

## Recapping the Improbable Resurrection of the Cleveland Indians

Written by {ga=noahpoinar}

Wednesday, February 13 2013 3:00 PM - Last Updated Thursday, February 14 2013 5:31 PM

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Remember the '88 World Series when Kirk Gibson went yard off Dennis Eckersley, leading to one of the most famous lines in sports, "I don't believe what I just saw!!!" Well that's how I feel right now: I don't believe what I just saw. The Cleveland Indians have done the improbable: they won the offseason. Ok, the Toronto Blue Jays likely won baseball's offseason, but the Indians definitely won something. How could they not? They just spent a combined \$104 million on two players, Nick Swisher and two-time all star Michael Bourn — and \$118 million in all. Believe it or not, this has never happened before. It probably will never happen again.

You know why this is so fantastic? Because it couldn't have happened at a better time, and I'm not just saying this either. These decisions completely resurrected a franchise that was seemingly headed down the long, winding road of a rebuild.

There was a time in early December when I questioned whether I would even be remotely intrigued to watch this team in 2013. Things didn't look pretty, it was just before the Winter meetings ... The Farm was depleted and the reality of *"Oh yea, Ubaldo Jimenez is still on this roster"* had finally begun to set in. Choo was as good as gone and no one thought Cabrera would be here on opening day, either. In

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addition to this, Masterson's name was on the block, Chris Perez was up for grabs, even Carlos Santana's name was being dangled out there. And again, the Farm was depleted. You kept hearing the word "arbitration" and even if you didn't fully understand its meaning, you knew that it wasn't good. You also heard the name Scott Boras, the reason Shin-Soo Choo had an expiration date tattooed to his face. And Francisco Lindor too — the reason the Indians were reportedly so willing to trade Cabrera, the team's best player, even though Cabrera was still two years away from free agency and Lindor was likely still two years away from promotion.

Blow things up and rebuild.

It seemed inevitable, we had been through this door before. The stick of dynamite was practically lit (Ubaldo Jimenez was holding the lighter), and I was kind of just waiting for the first chip to fall. It was time to hide the children, maybe even think about saddling them with another team. We. Were. Screwed.

A couple days after I had gone over all the angles of this depressing situation, I got an e-mail from The Cleveland Fan himself, Rich Swerbinsky: Sports Time Ohio was going to be sold, and

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we (the contributing TCF staff) were going to be impacted. Understandably, no one was happy about this. But as an Indians fan first, and a writer a distant fifth, I guess you could say it was a blessing in disguise. The STO sale would ultimately usher-in the greatest offseason in franchise history.

For years, we've lambasted the Dolan's, asking, pleading, and begging them to spend. Most fans were reasonable about their financial situation and mindful of the small market factor. But we also knew they owned a television network — one that televised all the Tribe games, the team they just so happened to own — which isn't something that every owner can attest to. So with the sale of the network, their pockets were suddenly a lot deeper. \$230 million deeper to be exact (\$240 million depending on who you ask). I know this because it was all over the internet for everyone to see, and this little fact may or may not have led the Dolan's to do something that we never thought they were capable of. Spend. After all, it was the first time we, the public, actually saw an exact dollar figure of what they made. So they had to spend, right? Sure, and like a college student that just received their income-tax return, it happened.

Hey, that guy over there who's buying everybody shots, that isn't ... no ... can't be ... never mind ... forget it. WAIT ... IT IS!!!! THAT'S PAUL DOLAN!!!! THAT'S PAUL DOLAN!!!! AND LOOK, HE'S WITH TERRY FRANCONA!

That's kind of what it was like.

A year ago this team didn't have a left fielder, two months ago they didn't have a right fielder, and two days ago they didn't have a DH. Normally, this is when we would ingratiate ourselves with the likes of Travis Buck, Austin Kearns, and whatever broken down 40 year old the Indians could gobble up. But not this year. In fact, their outfield is suddenly overflowing. After the Michael Bourn signing, we almost panicked, *Oh crap, now what do we do with Stubbs?* Not a bad problem to have. Ultimately, after we had time to catch our breath, we figured out that Stubbs will move to left, Swisher will go to first, and Reynolds to DH.

DH problem: solved.

To put this into proper context for you, the New York Yankees just signed Travis Hafner, and not because they think he can resurrect his career.

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Now consider this: Swisher came from the Yankees, The Indians get better by stealing Swisher from the Yankees. The Yankees get shittier by losing Swisher to the Indians. The Yankees get even more shittier by signing Travis Hafner. The Indians improve themselves by simply not having Travis Hafner. If Carmen Policy were here right now to comment, he would call that a quadruple dip. Awesome, right?



None of this means the Indians are going to make the playoffs (they probably won't). They may not even finish above .500 (it's possible they don't). But these concerns are reserved for another day. The point is that it's February 12th and I'm extremely giddy about the Cleveland Indians; more than likely, so are you. That's never happened to me before; sorry, pitchers and catchers reporting to Spring Training just never did it for me.

And the greatest part of all ... none of this required a four year rebuild.

Two months ago I didn't think this was possible. I figured I'd be spending the majority of the season hate-watching this team, rooting for them to be terrible to a comical degree, and hoping

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that this, along with our constant spew of venom and overall ability to abandon Progressive Field, would force the Dolan's to sell the team. But that won't be happening. The Dolan's — the ones who have taken more shit over the years than Art Modell — finally delivered, and although I'm sad that I can't use them as a punchline anymore, I'm actually really happy for them. I like them now. I think they're good people. I take back the time I compared them to the Maloof's. I'm sorry I wrote a chapter called "The Roast of Larry and Paul Dolan." And I'm sorry for making fun of old people in general.

But with all of this said, there's a decent chance that the Indians are done spending for the rest of this decade. So if it's okay with you, I'm gonna sit back, soak all of this in, and ride this feeling out.