Perhaps you're the sort of bloke that reads baseball box scores before St. Patty's Day. And maybe Shelley Duncan's torrid first seven at-bats of the spring have you thinking the Indians' left field problem has already been solved. If so, I simultaneously envy you and pity you. For while you are a dreamer in a world full of cynics, you are also undoubtedly a mouth-breathing halfwit.

Now, to be fair, it's hardly accurate to say that Spring Training statistics "don't matter." Sure they do. This whole circus in the desert only really has one point these days, and that's to let bubble players battle for roster spots. Most pro athletes now keep up a year-long conditioning routine (unlike in the '40s when they had winter jobs), so the whole "training" part of Spring Training is really secondary to watching a collection of doe-eyed rookies and grizzled veterans desperately trying to make an impression. The month-long audition process is judged partly on the subtle details, of course, but when it comes down to it, the guy who hits .444 with a few bombs will usually edge out the one who kept getting the string pulled on him by random Triple-A journeymen. So, in this sense, Shelley Duncan's Cactus League heroics certainly *could* increase our odds of seeing Sloth back in Cleveland in April. As for indicating anything about what he may do while up here, however…

Spring Training Stats vs. Regular Season Stats: A Study of Apples and Orangutans

After wondering about this crap for years, I was pleased to find that MLB.com is now offering complete Spring Training statistics dating back to the 2006 season. This allows us the rare treat

of revisiting the numerous occasions we've lied to ourselves in the month of March, in-between swigs of Guinness and four-packs of Cadbury Eggs.

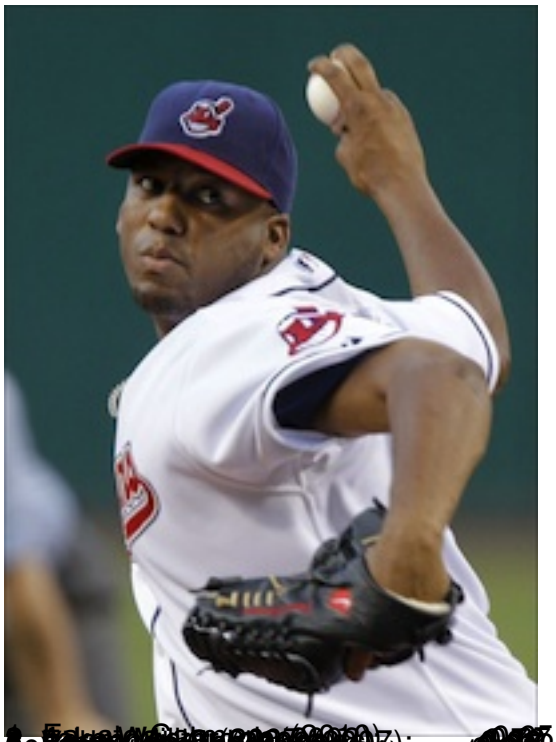
I know what you're saying to yourself: "I'm smart. I never really put any stock into spring stats." Sure, fine. Whatever. You've never once said, "man, you gotta love how Fausto is throwing this spring." You're a genius. So be it. But the fact remains, not even the most devoted spring-ignorers among us likely grasp just how wide the gap often is between preseason and regular season success. So, because I was home sick for a day and had nothing better to do, I've created a Cleveland Indians Spring Training Leader Board, covering the last six pre-seasons (2006-2011) in two of the most popular roto stat categories of the moment: OPS (on-base percentage plus slugging percentage) for hitters and WHIP (walks and hits allowed per inning) for pitchers. Both lists feature the top 15 spring performances in each category over that six-year timespan, meaning that one player can show up multiple times if he excelled in more than one spring season. Next to each player's name is the year in question, followed by a comparison of his spring numbers (on the left) and eventual regular season numbers (on the right).

Is it really fair to compare a guy's numbers in 20 games vs. scrubs to his stats in 150 games vs. elite talent? Nope, it sure isn't. But isn't that exactly the point?!

Indians Spring Training OPS Leaders, 2006-2011 (Min. 30 ABs)

Name……..Year……Spring OPS….. Regular Season OPS

[illegible] last 30 years for the



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