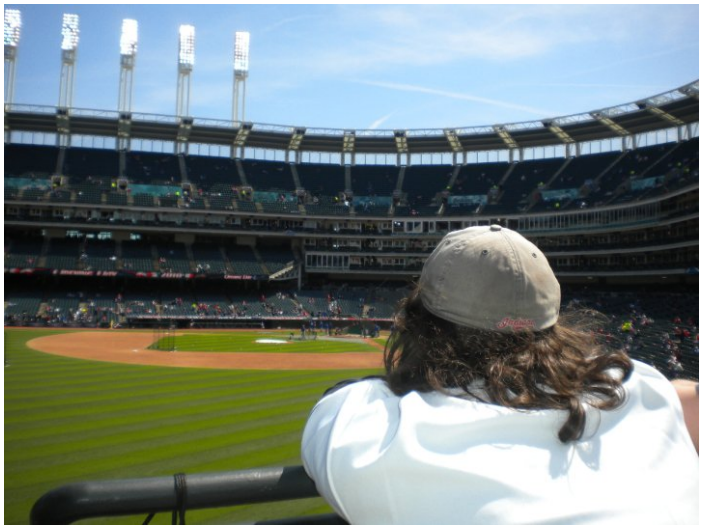

Just six games into the season, it looks like we have the makings of a long year. The Tigers are rolling out of the gate and the Indians have gotten desperate enough to pluck Johnny Damon off the scrap heap. By no means is it time to panic, grab the women and children, and head for the lifeboats, but things certainly look more grim after six games than they did last season. The Indians swept Boston to get to 4-2 for the season after six games. This season, they're 2.5 games back after six.

How do we combat the frustration of a slow start to the 2012 season? Well, we get reacquainted with our friends – Jack, Jim, Johnnie, Bud, Miller, (Maker's) Mark, the Captain, or whoever your liquid friend of choice is. When the Tribe game is on, don't be ashamed if you're sitting on the couch pulling a George Thorogood . If you're one of those guys (or gals) lucky enough to have your significant other imbibing right along side during a game, the beauty of this exercise is that there's a good chance you'll drive in more runners in scoring position after the game than the Indians did during the game.

In any event, after going to the first two games of the season, having Easter get in the way of being at the Indians lone home win, and being able to watch games on STO again, I figure there's no time like the present to present an idea that I thought of during Spring Training. Everybody likes games. A lot of people like drinking. So let's combine the two. It's the Indians/STO Drinking Game!

For the Indians/STO Drinking Game, game/broadcast events will be broken down into four categories: "Take a drink", "Do a shot", "Pour one out" and "Kill the bottle". (Here's where I add the disclaimers of "Know your limit, drink within it", "Please drink responsibly", "Don't Drink and Drive", and "You must be 21 years or older to play".) I'm going under the assumption that this

game will mostly be played with beer or hard liquor only. I also suggest you stock up on Gatorade or Powerade.

Without further adieu, let's crack one open!

Take a drink when...

- Matt Underwood and Rick Manning are wearing matching colored polo shirts during the pre-game show or the preview right before first pitch

- It's mentioned that "(player) plays the game the right way"

- A car lot commercial comes on that tries to sell cars by exploiting children

- An attention whore starts waving behind home plate while talking on a cell phone

- You hear everyone's favorite vendor yell "The Beer Guy's Here!" from one of the microphones

behind home plate

- Tom O'Toole (the colored hat guy) is wearing a different colored hat than the last time you saw him (usually seen when STO shows a close-up of a left handed hitter)

- The STO cameras find people decked out in Tribe garb in road ballparks

- Either Manning or Underwood says that a guy is a "good fastball hitter"

- An Indians baserunner steals a base

- Mike Hargrove stutters

- Manning corrects Underwood about something

- Underwood actually gets more than three consecutive words in on a night where both Manning and Hargrove are in the booth

- Asdrubal Cabrera makes a defensive play that makes you say "Wow"

