You hate to use the term "magical" to describe an early start, especially if you're a columnist with a penchant for causing irreparable harm with one's proclamations. And it conveys a certain connotation of disbelief, which would take away from the fact that the team is playing really well and is a lot of fun to watch.

The Tribe swept the Tigers this weekend by scoring in their last at-bat in each of the three games, and Buff … well, really, he feels like he ought to keep his mouth shut.

(He doesn't.)

FINAL

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Tigers (12-14)

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Indians (17-8)

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W: C. Perez (1-1) L: Benoit (0-1)

FINAL

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FINAL

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Indians (19-8)

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W: B. Squirrel (1-1) L: Benoit (0-2) S: C. Perez (7)

Cleveland scored as many runs after the 6th inning as Detroit scored all weekend (11). Note: Cleveland only scored 2 runs in each game before the 7th.

1) Fortune smiles

In one inning, starter Jeanmar Gomez gave up two singles and a double. In another, he gave up two doubles and a single.

In those two innings combined, Gomez gave up … one run.

Gomez ended up having one of those game which sportswriters in my youth would have dubbed a “scattering of ten hits.” He didn’t quite finish his 6th inning of work, so he was one out short of a Quality Start, but then, he only gave up two runs as well.

He left two men on base to Chad Durbin, so I feel he ought to get extra credit for that.

He did give up a two-run homer to Miggy Cabrera in the first, but after that, the Tigers did not score again off Gomez or, for that matter, anyone else, either.

Here’s something to take from this outing that might not be immediately obvious: while Max Scherzer was sawing through the Indians’ lineup the first couple times en route to collecting 7 Ks in 6 2/3 IP, Gomez was simply plodding along, giving up his 10 hits. He had one inning out of six in which he didn’t give up a hit.

He threw to an astonishing 10 batters with a runner in scoring position.

He actually gave up 3 hits to these 10 batters.

However, two of these were singles that only advanced the runner from second to third, so only Cabrera’s blow actually produced any runs.

But here’s a stat to keep in mind:

Number of batters who walked and subsequently scored off Gomez: 0
Number of batters who walked and subsequently scored off Scherzer: 3

Gomez, of course, didn't walk any batters in the first place, so it was moderately difficult for them to come around to score. Meanwhile, despite giving up 10 hits, Scherzer actually allowed more baserunners (6 H, 5 BB) than Gomez (10 H, but not including errors).

And despite allowing 3 hits for extra bases for 13 total bases, Scherzer's 6 hits included a pair of homers for 12 total bases.

Of course, much of the damage against Scherzer came in his final two frames, when it might have behooved Jim Leyland to rouse himself and bring on a relief pitcher. Personally, I applaud his decision to channel 2006 Eric Wedge to coax "just one more inning" out of Mighty Max.

But the fact remains that Jeanmar Gomez held the fort and we won the game in no small part because he was able to keep the Tigers from building a big inning.

Having a guy thrown out at home helped, too.

Was this a great game by the young starter? No, it was not. Ten hits is ten hits, and he was lucky to hold the damage to 3 runs.

He's really, really ordinary.

Your 7th starter is often pretty ordinary.

He did pretty well, though.

2) Did you say "7th?"

I did. Because Alex White is better than Jeanmar Gomez.

Is Alex White "truly ready" for the majors? Well, what do you mean? Is he ready to win 20 games in 200+ innings?
He is not.

Can he get major-league hitters out?

Yes, he can.

Can he make 20 starts without the league "figuring him out" and forcing him to adjust?

Shoot, I probably don't offer more insight than many other fans here.

My initial guess would be, "No."

Right now, White has two fine pitches in a fastball and a splitter: these are enough to get major-leaguers out, but probably not four times in a game.

White's final numbers are slightly skewed: Manny Acta took the Alvin Dark vs. Frank Howard approach to Miggy Cabrera, which probably wasn't wholly unwarranted. Unlike other small-sample inflated numbers, Cabrera's .333/.454/.635 wouldn't surprise me in the least if they were his season-ending numbers as well.

Cabrera has a supportable argument to being the best hitter in the American League.

So intentionally walking him twice bumps White's walk total up.

But the fact that it bumps it up to FOUR showcases one of my concerns: the other two walks came against Austin Jackson, who is mired in a terrifying slump. Jackson left this game hitting .181/.252/.257. His AVG was inflated by a fluky BABIP last season, so he was due for some regression, but not this far.

He's cold.

He's not hitting.

Throw him a strike!

Yes, his speed makes him dangerous: he can turn singles into doubles and doubles into triples, but that's an argument AGAINST walking him, not FOR it.

What was infuriating was not that he drew a pair of walks, but that he drew a pair of walks ***after being down 0-2 in the count***
.

That's just agonizing.

