My partial season Indians ticket package arrived this week. Expecting just a padded envelope with the tickets, I felt like a kid on Christmas morning when a medium-sized FedEx box showed up at my front door. I already knew what it was, since I had annoyed my season ticket rep several times about where my tickets were, showing the restraint of a crack addict in need of a fix. I could barely contain my excitement as I tried to figure out the best way to open the box. I couldn't decide if I should cut it open, fight with the industrial-strength adhesive that glued the box shut, or just let it sit there and wait for the perfect opportunity to just rip it open like a child. Maybe wrap it up like a Christmas present, hide it up high in a closer, wait a couple of days, and then open it.

Then, I noticed, the "Tear Here To Open" perforated strip and opted for the obvious choice. Clearly, I never have things shipped to me. As I peeled back the flimsy cardboard strip, I kept wondering what else could be in the box. I just expected regular paper tickets, shipped in a very basic manner and some sort of mass-produced, but personalized, thank you letter folded up.

As I starting to pull out the contents, I felt like one of those little kids from the Disney commercials who get told that they're going to Disney World as their Christmas present. The tickets came printed and binded in a book with a Photoshopped picture of the Jake at sunset/dusk with Jack Hannahan at the plate, runners on first and second, and the Kansas City Royals as that evening's opponent. The tickets themselves featuring player images slightly distorted by a Photoshop filter and printed on solid cardstock.

In the book, along with my 20-game ticket package, only for use on the Home Run Porch, of course, were free Opening Day tickets, a free "Club Seat Test Drive", and Team Shop discount coupons. One of the coolest thing in the box, and my fiancée loved it, was a daily planner going from March until next February. Perfect for her as she is in charge of the summer day camp at

the daycare she works at. A really nice, unexpected inclusion.

Basically, what I'm getting at with all of this is that the Indians' Customer Service Department really exceeded my expectations and put together a really nice package for their most valued customers. I got to thinking about being a season ticker holder because I'm going to go to at least 30+ games no matter what. So, why not get the perks that come along with being a season ticket holder, especially playoff priority. This will be the first time in eight years that I didn't stand in line the first day Opening Day tickets went on sale, so that was kind of a bummer for me, but we haven't won a World Series yet, so maybe this will help.

For an organization like the Indians who does have to incentivize season ticket plans to sell them in what is still a recovering economic climate and haven't had the best on-field product for the last 13 years or so, they take damn good care of their fans. They really make me feel like I'm an important part of the franchise. Even with my relatively small financial contributions in the form of buying cheap seats or discounted tickets with various promotions and almost never buying concession items, the way that they make the fans feel is first class. Their approachability on Twitter and Facebook, the way they promote the players who engage with fans, the two latest Indians.com ads (here and here), and the overall ballpark experience is all commendable.

More often than not, it's so much easier to bitch and complain than give praise. When things are right, it's the way that they're supposed to be and we take it for granted or think nothing of it. From the time I talked with some season ticket reps at the Tribe on Tour stop in Strongsville to the time my season tickets came in the mail and I fired off a thank you email to my rep, I couldn't say anything but good things about the treatment I received. I hope other people, especially season ticket holders, feel the same way.

The time I spend at the ballpark is the best time of my day. Even if the team is getting blown out 10-2, there's no place I'd rather be. As the season draws closer, I'm getting that optimism. I'm getting that feeling in my muscles where they're jittery with anticipation. Really, to be honest, it's like having to move away from home for six months and being anxious to go back. We're 12 days away from Opening Day and I want to crawl in bed and hibernate for 11 of them. The Cleveland weather we've been experiencing certainly doesn't help with how much I miss baseball. I just hope it sticks around.

That makes this time of year so hard. Spring Training statistics are blown out of proportion as talking points for people who are desperate to talk baseball. Sure, not every statistic or story is irrelevant, a la Ubaldo Jimenez's drop in velocity and lack of command this Spring, but the majority of them are hard to take seriously. Guys who are career .235 hitters bat .455 and everyone starts trying to say that the player has "figured it out". Because he's slugging .600 off AA pitching or hitting wind-aided home runs.

I even find myself struggling to keep a level-headed perspective on ST developments because I want something to discuss. I want something to examine and analyze. Tim Kurkjian visited Goodyear, AZ on Friday and tweeted some of his observations. The one that struck me the most was about Shin-Soo Choo. Kurkjian tweeted "
Shin-Soo Choo is the talk of camp. He lost 20 lbs, his mind is clear and his work ethic is back: for day games, he gets to park at 4:50 am
".

Cue the jittery muscles and the excitement. Choo needs a bounceback year more than anybody. Last season was disastrous for him with injuries and the shameful DUI. Now, he's getting to the park before 5 a.m.? Incredible. That's a man who is focused. I can't remember where I read it, but Choo did say that the military training he had to go through in his native South Korea during the offseason got him in good shape and helped him mentally.

There's something to be said about a player that a team can rely on. It really has two effects. One is that a player like Choo, who has shown the ability to be an extremely solid Major League hitter, helps out a lineup. He can be a run producer or he can work a walk. He can get a clutch

hit or advance a runner. When he's going well, the team can feed off of him. The second thing is that a player like Choo cares so much that when he fails to drive in a runner, the guy after him wants to pick his teammate up that much more. That creates a healthy environment for a lineup and improves overall morale on the bench. It's no different than starting pitchers wanting to follow a good start with a better one or make up for a bad start by the previous guy.

Those are things that a team needs and having a key contributor like Shin-Soo Choo back with a fresh mindset and an incredibly strong desire to make people forget about 2011 can only help this team.

Next week will be the final VftP before the season starts, which is awesome because I'm running out of things to talk about and hate Spring Training stats. I'll preview the April schedule, which is extremely favorable for the Indians, and try to project a lineup that makes sense for the team. It'll be chock full of statistics because Manny Acta will have plenty of different lineups this season, largely based on what arm the opposition's starter throws with. Creativity will be the name of the game for the Indians this year and their only chance to make the playoffs is to maximize everybody's skill set to its fullest potential. To be honest, it'll be a really fun column for me to write because it'll be a compilation of everything I've thought about since last season ended.

Finally, I know he's not an Indian and I know that he got a World Series title against us in 1995, but a quick salute to Chipper Jones. Even though he was an Atlanta Brave, he was one of my favorite players growing up, granted, it may just have been because I probably thought "Chipper" was a cool name. In this day and age of player greed and scumbag agents, for Larry Jones to have played his entire 19-year career with one team is amazing.

Entering this season, Jones has a .304/.402/.533/.935 lifetime slash line, which is really good. Perhaps more incredible than that is that he is a lifetime .304 hitter from both sides of the plate, with triple the number of at bats from the left side. If you look at all of his stats, he's been remarkably consistent throughout his career, along with being a .288 career hitter in the playoffs.

Chipper Jones announced this week that he'll retire after the season as nearly 1900 games at third base have finally taken enough of a toll on his body for him to call it quits.

Again, I know this is an Indians-centric column, but there is always a time to give props to a great baseball player (as long as he doesn't play for the Tigers, Yankees, or Red Sox). I hope Chipper Jones gets a plaque in Cooperstown, as he's, arguably, the best switch hitter of our generation.