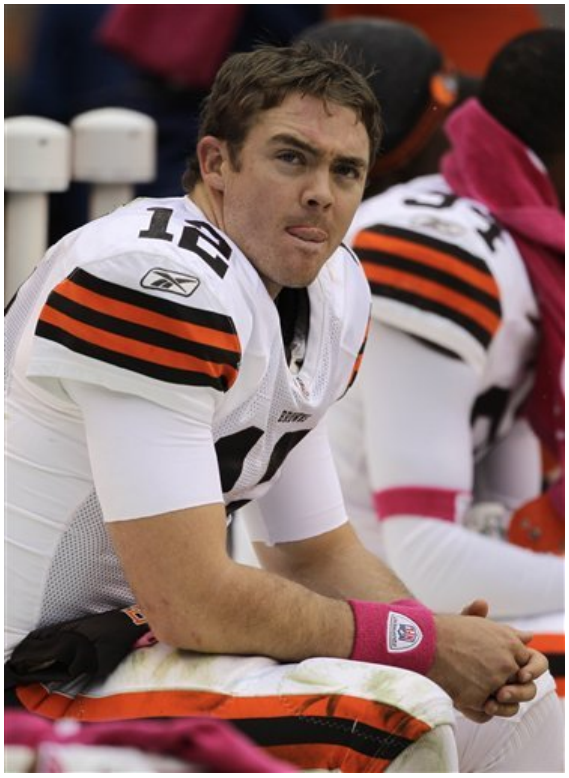

The number 61 has always held special meaning for sports fans. Until steroids and HGH 61* was the record number of home runs hit in a single season and Roger Maris was the long-time record holder in Major League baseball.

61* now has special meaning for Browns fans too. We now know that's the number of 7-yard passes it takes for Colt McCoy to throw for 300+ yards.

Would you like to have more fun with numbers? Excellent (as you really have no choice if you chose to read this). There are roughly 7 billion people on earth. Approximately 55,000 people have Browns season tickets, including yours truly. That means there are roughly 6,999,545,000 people walking God's green earth who are far smarter than I am.

After watching Ohio State's revolting effort against Michigan State Saturday I was entirely sure I couldn't be more disgusted watching a football game than I was during that ball game. And while I'm pretty sure I wasn't wrong about that I did have to think about it.

I just don't understand it. I don't understand how an NFL team in this day and age could be so stubbornly set against throwing the football down the field. In a day and age when guys walk off collegiate fields and throw for 400+ yards on their rookie Sundays I sit and watch, week after week, 4-yard check downs to tight ends and 6-yard slants to wide receivers. I watch defenses cram eight or nine guys into the box and watch the Browns try and find the soft spot in those 9-man zones in the hopes of picking up first downs. I watch Tom Brady and Drew Brees treat 3rd and 7 like it was 2nd and 2 yet I watch the Browns treat seemingly every down like it's 4th and 3 to go.

I'm sick of it.

I'm sick of watching McCoy not even glance down field.

I'm sick of 3rd or 4th and 1-yard carries going to either Owen Marecic or to Armond Smith.

I'm sick of watching TJ Ward get torched by opposing tight ends.

I'm sick of watching Browns punters look like they've never seen a football before, much less kicked one.

I'm sick of hearing about what a terrific job Brian Robiskie does blocking in the running game.

I'm sick of Tony Pashos's laundry list of physical ailments.

I'm sick and tired of watching shitty football.

The Browns lost 31-13 to a mediocre football team Sunday. They lost to a team whose quarterback completed a total of ten passes. And they lost by those 18 points to a team whose QB completed those ten passes and the score wasn't as close as the point difference would indicate.

I also wanted to mention that I'm sick of all of it.

Manny Being Manny

If you tuned in to read a cute story about a perpetually immature (and quickly becoming pathetic) hitting savant, well, you've got the wrong idea and the wrong Manny.

I'm not speaking of Manny Ramirez. That Manny is now facing a 100 game drug suspension from MLB (should anyone be foolish enough to sign him) and is also facing formal domestic abuse charges based on allegations that his ability to mash isn't limited to baseballs.

I'm talking about current Tribe manager Manny Acta who is quickly and quietly becoming a fan and player favorite in Cleveland.

Cleveland fans have a love/hate relationship with their managers, like everyone else, and they're clearly entering the 'love' phase of that relationship with Acta. The improvement this season, and the excitement Acta's team generated for the better part of five months, obviously aids in the manager's approval rating going up. But it was as much as how Acta led this team as the net number of wins that many Tribe fans find uplifting and endearing.

Publicly, which is all most of us have to go on, Acta is more open and forthright than some other managers we've had here in Cleveland and across baseball in general. Eric Wedge made a nice Cleveland career out of saying absolutely nothing to the media and fans. Acta is a bit different. He'll call out a bad ball game without embarrassing the player or players directly responsible for the lackluster effort.

It's also refreshing to hear him say, as we did the other day, that Fausto Carmona "baffles me as much as he baffles you guys in the media and the fans". Acta came out in a radio interview and reiterated Carmona's strengths. He said Carmona was a horse who was almost always healthy and who could be counted on to take the ball every fifth day. He went on to add that Carmona had the arm and the stuff to be successful.

