Coming off a mildly promising 2011 campaign, most Tribe fans have cautiously optimistic expectations for this summer.

And with baseball expanding its postseason this fall to include an extra wild-card team in each league, most fans figure that if everything breaks just right, the Indians could make things interesting come September.

We need to raise our expectations. Don't settle for "possibly" contending for the second wild card the way the Browns are going to settle for Justin Blackmon.

This is the Indians' year.

Not convinced? Looking for a reason why this season will prove better than the previous 63?

For all the doubting Thomases out there, here are 12 for '12:

1. Superheroes at the corners

Even with the San Diego Padres' impressive offseason signing of Green Lantern, not many teams can boast having a superhero in the starting lineup. The Indians will regularly have two.

While Supermanahan (alias Jack Hannahan) will probably still get the majority of starts at third, they further studded their infield by signing free-agent caped crusader/first baseman Kotch-Man (alias Casey Kotchman).

Not to confuse Kotch-Man with Crotch-Man - that's a whole other deal with very different super powers.

2. The Kipnis Protection Program

Some would argue that Jason Kipnis' dynamic debut in limited action late last season sets him up for a major letdown in 2012, a la Peyton Hillis or Mitt Romney.

But they're wrong. Kipnis wasn't put on the cover of anything released by EA Sports and he's not inexplicably less appealing than Newt Gingrich.

Plus, his name rhymes with "witness," so we're good.

3. The Bullpen Mafia, Part 2

There's no doubt that *The Godfather* is one of the greatest films of all time. But *The Godfather Part 2* is even better.

Bring back the same cast of characters and add Robert DeNiro (or in this case, Nick Hagadone) and you've got the greatest sequel ever made. And it doesn't take much imagination to see a correlation between the Godfather series and the Tribe's colorful Bullpen Mafia.

Though next year we could be in trouble if they bring in Sofia Coppola as a long reliever.

4. The Adventures of Josh & Justin

A new show on Nickelodeon starring Zac Efron dopplegangers? No, it's Josh Tomlin and Justin Masterson, who - barring injury and the offense's inability to score at least three runs each time they start - can't help but combine for 30 wins.

And maybe take home a Kids' Choice Award.

5. Fausto Carmona's secret identity is blown

Can you imagine how much more effective Superman would have been if he didn't have to fiddle around with his Clark Kent alter ego the majority of the time?

So just think how much better Roberto Hernandez will be now that he doesn't have to cope with the hassle of pretending to be mild-mannered Fausto Carmona.

6. The 2010 & 2011 Columbus Clippers

While you spent most of the winter whining about the Indians' inability to sign any big-name free agents, you probably forgot all about the Tribe's Triple-A affiliate, the mighty Clippers of Columbus, winning back-to-back national titles with a potent cocktail of young prospects.

For two straight years, the Indians have had the best minor-league baseball team on the planet...and the Clippers played pretty well, too.

What comes next is only logical.

7. It's Ubaldo Jimenez's "good" year

Up-and-down Ubaldo Jimenez is on a defined cycle like Halley's Comet or the Olympics. With 2012 being an even-numbered year, Jimenez is on schedule for another 15-1 start like the one he ripped off in 2010 that landed him a starting spot in the All-Star Game and his own line of barbecue sauce.

He'll then quickly slip back to a sub-.500 pitcher, but that's 2013's problem.

8. Harvard made the NCAA men's basketball tournament

The Crimson just clinched its first March Madness bid since 1946. That's two years before the Indians last won the World Series and five years before the month of March had been invented.

Clearly, 2012 is going to be a year for drought-ending. Thank you for setting the tone, smart boys with pretty hair. We've got next.

9. Michael Brantley is the bomb

Take that literally and don't stand too close to him. Leaking awesomeness out of every crevice, the guy is going to explode any minute.

And when he does, all sour memories of both C.C. Sabathia and Matt LaPorta will be incinerated.

10. Everybody's got a boner for the Detroit Tigers

Let's all thank the Tigers in advance for volunteering to be this year's stunning disappointment.

There's always one - a team with playoff and/or World Series expectations that looks unbeatable in March and then winds up finishing at or below .500. Take the Twins and Reds last year. Or the Indians in 2008.

The only thing that can result from such unilateral preseason adoration is complete disaster, with the Tribe serving as the benefactor.

11. The return of Shin-Soo Choo

That phrase will either prove to be the catalyst for consideration for American League Comeback Player of the Year or an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Choo's career batting average is .291. Last year he hit .259. From 2008-2010, Choo averaged 18 home runs and 81 RBI per season. Last year he had eight and 36.

There's your lightning flash, now just wait for the thunder.

12. The world is scheduled to end two months after the World Series

Under what other circumstances could a Cleveland team conceivably win a title?

Or conversely, perhaps an Indians' triumph in the Fall Classic will be the origin of the oncoming apocalypse.

Either way, let's play ball.

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