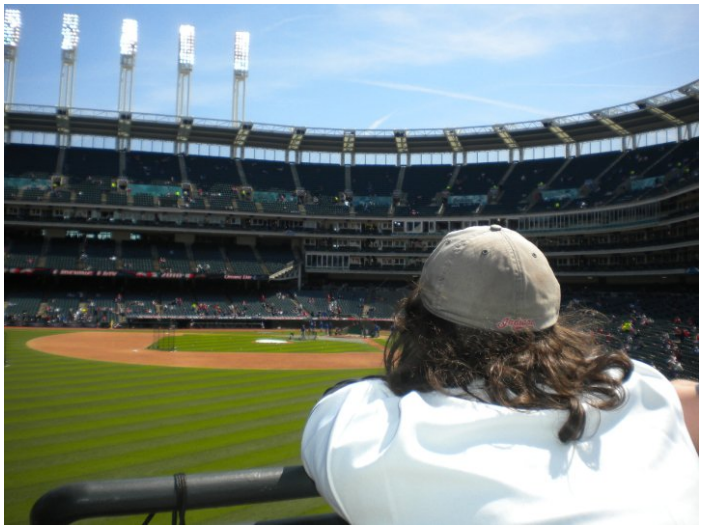


This week, the Cleveland Indians season is halfway over. Thinking back to snow, salt trucks, and wind chills, I cannot believe that the calendar has turned to July and the baseball season that I long for when the final out of the Indians' season is recorded is fifty percent done. Perhaps more unbelievable is that, at almost the halfway point, the Indians sit a half-game ahead of the Detroit Tigers and have three games in hand.

It's been an interesting season so far. The Tribe has given its home crowd a series of thrilling wins to go along with the heartache of a brutal month-long stretch. Some players have developed in to gems and others regressed to newfound lows. It has been a tale of two seasons over the first 80 games and there are a lot more chapters to be written.

Right from the first game of the season, we knew that we had an uphill climb, but had a team that had a fighting spirit. Despite being embarrassed in the first five innings of the home opener, the Indians clawed their way back to score 10 runs and make the final score a lot closer than it should have been. Figuring they might build off the momentum, they simply got beat up again the next day. After that, the Indians went 30-13, raising expectations and getting some love from the national media. The "I told you so" crowd was able to get vocal again after the Indians went on a 13-24 stretch that began in late May and continued through June.

There have been surprises and disappointments, elations and frustrations, joy and anger, changes from the status quo and more of the same, and everything in between. Really, the most interesting thing about the first half has been the psyche of the front office, the fans, and the players. While enjoying the shocking success and the games holding levels of importance that we had not seen since 2007, the Indians have made personnel moves that we hadn't seen in the past and had huge walk-up crowds that became etched in the Jacobs Field record books.

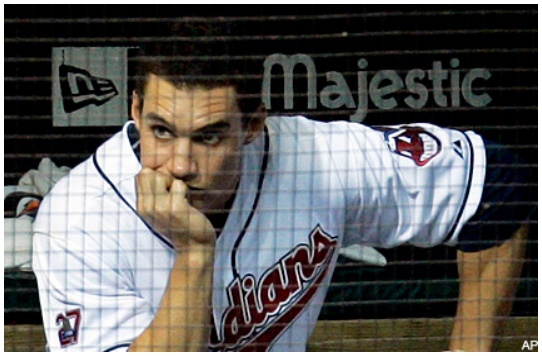
Surprises

Plenty of surprises to this season, but none bigger than the development of Carlos Carrasco. Carrasco emerged in the month of June to the tune of a 4-2 record with a 1.90 ERA. He accounted for 40% of the Indians pitching wins in June and won two 1-0 games. All four of his wins either stopped a losing streak or won a series. He will have to continue this to compensate for one of the season's biggest disappointments.

Asdrubal Cabrera added the long ball to his repertoire, slugging 13 (14) long balls in the first three months (and a day) of the season. He had 18 in 387 career games entering this year. Travis Hafner returned with a vengeance, hitting .336 over the 43 games he played. An oblique injury cost him about 30 games and cost the Indians because their seven game lead became a deficit while Hafner was on the shelf.

Vinnie Pestano has been incredible so far. One of my biggest concerns entering the season was which right hander would bridge the gap to Chris Perez. Conventional wisdom (or maybe just my wisdom) assumed that it was Chad Durbin's job. While Durbin struggled, Pestano thrived allowing just five earned runs in 29.2 innings. He struck out 40.

Disappointments



Two glaring disappointments are all that need to be said. Grady Sizemore and Fausto Carmona. Grady Sizemore has become essentially useless since his return from the DL. He has shown less range in CF, has struck out nearly every other at bat, and looks like a shell of his former self. To me, Sizemore is like The Hangover Part II. We are not that far removed from when Sizemore was lauded by national scribes and scouts as a tremendous player with supreme upside and untapped potential.

The first Hangover movie was hilarious. It was highly quotable and loved nationally, from critics to moviegoers. A lot of critics get turned off by the crass, lewd humor of movies like The Hangover, but this flick seemed to alter the paradigm.

The second that Hangover II was announced, I convinced myself that it would suck. In fact, the movie was out for a long while before I went and saw it this week. It sucked. Horribly.

Grady Sizemore, to me, is The Hangover II. The same cast was in place and the tools were there to make it a good movie. After such a debut, and a sustained run of success, both Sizemore and The Hangover had enormous expectations to live up to. Sizemore has the tools. He has chosen not to change his approach. Hangover Part II did not change its approach either, using tapped out jokes and too many plot similarities to work. The occasional good joke is equal to the occasional good night at the plate for Sizemore.

If Grady Sizemore is Hangover Part II, his legacy will be unclear. Some I have talked to love the movie and some who love Sizemore will defend him to the death. Others, like me, will dislike

both and prefer never to watch either of them again. The caveat is that Sizemore might change. Hangover Part II won't.

And the other disappointment is Fausto Carmona. In three months, Fausto Carmona has allowed 15 HR. His previous **season** high is 17. His lowest ERA for a month is 5.15. A year ago, Carmona threw four complete games. This year, he has thrown eight full innings once. He is not the top of the rotation pitcher we all envisioned. Not much more needs to be said about Fausto. Everybody knows it. Everybody's talked about it. Disappointment about sums it up.

Elations & Joy

There was something special going on at Jacobs Field in the first two months of the season. Every day, visions of the Carlos Santana walk-off grand slam and the Travis Hafner two-run dead center walk-off roll through my head. They go through my mind when I walk in Gate A, when the game goes in to the late innings, and when I'm just sitting around thinking about baseball.

There's the Asdrubal Cabrera suicide squeeze against Boston and the Asdrubal Cabrera go-ahead double against Boston, the Travis Buck two-run HR against Cincinnati, the drubbings of Kansas City and Seattle, Josh Tomlin's RBI single, and every other big hit, strikeout, or save.

Those moments have been few and far between over the last 40-plus days, but they are still

memories.

Frustrations & Anger

Most of these come from the aforementioned 40-plus days. Carlos Santana's all-arms, diving out at the ball approach. Grady Sizemore looking totally

incompetent. Shin-Soo Choo's season-long slump coming to a crescendo with a broken thumb thanks to a guy who couldn't hit McCovey Cove with a rock from the top of the right field wall.

Rafael Perez going 2-0 on damn near every hitter he faces. Infield hits off the plate leading to runs for the opposition, pitchers unable to hold runners within the same area code as the base they're on. Some of them have been nitpicky frustrations. Others have been glaring frustrations that have been ongoing.

Abandoning the Status Quo

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