

Offseason Rundown: Decision Time on Several Indians

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, October 31 2012 5:00 AM - Last Updated Tuesday, October 30 2012 10:40 AM



I know the Giants win on Sunday effectively ended the baseball season, but that is a blow that I can deal with.

As is a blow you should be able to withstand for two reasons. A) Baseball will eventually be back and B) The Tigers winning a World Series would really be as gross as the weather outside in Northeast Ohio right now.

Why such venom towards the Detroit Tigers? Eh, they're the Tigers, why are we supposed to like them? AL Central pride? That's hog-wash. I don't have any pride in how well a rival does. Plus there is nothing more enjoyable than seeing a myriad of PANDA! tweets fill up my timeline on Twitter.

So with the Giants as champions and the Detroit Tigers stalled once again in their pursuit to give fading owner Mike Illitch a baseball winner, we now can look forward to what is next.

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Within the very few days that are remaining post-World Series, the Indians must execute their decisions on a few options for their players. It really will begin this offseason as we know it and the formal postulating of what the Indians are expected to do in the winter months.

What I would like to throw into your mind is the result. The result of the World Series can be a good thing in that I really do not want the Tigers to represent as champions. I know, what is the big deal? It's just a thing. Who wants to see that team win it all? It goes beyond the fact that they are a bitter rival and also plays into The Yankee Effect.

Simply, The Yankee Effect is something that surrounds a team when someone does not want them to win. Usually this team buys players in an attempt to buy wins and in this case, a championship.

The Tigers tried to buy themselves a championship. I know I know, that's the name of the game, you win with players and if you can afford it, why wouldn't you buy a player to help you win a championship.

That's all well and good, but The Yankee Effect involves the over-priced, the bullish nature, and the lack of regard for anything in else in purchasing anything and everything.

Mike Illitch has done that the past few years. There is a stop-at-nothing mentality that George Steinbrenner had when he was running the Yankees that he instructed his team to get anyone and everyone that could help them win title after title. And they could do it, because they had the money.

Mike Illitch may or may not have the money. He's on his way out, so what does he care, right? He's old and he knows that money is of no use to anyone when they pass on, so he's going to spend whatever he can get his hands on to get whatever he wants.

It is kind of crummy when you think about it.

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And now another year has passed and he has not been able to get what he's wanted. I shudder to think what this means for this offseason. What is he going to instruct his team to do? He will get Victor Martinez back, which makes the lineup even more deadly with last year's addition to Prince Fielder. There is a capable rotation. Is there anything left to add?

Is the relentlessness going to kick into full-gear?

Does any of it directly impact the Indians?

Eh, who knows. I mean, sure the Indians would have never had the opportunity to sign Prince Fielder, but they have to play him 19 times a year.

I guess my overarching point is this. The Tigers may be as hell-bent as ever to get things done. I don't know what that means for their offseason, or even their mentality come the regular season, but if effort and a dead-set mentality could win you a championship, they would take it all.

[DECISION TIME]

As the World Series ends, now starts the several days clubs have to exercise or decline options on players. The Indians [have three decisions to make regarding some players](#) and while one is easy, one is hard, and the other is rather intriguing, all of them have been thought about, so there should be no time-wasted in the Indians pulling the trigger on them rather soon.

The first is the easy one. No one in their right mind would take Travis Hafner back at \$13 million a year. That will be the toughest, yet easiest decision for anyone to make. Telling Hafner he might not be coming back is the hard part, but actually deciding to do it is not. The salary has become an albatross to the organization and it is time for that to come off the books.

Some thing it is time to move on completely from Hafner though. And the sentimental part of me

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says they need to shut up. I'd love to have Travis Hafner back. But it may not make sense flexibility wise to do that. You could probably get him dirt cheap to make up for all the money he made and didn't play for (not through his own fault though), but you also run the risk of...well...him not playing. Remember Grady Sizemore? Of course you don't, he wasn't around last year.

But if the Indians want to go down that road again, they most certainly can. It wouldn't be strings-attached contract like you could do for Sizemore, but Hafner most certainly is not commanding \$13 million. He only has 15 teams that he could sign with because he can't play the field, and Cleveland has been really great to him, so maybe you figure there's some room to play with. Not to mention, he'll already receive \$2.75 million in what equates to "bonus" money for the Indians to not pay him \$13 million in 2013, so he's getting a nice payday regardless.

The other two options come with some intrigue and thought because the decisions also revolve around the overall plan this organization has in regards to what they want to do in 2013 about their rotation. Sure Travis Hafner can be replaced by virtually anyone you want because he plays a fielding-less position and was hurt half of the year anyway.

