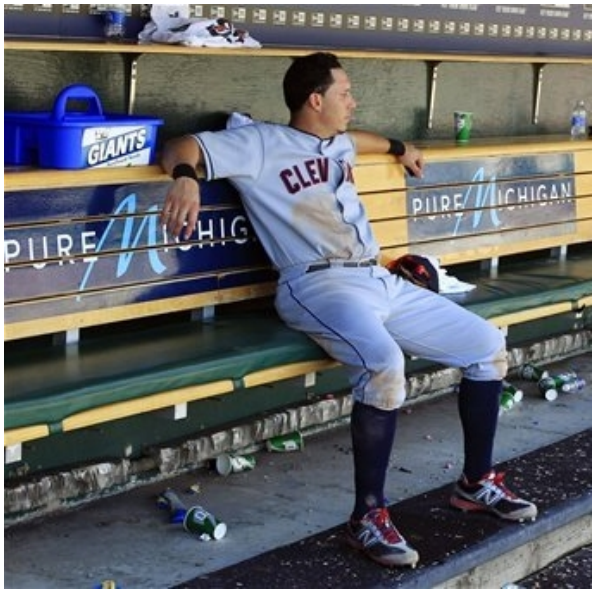

It's over... It's finally over! The road trip that the baseball demons created is finally over. The Indians endured beat downs, shutouts, heartbreakers, bad pitching, bad hitting, bad fielding, bad everything. They saw two teams who absolutely suck make the Indians look like the suck even more. Through it all, it looked as if they were going to at least get out with ONE win, but that wasn't to be the case.

August, 5th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **8**

Detroit Tigers - **10**

W: Darin Downs (1-0) L: Chris Perez (0-3)

[BOXSCORE]

The headline for one of the news bits on Saturday was simply "Batters, pitchers struggling on road trip"

Well in a road trip in which you've lost even games, I would kind of expect that to be the case. Unless one aspect of your team is really really bad.

I'm not sure if one aspect of this team is really really bad, I'm not even sure if one aspect of this team is actually bad. I think the pitching is below average and has looked really bad at times, but it has also looked good. They played some smoke and mirrors with us perhaps and I would at least consider the offense mediocre.

Of course that's what that will get you, a team that is 50-58 at the beginning of August and in danger of perhaps joining Minnesota and Kansas City in the division doldrums if they don't pick it up here in the next, oh day or so.

You are probably saying, "Oh but they're already there."

Oh, but they're not. They're still a good amount of games ahead of Minnesota, but if things don't go well as they return home, well, if you thought things couldn't get any worse after nine straight on the road, then you haven't seen anything yet.

That's probably the most deflating thing about this. The amount of time left. It's still early August. There's two months left to play. That's plenty of time to be in the race. But in just one week the Indians removed themselves from that race and also made the rest of this time, not worth watching.

Most of you will tune out, in fact I wouldn't be surprised if there are a lot of people no longer reading along because they've checked out. Football started yesterday and even though the Browns already lost a starter as they always seem to do, this is a Browns towns and the fever of a new owner has reached a record high.

So that's fine, if you've checked out, or are planning to, I'll see ya in a few months when we reconvene to talk about the 2013, because I know you will be back. That's your prerogative. My prerogative is to not saunter around and hand out blame. I don't run a front office, I don't own a team, I don't manager a group of ball players. I can give my opinion on what needs to be done, but to blame someone, I've realized, has become fruitless.

Whether you want Dolan to sell the team to Jimmy Haslam III, or trade Chris Perez to the Angels for something, or cut Ubaldo Jimenez, or whatever it is that you want the Indians to do. You take that stance. I'm not taking that stance. That's not the stance I want to take, so I'm not going to take it. I won't fault you for whatever stance you want to take though, because in the end your team has failed you and you can act however you want.

The fact of the matter is simply that. The Indians have failed us this season. Whether you thought they had a chance or not, at one point you had to believe they could do something because of this division and they've ended up failing us.

And we might as well talk about the latest failure.

