Even though the eight game winning streak was snapped, the team still comes home with an 8-4 record and a 4-2 road record. While the last two losses left a bad taste in our mouths, if I told you that the Tribe had a great shot at being 10-5 after their first 15 games, you would have petitioned to send me to the looney bin. There are some people out there who did not think our Indians would win eight games all month. The joke's on you.

This week's results:

4/8: Cleveland 12, Seattle 3

4/9: Cleveland 2, Seattle 1

4/10: Cleveland 6, Seattle 4

4/11: Cleveland 4, Los Angeles Anaheim 0

4/12: Cleveland 0, **Los Angeles Anaheim 2**

4/13: Cleveland 3, **Los Angles Anaheim 4 (12)**

Record: 4-2, 25 runs scored, 14 runs allowed (RS: 4.16/game; RA: 2.33/game)

Tribal chiefs:

Mitch Talbot: 8 IP, 5 H, 0 R/ER, 2 BB, 4K

Tony Sipp: 3.2 IP, 1 H, 0 R/ER, 1 BB, 4 K

Asdrubal Cabrera: 8-for-25, 3 HR, 4 RBI

Michael Brantley: 8-for-26, 0 HR, 2 RBI

Not a whole lot of offense to talk about in this week's column because the Indians made the most of little offense for three of their four wins on the road trip. Old friend Milton Bradley gift-wrapped the game-winning run in last Saturday's 2-1 victory by inexplicably firing to an abandoned third base and then the ball careened into the dugout off the leg of sliding pitcher

Doug Fister.

I have to take this opportunity to vent about Matt LaPorta. Obviously, I did my fair share of venting about Matt LaPorta in the spring. I said that he needs to be that guy to hit a big three-run HR at the bottom of the order. He did that in the series opener against Anaheim. He followed that up by going 0-for-his-next-10. I wish there was a light bulb above Matt LaPorta's head. We could answer the age-old, how many (insert butt-of-joke here) does it take to change a light bulb. Well, for the one in Matt LaPorta's head, we may never know. He beautifully inside-outted a pitch over the high RF wall for a crucial three-run HR. Since then, he has pulled off everything and continues to hit weak-ass pop ups and slow rollers to the left side of the infield.

Speaking of weak-ass pop ups and slow rollers, Carlos Santana has made that a hobby of his this past week. Six of Santana's nine hits came in the opening

series against Chicago. Since then, Santana has hit an astoundingly awful 3-for-31. Manny Acta, asleep at the wheel, has ridden his young catcher to the ground so far. Perhaps he forgets that Ryan Kalish nearly turned his leg inside out last year, leading to surgery. The kid is lost at the dish. He's Matt LaPorta'ing at breaking balls down and away, fouling off pitches to hit, and swinging his bat like a blindfolded five-year-old whacking a full-of-candy paper donkey hanging from a tree limb with a stick. Rather than give Santana a maintenance day on getaway day, with an extra-added off day on Thursday, Santana was able to catch 12 innings on a semi-day game after a night game.

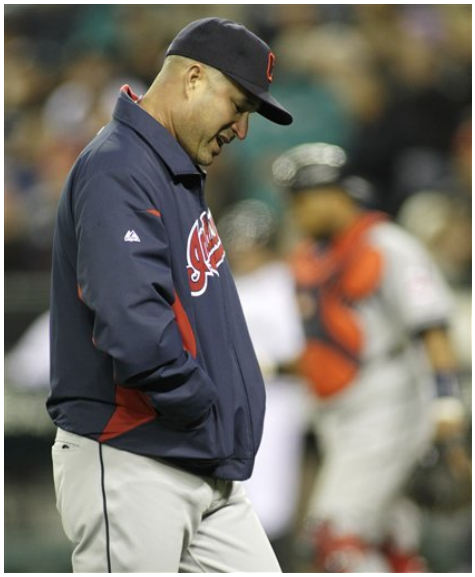
While the hitting has hibernated, the pitching has roared. Tribe starters have reeled off seven straight quality starts and the "worst" start has been Josh Tomlin's three earned, three hit over 6.2 innings in the series opener against Seattle. He was pitching with a 6-run lead.

With the starters rolling along, the majority of the bullpen has been dynamite. The exception being Chad Durbin, who has let off a couple of nod-in-agreement Tweets about his performance. There is some discontent among Tribe fans about Durbin, especially in light of the activation of Joe Smith from the DL. Frank Herrmann gassed up his ride to make the exciting trip down I-71 in lieu of Durbin. The fans' anger is misguided here. Hate on Durbin's

performance all you want, and clearly he hates it as well, but Frank Herrmann had options and Chad Durbin would be swept up faster than a rickety barn in Tornado Alley during a twister.

Chad Durbin will be fine. Shin-Soo Choo will be fine. Carlos Santana will be fine. These are tremendous problems to have. We are 8-4 and Choo and Santana have combined for 18 hits in 89 at bats. They have zero combined doubles.

We have twice as many wins as losses. Be skeptical. Be cynical. But, you know, deep down inside, that you want to enjoy this. You should. Enjoy the ride as long as it lasts. That's the only proper reaction when your team is in first place for the first time since May of 2008.