- Lou Marson guns down someone trying to steal a base

- Carlos Santana registers a passed ball

- Casey Kotchman successfully hits a ball out of the infield

- Travis Hafner doesn't strike out against a left handed pitcher

- Manning refers to a slider as a "slide piece"

- A birthday greeting goes out to someone over the age of 95

- STO cameraman shows attractive (yes, that's a relative term) 18-25 year old females when coming back from commercial break

- The STO broadcast features a nice, mid-game sunset camera shot (If the game is nearing the time when the sun is setting, be sure to have a back up drink on hand for after the sunset shot because it'll always be when coming back from commercial, and you don't want to be empty all half inning or have to get up during play.)

Do a shot when...

- Josh Tomlin walks someone on four pitches

- The Indians hit a home run and the ball lands in “Souvenir City”

- Chris Perez enters a game in a save situation

- The White Sox Paul Konerko comes to the plate with runners in scoring position

- Manny Acta gets ejected

- Third base coach Steve Smith sends a runner home that has no business attempting to score

- An Indians player hits an opposite field home run

Pour one out when...

- Bob Feller is mentioned on a broadcast

- The 1990s glory days are shown on the “Miller Taste Greatness Highlight”

Kill the bottle when...

- Lou Marson hits a home run

- Travis Hafner triples

- A pitcher homers in interleague play

- Johnny Damon records an outfield assist

Feel free to add your own items to this list or shoot me a tweet @SkatingTripods and let me know what I missed. I'm sure I missed quite a few good things to add. I'd love to hear from you with your input.

I'd be remiss if I didn't give a few of my other thoughts from this past week of baseball. Let's start with Derek Lowe. As I mentioned two weeks ago when I looked at the Opening Day roster, the stats pointed to a bounceback year from Derek Lowe. His ERA and W-L record were ugly, but his FIP and other stats were pretty consistent. Through two starts so far, he has been everything the Indians wanted. He's pitched into the seventh inning, has 30 ground ball outs, and is 2-0. Both of his wins have also been very important games for the Indians. Both stopped mini two-game skids.

One of the things Lowe struggled with last year was walks, as he walked 3.37 hitters per nine innings. That was the second-highest BB/9 of his career. What impressed me the most about

Lowe in his start against Kansas City was how he kept his composure. Lowe was staked to a 7-0 lead before he threw his first pitch. After sitting for about 35 minutes after he finished warming up, Lowe allowed the first three batters to reach on ground ball singles. He buckled down and got Billy Butler to hit into a double play and then recorded one of his two strikeouts getting Alex Gordon looking.

I don't think it's possible to emphasize enough what a veteran like Derek Lowe can bring to this staff. He showed it by example on Friday afternoon and will hopefully continue to do so throughout the year.

An interesting tidbit about the Indians first inning on Friday. They surpassed their season high in runs during the first inning, and it increased their season run output by 50%. Naturally, they went scoreless for the next seven innings.

Obviously, Johnny Damon is the big story in Wahoo World. With Mike Brantley struggling out of the gate and Shelley Duncan 1-for-9 against RHP, the Indians felt that signing Damon the prudent move. Initially, I hated the move. I think Damon's best days are well in his rearview mirror and I'm deathly afraid of watching him meander around the outfield with his salad shooter arm and dwindling range. After all, he's played 52 games in the OF in the last two seasons combined.

As of now, I'm trying to talk myself into it because it's inevitable. One would assume that Damon would be inserted into the leadoff role to take pressure off Brantley and be a veteran at the top of the lineup. If that's the case, I would desperately hope that Damon is able to replicate the .292/.343/.431/.775 slash line he had when batting in the leadoff spot in 2011.

At the same time, I have to think that Shelley Duncan is a better OF than Johnny Damon at this stage of Damon's career. That's not a ringing endorsement by any means. The consensus opinion on Damon is that "He can't hurt", which is a probably a fair assessment. But, that also says to me that people seem to be skeptical on how much Damon will actually help.

Either way, I'm going to cringe every time that guy winds up to throw a wiffle ball to the cut off man.