I honestly, I thought it was the end. I thought this horrible trip was going to have some sort of end note that stopped the misery. Instead, it just capped off the misery with a perfect miserable ending to a perfectly miserable trip.

Chris Seddon started out starting out. He couldn't let the Indians have a lead. The Tribe would take it and he'd give it right back. That isn't to say he pitched bad. If anything, after the abominations the Indians have been having, Seddon gave the Tribe a chance .

"He pitched better than what the numbers indicate," Acta said. "He battled. He battled for us, but still, we had to play catch-up baseball. But, the guys did a great job."

"I wish I could've kept us in it a little better," said Seddon, who had not started in the Majors

since 2007. "I was a little up in the zone, but that's something I can improve on next time."

Oh that battling thing again... Whatever. Seddon battled, the Indians tried, in the end it didn't matter because after Seddon exited was when the real fun began.

What this boiled down to was **Travis Hafner** coming up with the big hits. From the one late to the later home run blast. Almost as if he was celebrating in his first game back since the birth of his second son. Then **Chris Perez** blowing it in the 10th in a big way.

Hafner was huge and the Perez blowup was even bigger. It was the first time he found some of sort of harsh ending to a game against Detroit. But look at this.

Perez last pitched on August the 2nd against Kansas City and he threw four pitches. He threw nine the day before that. He's hardly sharp. The last time he got a save situation July 26th.

Not going to make an excuse for him in anyway. But he wasn't sharp in this one.

"That's what makes this so much worse," Perez said. "The fight that our hitters showed. Obviously, everybody knows we're playing bad ball and this has been a terrible road trip. But to keeping coming back, adding one on, and keep coming back, adding one on, put three up in extra innings, and then watch me [give] it away, it just [stinks]."

Perez takes blame for it. I'm not going to make excuses, but this is what it is. When you go on a nine game skid like this, when you are playing the way you are playing, this stuff happens. Your closer isn't sharp, you go up three runs in the 10th and all of a sudden, I'm not shocked if the Indians were in a situation where they were shocked to be in that situation.

It's really going to take something for the Indians to get over this whole thing. This is the crap they are being fed and right now, they are taking it and taking it. They'll need to decide as a

team when they don't want to take it anymore because the offense can come out and do their part, but the pitching may not cooperate. The pitching may come out and do something but the hitting may not.

This team is not playing well. As it said in the headline, the pitching, the hitting, struggling. It's a two sided coin. Until they do both of those things right in one game, they're not going to win and they're going to have to continue to eat the crap they're fed.

It has nothing to do with Perez, Hafner, Seddon, anyone on this team by themselves. It has to do with the sort of stench that is following them as they continue to ride this losing streak and that is all there is to it.

Random Details...

Ezequiel Carrera with three more hits in his third game with the club this year. He's not got seven on the season. It took 10 games for Johnny Damon just to get to that total. So there's that. Carrera is clearly a better defender at this point in his career than Damon is, but that didn't stop Zeke from having his issues in this series. Acta loves him as a defender, and he's got speed, but that doesn't mean he's really good. He has a lot of room for improvement in that aspect. It is good to see him getting on base though because when he can do that, he can create opportunities.

Lou Marson has been on a rough stretch and he finally broke out of it with a single that he tried stretching into a double, but was denied. He did come back later and hit that big double in the 10th that scored a run though.

Brent Lillibridge, three strikeouts, down to .177, excellent.

Other than Perez, can't say enough about the bullpen following Seddon's exit. Allen got a few outs, Sipp got a few, Smith got into a jam that Pestano couldn't get him out of and then there was Josh Tomlin.

He gives up a triple and at that point the only thing I can think of is... Why... Why this way? Can't we just lose in the eighth inning? Do we have to watch them celebrate at home plate like this? Tomlin's going to give up something, he's too much of a contact pitcher not to and unless its right at an infielder, Jackson is surely going to score.

But that wasn't the case as he was able to nail a huge strikeout down in Omar Infante, which allowed him to intentionally walk both Cabrera and Fielder and getting the groundout to Santana to throw home for the easy force is one thing, but to get it back to first to turn the double play, that was just gravy.