But then Acta went beyond where most managers would have left it when he also said that

neither he nor anyone else had any idea what they were going to get from game to game from Fausto and that he was extremely inconsistent. You don't hear that a lot from a skipper. You also don't hear managers say that those inconsistencies seem to change each year and that the GM, in this case the Indians Chris Antonetti, had a very difficult choice to make in whether to pick up Carmona's option in 2012.

I find that refreshing. I respect the honesty that Acta spoke with, especially when we're accustomed to managers talking every day and saying nothing. Acta said what any Tribe fan knows and in doing so bought himself credibility with the fans who want to hear some honest words from their manager.

All of that is great. But aside from his interviews you can't help but notice just how much Manny Acta loves the game and enjoys being around it. He respects his players but expects them and everyone in the clubhouse to be accountable for their performance. He also respects the history of the game and knows how important it is in the lives of those who live it.

Which is why what Acta did Wednesday night in Detroit endeared him to me forever, despite Acta himself not being able to admit what he did was done on purpose.

Tribe Bench Coach, and long time Acta friend and confidant, Tim Tolman announced Wednesday afternoon that he was stepping down from his coaching position due to him being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease back in 2010. The disease is taking more of a physical toll

on Tolman as it progresses and Tolman felt he'd be unable to continue due to the travel and the physical constraints of the disease.

Wednesday night, after Tolman's announcement and in the 162nd and final game of the season, Acta was ejected in the bottom of the 1st inning for arguing balls and strikes. 3rd base coach Steve Smith was also ejected.

That left Tim Tolman, who had never managed a Major League game, as the acting manager against the Tigers.

Acta wouldn't admit to being purposely ejected after the game. He said he'd never 'make a mockery of a baseball game', and he wouldn't. In fact, he didn't. What he did was show a great deal of respect and love for a guy he actually grew up playing for 20 years ago when Tolman managed a young Manny Acta in the minor leagues. And he also acknowledged with his ejection the appreciation he had for Tolman hiring Acta onto his minor league coaching staff when Acta's playing career came to an end. Few know that Tolman actually gave Acta his first coaching position, a starting point that would lead Acta to a big league managing career.

Wednesday night was a wild one in Major League baseball. There was unrivaled and historic

drama all through the final night of the season. Lost in that night and in all the discussion of a Red Sox collapse and a Rays walk-off, playoff clinching home run, was a gesture from one man to another. It was a gesture that was symbolic of what baseball (and friendship) means to those of us who truly love the sport and understand what it means to everyone who feels like we do about the game.

It didn't make it to SportsCenter and it didn't get mentioned in most corners. That's fine with both Acta and Tolman. But to those who saw it and those who recognized it for what it was, it was meaningful, poignant and perfect.

Painful

As if the embarrassment of the off season wasn't enough for most Ohio State fans to tolerate, it appears the embarrassment of what will become known as "The Luke Fickell Year" may be even worse.

In a startling display of offensive impotency Ohio State stumbled, bumbled, fumbled and crumbled against Michigan State Saturday in Columbus and lost to the Spartans 10-7. Fickell, as he did against Miami, looked incapable of making any adjustments or coming up with anything to help his young, inexperienced and overmatched offense get out of its own way most of the game.

QB Braxton Miller is as overwhelmed right now as his coach and Offensive Coordinator Jim Bollman has all the imagination of a brown paper bag. That's a deadly combination and it's one that promises to look worse before it gets better with the Buckeyes set to face three straight ranked teams in the coming weeks.

Ohio State does get back Boom Herron and Devier Posey (amongst others) but the question remains as to who will get Posey the ball and if they'll ever do it consistently enough to give Herron or Jordan Hall or any other Buckeye running back room to breathe.

Buckeye QBs (and how nice is it to have a poised gunslinger like Joe Bauserman backing up Miller?) were sacked nine times on the day and passed for just 143 yards with 33 yards of that total coming in the last 10 seconds of the game.

I'm not sure I understand Fickell's logic regarding his QBs. Miller was pathetic. But in moving to the true freshman Fickell made the decision that this season was for the development of Miller. Bringing Bauserman in seems counter-productive. Not so much in that Miller should have remained on the field but rather for who replaced him. Bauserman is bad. Head-banging bad. At this point bringing in Taylor Graham would have been a better idea because not only could Graham simply not be worse than Bauserman (or Miller Saturday) but now Fickell is going to face a week's worth of questions on who his starting back is and why.

This team is a complete disaster on the offensive side of the football. The defense actually played their collective asses off Saturday only to be put back on the field with their backs against the wall all afternoon.

Fickell and his staff are in clear danger of losing this team at this point. He certainly doesn't allow anyone to mistake him for George Patton, or any leader for that matter, and his 'deer in the headlights' look on the sidelines is concerning.

The Buckeyes best offense on Saturday was a couple of Michigan State personal foul calls that gave the Buckeyes a couple of their few and far between first downs. But until the final ten seconds Ohio State was incapable of taking advantage of the gifts and instead went backward for most of the afternoons.

Even legacy programs like Ohio State suffer through seasons like this. All you can hope for at this point is that Miller's confidence and development isn't completely destroyed and that whoever takes over this program next season can quickly restore OSU back to the upper echelon of college football teams.

But someone in the Ohio State Athletic Office might want to start really parsing the list of prospective coaches sooner rather than later.

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