

What Would It Take?

Written by {ga=riverburns}

Wednesday, August 22 2012 3:30 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, August 22 2012 7:28 AM



There's no need for an obituary for these Indians, everyone knows the 2012 chapter of this organization died long ago. We need not announce it, discuss it, and cite the names of those who grieve, or have any type of memorial service. The few who remain simply tune in for the games because that's what they do, but even the most loyal fans of the feathered have ponder the idea of jumping ship. When it comes to those who have opted not to hang on, will they ever be back?

What will it take for that to occur?

We're not spending our hard-earned money to jam the turnstiles at Ontario and Carnegie on a regular basis, and only reluctantly tuning in to Matt and Rick for 3+ hours per night after we've exhausted our limited summer programming options on the DVR. In the few weeks that we've witnessed our heroes collapse in this dreadful month of August, making this season a lost cause, the Cleveland Indians brand has surely lost some loyal customers along the way.

And, we can't help but notice the scars run deeper than just a 4-20 stretch since that team from the Motor City visited in late July.



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Had everything remained the way it was in the “before time”, the losing culture that made Cleveland and the Indians the perfect inept back drop for “Major League”, maybe it wouldn't be so difficult to watch the relationship between the people of Cleveland and the professional ball club disintegrate. It just so happened that we were too busy enjoying a new state-of-the-art ballpark in 1994, and a 100-44 pennant winning club in 1995 to turn our backs on a sport that cancelled its 1994 post-season because of a labor struggle. We had a culture of winning baseball in Cleveland, for the first time since our parents were children, and we got everything we could have ever wanted out of the Indians, except, of course, a World Championship.

It took some time to adjust to the end of that initial early Jacobs Field era, but those who were patient enough to stay on board were rewarded with a 96-win Central Division Champion in 2007. Having faced the reality of losing Albert Belle and Manny Ramirez, the aftermath of the collapse in 2007 was just one gut punch after another. This would have been a good time to let go of whatever passion we had for the Indians, and the departures of CC Sabathia, Cliff Lee, and Victor Martinez was enough to crush the threshold for many.

Surely, after consecutive mid-season collapses to cancel out hot starts, patience is wearing thin for even the so-called diehards.

We, the fans, cling to that “455” above the right field mezzanine, but that all ended on April 4, 2001, and thanks to our favorite baseball fans in New England, it isn't even a record any more.

What would it take to get us back there?

Tomorrow

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Next Season

This is still a tall order, to expect the departed fan to be back for Opening Day is probably wishful thinking, at best. I don't know what's realistic for the Indians to win the off-season, but I think "different" would be seen as "better" for many. Every team gets a clean slate on Opening Day, everyone is on a level playing field, tied for first and last place at the same time.

Of course, personnel decisions will matter.

Will Manny Acta be on the top step of the dugout, and if not, is there a considerable upgrade out there?

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Ever

Speaking of ownership, and staying with the theme that different is better because it isn't the same, new ownership would go a long way towards bringing back those frustrated fans. The bottom line is that fans have had enough cheap hot dogs, nostalgic give-aways, and fireworks; fans want winning baseball.

That's the only thing that matters to most of us.

We'll pay \$8 or even \$12 for a Sugardale Hot Dog in late October, if it means we can buy tickets to see the Indians play in late October.

It happened in 2007 under the Dolan's ownership, so we have a precedent of the Indians doing it under them, even if you want to call that season a fluke.

It's going to take a Division Championship, and possibly a League Championship Series berth at a minimum for some. I know there are some folks out there that don't see either as a reality without a change at the top. Now, my idea of the top is Mark Shapiro, and I do wonder if his relationship with Larry Dolan is too strong to sever without selling the team. And, Dolan has not publicly admitted that he's interested in selling, no matter how much fans push NBA moguls like Dan

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Gilbert or Mark Cuban to throw their names in the hat.

Please, stop holding your breath for a big name to come along and throw Steinbrenner money at the problem.

The Indians woes aren't strictly financial.



he Indians drafted poorly for a while. The majority of the blame for that falls on the shoulders of John Mirabelli, but the big picture dictates that Mark Shapiro, and ultimately Larry Dolan have to own this problem.

at face value, and you definitely should,

[the failures we saw on Mirabelli's watch should not continue to occur with Brad Grant at the wheel](#)

, when it comes to the draft.

If you take our own [Al Ciammichella](#)

How the talent is developed is another big piece of the pie, whether we're talking about players that were drafted or acquired via trade.

Guys like Matt LaPorta and Jason Knapp aren't exactly poster children for the Indians farm system.

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Then again, what if (there's those two words again) it really is a curse. Should the Indians drop Chief Wahoo or the "Indians" name altogether?

Would a total re-branding of professional baseball in Cleveland help matters more than organizational changes?

While I try to keep an open mind about such things, these concerns are misguided, and tangential to the actual point here.

Frankly, I doubt anything other than an improvement in the product on the field matters at all in the long run. When I wonder if I should raise my children as Cleveland fans, when my current locale away from the North Coast gives me an excuse not to, only one number matter in my mind and it's a priority to most Cleveland fans: 1964. If the Indians do something, anything to make that number slightly less relevant in the world of Cleveland sports, the fans will be back eventually. They might even fill every seat 455 consecutive times.

Winning the whole flipping thing; that's what it would take.