The Browns kicked off their 2011 season Saturday night in impressive form and yet it's the Indians who still own the top spot on The Weekend Wrap. That should be a pretty good indication how the last week of baseball went down at Progressive Field against the Tigers and the Twins.

Nutting Up

The Tribe went into a critical home series Tuesday night against the Tigers after going 3-4 on their road trip to Boston and Texas. That trip featured all four of the losses coming in the opponent's final at bat and was demoralizing to say the least. That trip also followed a horrible home stand before that which featured some of the worst baseball the Indians have played all season.

To say the series against the Tigers was big was to put it mildly. But the Indians came up big against the Motor City Kitties. They won a game Tuesday night that started at 7pm and ended at about 2am. It featured fourteen innings of dramatics and 12 innings of scoreless relief from the same bullpen that puked all over itself in Boston and Texas. It ended with Kosuke Fukodome getting hit on the arm with the bases loaded to give the Indians are really big 3-2 win. The Tribe used that momentum to pound Detroit the next night and to batter and bruise Tiger starter Rick Porcello in the process.

The Indians won the series Wednesday with that win against Porcello but they nearly swept the Tigers Thursday night despite facing Justin Verlander. Only a third night in a row featuring a crappy defensive effort from Carlos Santana and a base running faux pas from Lonnie Chisenhall kept the Tribe from the sweep.

Young players will sometime bite you in the ass with their inexperience. You can live with that and expect it going in. But getting bitten in the ass by a young player's effort, hustle, motivation or willingness to work and improve just shouldn't be an issue. As I wrote Friday though, I think that may very well be the case with Santana.

Santana personally cost the Indians about 5 runs during the week against the Tigers and the Twins with his shitty defensive effort. And it ultimately led to the confrontation with Asdrubal Cabrera as noted in that linked article. But the Indians still won a couple critical series against the Twins and Tigers AND saw Santana get served notice from his veteran teammate that 'good enough' just isn't good enough during a race. Every game, every play and every pitch could make the difference between a playoff appearance and a bitter offseason with thoughts of 'what could have been'.

Effort and 'give a damn' requires no experience. It shouldn't be a question with young players and it can't be an issue going forward.

Simply Criminal

Justin Masterson went another 7+ quality innings against the Twins Friday night only to leave on the wrong side of a 2-1 deficit. That's not anything new though. The Indians ultimately rallied to win when the Twins defense went all beer league softball against the Tribe and gave the Indians 5 or 6 outs in a couple of innings but I just wanted to hit you with this if you're underwhelmed by Masterson's season in any way:

Masterson No-Decisions- 10

Most runs given up in those No-Decisions- 2

That's sickening. Ten times Masterson has been robbed of a 'W' while giving up an average of 1.5 runs in those ten outings. Read that again. Masterson is 9-7 with a 2.69 ERA on the season. With some support he could be 17-6 or better when you consider the Indians averaged just 2.3 runs when Masterson started.

We hear about how dominant Justin Verlander has been all season and that's true. But Masterson has been almost as dominant. He's just pitching against other teams' number ones and twos and he's pitching for an offensively challenged club.

Masterson has pretty much had to go out and throw a shutout and hope for the tie. But take nothing away from the 25-year old Jamaican born ace. He's been a true #1 and his brilliance has been overshadowed by his rotten luck.

Anonymity Has Its Rewards

The other guy that keeps quietly throwing up zeroes and tremendous pitching numbers is Josh Tomlin. You'll never see him in a MLB.tv commercial and you probably wouldn't notice the 6'0, 190lber if he was standing next you at the grocery store.

But you can bet your ass other teams are aware of Tomlin who's won 12 games and who sports a WHIP better than Masterson at a ridiculous 1.039. People were ready for the law of large numbers to ultimately make Tomlin its mistress when he threw up those same kinds of numbers early in the year. But, like Masterson, Tomlin appears to be for real. And the reason for that is he can and will throw any pitch in any count to any part of the plate against any guy in the lineup.

