

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

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My dominance is striking. I consider baseball to be my favorite sport. I love the Cleveland Indians and then everything else. Baseball to me is number one and the sport I know the most about.

It has been this way for several years. I used to be a football fan. I still am a football fan, but not as much as I used to be and I don't have nowhere near the knowledge of the game that I used to. Of the little time I have to devote to following sports, most of it goes to baseball, even in the offseason.

The past few years, I haven't so much increased my baseball coverage, but I have decreased how much I pay attention to football. And the past two seasons I have been on fire in fantasy football. Seriously, it's incredible. Of the three leagues I am in these past two years, I have been dominating. The league I've been in for almost 10 years has been my ultimate playground as I made it to the title game and had Matt Forte not been injured last season, I would have won it all, my team was unstoppable.

This year in the same league, I'm fresh off the highest score of the season (141, two points higher than my high last year) and off to a 6-1 start, my team looking ever dominant once again. I'm in the division lead with a 5-2 record in another league.

This is far better than what I've been doing in the fantasy baseball world. I didn't fair well in the very deep Cleveland Fan experts league and in the good old Tribe Daily Fantasy Invitational, I was middle of the pack. I did come in second and make the playoffs in another league, but bragging rights over friends is not the same over bragging rights over some knowledgeable people.

What does any of this have to do with the Indians or their offseason?

Absolutely nothing other than it has to do with my offseason and is a way for me to have some sort of intro. I put very little research into my fantasy football teams these past two days. I put a lot into my baseball leagues. So apparently for me in regards to fantasy sports, it seems to be that less is better.

That better not be the case in regards to the Indians homework this offseason. Terry Francona has gone to work already and he met with the media yesterday to discuss the work he has done so far. Most of it is staffing business, which continues to dominate the early months of this offseason.

[GET WHAT YOU WANT]

The Boston Red Sox wanted no one else. Sure if they couldn't get him, they probably would have settled with Brad Ausmus, as he was reportedly real impressive in his interviews for the then open managerial spot in Boston.

But the Red Sox wanted John Farrell, so they went out and got John Farrell. They traded Mike Aviles to Toronto to get him and they got him. It did one of two things. The first thing it did was open up an interesting dynamic to the AL East as they've had one manager switch teams within division, and create even more intrigue to the Sandy Alomar Jr. situation in Cleveland.

It didn't seem like Alomar was even a candidate in Boston. But now in Toronto, he may be a

serious candidate. It was Sandy who interviewed in Toronto not long ago when the Blue Jays hired Farrell. Sure he interviewed in Boston last year, but it didn't seem like he was a serious candidate or he would have been brought back this season.

While it's early in the process, you have to imagine Sandy [will once be again a serious candidate](#) for the Toronto opening. He has not yet been contacted by the Jays for their opening, but as you can see in that MLBTR collection of links, the Blue Jays may want to reach out to candidates that they did not talk to last time around, including the recently dismissed Manny Acta.

Interesting I say. More interesting is the fact that [Buster Olney adds](#) that former Indians minor league manager Torey Lovullo could be a serious candidate for Toronto. Lovullo of course went to Boston's organization after losing out when the Indians hired Acta, then followed Farrell to Toronto on the big league staff and if he doesn't get the managerial job in Toronto, could probably follow him back to Boston to be his bench coach.

With that, the Indians [will continue to be stalled](#) in their quest to finalize their coaching staff as one opening closes, another one opens. Names will fly, but until Toronto has a guy now, the Indians cannot rest and will probably not make any announcements, even if Brad Mills and Mike Sarbaugh are going to be on the staff, which seems very likely at this point.

"We can't announce any coaches yet for obvious reasons," Francona said. "Some guys are going to be leaving the organization, some are coming in. It's kind of sensitive and we have to be respectful for guys who are potentially moving on."

Francona has been interviewing candidates, and while there are probably slots for those candidates, because Alomar would likely be the bench coach, if he isn't around, that would change a lot in terms of the hierarchy. So while names like Sarbaugh and Mills seem to be favorites to be added to Francona's super-staff, it cannot be finalized quite yet.

And it is rather interesting, but there's more intrigue and interest in the coaching staff as there was in the Indians actual manager search. There's much more at play with other team's searches than the Indians manager search.

[WHAT ELSE?]

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Francona mostly spoke about the on-the-field personnel and what the Indians are looking at this offseason. He had a few interesting quotes about what the Indians are going to be doing and how his research has been going. He started with three days of meetings and three days of 'brainstorming' in Cleveland and then a lot more meetings with the development staff in Arizona.

"We tried to have not only an understanding of the organization," Francona said, "but maybe some strategy moving forward, or potential strategies. It's, 'Where are we as a ballclub?' Trying to honestly assess where we are and how we best go forward. Everybody had opinions on it and it was really helpful for me."

Sounds like he's been busy to say the least. But while all that is important his biggest task is managing the 25 men on the major league roster and that will be the focus of this offseason and three spots in particular. While some sports are locked down and rather secure, others are not.

"That's a good place to start," Francona said. "You've got catcher, second, short and center that have some pretty athletic guys that know how to play baseball, so that's good. I understand right now there's some openings. You're looking at first, left, [designated hitter] that there will have to be some decisions made on how do we best move forward."

Sounds like early on that there are no bones about it. First, left field and the DH spot are open and the Indians need to figure out what they are going to do there. As we discussed last week, how the Indians go about addressing the first base position is going to be interesting.

The DH spot can be a luxury or a burden for a team in the AL. If the Indians use it effectively, it can be a benefit. If not, it creates a hole in their lineup. And of course, this team needs a left fielder like a human needs to eat on a daily basis. They haven't had a stable one in years and that will be a need that has to be filled long term, not just short term.

