I leave for two weeks and when I come back, I'm greeted by... Matt LaPorta? That's like instead of seeing your excited puppy wagging it's tail after your two week vacation, you get a monkey flinging feces at you as you walk through the door. Is that to say Matt LaPorta is a monkey who flings feces? No, but he sure does swing as wildly as the monkey flings feces.

**June 3rd, 2012**

Minnesota Twins - **6**

Cleveland Indians - **3**

W: Scott Diamond (4-1) L: Justin Masterson (2-5) S: Matt Capps (12)

**[BOXSCORE]**

I've been paying attention though as you may or may not know based off my Twitter activity. I tuned into every game I was awake for on the Kindle to lead the sweet soothing sounds of Tom Hamilton and Jim Rosenhaus, which was kind of like being back at home, but most of the time, when the Indians played, I was in bed, making it difficult to listen in.Of course more pressing than that of Matt LaPorta's feces-flinging swing is this sudden spurt of ineffectiveness the Tribe has been on in my absence. I'm not saying I'm the key to all destruction, but it certainly feels like it when you leave the country on May 19th and return on June 2nd and the team has fallen out of first place and is two full games back.

I watched Sunday though and it's kind of clear to see why things aren't exactly going in the right direction with our Tribe. Perhaps it provided me with a microcosm of what has happened in these two weeks.

The headline on the MLB.com recap is that the Indians "struggled" against another lefty. Although I wouldn't exactly count seven hits and the way they got them as struggling but they failed to draw a walk, which is exactly what the Indians were not doing two weeks ago.

Then again when two of your top three walks guys in Santana and Hafner are on the disabled list, it is kind of clear why that is and that is of course, the central problem right now.

This team has been destroyed in two weeks. There is no way Jose Lopez should be a regular starter on this team, but he is.

Diamond wasn't exactly dominant, but he held the Indians in check and got the plays he needed when he had to. Perhaps the first at-bat of the game gave you everything you needed to know when Shin-Soo Choo led off with what looked to be a double. The ball was smacked down the left field line and was headed down in foul territory, until it hit awkwardly off the side wall and bounced right into the direction of an incoming Josh Willingham.

And Willingham made a perfect throw to retire at second Choo and we have our theme to the

game. The Indians would even get three errors by the Twins, more opportunities to get what they needed, sure the three runs were scored, but it was just a game of catch up all day. It was a game in which the Indians couldn't seem to catch a break, in addition to everything else that went wrong.

**Justin Masterson**'s outing was one that left a lot to be desired. He gave up just as many runs as Diamond did (although Diamond's were unearned thanks to errors), but it just seemed like every bounce was going the Twins way.

*"A lot of balls in the infield and they laid down some nice bunts," Masterson said. "I don't think anybody could really get to those. They tried to hit me with some balls. They tried to get me with a bat. You look up and you think maybe a run or two, but then they got three of those runs in there. It's a hair disappointing, but we kept it close. Our guys were battling."*

Masterson stayed in long enough to keep his team in it though, so his performance was not really the problem. I think ultimately you wish the Indians would have taken advantage of the additional opportunities that were not created thanks to mistakes on the Twins part.

But that's expected.

Hopefully this free fall ends soon though. 2-out-of-6 to the Royals and Twins? It completely eliminates beating the good teams and it's again exactly unlike the Indians prior to two weeks ago. Instead of beating the teams they were supposed to beat, they're...not.

**Random Details...**

Michael Brantley extended his hitting streak to 12 games and what's impressive is that it is his seventh of those games with two hits. That's no cheap hitting streak he's got going on. Maybe he has turned the corner?

Can I just say how crazy it is to watch the Twins? If you don't think the injuries have a profound effect on this team, look at the Twins in this series with Mauer and Morneau. Just a presence does wonders and heck, it's far better than Jose Lopez hitting cleanup. Aye?

