Even if, even if Prince Fielder and Miguel Cabrera came out of the gates swinging and this Tiger offense was everything it was billed up to be. If it isn't clear by now, the Tigers are a majorly flawed team. The thought was that Cleveland is, and they are, but the Tigers have just as many, if not more than them.

June 6th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **9**

Detroit Tigers - **6**

W: Jeanmar Gomez (4-4) L: Max Scherzer (5-4) S: Chris Perez (19)

[BOXSCORE]

Part of it is that starting pitching, which besides MVP/Cy Young/Ace/No hitter extraordinaire Justin Verlander, is very suspect. This point was made time and time again throughout the late days of spring training. And now when you have a team that doesn't even have a optimal performing Justin Verlander, who can win you that 1-0 game with ease, this was bound to happen.

I think they'll contend at some point, but their flaws will hold them back. As long as this Indians team and that White Sox team over in Chicago remain reasonably healthy, Detroit simply does not have the right team to be running away with this thing, even if they right the ship somewhat.And I'm not going to lie. It is fun and enjoyable to watch. I get a sense of sadistic enjoyment out of watching the Detroit Tigers scuffle through these first few months of the season. It's June now, if you don't know by now, you may never figure it out in 2012. Sure, last year they got off to a slow start and rebounded to runaway with the division, but they are showing no signs of a team that can run away with this thing.

Their pitching continues to be a major concern as not only the starting rotation is not getting them quality outings, but the ones they do get, are being ruined by that bullpen that was so perfect last year. It's nothing to be shocked by either. Players have big years and then they come down to earth a bit after playing one year out of this world. Heck, Asdrubal Cabrera had an insane career year, but this year, he's a little bit more where you should expect his production to be.

That doesn't mean he is bad, he's a contributing member of the team and doing what he needs to do. But those career years that everyone on Detroit seemed to have at the same time are not really likely to be duplicated.

And now we have witnessed a five game winning streak over the Tigs and like I said, sadistic enjoyment.

Sadistic enjoyment watching this team that just crushed our spirits and ended the Tribe's season with such ease last year, almost as if they were toying with them struggle. There's no toying on here. It's pure upper hand strength right now. Even if they get behind, it seems like the Indians are going to win the game somehow .

The magic has even extended to Johnny Damon's fielding prowess, who robbed Prince Fielder of a home run. How? Maybe it was the quick refresh period he took over the past few days, or the magic of having just become a dad to twins, or maybe he just got lucky. One thing is for sure, it certainly made **Jeanmar Gomez** say "That was crazy."

"When it first got up, I had no idea how far it was going to go," Damon said. "Fortunately, I got back and was able to make a great play."

Prince Fielder tipped his cap and Damon simply made a play that perhaps kept momentum in the Tribe's corner. Sure it was early in the second inning, no one was on base, but the Indians had just put up a three spot in the first and if Prince responds with a blast, then maybe the Tigers get comfortable and start honing in on Gomez.

Instead, the Indians continued to roll, the Tigers would scrape a few runs across, but not before the Indians started to distance themselves with some offensive power of their own. It also probably gives Jeanmar Gomez some confidence as he can settle in and get a sense of relief. That confidence didn't last as Gomez would start to get attacked, but it was big in the moment.

There is no sense of relief with the Tigers, because the way the Indians scored those initial three runs had to be deflating enough. **Michael Brantley**. Fastball. Gone.

"I was just trying to make sure I got a fastball early that I could kind of drive," Brantley said. "It's big to have an extra out. You want to make sure you swing at a good quality pitch, and I did. I was able to put a good swing on it."

His first of the year came after outfielder Brennan Boesch made a critical error. And so shines through another issue with this Tiger team. Their defense makes one mistake, it not only puts them in a three run hole, it shortens their starter's outing.

Sadistic enjoyment. I really hope it doesn't come back to bite me.

What needs to be pointed out though, in addition to the 8-2 lead the Indians got out to thanks in part to Casey Kotchman also sending out a blast, is that Michael Brantley is incredibly hot right now. Throughout his 14 game hitting streak he's hit .365 with a.411 OBP, an RBI for each game and five extra base hits.

This isn't even the Michael Brantley we needed. We just needed a fraction of this. Someone who could swing a productive bat and get on base and make things happen. He's doing more than that and then some right now and while this type of production won't continue, if he can just continue to be that capable stick to "leadoff" that bottom part of the order, it's one less spot the Indians need to worry about getting production from.

It's sort of rewarding seeing him do this because the team stuck with him and at times it has looked like he just didn't have it or wasn't capable of being that guy. There was doubt around the fans, there's was concern that maybe he's just not what we thought.

But right now, Brantley is showing us that at least he can get it done at this level. That if anything, he has what it takes and that he was worth waiting around for. It's a satisfying feeling having to praise a guy for his hot hitting than mourn his Indians career as he gets DFAed or simply let go after the season. I can only imagine the sense of relief in the front office that he's at least starting to pan out.

When I say he is 'leading off' the bottom part of the lineup, he essentially is. He's been in that 5th through 7th range and in this one, those were the spots in the lineup that produced. The Indians scored nine runs because of the bottom of the lineup. Choo was 3-5 with three runs ad Cabrera, Kpinis, and Santana all scored runs but they don't score those runs unless Michael Brantley, Casey Kotchman, and Johnny flipping Damon do their job.

