You can't question the talent.

The ball jumps off the bat from either side of Carlos Santana's switch hitting swing and his contact is often electric. The kid also demonstrates an advanced sense of plate awareness and discipline that's uncommon for many veteran players, much less one who hasn't even played in 162 major league games to this point in his career.

Nor can you question the cannon that hangs from the 25-year old's right shoulder. Santana is blessed with power in not only his swing but also in his arm.

But you can question Carlos Santana's attitude and his commitment to the defensive side of the game and Thursday night in the first inning of an important game against the division leading Tigers, Tribe SS Asdrubal Cabrera did exactly that.

In the dugout.

In front of God, teammates and the STO cameras.

For the second night in a row Santana failed to bring in a catchable ball while playing first base and for the second night in a row it cost the Indians runs. The Tribe recovered Wednesday night when they bludgeoned Detroit starter Rick Porcello but they couldn't recover Thursday night against Tiger ace Justin Verlander.

The Indians lost the game 4-3. The Santana mistake and the unearned run it led to (on the Chisenhall error) was the final margin of victory.

And apparently Cabrera had seen enough that he thought it time to address the matter with the precocious Santana.

There’s a lot that's led up to the Cabrera-Santana confrontation that may or may not have been noted by those who follow the Indians closely. Not only did you have the two throws that Santana should have come up with (he clearly should have come off the bag Thursday to keep the Chisenhall throw in play and he should have simply caught Asdrubal's throw the night before) but also on Wednesday Santana reached out and caught a pop up down the first base line that Tribe rookie Jason Kipnis had called for. It was a ball that Kipnis had a much better angle on and settled under only to be squeezed out by Santana. Kipnis glared at Santana as the first baseman jogged toward the dugout after the play.

Those looking for even more confirmation that Santana is struggling should note that he’s at first base in the first place. That’s in large part due to the fact that his progression as a defensive catcher has stalled. Santana’s throwing mechanics minimize his powerful arm and his footwork, or lack thereof, behind the plate is shoddy. Too often Santana lunges and stabs at balls in the dirt that he needs to block with his body and backup catcher Lou Marson is simply a much better defensive catcher who also calls the majority of pitches when he’s behind the dish. Santana gets the signs from the bench when he’s behind the plate.

Santana’s lack of progression behind the dish is puzzling when you consider he has not only Marson to learn from but also Sandy Alomar Jr. in the dugout and clubhouse to work with. Alomar Jr., despite his height and size, was a very good defensive catcher and was also adept at calling a game for his pitchers. I find it difficult to believe that Santana isn’t receiving daily, if not hourly, instruction from Alomar and Indians Catching Coordinator Dave Wallace.

It just doesn’t seem to be helping.

And that brings us to the real issue with Carlos Santana. There are times when Santana simply

treats his defense as the time between his at bats. That's all well and good if you're a DH and you can occasionally get away with it elsewhere in the lineup, but the Indians bread and butter is their pitching and that pitching staff is reliant on having a capable catcher receiving them.

Not only is there a rhythm the Indians pitchers have with Marson calling his own game but they also have a great deal of confidence that the light-hitting catcher will protect them by keeping 59-foot splitters and sinkers in front of him. That confidence and rhythm clearly aren't evident when Santana is wearing the mask and the extra bases Santana's passed balls and lack of movement or motivation provide can and do lead to runs.

Hence the move to first base for Santana. The Indians brain trust rightly understands that until and unless Santana takes as much pride in his defense as he does in his offense that Marson, despite his anemic offensive game, offers more value at the catching position than Santana does. Especially when you consider that the infield defense already features two raw rookies in Chisenhall and Kipnis who aren't noted to be defensive stalwarts.

The issue is that it appears Santana has taken is lackadaisical approach to first base with him or, at least if Thursday night was any indication, that his teammates may be under that impression. Much like the game itself, players are often self-policing. They know when a guy isn't giving maximum effort. The leaders on this Indians team, of which Asdrubal Cabrera is one, also know their chances of playing past the regular season could hinge on a given game or a given play. Cabrera, in his way, attempted to convey that message to Santana in the dugout Thursday night.

Santana appeared to get the message. He hit a long home run in his at bat following the confrontation with Cabrera and nearly put the Indians ahead in his following at bat with another bomb to centerfield that Austin Jackson tracked down.

The man can hit it.

But the question with Santana is, and will be in the future, defensively, does he really get it?

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