I have to be honest and perhaps grammatically incorrect out of the gate here, but the Cleveland Indians nervous me, if you'll allow me to adopt a verb from the Flavor Flav glossary . Just when you enjoy watching them slay the alleged dragon, a convincing sweep over the rival Tigers that was capped off by an outing where our Justin was better than their Justin for at least one afternoon, they spend the next six days undoing everything.

The joy of winning didn't even stick around long enough for me to tell my friends that it was okay to trust the Cleveland Indians again; maybe even tell them to spring for some tickets to a game.

By the time Jose Lopez hit into that back-breaking, first-pitch swinging, game-ending double play with the bases loaded in a 6-3 game on Wednesday, I was ready to take it out on my digestive system.

It was going to be enchilada night, and that meant leftover hamburger meat from Memorial Day, plus 4-month old Taco Bell Fire Sauce packets; if you're scoring at home, this is not good for a man that avoids the doctor's office because of his fear of the word "irritable".

After watching the Indians scrape together 5 runs off of Royals pitching in 2 days, I just wanted the runs.

For the second consecutive year, you can look back on a team that matters in the grand scheme of things. And once again, the individual statistics do more to confuse than to explain a decent start. We all get that uneasy feeling about the next two months being worse than the last two months, but being 27-23 through 50 games has been an absolute godsend. Sure, it isn't good enough for first place in 2012, nor is it their 31-19 record at the same point in the season a year ago, but it would have been good enough for first place back circa 2011. Right now,

last year only matters if you want to talk about a 50 game season, but frankly that's old news.

Don't we want to think about what happens next?

Rather than recap the disappointing individual numbers (and the few notable exceptions) through the first fifty games of either year, or the overall team letdown in the final 112 games of 2011, I only want to focus on one number. The number of runs you score and allow is all that matters in baseball, no matter how much the stat geeks want to throw acronyms like WHIP, OPS, or even the more pedestrian ERA in your face.

If the best arm on the team rocks an ERA around 2, but goes 11-16 because his defense screws him with unearned runs or his offense sees to it that they lose 2-1 every five days, it doesn't mean a thing.

Justin Masterson lost 10 games a year ago, despite being outstanding on most occasions; forget that the Indians didn't score in 4 of those games (shut down by Peavy, Hellickson, Verlander, and Cain), and the invincible Bruce Chen beat him 2-1 in another one of his losses.

The standings don't offer those asterisks that some seam-heads believe will fix the records set in the steroid era.

12-10 Aces are the reality of an 80-82 ball club, and it's simple, but it comes down to scoring enough runs and limiting the runs you yield. Baseball doesn't have the fast-paced "first to 100 wins" mentality that we see in basketball. Every game is different, but scoring at least 5, and/or holding your opponent to 4 runs or fewer are good benchmarks.

Obviously, teams are undefeated in games where both instances occur, and winless where neither goal is achieved

If nothing else, and sure this is oversimplifying things, this standard can help identify whether to credit or blame is due to the offense or defense for the W's and L's.

Keep in mind that the Indians are just four games over .500, which represents a positive tipping of the scale beyond mediocre. The pitching staff has allowed 4 or fewer runs in 26 of the 50 games they've played, and no matter how inept you deem the offense to be at certain times, they are 20-6 in those games. If you do have to take a less than stellar offense into consideration, consider how slim the margin of error is when you walk the line here. Yes, I do believe that a team that wants to contend should win most games where they can limit the opposing bats to 4 runs, but the Indians are 4-8 in games where they allow 4 or 5 runs.

You can't expect to win a game where
you give a guy like Josh Johnson 5 runs
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On the flip-side of that, the pitching staff and defense (don't pin it all on pitching, even if you do acknowledge the obvious talent deficiency in the outfield) has given up at least 5 runs on 24 occasions, and the 7-17 record in those games does reflect that. The good news is that they're winning 30% of those games, which is twice as good, percentage wise, as they were through 50 games a year ago at 2-11. Is it bad news that they've put their offense in a predicament where they need to score 6 to win almost twice as often this season?

I honestly don't know the answer, but I choose to keep the glass half-full, so let's applaud the way they've found a way to win more of those games early on this season.

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