Yeah, not only did he make some ridiculous catch to rob Prince Fielder and the Tigers of a run, he came through with a big single in the fifth inning to chase Max Scherzer and give the Indians that 8-2 lead.

I say, new month, new babies, new start for Johnny Damon. Let's give him a little bit of a shot here in the month of June. What other option do we have?

Plus, a game out of first, a scuffling Tigs team, and Ubaldo even looked like he was able to turn things around. Maybe I'm feeling generous.

Random Details...

Yeah so about that. Choo gets on three times and scores all three times. You really can't have a better game as the leadoff hitter. Okay if he gets on all five times and scores five times, I guess, but you get the point I'm making, so don't argue.

It's nice being able to score nine runs and not need mass production from your three best hitters. In fact, when one of them can go 0-5 and you can do that, all the better. This lineup has the capability of this type of stuff. Even if Santana goes 0-for-5, there's got a be a sense of confidence having him in there because he does make it easier on the rest of the guys. Sure you pitch around Santana, get him out, but then you deal with someone who has a 13 game hitting streak.

You get Santana on deck and even though your pitching to someone who leads the team in RBI in Kipnis, you don't want to face Santana with runners on.

Santana being back helps the offense, even if he's going 0-for-5.

Matt LaPorta, Lonnie Chisenhall, 0-4, 0-4. Ugh.

Damon in addition to going 1-for-2 with the two RBI, he walked twice. Talk about a return with vengeance, he topped it all off with his first steal of the season. He should have twins more often.

Oh and maybe we're just accustomed to it but the bullpen tossed four shutout innings after

Gomez was removed after five. He got the win and he was saved from further damage and that would be just like Manny Acta drew it up.

This pen against Detroit has been stellar, namely Pestano and Perez, who have pitched in all five games against the Tigers, with Perez notching a save in all five games against the Tigers. You talk about big time? You didn't? Well I'am and that's Big Time, both capitalized.

Pestano: 5 IP, 0 R, 5 K

Perez: 5 IP, 0 1 R, 5 K, 5 SV

[AWAAAAY BACK, GONE!]

Honestly, if you came to me expecting to find out about the Indians draft class, you came to the wrong guy. The best thing you'll get from me is a link to all 40 of the Indians picks and what I recapped yesterday over the first few picks.

What you will get from me though is a good story because I'm a journalist who loves a good story. Carl Yastrzemski's grandson was drafted, names like Ripken, Hershiser were also called. Heck four sons of managers got drafted to their dad's organization.

None of it is as cool as **Nick Hamilton** being drafted by the Cleveland Indians. Yes, Nick Hamilton, son of **Tom Hamilton**, who we all affectionately call Hammy. In the 35th round, the Indians took the son of their radio broadcaster, a Kent State Golden Flash and one of the key's to his team's run to the NCAA tournament and through the MAC tournament. He's a 22-year-old junior, but you have to think being drafted by his hometown team and the one his dad covers is going to be enough of a reason to forego his senior year.

The focus for all of them right now though is the College World Series as Nick plays in it and his

dad watches him play in it when he isn't watching the Tribe.

"It's an honor to be drafted by anybody," Nick said, "but especially the Indians. With my dad working for them, I've always been an even bigger fan of the Indians than the average person. It's definitely really neat."

The elder Hamilton, who we'll now just have to strictly call Hammy (and perhaps call Nick, Lil Hammy?) will spend the weekend in Oregon watching his son, missing the weekend series and rejoining the team on Monday in Cincinnati.

I mentioned on Twitter that if he's ever in position to call one of those famous walk-off calls of his son, he better let someone else do it because it may be the one that kills him. Crazily enough, Hammy wants no part of having to call a game his son is in.

"Oh, my Lord. I don't know," Tom said of calling a game Nick is playing in. "I'm too emotional. That might not work. I'll let [broadcaster Jim Rosenhaus] do that."

Keep your son's managers, your Hall of Fame grandsons and nephews and whatever else. It may contain a hint of bias, but this is the coolest relative story of the MLB draft this year.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

As expected, with **Johnny Damon**'s return, Luke Carlin was optioned back down to Columbus to make room. Damon's return comes after he left the team to be with his newly born twin girls. All of this is a side bar
to the hilarious quote Damon has about now having five daughters and just one son.

"It's exciting -- until 10 years from now when the house is full of estrogen," Damon quipped. "I guess it's somebody's way of getting me back for being an outstanding gentleman all my years."

In all serious matters, Damon said that he's going back to how he started to feel when he first got here as he tried to change things. He also knows he's a slow starter and that he did the same sort of thing in Oakland before he got it going. So like I said earlier, I'm willing to give him more of a fresh start in this month of June.

In other news, there is no platoon between **Matt LaPorta** and **Casey Kotchman**. I think you will probably see LaPorta DHing more than anything. Kotchman needs to play first, because he's a good defender and if he can get you the odd hit like he did on Wednesday, I'd much rather suffer through his struggles and good defense than watch LaPorta go 0-for-4 three to four times a week.

With all the crazy movement going on the Indians somehow ended up with an available 40 man roster spot, to which they used to claim **Chris Schwinden** off of waivers from Toronto. He was quickly optioned to Columbus and I now need to update my roster charts in a big way before we start claiming more people I don't know about.

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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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