We're we all took quick to judge? Did we ignore the warning signs? Was there something happening right under our watch that we just didn't see, or perhaps didn't want to see?

Did Justin Masterson get it? And did we not get it that he was getting it?

That's usually how it happens. Players often get it and you don't realize it until they've got it and are way past proving it.

Call the start Justin Masterson is off to a fluke if you want, but you just wouldn't be "getting it" like the rest of us who won't.

Tread lightly, because it is only four starts, as Masterson prepares to take the hill against Kansas City on Tuesday. It was last week, in the first meeting between Luke Hochevar and Masterson that the one of the MLB's leaders in winning percentage was roughed up a little.

Five walks, two earned runs, six hits. For six innings, that isn't bad, right?

Right, but here's how good Masterson had been before the Kansas City start.

Five walks was one more than his total coming into the game. Two earned runs was one less than his total earned runs coming into the game. The 11 baserunners he allowed on base was one less than the total baserunners he had allowed in his previous two starts.

Oh, but he won the game, just like all the others. Masterson's four wins is two less than the number of wins he had last year. The stout right-hander had a season of ups and downs in 2010, going 6-13 and often being the subject of conversation that ended with most people claiming he should be in the bullpen.

Not in the rotation.

Just think if the Indians gave in to all that talk and went back on the principle of keeping him as a starter for the entire year. I can't help but think of when there was a cry for Cliff Lee to be traded following the 2007 season. Heck, rumor has it the Indians almost pulled the trigger on a deal for Lee that would have sent him to Arizona for Carlos Quentin.

Just think of what the Indians would have missed out on. Just think of what the Indians could be missing out on if they had knee-jerked Masterson into the pen. Especially with a staff that is off to a good start and looking deep in terms of late inning arms, Masterson's start to 2011 is an additional plus.

I'm not saying Masterson is going to win the AL Cy Young award, not in the slightest, or that this type of production is even going to keep up. But I am saying this. Justin Masterson is a starter. I'm going to say it. Masterson is a starter and I think he's going to be a good one at that.

There are some subtle quirks to Masterson that you have to enjoy. He seems like an easy-going

type of a player, who isn't rattled much, if at all. In fact that may be an indicator as to why he was so good in relief when with Boston.

During the 2008 postseason, as a bonafied rookie, Masterson was lock down for Boston. He gave up just two earned runs in nine appearances, appearing in nearly ever contest the Red Sox played. For a rookie to be depended on that much and produce those types of results, I would have to say is pretty impressive.

Sometimes when Masterson talks to the media he refers to himself as a collective unit. Or perhaps he is referring to both he and his catcher. "We pitched well," or "We got off to a great start." Whatever it is, Masterson is good natured, and his poise is impressive.

Probably when the pressure was the highest for Masterson last season was near the end, when many, including myself, started to sour on the prospects of him as a legitimate full time starter. He finished July with an eight run bombing at the hands of the Blue Jays. It was his tenth loss. He'd go on to beat Boston the next time out, but not convincingly. The better part of August was hell, and even though he gave up just one hit to Seattle on the 15th, he walked six hitters. The game as a whole was just a prime example of his inconsistency and his ultimate problem, control.

Facing a lineup made up of five left-handed hitters was pretty much the norm when clubs caught on and had the ability to do so. So it just was a perfect snapshot of the hope, yet frustration one had in watching him last year.

It may have clicked for him against Oakland. He won his fifth game, walked just two hitters and then followed that up with an impressive 7-plus inning performance against Chicago in which he gave up just a run off four hits and two walks, with seven strikeouts. That was what Masterson is ultimately capable of. From there he would make a few more starts, and come in relief for Mitch Talbot and go seven innings, essentially a start.

He'd have to pitch his final few games in relief to keep his innings in check, but the Indians made no bones about it, Masterson would be a starter in 2011. Perhaps that was the confidence boost, along with the performance, that Masterson needed for this season.

What he ultimately attributes his early season success to is the repeated delivery that he was able to master at the end of last season. Maybe even the relief appearances helped in that, as it gave him more often opportunities to go out and work.

And as we look back, consistency was one of the issues with Masterson, perhaps he wasn't able to be consistent in that aspect and it led to inconsistencies in other aspects of his game.

Other areas that Masterson struggled in, as I would routinely bring up in 2010, would be pitching to left-handed hitters.