Most would think I'm bashing Lopez, but I'm not. And I'm not even bashing the Indians for putting him there. They don't really have any options in a game that they field this poor of a lineup. If Duncan was hitting better he'd be up there. Your top three hitters are hitting 1-3, your fourth and fifth consistent threats are hurt. Meaning that guys who are normally lower, Brantely, Kotchman, Duncan, are moved up and asked for more. I'm not stating anything you don't know though.

I will bash Lopez for that idiotic play in which he let the ball drop in on a bunt. The baserunner led to a run scoring and even though it would have been a foul ball had it not hit the bag, he should have just fielded the ball and attempted to get the out.

**[NOW SERVING: SECONDS ON LaPORTA]**

I compared **Matt LaPorta** to a feces flinging monkey to start this Rundown off. I will refrain from an opinion util I see what will eventually happen with him. I'll just say, I'm not on board with this.

Whatever the case may be with LaPorta, he may be here for a few games in the absence of Johnny Damon, or he may be here for a bit longer.

*"If it's two days, three days, a week, it doesn't matter," LaPorta said on Sunday afternoon. "I'm up here to hopefully help contribute to this ballclub and help this team out."*

I don't see the Indians calling up someone who's ripping up Triple-A pitching the way Matt is for a few days. With the heavy hitters like Hafner and Santana out, LaPorta was called up with the intention that he'd bring a punch. Especially with Hafner out and no regular at the designated hitter position, LaPorta's use will be frequent and he will not be going down when Johnny Damon returns on Wednesday from paternity leave.

*"They felt that he was doing the right thing over there," Indians manager Manny Acta said of LaPorta's progress at Triple-A. "He was having success and hitting mistakes whenever they made mistakes on him. But, we'll have to see how that translates up here."*

Um it sounds very much like "He makes the routine plays" book of Eric Wedge on Johnny Peralta as a shortstop. He hits the mistakes. Uh, A) He's supposed to and B) He's ALWAYS hit the mistakes. We know he can hit the mistakes. Any dope can hit a baseball where it isn't supposed to be and Matt LaPorta can certainly crush a belt-high fastball like nobodies business.

That was never the problem with the man with a hole in his swing. He better have fixed that issue or he is no more of an answer to this depleted offense as you or I.

**[RANDOM RUNDOWN]**

Are you surprised **Jason Kipnis** leading the Indians in steals? What's more impressive is getting caught just once out of 14 attempts. There are few people who can just outright steal bases. Speed is only a key to steals if you are really really really fast. That's why, as fast as Michael Brantley is and as many bases he stole in the minors, he is struggling up at the big league level. He's not freaky fast, but he's fast, but he's not fast to simply out run the baseball. Kipnis on the other hand, knows what he's doing.

*"As I become a smarter baserunner, the numbers will hopefully go up still," Kipnis said on Sunday. "You get to learn pitchers' tendencies. You learn their moves, when they like to pick off, when they like to go home. If you know a guy is a big curveball pitcher in certain counts or something like that, you can use that knowledge and try to steal on that pitch. You pick up little stuff as you go along."*

With a day off on Monday, the Indians will send likely **Carlos Santana** to Lake County for a rehab start, meaning he's nearing his return from a concussion. Manny Acta went as far as to say that he is optimistic that he'll be ready for a key series against Detroit. Of course take it with a grain of salt, but if Acta is sure enough to say he's optimistic, things should look that good.

The big news on the **Roberto Hernandez** front had really nothing to do with Hernandez himself. The falsely called Leo Nunez was granted a return to the United States, making it to Miami, only to be greeted by an eight-week suspension.

Seeing how long the process lasted for Nunez, one would think seeing Hernandez back (whether he is allowed back and then promptly suspended or not allowed back, seeing Hernandez in an Indians game this year seems unlikely. But a lobbyist hired by Hernandez says he could be back by the All-Star break
.

Yeahhhhhh. Paul Hoynes himself goes on to also say that a suspension for Hernandez is unlikely because he structured his contract. What does that really have to do with defrauding his employer? Essentially, MLB suspended Nunez for trying to pull a fast-one on them and the then Carmona did exactly the same thing. So why does a restructuring of his deal mean he wouldn't be suspended?