White would set him up, then broke out the laser sight and tried to get MUCH too fine.

While I acknowledge that White didn't walk anyone else in this (or any other) manner, there were other batters to get a similar treatment.

Brennan Boesch started 0-2 in the 5th, then got two nibbles before flying out.

Ryan Raburn was down 0-2 in the 4th

, then went foul, ball, foul, ball, homer.

White got 10 swings-and-Misses and struck out 4, but his penchant for Nagying will drive me crazy if it's a character trait rather than a one-game data point.

All told, White gave up 2 runs in 6 innings, adding his name to the Quality Start roll, yielding 6 hits and the 4 walks. The walks to Cabrera don't bother me at all: the walks to Jackson are more disturbing for the nibbling than for blunderbussery. The home run to Cabrera didn't even make me blink: Miggy Cabrera hits home runs.

The home run to Raburn … well, look: we got a home run from Mike Brantley.

Things happen.

White pitched well.

Now … can someone teach this young man Mitch Talbot's changeup?

Preferably whoever taught it to Talbot rather than Talbot himself, because I'd rather he healed first?

3) Snooze alarm fail

In the first inning of Sunday's game, Justin Masterson allowed two hits and a walk.

In the second inning of Sunday's game, Justin Masterson allowed two hits and a walk.

In the next five innings of Sunday's game, Justin Masterson allowed two hits and no walks.

Mind you, he did hit a couple batters and later ended up giving up a third run with some "help" (thereby losing his chance to win the game), but after a rough start, Masterson again pitched very well. He seems to display a positive, unstressed demeanor on the mound, and for him to cut out the walks while ending up with 7 Ks made for a very pleasant viewing experience, especially matched up with Unbeatable Phil Coke. With 11 groundouts, this make his Masterson Number for the game 18, a season high.

Masterson now has 6 Quality Starts, giving up no more than 3 runs of any kind in a start this season.

It also puts an end to the disturbing Fibonacci Sequence of runs allowed.

With 6 singles and a double, Masterson has now allowed 8 extra-base hits in 40 IP and has held oppponents to a .301 SLG.

Opponents vs. Masterson actually live in the Tyner Zone with an OBP of .307.

His pitches per plate appearance of 3.76 would be a career low, suggesting either increased confidence or command, either of which would be a fine thing.

4) Whiplash

Jack Hannahan led off the bottom of the 9th inning Friday with a solid single and was replaced on the basepaths by Adam Everett, who is 34 years old but seems older.

This confused me.

I got over it.

Anyway, Grady Sizemore advanced Everett to third with a hard-hit single to right, so with no outs, the runner on third represented the winning run. Even a double play would win the game.

Just about any decently-hit ball (or exceptionally poorly-hit ball, like a “swinging bunt”) would win the game.

Just make contact.

Asdrubal Cabrera did not make contact.

Ha ha! Just fooling! Asdrubal Cabrera was intentionally walked, to load the bases and put a force on at home. This is sound strategy, as long as the next hitter isn’t someone like Shin-Soo Choo.

The next hitter was Shin-Soo Choo.

Okay, then: this is a challenge to you, Shin-Soo: just hit the ball and we all go home.

Shin-Soo Choo did not hit the ball.

This was really very discouraging: Carlos Santana actually HAS grounded into 3 double plays already this season and is hitting .191. While Choo's .250 is nothing to get extremely excited about, there have been signs that he's back on track. And all we needed was a decent fly ball, as long as Adam Everett is faster than the average 34-year-old.

I went from euphoria to real consternation on three pitches, the length of time it took Choo to whiff.

All we needed was a decent fly ball!

Carlos Santana hit a pretty decent fly ball.

I will say this: once Santana had a 3-1 count, with the bases loaded in a tie game so that a walk would win the game, I found myself saying, “Boy, if you swing at this pitch, Carlos, you’d better be sure you can hit it solidly.”

Yeah, he hit it rather solidly.

5) That was fun! Let’s do it again!

Santana wasn’t the only Indian to have a walkoff game-winning hit this weekend, as Orly Cabrera drove a ball over the head of shallow-playing Austin Jackson in the bottom of the 13th Saturday to win the game.

Under normal circumstances, Cabrera’s game-winner might have been caught for an out, but with 1 out and a man on third, that would still have been the game-winner in the guise of a sacrifice fly.

In other words, Cabrera just needed to hit the ball well, not awesomely, and he hit it well.

Cabrera ended up going 3-for-6 on the night while seeing 12 pitches total, proving once again that I should probably hold off on grand pronouncements about plate discipline. Hey, it’s better

to have it than to lack it, but Orly's 36 and this is pretty much who he is at this point.

He won the game, who argues with this?

