

It is time for the holidays again in Cleveland. Time to deck the halls. Put up the tree. Shop for gifts. And listen to the Dolans reprimand other teams for spending money. Per usual, free agents are flying off the board, and the Indians aren't a part of it. Yet the team insists it has money to spend. Our local pessimist Jarad Regano lashes out.



Why Another Winter Disappointment May Be Right Around The Corner For Tribe Fans

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Another Indian offseason is off to a bleak start, as the latest “window of opportunity” enters its 6th year of an uneventful rebuild. The latest chapter involves having even MORE money than last year (this time with a promise not to let it burn a hole in Larry Dolan’s wallet). Whatever amount is allocated to the 2007 payroll should be super sized even more by the Josh Barfield acquisition last month. Surely, even the stingiest of Tribe executives had to have \$5m earmarked for second base.

While many Tribe fans remain concerned about the Dolans willingness to spend what it takes to put a contending team on the field, they seem to be forgiving enough to give the benefit of the doubt for at least one more winter. After all, it would be hard to alienate the fan base any more, right?

Things got off to a rocky start, when the front office proclaimed that “we have money to spend this off season, however we are not sure what other teams are going to spend.” Not the vote of confidence an already skeptical fan is looking for. Not to be outdone, Paul Dolan “expressed concern” over the Red Sox bid to negotiate with Japanese pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka.

All this, and the big name free agents had yet to ink their deals. Per usual though, the front office did not disappoint and reacted in “shock” when Alfonso Soriano signed with the Cubs. Seemingly always unaware of the market and unwilling to compromise “contract comfortability”, the Indians seem to always be a step behind the rest of baseball. Better yet, a dollar and a year behind. B.J. Ryan and Bobby Howry’s contracts would be on the dollar menu this year.

Until the Indians begin to look at an overall budget figure, as opposed to player by player, things are not going to improve. Sure, a front-end starter or middle-of-the order hitter making \$15m is insane and overpriced. But how underpriced is Grady Sizemore, who is due just \$900,000 next year?

The Josh Barfield trade made sense, however one cannot expect much more than Ronnie Belliard numbers in 2007. Combine that with rookies at the corners, and the offense is not improved. Even adding a closer would simply replace Bob Wickman. That alone would not make the Indians a contender again.

The Indians need to think differently than they have in the past. The early results, however, do not look promising.