Look no further than Al C, filling in for Paulie C providing a must-read breakdown of the Hernandez situation. Take this paragraph for your nutshell though.

*Both Oviedo and Hernandez committed crimes when they entered the U.S. using false names and with false documentation, so even if State Department were to issue their visas under their true names, without this waiver they would be inadmissible to the U.S. and denied entry when they arrive. This waiver is far from automatic, and if this were a random citizen of the Dominican Republic who deceived the U.S. government to fraudulently enter and work in the States, it would likely never be issued. However, Oviedo purportedly has something the U.S. and Dominican governments want; names of others involved.*

Of course, Hernandez has none of the kind considering all he really did was pay off some random guy named Fausto Carmona for his identity. I don't really see Hernandez back this year. The lobbyist is someone working for Hernandez, so he's going to say that. I don't believe him.

Al C also provides a great preview of today's first year MLB Player Draft . Interested to see the possible names that could be on the Indians radar with the 15th overall pick? Give Al's post a read. Indications seem to be though that the Indians will go back to pitching with their two blue chip pitching prospects of recent drafts having been shipped off last year.

The draft has some added (or I guess subtracted?) changes made concerning the rounds. A usual 50-round draft is no 40 rounds deep and there are some bonus/signing changes made that may impact strategy of picking. I think it's likely the Indians shoot for a pitcher, especially after taking the young shortstop last year and then of course trading Pomeranz and White. But you just never know what other teams will do ahead of them and who could come available. The MLB Draft is very much a best player available/what's in your budget type of a thing. Of course with new changes, money may not be an over-riding factor anymore.

**[WHILE I WAS GONE]**

I enjoyed my two week stay in Italy, but it's good to be back in the states and being able to watch the Indians instead of following from afar. A few thoughts on some things that transpired while I was gone.

Scott Barnes was called up when Jairo Asencio was shipped off. This was the right move and while I wondered if they'd give Hector Ambriz a shot, Barnes was the right call. He can give the Indians some much needed length if need be and obviously, a young guy with stuff like his can push him up the ladder pretty quickly if he does well. Asencio is gone though as the Chicago Cubs made a claim.

Juan Diaz is still around, but you have to believe he'll be the one to go when Damon does return. He was called up with Cabrera's issues, but now that he looks to be back and going, Diaz isn't needed. However there is no backup shortstop without Diaz and Hannahan. I suppose Chisenhall (drafted as a shortstop) or Jose Lopez could fill-in if needed, but do you really want to see either of those possibilities?

Diaz is also only really relevant because he is wearing 29, which is my favorite number in the world.

Beneficiary of the Santana concussion was Luke Carlin, who returned to the big leagues once again. Couldn't have happened to a cooler guy, who has one heck of a player mug shot. And if you read Dirk Hayhurst's 'Out of My League', you know it's all legit. Good for Luke to get another major league payday.

Luke also got some extended looks with Lou Marson sitting for a few days thanks to being hit with a pitch and needing stitches around his mouth.

There have been people calling for the head of Ubaldo Jimenez, but you cannot give him on him right now. It would be nice to have the luxury to fix him without him damaging this club's chances night in and night out (McAllister was turning in decent outings in Tomlin's absence), but you have to deal with it right now. Too much has been invested in too talented of a person to be throwing him to the curb.

Finally, I'd like to send a shout out to Adam Burke who filled in for me with the Morning Rundown on TCF. If you are not reading his weekly Views from the Porch, you are missing out because it's good. And Adam went to Akron, so you know he's awesome.

**[TIGER WATCH]**

Phil Hughes threw a complete game against them. Phil Hughes! I'm glad they're still in third place and regardless of what happens here tomorrow through Thursday, it will stay that way, but now would be a good time to put some distance in.

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*Nino has a blog that is protected by a statue of Luke Carlin. Give it a vist at The Tribe Daily , or he might eat your face off.*

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