Labor Day is nearly upon us and – due to a Miggy Cabrera walk-off – the Indians find themselves alone in 2nd in the AL Central. After the Tribe finishes up today's tilt against the Royals today, they play their next 7 games against the Tigers and the White Sox, beginning a stretch of games in which they will play 14 of their final 25 games against Detroit and Chicago. While we all ready ourselves for our Labor Day "festivities" (and finding Bells' Third Coast Beer late last week began my "celebrations" early), the Indians ready themselves for the final stretch of games that will – stop me if you've heard this before – definitively decide how 2011 will be remembered in terms of whether the Indians can somehow win this division or if they end up falling short, due to either the continued torrid pace by the Tigers, the White Sox pulling off one of their patented runs, or if the Indians are done in by their own inadequacies or, more likely, injuries.

With that, let's get loose on a Lazy One…

This is not news in any corner, but with the Indians doing their best to insert themselves back into this AL Central race (with the Tigers doing their best to run away and hide as they now have the 4th best record in the AL, taking advantage of their schedule), they stand at the precipice of being able to really make some hay in this divisional race as they welcome the Tigers to the corner of Carnegie and Ontario. While most people remember what happened the last time the two teams faced off (the lost weekend in Detroit, Ubaldo blowing up, Fukudome out at home, all beginning the tumble that carried into the Seattle series), let's remember that the last time the two faced off in Cleveland that the Tribe had the opportunity to sweep the Tigers, with the final game being pitched by the monster that is Justin Verlander preventing the Indians from sweeping the Tigers back then.

Unfortunately for the Tribe, Verlander figures to pitch on Wednesday (against Cleveland's own Justin Credible), but the Indians have started to right themselves since the Mariners' series and are simply not going away. As things **continue to fall apart on the South Side** , both on the field and off (which makes me sad, because I always felt that the Williams/Guillen combo was what kept the HUGE-payroll White Sox from owning the Central) and with the sense that at some point, the issues between the Front Office and manager HAVE to filter down to affect the performance of the Pale Hose (although we've been thinking that for years now), there is a possibility that the Central race could come into very clear view as the Tribe heads off to Chicago after the Tigers leave and this unbalanced schedule really throws its weight around, allowing each team to essentially control its own destiny.

But that's still what's coming…what's already happened is that we're still on board on this ride, about to hit Labor Day with the Tribe not just relevant in the divisional race, but with the opportunity to take advantage of what lies ahead of them. It's been said by everyone with even a passing interest in this team, but this team is a year ahead of schedule and the fact that they are where they are is not just exciting…it's fun.

With the Tigers about to arrive into town, the anticipation is palpable and the butterflies are already fluttering for most. There is a pervasive nervousness of not knowing what waits around the next turn which, after the last few Septembers, reminds us all what a pennant race feels like, with every game under the microscope and with wins and losses magnified in the context of scoreboard-watching.

Of course, with the final month staring the Indians in the face, the biggest question facing them has little to do with whether the Tigers are able to continue their torrid pace or if the White Sox will (finally) implode in upon themselves as the Indians' more pressing concern is whether Manny Acta actually will have enough warm bodies to choose from to fill out a lineup card on a nightly basis.

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