I got absolutely downright irritated with ESPN senior writer Keith Law the other day after reading his blog entry about the start our Tribe has been off to.

I'll spare you the reprint and while I usually avoid flat-out pointing you to my daily place of Tribe musings, this may be one case where you must to get my overall point. I can't reproduce a good rant and I simply would like to use all the space here, so I'm above pasting what I had said.

Law basically took a sledgehammer to the Indians start, busting it up bit by bit until you felt like you were looking at a team that put together a 4-12 start rather than a 12-4 start.

Again, as I had said in my original blog post, Law isn't out to make friends and he certainly has a duty to give his honest opinion and he has a right to be wrong. I feel he's wrong, but that isn't why I felt the need to take him to task. He was simply arrogant of the facts. He is arrogant of the fact that not only he, but probably 98 percent of the universe had been taken by surprise from the Tribe's start.

He is arrogant of the fact that the Indians are showing a lot more promise in not only the future, but in 2011, as being a team worthy of contention. A team that isn't likely destined for fourth place and a below .500 record, like Law thinks.

Of course, it is only a strong start, it isn't an entire season. They are the flavor of the week, or time period, or whatever. But that doesn't mean the flavor has to go out of style.

This, in some crazy-round about way, brings me back to the 98 percent of the universe. Is that an official statistic? It's an official guesstimate, because there was only one person that I found, other than myself, that was willing to put any faith in the Tribe not finishing in fourth of fifth in the AL Central.

AL MELCHIOR! COME ON DOWN!

If the Indians finish third, even second, hell win the whole damn division, this will forever be the season of Al Melchior.

Now if you remember back to the point where I found Al Melchior's prediction , you will remember my "checklist" of sorts. It was a few things that I listed that had to go right for the Indians to, as I put it, "shock the world."

I guess shock the universe?

With the hot start, and not knowing how long it will last, why not go down that checklist and see just how in-tune it is with what has actually gone right. But before I do that, I must go below of what I said I was above of and paste something from my original "shock the world" post. It's only a couple of sentences.

"But maybe it is the hope inside of me with this team that forces me to make such a pick. I realize things look bad to a lot of people and perhaps an overactive sense of hope combined with constant and daily musings is an equation for insanity. But third place isn't that insane, is it?"

Insanity lives people, insanity. It lives!

If Grady Sizemore comes back healthy...

Well, well, well, look what frisky cat decided to join the party. We're only a few games into seeing if Grady Sizemore is fully healthy, but so far so good. Sizemore, first off has hit a home run. That's a sight for sore eyes because he officially hadn't hit one since 2009. He is swinging the bat early on like he's healthy, so that alone gives you hope that this one is not only one you can check off, but be incredibly happy about.

Bonus points to me for saying "even Travis Hafner." The lineup had been productive pre-Sizemore return because of Hafner and Asdrubal Cabrera and other spare parts (more on that in a second), but his addition only makes it stronger.

If Matt LaPorta and Michael Brantley both get it...

Get it?

Matt LaPorta

.259 AVG, .369 OBP, .463 SLG, .827 OPS

9 R, 2 HR, 10 RBI, 9/11 BB/K, 1 SB, 6 XBH

Michael Brantley

.328 AVG, .413 OBP, .391 SLG, .793 OPS

10 R, 0 HR, 6 RBI, 10/8 BB/K, 3 SB, 4 XBH

I think so far, it's looking like they both get it. Brantley probably more than LaPorta, but early signs are encouraging here with these two young hitters.

LaPorta seems to be turning a corner. You can probably expect an average around there, but the on-base numbers are good to see. He's garnering walks, hitting for some good power with a pair of home runs and a few more extra-base hits. His triple was a power triple, a towering shot off the left field wall against Baltimore.

A .472 slugging average isn't bad. Travis Hafner leads the team with .625 and that may be a little inflated like all the rest of the league (MLB leader was .633 last year, only four hit above .600). So if he can keep up a number around there, I think everyone will take that.

Brantley has put up quite the fight early on. So much so he had people like myself fighting for him to remain in the leadoff role. What's encouraging is the hitting average. Brantley has always made his on-base numbers higher from walks, yet he seems to be doing it with hits. That will probably come down a little, but the walks will likely go up from where they are at. That is excellent news. He also should go on a base-running tear at some point, because to not utilize his speed to create extra opportunities, would be a waste.

If Carlos Carrasco is a second ace...

If I could replace Carlos Carrasco with "any other pitcher" you could emphatically check this one

off the list. Carrasco has been decent, definitely middle of the rotation caliber. But it has been Justin Masterson who has been the second ace of this staff.

