)
ERA – 3.78 (1st among AL Rookie Starters, 27th among all AL starters)
ERA+ - 105 (2nd among AL Rookie Starters, 31st among all AL starters)
WHIP – 1.29 (1st among AL Rookie Starters, 25th among all AL starters)

As an interesting sidenote, since Dave Righetti won the AL ROY in 1981 (when he was still a starter), there has been one starting pitcher that has won the award – Justin Verlander in 2006.

Can Talbot keep up this pace?

I'm the wrong guy to ask, because I've been throwing him under the bus from the time the Indians added him for Kelly Shoppach. However, if he can keep up some semblance of this pace, he may get a look at becoming the first Indians' Rookie of the Year since Sandy Alomar won the award in 1991.

Of course, once upon a time in a galaxy far, far away, Jody Gerut was the AL Rookie Hitter of the Year for The Sporting News, showing how fleeting success can be (particularly for an older rookie), but Talbot's achievements thus far are nothing to scoff at and as long as he continues to bring The Fury to the mound every 5 days, the Indians may have themselves some of the rotational depth going forward that is so sorely needed.

_____

Speaking of rookies, the clamoring for 'Los Santana looks to be reaching a fevered pitch and this assumption that Santana will cure all that ails the Indians' scuffling offense is getting some roots in the ground. While I'm just as (if not more) excited for Santana's debut, perhaps there needs to be a quick realization that there are quite a bit of expectations being placed on the shoulders of a guy that has yet to see a MLB pitch.

With that in mind, some hack over at Beyond the Box Score made the comparison to last year's "Super-2" catcher, Matt Wieters, who was supposed to carry the Orioles' offense on his back…something he has yet to do, even 2 months into this season. That's not to say that enthusiasm over Santana's arrival should be tempered to the point that we shouldn't be excited about him, only that some perspective is needed if (or maybe when) Santana goes through some adjustment periods in MLB.

As a quick aside, I've seen some momentum on calling the Indians' Carlos Santana "Smooth", probably in reference to the song that the guitarist Carlos Santana and Matchbox 20's Rob Thomas battered over our heads back in 1999. If you have any memory of that song being played ad nauseum for what seemed like 3 years, you would give great pause before relating this song to anything that you actually liked…or will potentially root for.

While the name "Smooth" is not bad for any baseball player, the mere idea that the impetus for said nickname came from the Top 40 garbage that Carlos Santana (the guitarist) has evolved into producing (and "Smooth" was really the first foray into that) makes me ill. What's next – using some song from Creed or Nickelback to nickname these players? While that may be going overboard a little (and it really isn't), the suggestion that Santana (the catcher) should be called "Smooth" because…because…because "Smooth" was the biggest hit put out by Santana (the guitarist) is just lazy.

If we're going to "honor" the guitarist or at least bring up the coincidence that the Indians' top prospect shares a name with a legendary guitarist, can't we get a little more creative on this?

How about "The Axe Man" or "The Axe Murderer", or honor a time in which Carlos Santana was putting out legitimately great songs, like bestowing a nickname such as "Black Magic" for "Black Magic Woman"?

Remember when there was a movement to refer to Matt MaTola as "White Thunder"? This is wildly premature, but what about the idea that the middle of the Indians' lineup could be anchored by "Black Magic" and "White Thunder"?

Actually, perhaps the evolution of Matt LaPorta from "White Thunder" to "Matt MaTola" (or "Fat Matt MaTola", if you prefer) should serve as a lesson that glossing these players before we've even seen them play in the Big Leagues is premature.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go see what looks better on the back of the #41 jersey I'm about to order – "The Axe Man" or "Black Magic"…

_____

By now you know that the MLB Amateur Draft is coming up next Monday and that the Indians have the 5th pick in the Draft on the "merits" of their 2009 season. I'm not going to claim to know anything about any of the prospective draft picks or assert that "this guy" is better than "that guy" as…well, it just doesn't interest me.

What does interest me is this:

2010 Draft Picks

Cleveland – #5, #55
Anaheim - #18, #29, #30, #37, #40
Boston – #20, #36, #39, #57

No, that's for real…

Because of the Supplemental Draft Picks for Type A and Type B Free Agents that are assigned to teams that lose Type A and Type B Free Agents, the Angels will have made 5 picks in the top 40 before the Indians get to make their second selection and the Red Sox will have 4 picks in the top 57 while the Indians will have just 2 picks in the top 55.

The Red Sox and Angels will receive these picks on the basis of the teams losing Chone Figgins and John Lackey (to the Red Sox coincidentally) and Jason Bay and Billy Wagner. If you don't remember, the Red Sox acquired Wagner from the Mets by picking up the remainder of his $3.3M salary and giving them 2 non-prospects, all of which netted them the #20 and #39 picks.

Truthfully, that #5 pick is the most important of all of the picks as it gives the Indians the opportunity to pick in the top 5 for the first time since 1992 (when they took Paul Shuey #2), but given what has been written particularly about the Red Sox consistently paying their draft picks with "overslot" money, isn't this just perpetuating the imbalance that pervades the league?

_____

Since news like that can drive one to drink, I'll provide a quick update (whether you're interested or not) in the selection of "Drink of the Summer" as we have now passed the arbitrary Memorial Day date for a choice to be made.

When questioning most of my friends, many told me that they had the perfect solution…which was to "just drink gin" and while that certainly will not be dismissed out of hand, the presence of a 4-month-old who still wakes up at night precludes the enjoyment of gin on much more than a periodic basis.

Thus, we're back to finding a "Drink of the Summer" with the caveat that I'm looking for a beer. After trying out Magic Hat #9, Troegs' Dreamweaver, enjoying Juengling up in Chautauqua (which I cannot get in Ohio), and testing Founders' Red Rye IPA, I'm still undecided.

If I had to pick a leader in the clubhouse, it would probably be Troegs' Dreamweaver, but I could still be swayed. For now, I'll enjoy the search and decision while keeping the High Life (which is the perpetual "Drink of the Summer") in the icebox.

_____

On the trade front (and it pains me to address this stuff at the beginning of June), let me just point out some pertinent numbers that can be viewed and utilized by 29 of the GM's around baseball if they so choose:

Jake Westbrook – Last 5 starts
3.12 ERA, 1.15 WHIP, 16 K, 8 BB in 34 2/3 IP with a .690 OPS against

Jhonny Peralta – Last 35 games
.286 BA / .353 OBP / .474 SLG / .827 OPS with 12 2B, 2 3B, and 3 HR

Russell Branyan – Last 19 games
.266 BA / .314 OBP / .625 SLG / .939 OPS with 2 2B and 7 HR

As for the other moveable parts going into this Trading Season (and Mark Grudz and Jamey Wright need not apply), Austin Kearns, whose numbers have dropped like a stone as he has 4 extra-base hits in his last 21 games, and Kerry Wood, who has allowed runs in half of his appearances and is the owner of a .999 OPS against…well, sadly…I have nothing.

_____

Finally, whether you've heard or not, Cy (or is it Sandy) Strasburg looks to be making his 2nd MLB start (against what looks to be Dave Huff, assuming the rotation stays intact) at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario on Sunday, June 13th.

While that bit of information is certainly exciting (and needed, given the Indians' attendance to date), here's hoping that Strasburg's start is ruined by Carlos Santana (the catcher) making his Cleveland debut for the Erie Warriors in front of a full house of fans who have all taken the time to remove the "MARTINEZ" lettering out of their #41 jerseys while they cheer on their new hero, "The Axe Man"…or is it "Black Magic"?