And dare I say it propelled the Indians into that big 10th inning. As for what followed, I'm not really sure, but if you did it earlier in the ninth, why wouldn't you do it in the 10th? With Perez throwing to Cabrera, and he not being the winning run, why do you throw to Cabrera with Infante on first?

You put the winning run into scoring position. Which I might do in some circumstances, but with Prince Fielder on deck, you might as well pick your poison. Sure you can walk the bases loaded again if you want, easier to get out of with two outs, but at that point, you need to win. You have one more relief pitcher left. If you get out of the inning, great, you may have a chance, but your chances are decreasing. You can't keep putting people on and expect to get out of the jam.

Sooner or later, those guys that you are telling "we don't respect you" will beat you and make you look like fools. And sooner or later you just need to beat the best. If Chris Perez is your best, then you might as well go after their best with your best. That's all there is to it. You can blame Acta all you want, but that's the reality of it.

[DESIGNATED DAMON]

Remember when we questioned as to what **Johnny Damon** was getting at when he was talking about being let go if the Indians fell out? Was it retirement? Did he start to hear the footsteps of the baseball grim reaper coming for his career? Perhaps he knew what was going to happen if things would continue to falter for the Indians or even if they didn't, if he continued

to scuffle, regardless of where Grady Sizemore was in his...whatever he is doing now.

Turns out he was just flat out right. The Indians are ready to move forward with younger options as they play out their season, competition or not and it already looks like it is the right decision to designate Johnny Damon for assignment
.

"We had to make a tough decision," Acta said. "Johnny is just first class. He made an impact on a lot of people here, despite not performing the way he was expecting and how we were expecting. I can only imagine how much impact he could've made here if he would've performed better. He gave everything he had. He was really helpful to some of our young kids. He was a total pro about it."

When you really look at it, it actually wasn't that tough of a decision. But because Damon is a stand-up veteran that really did give it all he had, it is nice of Manny to say it was tough.

But it was far from tough. In fact it was probably tougher picking who to replace him than it was to decide to replace him. Damon was not adding anything special to this team and doesn't figure to beyond 2012, so there really was no point in keeping him around.

It's the same reasoning in getting rid of Derek Lowe so after you get rid of Lowe, why would you have any reason to keep holding onto Johnny Damon? Especially since with, unlike with Lowe and the rotation, you have options in the outfield.

Already noted what Ezequiel Carrera has done in Damon's place, so you can definitely look at the move if you are Damon and accept what happened. He was a nice person to have around for the club, but in terms of a player? The Indians didn't get the Johnny Damon of even last season and for that, he was if anything, useless to the Indians struggling offense.

And unless the Indians decide to resurrect Ramiro Mendoza, Pokey Reese, Mark Bellhorn, or eventually come to terms with Bronson Arroyo in the future, their run-ins with former 2004 Boston Red Sox World Series players is probably over with Damon and Lowe.

Just for the record, the following played for that team and were at some point, signed or acquired by the Indians at a later date: Damon, Lowe, Keith Foulke, Orlando Cabrera, and Trot Nixon.

What a stellar bunch. All had great careers, but the greatness came before they were Indians. Better late than never I guess?

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Acta will tell you that bringing up the young kids is not a sign of them giving up. Bringing up the young kids to Acta is trying to improve. Of course he's right, they are trying to improve and while some will equate it with giving up, he really is right.

No team "gives up" by bringing up young guys. They try and get better. In many cases they try and find out what they have. You don't want to send a message that you are giving up, and while many fans will say that it is exactly what it is, giving up, it really isn't.

Look the season is done, it's over. But calling up Ezequiel Carrera is not a sign of giving up, it's a sign of cutting dead weight as we just went over. When you start seeing play dictate, that's a sign of giving up. You don't give up by calling up certain players or trade certain players. You can't give up that way because the players on the field are ultimately the ones deciding or not if they are giving up.

I think some of them are still playing. I think most of them are still playing honestly. I just don't think most of them are playing very good or simply aren't very good. So there's that.