Masterson is leading this rotation right now. He's starting winning streaks and going deep into ballgames. He's taking a burden off the bullpen and showing a lot of good signs of overcoming the issues that caused him to struggle in 2010 at times. There's no point in going over the basic stats, you know he's good. It's time to take a look at where he's thriving and how.

Last year, Masterson was letting lefties tee-off on him. He had a .290 average against and was walking nearly double the lefties than he was righties with almost equal innings. This season, he's obviously containing everyone, not just lefties. The average is still up around .283 (facing more lefties, understandably), but he isn't walking them. Or at least wasn't until Kansas City on Wednesday. He entered the game with four walks, three of them to right-handers, one to left-handers. He walked five, more than what he had walked all season, but to be fair, two came in the seventh when he should have been yanked.

Still to walk just one left-hander through his first three starts, it shows he's improving. He has been crushing right-handers too, giving up just six hits (three going into Wednesday).

It goes beyond the stats though. Masterson is repeating his delivery and he's working his mechanics out to a comfortable point. He's showing much better control to the left-handers, which is going to benefit him in the long-run.

Not to let Carlos Carrasco go unmentioned, since opening day he's been 1-0 with a 3.26 ERA in three starts. He gave up seven earned runs in the game against Chicago and seven in the three games since. He and Josh Tomlin especially are really contributing, which brings me to the next check.

If someone comes out of nowhere...

So far you could probably check this off like nine times. I confined this to position players in my head, but the pitchers have really come from out of nowhere. Tomlin and Masterson have lead

that charge. Then you have Tony Sipp stepping up in the eighth and Vinnie Pestano pitching well and being given more trust.

Offensively of course it has been Asdrubal Cabrera, who hasn't exactly come out of nowhere, but has played as well as ever. A resurgent Pronk of old has also come out of nowhere. I think we all expected not the power-hitting Pronk, but at least a productive one that collects hits, gets on-base, and isn't a perpetual out that looks like he's swinging at a tiny golf ball on a string.

To be real fair, the entire team has really come out of nowhere, which is likely why this type of winning isn't likely to last. Of course winning ways are certainly possible and the team would all have to slump at the same time, but there are few parts of the team that aren't playing well right now. Choo and Santana have yet to hit their high point, which is probably even more of a reason to believe in the Indians, because they surely will come around.

If the defense is everything we think it can be...

I think the defense has been the catalyst of this early start. Not only is stellar defense helpful in the fact that, well, you aren't screwing things up, it's helpful because it makes your pitchers better.

Just ask Justin Masterson and Fausto Carmona how much more confidence they have knowing they can pitch to contact and let the defense do a lot of the work. Going into Thursday's games, only three AL teams have committed fewer errors, Baltimore, Tampa Bay, and Boston. Two of the errors have come from pitcher Josh Tomlin, meaning that the infield defense has only screwed up five times.

But again, it isn't just about not screwing up or committing errors. Jack Hannahan has been a vacuum over at the hot-corner and Adam Everett is a stable backup for him and the other positions (even though the Cabreras have played all 18 games). Matt LaPorta is much improved, making more than his fair share of impressive plays. And of course Orlando and Asdrubal look like they've been playing together forever.

And I must not forget the final game against Boston in which defense pretty much won the game.

I said it initially when I brought up the Padres. Pitching and defense can carry you a good amount of the way. If that defense component is maintained all year, you have to feel good about the team moving forward.

If one of the AL Central horses takes a tumble...

Not just one, but, two, heck all three so far. There's a reason Kansas City and Cleveland are leading. All three haven't done much. Chicago has won five games outside of beating Cleveland twice. They probably look the best out of the three to turn things around. Detroit is just coasting around and they just placed Victor Martinez on the disabled list.

Which brings me to this point, verbatim, from what I said a few weeks ago as the season started in regards to the Minnesota Twins: "...but they certainly aren't immune, especially if Morneau can't come back or if someone like Mauer goes down." I wouldn't have won the bet, because I wouldn't have put money on it, but I did say it.

Sorry to be the jinx Twins fans. Mauer is down and while Morneau is playing, he isn't quite back to the level we know he is capable of. Yet it's early and you have to believe that they'll hit a turnaround point.

It's kind of like Santana and Choo in regards to their two best pitchers. Carl Pavano did get shelled against Baltimore and Francisco Liriano hasn't quite put it all together, but you know they'll come around.

Still, it's kind of eerie that it all falls in line with pretty much all the other checks.

Shock the world...

I don't know about you guys, but I made a lot of checks going down the list. How likely is it that they all remain throughout the season? Look, I don't know that. Keith Law doesn't know that. What I do know is that right now, they're hitting all their checks.

And as I mentioned a few weeks ago before this wild season even started...If all this could happen, then the Indians could very well shock the world. But heck, the way things are going, if they only check off a majority of them, they could still do it.

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