Interestingly enough, the intentional walk came into play here again, as Mike Brantley led off the inning with a single, then took second on a botched pickoff throw. Asdrubal Cabrera sacrificed him to third, where he stood patiently as Leyland walked BOTH Choo AND Santana to get to Cabrera. Note that on the night, Santana finished 1-for-5 with the IBB and 3 Ks: had they walked Choo, Santana was a legitimate threat to end the inning with a ground ball, as long as they didn't let Choo steal second. But this is all second-guessing territory: I don't view Choo OR Santana as "must avoid" hitters in the Miggy Cabrera mold, but each has more power than Orly, and it was a calculated risk by the Tigers.
Orly had to come through for it to backfire, and he did.

Great finish.

6) Shhhh!

When your first baseman hits 7th or 8th, it's usually due to one of two circumstances: Paul Sorrento is playing first for the 1995 Cleveland Indians, or you have some misguided notion about how important your first baseman's glovework is. I think it's a bit delusional to consider Brantley-Sizemore-Choo to be Albert-Kenny-Manny, and no one I know is seriously touting our first baseman for a Glove of any type of precious metal.

So we need a third case here for Matt LaPorta.

LaPorta collected 4, 3, and 4 total bases in the three games, hitting a solo shot, three doubles, and a single. He is now hitting .263/.344/.513 on the season. And while Orly's game-winning heroics have their charm, I'm not convinced LaPorta really "belongs" in the 8 slot.

I'm no mind-reader, but I can't help but think that Manny Acta put LaPorta there to say, in effect, "Look, we believe you can succeed.

Hide here in the 8 slot and settle in: you're our guy, better or worse, hell or high water.

You get your cuts every day and don't press for immediate results.

Relax and let the game come to you."

Whether or not this was the original intent, the results are encouraging, as evidenced by his slash line.

So there is the third case: we don't want anyone to notice that Matt LaPorta has become a major-league corner infielder. Don't tell anyone.

7) Official Disclaimer

Every year, a player or two will come to the fore about whom I lose my ability to be objective. S ome justify my frustration (Ramon Vazquez, Mike Rouse) and some don't.

But I'm no longer capable of writing constructively about Chad Durbin, and thus will not.

8) Break out the buzzsaws!

After White left the game Saturday, on a night in which we appeared to have little going for us offensively, the bullpen conjured up these blasts from the past:

Joe Smiff: 3 hitters, 3 outs, 2 Ks, 8 strikes in 10 pitches
VFP: a hit and a walk in a scoreless inning (the walk was Miggy, I can't complain)
C-Pez: 3 hitters, 3 outs, 2 Ks, 11 strikes in 14 pitches
Raffy Perez: 2 IP, 2 singles, 2 Ks, 0 BB, 24 strikes in 31 pitches
Tony Sipp: 2 IP, 2 H, 0 BB, 2 Ks, 15 strikes in 21 pitches

Except for Pestano, that's dominant, cruel stuff.

Durbin and Smiff were much less effective Friday, but were bailed out by a regular-grade VFP (1 K in 1 perfect inning) and a solid C-Pez (1 K in 1 perfect inning, but only 5 strikes in 11 pitches). Raffy gave up Masterson's 3rd run on a single and a sac fly, while Durbin poached the win with a K of the single hitter he faced, and C-Pez got a "save" despite pitching Durbinly.

But Saturday was really fun.

9) Captains Clutch!

Shelley Duncan is somewhat miscast as a DH against right-handed pitching: he is serviceable, but not nearly as effective as he is as a lefty-masher. With Travis Hafner nursing a foot injury, Duncan got a "spot start" against Scherzer and yanked a two-out, two-run, bases-loaded single through the hole between short and third.

Oddly enough, he could not get a hit off Phil Coke, but that hit was big.

Asdrubal Cabrera chipped in a pair of two-out RBI Friday as well. Santana had one in the 13-inning affair, and LaPorta had two on Sunday.

As a team, the Indians hit 6-for-22 with runners in scoring position, which is … eh.

Oddly enough, they had only 5 AB with RISP in the 13-inning game: that was far less an issue of "squandering" as it was "being throttled" (17 Ks as a team).

10) Bottom of the barrel … er … *order*

Saturday night, the 6-through-9 hitters combined to go 2-for-19 with 1 walk and TWELVE strikeouts. LaPorta hit a double and a single, but Jack Hannahan (moved up to SIX), Austin Kearns, and Tofu Lou went hitless in 15 trips to the plate (Hannahan drew a single walk).

Kearns in particular looked overmatched, although he struck out only three times to Marson's four. His other two times, he grounded out to third, and neither one was putting the fear of Jhonny Peralta into Brandon Inge. The sample size is pitifully small, but this player does not look like one who is going to help the Indians any time soon: he appears to the lay fan to be guessing at the plate. (Marson is kind of what he is, I'm a lot less concerned about him.)