



“And at the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month, the guns of August fell silent.” Today is Veterans Day in the US, which was originally Armistice Day celebrating the end of WWI, the poorly-named “War to End All Wars.” After World War II, Armistice Day was expanded to honor all veterans, and is a near-worldwide celebration of those who fought and continue to fight for our freedoms. While here in London and across the commonwealth countries they call it “Remembrance Day,” the underlying theme remains the same. Poppies decorate the lapels of nearly everyone walking around town (including yours truly), and by the time you read this the Queen herself will have presided over an impressive ceremony that includes two full minutes of silence as Big Ben strikes 1100 GMT. From the ever-dwindling number of WWII vets to the always-increasing stream of young men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, most of us know someone who has served their country. So regardless of whether or not you will enjoy a day off for tomorrow’s bank holiday, give a soldier a pat on the back, pay for his/her drink or just take a second to say “thanks.”

The 2012 offseason is in full swing, with the hot stove beginning to simmer, award voting/arguing commencing and the general managers gathering in California for their annual slate of post-World Series meetings. While more smoke than fire will undoubtedly rise in the next few weeks with names like Justin Upton, Jacoby Ellsbury, Matt Garza and countless others already in discussion, the Indians have an important step to take before any sort of significant moves are made. The front office needs to step back and take a holistic look at the organization and decide whether this team can be tweaked into 2013 contention, or whether a complete teardown and rebuild of the 40-man roster needs to take place. Last week’s trade of Esmil Rodgers for Mike Aviles and prospect Yan Gomes did nothing to reveal the intentions of Chris

Antonetti and company. The move could be seen as the first domino falling that ends with Asdrubal Cabrera departing Cleveland, but it could also be seen simply as the Indians selling high on a bullpen arm to shore up their depth with a versatile righthanded bat and a C/1B prospect. Antonetti responded to questions about the future of Asdrubal with an emphatic denial that anything further is in the works with respect to the all-star shortstop, but forgive me if I take that with a rather large grain of salt. I have to think that the front office has already made a decision as to the likelihood of contention in 2013, and I think that as the offseason gets rolling we'll see that overarching vision come into focus with each additional move. So while the Indians intentions are disguised at the moment, allow me to humbly set forth some of my suggestions as to personnel moves the team is likely considering here on a Lazy Sunday...

Let's just get this out there straightaway; looking at the Indians organization, I simply don't see how the 25-man roster could be massaged into a playoff contender prior to the 2013 season. Even in the relatively weak AL Central, the Indians simply do not have the pitching necessary to make it to the playoffs, let alone make some noise if they get there. IF Masterson regains his 2011 form, IF Ubaldo isn't a complete disaster, IF Carrasco comes back healthy and effective and IF Kluber and McAllister can stay healthy and develop into innings-eaters in the back of the rotation, then the Indians could contend. Those are five pretty big "IFS," to say the least. To count on all five of those guys just isn't realistic. Put me firmly in the "teardown and full-rebuild" camp. It's a difficult decision to sit here in November of 2012 to write off the 2013 season, but ripping off the band-aid is a necessary step to take when you look at the state of the 40-man roster. With that being said, the Indians are actually in a pretty good position to dramatically accelerate the usual rebuilding process. This year's free agent crop, outside of the top few marquee names, is pretty weak. Teams are flush with cash coming from the new TV revenue, and bidding for free agent services is bound to get crazy pretty quickly. Smaller market teams like the A's and Rays who are expected to contend in 2013 but still need to add a piece or two will be forced to turn to the trade market as the contracts continue to escalate. Even the larger market teams that are looking for an established closer or shortstop will find slim and expensive pickings in free agency. This could result in somewhat of a perfect storm for the Indians, who just happen to have both an established closer and quality offensive shortstop under control through 2014. In this market, those are two incredibly valuable trade chips. So understanding the opportunities that this market offers I will now, in true political style, lay out my personal 5-point plan for the Indians offseason:



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