But with Roberto Hernandez and Ubaldo Jimenez you have two guys who could fill two-fifths of a rotation that is not very deep to begin with.

On one side of the argument, you could say that throwing young cheap alternatives out there is better than taking calculated and more expensive risks on guys who could offer the same production. On the other side, you could point to the upside to those risks and say that the investment is well worth it and that anything beyond that is asking for trouble.

Either way, these are two situations you must evaluate separately and I'll take the easiest one first.

Ubaldo's option is going to get picked up because Chris Antonetti traded for him and he traded some high-end pieces to get him. If there is yet another opportunity to save face, Antonetti best take it. If not, he is admitting a failure at a cheap cost to the Ubaldo venture. Until it becomes economically stupid or borderline crazy to give up, Antonetti will keep trying and ride this wave out until he crashes into the water and gets eaten by a shark, or makes it back to land.

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That's really all it comes down to. The option is not very expensive compared to what Ubaldo could provide.

Then we have Fausto, who's option is actually has an option a little bit more than Jimenez's and well, comes with a lot less stringage. There is no commitment to a guy who falsified his name and left the organization in a bad spot. There is no evidence to suggest that Fausto can come back stronger than ever because when he did pitch last year, he was not very good and incredibly rusty. Then he got hurt.

So really, you can decline that option and live to see cheaper options try and fill the void, or you can take the gamble. What the Indians do is anyone's best guess. I would probably decline it, but I could see them picking it up. I could also see them declining it and offering him a lower deal because how many other people are actually going to try and go after him for a decent price that is near \$6 million?

Not many, if any.

Either way, these decisions will be made rather soon, at least public. The decisions have to already have been made internally or else the team hasn't been doing their homework. They probably have an idea of where they are going, it is just a matter of finalizing it all and releasing that information for us to sink our sharp bite into.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Of course in addition to the decisions the Indians must make in the next few days, they have plenty of other decisions they'll need to make, mostly in regards to arbitration eligible players. Of course that is down the road from now.

Shin-Soo Choo is a finalist [for a Rawlings Gold Glove](#) . On that note, my car is named Rawling because it is a baseball term and sounds kind of like a name. I've nicknamed him "The

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Playmaker" because, he is quite clutch.

As for Choo's status as a playmaker and candidate for a gold glove, I'm not so sure. He's up against Jeff Francoeur and Josh Reddick in right field and while I think he stands a good chance of winning, I'm not sure he deserves it. He's not the best when it comes to routes. He has a hell of an arm, but so does Francoeur, so if you are going by arm, he may not even be the best pick. I don't think I've seen Josh Reddick enough to accurately give a fair assessment, but I'd probably take the three guys that were nominated in center before I'd take any of the ones in right.

If he ends up winning. Great. Cool. After Asdrubal Cabrera lost last year, I've come to take the Gold Glove awards as they are and leave them right there where I find them.

No news on the **Sandy Alomar Jr.** front, which I suppose is good news. The Blue Jays will be interviewing current Diamondbacks coach and former Indian Matt Williams. The Rockies have interviewed former Mets and White Sox manager Jerry Manuel and a coach from the Phillies, and so far, Alomar does not seem to be a serious candidate. Williams is also a candidate in Colorado.

The other new opening is down in Miami with Ozzie Guillen ousted. The Marlins have already interviewed people like Larry Bowa and Cincinnati's Bryan Price, but it doesn't appear as if Sandy is going to be an option there either.

Torey Lovullo was named bench coach in Boston, likely meaning he won't be headed to Toronto. Great for Lovullo, a guy who's made his way through the ranks in the past few years after spending years with Cleveland.

The Winner of the Golden Fedora will be announced very soon. Right now you have the rest of Tuesday to vote for the winner. Michael Brantley is currently leading [on the blog](#) and [Facebook](#). So make sure you get your vote in.

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Now that the season is officially over and all the fun is out of the way, it's time to start analyzing things. As I've mentioned, offseason rundown will be a frequent occurrence throughout the offseason. However what I will be doing to break down the Indians and their organization and where there headed is a little new.

Starting this week, I'll begin reviewing the Indians position by position. A break down of each position how it currently stands, where it is headed, and what is out there. First up this week is the shortstop position, the most rich and deepest position this team has from the top to bottom.

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Nino can be found with glue and scissors and pictures of Vinnie Pestano and himself on The Tribe Daily, his own Indians blog. Hearts may or may not be invovled.

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