Vs LHP: 389 AB, 113 H (.288 AVG), 10 HR, 46 BB (1.65 WHIP), 58 K, 57.8 GB percentage

Vs RHP: 320 AB, 84 H (.259 AVG), 4 HR, 27 BB (1.33 WHIP), 82 K, 62.6 GB percentage

Here's where I really draw the line because as bad as he was against left-handers, his season as a whole wasn't amazing or anything. Overall, what more can you say about a .263 average against right-handers? I choose to focus on several key stats in regards to the lefty vs. righty conundrum.

Vs LHP: 1.26 K/BB, 4.30 BB/9

Vs RHP: 3.04 K/BB, 2.90 BB/9

The walks per strikeouts and walks per nine innings. This was probably the most brutal statistic that was not in Masterson's favor. Not only are the ratios bad, he wasn't facing that many more left-handers than right-handers, so there was no room to say anything got skewed.

Here's where playing with numbers and a small sample size can be fun. In 2011 Masterson's GB percentage against lefties has gone down, but his percentage against righties is way up. His strikeouts against righties are also up and his walks are down. But against lefties he's improved from 1.26 strikeouts per walk, to 3.46 strikeouts per walk and 4.30 walks per nine innings to 2.00 walks per nine innings.

Yes the production against right-handers may not keep up as insane as it has been (and it realistically can't, unless he's Cliff Lee v2), but the control against left-handers looks improved. They're skewed in the right vs. left department, but in comparison to last season, they're much better.

Ultimately, Masterson is getting more contact and more swings and misses. For one, first pitch strike percentage is up from 55.6 percent to 61.1 percent and his pitches in the zone are up almost four percent.

That is leading to more swings at pitches in the zone and the hitters are missing. His contact percentage remains the same, but the increase in swing and misses is likely because he's not missing the zone wildly.

Is he throwing anything different?

He's relying on his slider a little more, 23 percent of the time, compared to 18 percent of the time last year. He's relying less on the changeup, which could be a good or a bad thing. One thing that I was adamant about last year was him using the changeup more against lefties, something he'd need to do to get them out. Maybe relying on it less is helping because the changeup wasn't very good. Whatever the case is, he seems to be having success.

Maybe he has a better feel for his slider and the consistent delivery allows him to throw it more often for more success. With Boston in 2008, although he was relieving, he threw his slider over 30 percent of the time. He was likely using that as his out-pitch and given the success he had, it worked then and it is working now.

This year he's throwing the slider with much success. Opponents are hitting just .187 off of it and he's throwing it 33 percent of the time when he's ahead and 30 percent of the time overall.

The changeup is being thrown more often than not to left-handers and they're hitting .326 off it, which just leads you to believe he should probably continue to throw it at the rate he is, because it hasn't worked as much.

One thing that doesn't escape me though and it is not as measurable in statistics. The team's improvement overall defensively around the infield has probably been instrumental. With a strong infield, you can pitch to contact a lot more and Masterson has done that, by evidence of winning a game despite not recording a strikeout. His ground-ball percentage is up, and overall he's getting more outs through using his defense.

That can be a huge confidence builder, knowing you don't have to strike everyone out. Perhaps that is what happened last season in a way. Masterson knew he had to get every out possible and that led to overthrowing or wild control. Now he can make a pitch and know he has a defense behind him that is capable of making a good portion of the plays.

That's something that cannot be measured in statistics. Masterson seems to have the confidence and now he has the backing from not just the management and coaching staff, but the fans, his offense, and even his defense. Whether it is the performance backing or the emotional backing, it all works.

Masterson looks to be coming into his own on the mound as a starter. He's going deep into games and he's showing incredible poise, even when he doesn't have his best stuff. He's also busting up losing streaks. A big reason the Indians haven't lost more than three games in a row is because Masterson pitches every five games. Right now they are on a season high three game skid and it is Masterson's job on Tuesday to end it.

He stopped the initial two game slide to start the season and the Indians have won every start he's made (three) after a loss. Against Kansas City he didn't have his best stuff and clearly struggled early and late with walks, but he still only gave up two runs and kept his team in the game and they won.

That is the type of stuff that an ace of a staff does. And like with the Cy Young award, I'm not saying he's the staff ace. But he's certainly pitching like one.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he tweets thoughts of joy and not doom. You should also like his blog on Facebook because you really should.