



The good news is this was the last weekend where there won't be any hitting in Berea as Browns camp opens later this week. The bad news is that the Indians appear to be ready and able to not hit for as long as their season goes on. And the other bad news is that after either over paying or paying the very maximum in order to select Trent Richardson and Brandon Weeden, the Browns are now suddenly fiscally conservative and responsible (or just stupid) and willing to risk not getting the kids into camp on time so they can actually fully benefit from them.

It's The Weekend Wrap...

Embarrassing

I've seen slap fights between 10-year old girls that offer more contact and power than the Indians offense does. Now, I don't go off searching for slap fights featuring 10-year old girls, but the point is there's almost no difference right now in running little Suzy, Tina and Angie up to the plate as opposed to Travis Hafner, Carlos Santana and Johnny Damon.

None of them are going to look good swinging the bat and none of them are likely to hit anything hard.

We've reached a perilous point with the 2012 Indians. Their division, as awful as it is, will not let them quit and will not let them die. Despite that fact, the Indians appear to be trying to shoot themselves in the head and heave their season off the cliff. It's bad enough that Santana, Hafner and Damon have blown chunks pretty much all year long. But when you have those guys struggling and then Asdrubal Cabrera and Jason Kipnis also struggle you truly have no chance.

I was down at the game Saturday night when Zach McAllister, a 24 yr old 5th/6th starter who has put together a pretty decent month in Cleveland, made two mistakes all night. Two mistakes against a team with some pretty solid hitters and one of those mistakes was to a Hall of Fame player in Jim Thome. Those two mistakes cost McAllister three runs. And three runs is about two too many for the Indians to score these days.

Saturday night's game was, for all intents and purposes, over when Thome's laser landed in the right field seats and the Indians 1-0 lead was turned into a 2-1 deficit. There were still three more innings of watching the already named guys struggle and, just for good measure, a couple of pathetic at bats from Jack Hannahan and Casey Kotchman thrown in too.

If Shin-Soo Choo or Michael Brantley aren't producing runs basically by themselves then this team isn't scoring right now.

But the bigger issue is what you do about it.

It would be hard to clear the decks of the problems because you'd be losing 30% of your roster. Does the front office have any faith that these guys who haven't hit all year (Damon, Hafner, Santana, Kotchman) are actually going to pull their heads out of their asses and produce?

And for all the horn blowing and parades in Hannahan's honor early this season, Captain Jack is back to being the same, thumpless .240 hitter he's always been and, at 32-years old, likely

always will be. He's not alone though. Kotchman has reverted back to his pre-2011 form as well, making last year sure seem like that anomaly as opposed to the breakout year some called it.

It's odd, because some fans swore to me Kotchman's Lasik surgery opened his eyes last season and made last year possible while forbearing only good seasons ahead for the 29-year old career .260 hitter. He's well below his career mark this season and his OPS, which was mediocre at best coming into the season (.726) is about 80 points lower this year.

This offense is offensive. It's a disaster. And the guys who are the problems (aside from Santana) don't have history on their side. This isn't Albert Pujols getting off to a slow first two months and knowing that the last four months were going to be ridiculously hot. Hafner is old and broken down, Damon is old and not as quick to the ball with the bat and Kotchman and Hannahan are mediocre at their best.

This is a problem that's here to stay. At least through September. That means the Indians need to hope those guys put together a decent month or two between them and it means they can't afford for Cabrera's annual mid season slump and fog to last too long. It's already tiresome that he seems to shut it down physically and mentally a week before the All Star game and for a couple weeks afterward and his 0-5, including striking out with a chance to deliver a huge comeback win Sunday, isn't an accident. Cabbie looks bored and out of rhythm at the dish.

Help in the form of a trade would be appreciated but I'm not sure it's likely. The card is maxed out and there is no cash in the bank either in terms of prospects. Unless you want to cash in the 401k and trade Francisco Lindor (and I do not). And I'm not even sure a trade would make that much of a difference on this club at those prices. What good is a one more legit hitter when six guys in the everyday lineup are ciphers?

It's truly a shame. This division blows. The Tigers now lead it by a game or so and the Indians, as pathetic as they've been coming out of the gates in the second half, are still just 3.5 games out. That's a hot week of baseball while the Tigers go .500 or worse and the Indians are right there.