My Manny Acta Moment: I cannot, in good conscience, praise Manny Acta for two straight weeks...so I won't. The first thing I have to do is gripe about his (over)use of Carlos Santana. Young players don't usually hit their way out of slumps without a maintenance day or two. To me, Santana has an issue with the knee that he injured sliding on an attempted stolen base on April 7. He's swinging all arms and uncharacteristically chasing pitches. Give the kid a day off to sit down with Jon Nunnally and watch some film. Give him a day to relax.

Tough love is one thing, and maybe, that's what Manny Acta is showing him. "Hey kid, this is a grind, and you better be ready for it." I don't know because I'm not a fly on the wall. But, in my opinion, Santana needs to clear his head and get out from behind the plate. DH him one day, let him play first. Let him worry about hitting rather than worry about directing the pitcher through the game.

My second Manny Acta gripe of the week comes from the series finale against Anaheim. Manny Acta did an excellent job during the eight-game win streak of putting his players in the best possible situation to succeed. Fast forward to Wednesday's game. Chad Durbin has been fighting it all year long. He was really the only option for the 12th inning at that point. Calling TWO 1-0 pitchouts in one inning, including one with the bases loaded and Jeff Mathis at the plate does not seem beneficial to me. In Acta's defense, Mathis does have 22 sac bunts in over 1100 plate appearances and Mike Sciosia is one of the few managers who would call for the squeeze there. But, after seeing Shin-Soo Choo get picked off third base, I would guess that Sciosia would give Mathis a chance to drive the run in while ahead in the count. The 2-0 pitch was slugged to CF where Michael Brantley's unpumped Super Soaker arm left the play at the plate rather uneventful.

The three biggest plays from this week:

#3: Trouble™: Oh, Milton. He was a comedy for all the wrong reasons when he was here and he's a comedy for all the right reasons now. Bradley's errant throw to an unoccupied third base gave the Indians an additional run in their 2-1 win over Seattle. Bradley also went 0-for-4 at the dish with 2 K's and sported some nice earplugs after the home crowd heckled him too much. He'll be on the DL with a strained labia next week.

#2: Gator4God's Glimpse of Promise: Matt LaPorta's key three-run HR in the second inning of Mitch Talbot unbelievably terrific start in the series opener against Anaheim gave the team the cushion they needed to run their winning streak up to eight. LaPorta inside-outted a pitch off rookie Tyler Chatwood to give the Indians a four-run lead. Subsequently, LaPorta has gone 0-for-10 and makes me wish for CC back. Not to pitch, but to bat 8th.

#1: Glove optional for the Animal: Because I hate all of the Hannahan nicknames out there, I'll continue calling John Joseph "Jack" Hannahan the "Animal", paying homage to Jack Hanna. It's better than Supermanahan (no offense Jordan Bastian). In my mind it is, anyway. But Jack Hannahan's barehand grab and absolute seed to 1st in the

bottom of the 5th

on Monday night in Anaheim was a microcosm of why this year's Indians team is better.

Mitch Talbot was dealing, but with Bourjos laying down an excellent bunt, the Angels would have had the inning set up with two on, nobody out, and the heart of the order coming to the plate. Hannahan made a play that Jayson Nix, Luis Valbuena, Jason Donald, Jamey Carroll, Andy Marte, and whoever else has played third in the last couple of years never would have made. The play diffused the rally, Talbot did the rest, and the Indians won.

Looking ahead: The Indians entertain Baltimore, losers of four straight, for a weekend series down at The Jake. Justin Masterson, the Tribe's best starter thus far, looks to stop the two-game skid right where it is. After that, the Indians head to Kauffman Stadium for their first series against a division foe since the opening weekend against Chicago.

One final note: A tremendous former Indian retired this past week. Manny Ramirez announced his retirement from Major League Baseball after testing positive

for a banned substance under MLB's drug testing policy. Rather than go through a 100-game suspension or an appeal, ManRam opted to ride off in to the sunrise (it would be sunset, but it is Manny after all) and call it quits on a fantastic career. Unfortunately for Manny, he will have his career numbers scrutinized under the questions of steroids and PEDs.

For me, I will always remember Manny Ramirez as a guy who could straight rake. He was a phenomenal hitter who had a penchant for hitting the best pitchers baseball had to offer. Some guys pad stats against scrubs. Not Manny. He hit everybody. The amount of line drives he hit was staggering. It was his offensive output that allowed the Indians, Red Sox, and Dodgers to overlook his oddball personality and occasional laziness.

At the end of the day, if I had a Hall of Fame vote, I would vote for Manny Ramirez. Turning 25 this upcoming October, growing up, Manny Ramirez was my favorite player and the player I tried to emulate on the field or in the yard. My nostalgia may blind me from what Manny has become and what his legacy will be, but Manny Ramirez will always be the baby-faced kid who hit .320 with 40 HR and 120 RBI every year as an Indian, even when batting in the bottom third of the order.

It's a shame to see him go out this way. Right or wrong, Manny Ramirez was desperately trying to hold on to all that he knew. All that he knew was hitting a baseball. He used to hit 415-foot home runs to right center. As of late, he struggled to hit line drive singles. He did what he could to attempt to get that edge back. It's against the rules and he got what he deserved. I can't help but feel a little sad for Manny, though. To have a precipitous fall from grace from the only thing you excel at cannot be easy. I hope he finds something to occupy his life after baseball, because we can rule out coaching.