Roberto Hernandez made another start for the Captains last night and he was pretty he was okay. He went into the eighth inning, giving up four runs off seven hits (all four solo shots, eeek) , but only walking one hitter and striking out nine. That to me tells me enough. He is probably ready to go at this point to pitch. The results may not be what you want initially, but honestly, the

Indians will probably go with one more rehab outing, line him up with Chris Seddon to make one more start, and pull the trigger.

If there's one thing we've learned and it painfully had to be pointed out to us by watching the starters repeatedly get their brains bashed in, the starting rotation is broke , mangled, disjointed, and completely a mess. Not even a Fausto Carmona this year can fix it.

"We're definitely going to have to reinforce [the rotation]," Acta said on Sunday. "No one was anticipating that some of the guys who [we] started the season with were going to -- I won't say take a step back -- but not pitch, at least, the way they pitched last year."

Of course part of the problem is that the Indians attempted to fix the problem and that solution caused more of an issue. Not only are there no options, the reason there are no options is not a solution. Of course this coded way of speaking is referring to Ubaldo Jimenez, but that's not the discussion we need to be getting into right now.

Yes this team misses Carlos Carrasco, but he's one guy. Would they have been better with Fausto Carmona Hernandez Roberto Heredia the Second? Who knows. The point is the depth. When you start Chris Seddon, you got problems . No disrespect to him and the high socks because he pitched decent as decent as decent is when you have Derek Lowe getting bombed every five days. But when you got Seddon going out there, you got problems.

Ultimately, what the Indians have been left with is a heartbreaking group of starters. Even if one or two of those options the Indians came in with went south, it was not supposed to go down like this.

"I was looking at it [on Saturday] night," Acta said. "Out of the five guys we started the season with, I wasn't anticipating that one was going to get released, one was going to be sent down to Triple-A, one was going to have to be put in [the] bullpen and, at some point, the five of them would have a 5.00 ERA. That's not the way I think. That's not the way anyone should be going into the season thinking. We were positive going in. [I thought the rotation would] at least be better than it had been in the past. I was anticipating that either guys were going to pitch as good, or better."

The depth wasn't bad. It wasn't. But now that the first wall has been broken down, it's looking pretty bleak. It's looking pretty damn bleak because now that the Indians have exhausted their options, there's nothing really left to look at. Sure you get Hernandez back this year, but the Indians have a decision to make on him in the offseason that we'll wait to tackle.

Sure you get Carrasco back, but again, that's one arm and that's an arm recovering from Tommy John surgery, one you can't even begin to count on.

The "evaluation" of the rotation better be a long and hard look at what the Indians are right now, what they have, and what they want to do.

What they do from here? The rest of this season?

Play it out. You probably aren't making up a nine game deficit, even though with two months left, it can be done. It can be done by teams far more talented and loaded than the Cleveland Indians, but it can't be done by the 2012 version as it stands right now.

It can be done by the 2007 Cleveland Indians that got all they need and then some, from a surprise call-up to aid their second base woes
,
a solid veteran starter
,
an emerging outfield option who ousted a veteran from a platoon and turned it into a full-time role
, and
a surprise starter who found a rhythm up from the minor leagues
.

It can't be done by the 2012 Cleveland Indians. It could have been before a nine game losing streak. In fact it had the makings of it with the impending return from Fausto (Westbrook), the debut of McAllister (Laffey), and some options already in place that saw no need for a Cabrera or a Gutierrez (the Damon cut was eerie). It was looking eerily similar, which is why I dug up the

numbers I dug up. But now, there's no CC Sabathia (Justin Masterson), there's no Fausto of old (Ubaldo Jimenez). There was Captain Catcher (Carlos Santana) starting to re-emerge and even an electrifying center fielder lighting the world on fire with his offensive play (Michael Brantley).

But now?

Now, you can forget about it.

Now, Cody Allen needs to see more time out of the bullpen. The Indians should regularly play Zeke Carrera like they have been and hopefully at some point introduce Tim Fedroff to the mix. And strongly, strongly evaluate where they want to go with.

Because now, there's no giving up. But there is certainly no chase to be had.