I sat two rows behind the dish Saturday night as Tomlin simply confused, confounded and frustrated the Twins lineup with a variety of fastballs on corners and slow breaking stuff. There were two or three balls actually hit hard while the rest seemed to be either off the end of the bat or off the thumbs of good hitters like Justin Morneau, Joe Mauer and Jason Kubel.

Tomlin pitches to contact and away from a hitter's strengths better than nearly anyone in the game right now. He can't reach back for 94mph when he needs it but his 89-91 looks like 98mph because of his pitch mix and hitters are as likely to see a change-up on the black in a fastball count as they are anything else. But they can't be sure.

Tomlin is a beauty and his emergence has been the key to this playoff run in my opinion.

Dear Haters & Doom and Gloomers

I know y'all had your, "This Browns team is a joke/Another Wasted Year/No talent on the sidelines/Why didn't we sign Lee Evans/Here we go again" takes ready for publication going into Saturday's preseason opener against the Packers at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

But now you'll grudgingly have to go with option B which is naturally, "It was just the first preseason game/Here Comes the Lombardi Trophy" crap that I'd expect of you. It has to be one or the other and I know the fact that the Browns looked organized, competitive and actually competent when the first teams were on the field aggravates your sensibilities.

The haters were hoping some of the anonymous players the Browns brought in via the draft or via free agency would provide for easier targets Sunday morning. They were hoping the fact

that they didn't know Greg Little or Jordan Cameron or Jordan Norwood or Jayme Mitchell would mean that those guys couldn't play.

But it looks like the Browns front office might actually know more than the people who leave comments on Cleveland.com and other message boards.

Obviously I thought the first team offense looked good. They got in and out of their huddles and formations efficiently and effectively and you couldn't tell at all these guys were basically new to each other and a system.

There weren't a ton of 'dink and dunk' kind of throws from Colt McCoy as he threw a couple of deep balls really well to Josh Cribbs for a 27-yard TD ad to Ben Watson for a 25-yard gain on a seam route.

When you comment on this team's talent at the wide receiver position please include a talented group of TEs in your WR analysis because in this offense that's what those guys are. Evan Moore and Watson as well Jordan Cameron and Alex Smith are a strength of this team. All are big targets and all are dangerous in the middle of the field as well as running those seams.

I just think you saw what kind of production and what kind of system you're going to get Saturday night. I've said for months you're going to like this offense that exploits matchups and wears down defenses. You may not know the names of the guys running in that offense just yet

but you will soon.

(Brief Column Interlude for the "Please STFU Moment of the Week")

For those telling me Watson is old and slow and won't be around in a couple of years when the Browns may be actually competing for titles and playoff spots? **Please STFU** about Lee Evans or Osi Umenyiora then. Likewise please
STFU
if you're telling me Evan Moore is hurt too often and you wanted Sydney Rice. Don't give me your shit about Watson being old but then bitch about not signing Evans or Umenyiora to bolster the receiving corps and the DL. Don't tell me Rice would have been perfect here coming off a hip injury that cost him all of last season and tell me you can't count on Moore who actually played more games than Rice. You wear your ignorance and hate like a badge of honor with plays like that. Maintain what honor, dignity and credibility you may have remaining by thinking before you speak.

Thanks.

We now resume our regular programming. But I do think we've found a new weekly feature here on The Wrap.

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First Impression

I actually thought the biggest surprise of the night was the pressure the defensive line got throughout the ball game. Whether it was the first team DL or the 3rd team DL they got to the QB. It may not have been for sacks and fumbles all night but they got a couple of those and they got a couple hurries to go with them. If it wasn't for Packer QBs Matt Flynn and Graham Harrell actually standing in the pocket, absorbing some big hits and still delivering a couple throws on the numbers of their receivers the impact of the DL would have been even more noticeable.

But as it was Jabaal Sheard and Jayme Mitchell combined on a sack and fumble early and Phil Taylor was both a load and a handful as advertised. The Packers had to load up two players against Taylor most of the night. If that continues in the regular season the defense, if it stays health (there is next to no depth) might be able to hold its own some Sundays.

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