But right now a hot week is a pipe dream. You can't throw a shut out and play for the tie every

night. The pressure you put on your pitching staff can tear your team apart. And aside from McAllister and Masterson (75% of the time anyway) the Indians haven't been able to count on their starters for consistent efforts anyway.

This is a bad time to be playing your worst baseball of the season. There are worse times though. If the Indians can get anything beyond what they're getting from Hafner, Santana and Damon and they can put a solid month together they could lead this woeful division a month from now. It's that tenuous of a situation.

But as it stands, it's hard to watch and it's hard to justify making a move for one piece or part when so many of the pieces around it would still be faulty. And now you know [why I pine for Grady Sizemore](#)

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Fau...berto?

Only here in Cleveland would we herald the impending arrival of a perennially out of shape, perennially inconsistent identity thief, who is actually older than we thought he was and who lied to his bosses and fans for a decade, as a potential savior.

Fauberto Carnandez is coming back. Yeah!!!!!!

I'm sure he'll be lights out. I'm sure the lie he lived every day for a dozen or so years weighed heavily on him and caused him to pitch like Cy Young one day and Cy Buynak the next. I'm sure now he has something to prove and he can do so without the stress and strain of betraying the trust of anyone here who's supported him.

Hard to see any downside to Fauberto not having pitched at all in 9 months and not having pitched consistently well since 2007. I wouldn't bother with looking at acquiring an arm at the trade deadline. The answer to our prayers is back and should be ready to dominate as he has the last four seasons right after he serves that suspension.

Plus he's 'matured' about three years since we last saw him on the mound. Which is nice.

Which comes first? Three wins for Fauberto or a trip to the DL? You might be able to guess as to where my money is going.

Kicking it Off

Can someone explain to me how the Browns can have neither of their two first round picks signed as camp opens this week and veterans report Friday? Can someone explain how, when you reach to take a 28-year old QB with the 22nd pick because you need him more than the weak-armed guy you spent a 3rd round pick on a few years ago, that you don't get him signed and into training camp without any issues? Or how the guy you drafted third in the entire draft is still home when the first two picks have signed their

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I've listened to a half dozen ex-NFL vets this week tell how critical the first week of camp is for rookies. Especially once the vets come in and the team is together. None of them were QBs and all of them said that for a QB it's even more important that they get there. Not just for the camaraderie and togetherness but because the freaking offense is put in and studied in depth and regardless of how much time you spend catching up on it if you come in late, you never actually catch up.

If you miss time those days are dead and gone.

It may be nothing. Both Trent Richardson and Brandon Weeden may be in before the bell rings. They may walk into camp and get acclimated and be accepted as key members of this team by this time next week. But why are the Browns taking it down to the wire at all?

They draft an older QB and they go out and use next year's 2nd rounder on Josh Gordon so they can be ahead of the curve and get Weeden, Richardson, Little and Gordon working together and developing timing and chemistry and then they're going to fiddle-dick around with a couple million dollars over four years or so as a reason these guys won't get to camp?

And some of it's 'offset' language? Are you kidding me? The Browns want to make sure that if they cut TRich and owe him \$4million and he signs with a team for \$2million after he's cut, that the Browns only owe \$2million instead of the entire \$4million?

You know what? You're paying 359 coaches (may be slight exaggeration) who no longer coach and any number of front office personnel who no longer work for you a ridiculous amount of money because you were wrong about them. You also moved up a spot for no good reason to choose Richardson when he would have likely been there a pick later. If you're wrong about this one the \$2million should really be the farthest thing from your mind there in Berea. If you're wrong about the 28-year old QB you moved up needlessly to select when he would have likely been there at 37, then the last year of his deal being guaranteed really isn't going to affect this regime either.

They should be worried about moving vans and turning the electric off in their Berea and Brunswick-area homes instead because their asses will be gone.

Quit jerking around with these ancillary and relatively meaningless issues. You guys just leveraged your lives in getting these kids and instead of pissing around over relative pennies, get them into camp and give them and you the best chance to make the selections count.

For God's sake, this regime is now stepping over dollar bills to try and pick dimes off the sidewalk. They offered more than sticker price for the car and are now haggling over the \$220 warranty. And people wonder why no one has faith in this front office as a whole.

Get the kids into camp and optimize the chances they improve and grow together.

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