



After spending last week courting Nick Swisher, the Indians finally got their man. Swisher signed a four-year, \$56M deal with a vesting option for a fifth season at \$14M for 2017. It's easily the biggest free agent contract in franchise history and continues the trend this offseason of GM Chris Antonetti going big or going home. In Swisher, the Indians get a high-energy player whose bat is still very productive and will be almost 37 at the end of the contract, if the option vests.

The Indians made it clear from the beginning that Swisher was their target. They were one of five or six teams who expressed interest in the former Yankee, White Sock, and Athletic, but appeared to be the most active right from the start. In a lot of ways, Swisher serves as a Shin-Soo Choo replacement, and likely at a cheaper price than what the Scott Boras client will get on the open market. Some of Swisher's production over the last four years should be taken with a grain of salt, as he played at Yankee Stadium, which has very hitter-friendly dimensions for guys who bat left handed and he has plenty of lineup protection. Even still, Swisher hit 77 home runs over three seasons in Oakland, where home runs go to die in the heavy marine air and spacious outfield. With age, it's reasonable to expect some drop-off, but if healthy, it should not be enough of a loss of production to make this look like a bad contract. Given the market and Swisher's worth, this is a very reasonable contract and comes in right around market value.

It's unclear how much of Swisher's family remains in Ohio, but Swisher was born in Columbus, grew up in Parkersburg, WV, and graduated from the Ohio State University. It's possible that proximity to family could have weighed in the decision. However, the biggest reason for Swisher

ending up in Cleveland is that the market for him was not at all what he and his agent, Dan Lozano, expected it to be. Teams were making other moves in lieu of making offers to Swisher and Cleveland had the highest offer, and possibly the only legitimate offer. Also, because the Yankees offered Swisher a contract at season's end, the team who signed him in free agency would have to forfeit a first-round pick. The Indians, who hold the eighth pick in the draft, have their pick protected because it is in the top 10. In this case, they simply forfeit a second-round pick to sign Swisher.

Swisher was somewhat of an all-or-nothing move for the Indians. The corner outfield market dwindled every day that Swisher sat on the Indians' offer. Had he not agreed to terms, it would have been very hard for the Indians to fill the right field hole that was created from the Shin-Soo Choo trade. The aggressiveness shown by the Indians front office this offseason has been a breath of fresh air. Antonetti went out and got one of the most talented pitching prospects in baseball, Trevor Bauer, for Choo, who was undoubtedly leaving Cleveland sometime during 2013. The Indians successfully signed Mark Reynolds, a player profiled in my View from the Porch column yesterday, a guy who adds a dimension of right handed power that we have not seen in quite a while. Then, they get their ace of diamonds in Nick Swisher. All of this at the expense of about \$70M over the next four years, a financial commitment from the Dolans that we have not seen them make in some time.

With Swisher signed, sealed, and delivered, Antonetti can now focus on where the Indians need the most help - starting pitching. There continues to be attractive options out there and several that will require a short-term contract. With Edwin Jackson off the market, a pitcher the Indians were interested in, the vast majority of free agent arms will probably get deals in the one-to-three year range, which is ideal for a team unwilling to give long-term commitments to pitchers. Shaun Marcum, Kyle Lohse, Joe Saunders, Brett Myers, and Kevin Millwood are the biggest names left on the market. Like Swisher, Lohse requires a compensation draft pick, however, the Indians' pick is protected. Because they forfeited a second-round pick to sign Swisher, they'd have to forfeit a third-round pick to sign Lohse.

The Indians' lineup appears almost set now. The three outfield spots will go to Drew Stubbs, Michael Brantley, and Nick Swisher. The infield will be Lonnie Chisenhall, Asdrubal Cabrera, Jason Kipnis, and Mark Reynolds. Carlos Santana will be behind the plate. The bench will be comprised of Mike Aviles, Lou Marson, a fourth outfielder, and likely a second utility infielder type player. With the open designated hitter spot, a player like Yan Gomes, acquired in the Esmil Rogers trade, may have an inside track to make the team.

Ultimately, getting Swisher is a big win for the Indians and their embattled front office. The

Dolans showed a financial commitment and signed a player who will create a little bit of a buzz in Cleveland. Antonetti has had a fantastic offseason, adding this Swisher signing to the trade for Bauer and the signing of Reynolds, and possibly the most important move, hiring Terry Francona as the manager. So far, Francona appears to be an integral part of the decision-making process and that has paid dividends thus far.

The bar may have been set pretty low, but this is definitely one of the best offseasons in a long, long time for the Tribe.