Now Francona has no control over this, all he has is an opinion on the matter that he can voice to his "partners" that he admires so much. But what he says is interesting as he has an insight as to the plans the Indians have this offseason.

And he made it seem like **Ubaldo Jimenez** is a piece to next season as he mentioned him and Masterson by name and said they need to get back towards 'the '11 guys'. Not that Ubaldo was much better in 2011.

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"We have Ubaldo [Jimenez] and [Justin] Masterson," Francona said. "If we can get back towards the '11 guys, as opposed to maybe last year, that's a huge step in the right direction. That's something that I'm not arrogant enough to think that I have all the answers, but I'm also new enough and energetic enough where I want to try."

So it appears that the Indians will pick up Ubaldo Jimenez's option and move forward with him as a project they need to rebuild. Because he needs rebuilt and he needs help.

Now that isn't up to Terry Francona to fix, but if he can? Well shoot give him Manager of the Year right now. Because if he fixes Jimenez, he can win a lot of games next year. And really that goes back to what Francona was talking about when he got hired and what he touched up on Monday. He's looking to connect with his talent. He told the media he won't be in his office much, he'll be out in the locker room. He'll be hanging out with his players.

"The last couple years in Boston," Francona said, "I felt like I was getting further and further from the field. My title didn't maybe need to be manager. It was like fire-putter-outer. I'm kind of looking forward to getting on the field a little bit and maybe having a chance to coach. We've got a clean start here, and there's going to be probably some younger guys. It's kind of fun to be out in the field with them, trying to impact them and seeing how good we can make them."

So there you go. Francona wants to try and teach his players more than he did towards the end in Boston. Of course by the time it was 2011 in Boston, he was dealing with veterans and personalities more than he was with young players trying to learn.

And there are some young guys here and he'll have that chance. He'll also have a lack of personalities to deal with. He may have on in Perez if he stays. But he has a chance to mold guys and form a bond from early on. So that can be a really good thing.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Matt LaPorta underwent surgery on Thursday for something that may or may not be related to a hip issue. To be honest, it really doesn't matter.

In case you missed my rather indifferent opinion on the matter, and a recap of the news on LaPorta, how long he'll be out and all that other fun stuff, [you can read that here](#) . But Antonetti [did add on some quotes](#) since I've penned that and went on to basically confirm what everyone else is thinking in regard to LaPorta's status.

"I've talked with Matt. It's obviously an important offseason for him, because he's going to have to come into Spring Training to win a job."

If anything this adds to the growing intrigue of the Indians first base position. We already mentioned Kevin Youkilis in this space last week, but I'm not sure many think that is a viable option. Not that Matt LaPorta seemed like a viable option, but you have to think the Indians have some pieces they're considering internally and externally for first base.

What's funny on that matter of "viable options" and, uh, spending this offseason, Buster Olney came forward with a rather interesting and damning quote. Because of the teams around the league that have so much cash because of television contracts, there could be [some large financial windfall for many free agents](#) . Zack Greinke is going to get paid, that's for sure, but some others who normally might not get large salaries, might get large salaries.

That doesn't bode well for the Indians unless they suddenly have some of this financial windfall that other teams have.

I cannot imagine a scenario where the Indians take part in some of the shenanigans with other teams overpaying for players just because they have the money now. Because just because you have the money now, doesn't mean you'll have it later. Sure you could trade the player, but if the player ends up not living up to the production, you're almost certainly eating that salary even if you can deal him somewhere.

So if anything, this may be a good thing for the Indians so that they don't go out and buy someone like a Kevin Youkilis. Because if you ask me, signing a Kevin Youkilis for one or two years is only putting a band aid on the problem for next season. Next season needs more than a band aid.

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As mentioned earlier with John Farrell being "traded" to Boston and Mike Aviles going to Toronto in return, there is a thought that Yunel Escobar would be traded. But yeah he has little value with a bad year and having written an disgusting hateful slur on his eye-black towards the end of the year.

So if that's the low end of the trade market for shortstops, **Asdrubal Cabrera** is certainly the high end if the Indians were to deal him, would he not? Just something to think about.

Finally, congratulations go out to special adviser to the Indians player development staff, Johnny Goryl. He was awarded with the Mike Coolbaugh award, given to a individual for their effort in mentoring young players. Goryl has been with the Indians for 31 seasons and that's only part of how long the 79-year-old has been in the game. Goryl was on the Indians major league coaching staff at one time and has been everywhere in the organization.

"Johnny Goryl is a true baseball lifer and a most deserving recipient of the Mike Coolbaugh Award," Minor League Baseball President Pat O'Conner stated. "He has dedicated more than six decades to our game, mentoring and coaching several generations of players and staff using his immense knowledge, experience, passion and selflessness. Johnny's career is emblematic of Mike's goals of continuing in the game after his playing days and having an impact on future generations of players."

Congrats to Goryl, who is one of those true baseball lifers.

Coming up this week will be the annual All-Daily Team, that lists all the awesome players from 2012 according to me. There will also be a guest post on the blog Wednesday on the Terry Francona hiring, so make sure you check that out as well as the All-Daily Team.

You can also vote for the Golden Fedora for the entire year starting on Tuesday.

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Offseason Rundown: Francona Alludes to Jimenez's Inclusion, Interviews Staff

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Nino has a blog! Give it a visit at [The Tribe Daily](#) , because Shin-Soo Choo will certainly be dancing 'Gangnam Style' somewhere there.

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