



When the Indians signed free agent Mark Reynolds this past offseason there were many who lauded the move as an aggressive stroke from the Tribe's front office to go out and land a legitimate power hitting threat. There were others who questioned whether \$7million for a feast or famine guy like Reynolds was a wise roll of the dice.

After a half a season of Reynolds in a Tribe uniform one could honestly say both sides may have been right. One could reasonably say it was worth the risk to bring in a right handed bat with a ton of power and also say that Reynolds hasn't been worth the money or the risk since April.

But let's not forget about April. It happened and Reynolds was terrific. If there is a loop of highlights playing one day at Reynolds' Memorial Service you'd be safe to assume that it will consist mostly of April, 2013 footage.

Reynolds, a career .234 hitter with a slash line of .330/.468/.798, hit .301 in April with a slash line of .368/.651/1019 along with 8 home runs, 22RBI, a stolen base and just 22 strikeouts in 95 plate appearances. Reynolds and Reynolds' supporters were riding high and feeling pretty damn good that maybe the Indians had gotten the biggest bargain in baseball in 2013.

That maybe, just maybe, a really smart team like the Orioles and all the other smart teams out there missed the boat and passed on Reynolds for a paltry \$7million/year.

Then May and June came and went and those teams that passed on Reynolds because they didn't see him as a big contributor in a good lineup seem to be a little smarter.

It's been a steady train to Suckville for Reynolds after his torrid April start. May saw Reynolds put up a .218 batting average with five home runs and 19RBI. A slash line of .310/.386/.696 accompanied the homers and RBI.

And Reynolds' month of June makes you long for those days of May, much less the production from April.

Reynolds hit .187 in June. A .288/.253/.541 slash line doesn't lie and, importantly to a guy like me who watched Reynolds struggle tremendously for two months, those numbers confirm what I saw to a tee. In fact the numbers are actually worse than what I recall watching in part because of the sad fact that Reynolds in the lineup has increased my drinking frequency and the amount consumed.

I understand the argument that a guy who strikes out can be productive. I understand that an out is an out is an out and that there are actually occasions when a hitter striking out is preferred over a hitter putting a ground ball at an infielder in play. I get all of that. I also understand that there are numbers and metrics and indexes out there that will tell me that.

But Mark Reynolds isn't productive for the Indians right now and has not been since school was in session and most people were gathering to eat Easter ham.

That's the sad truth.

I'd love the April Mark Reynolds. I loved that guy. I'm praying that guy shows up again before the snow flies and the MLB playoffs start. But that guy has been AWOL for a long freaking time and we're getting to the point where the **threat** of Mark Reynolds just isn't enough to warrant him being in the lineup.

Reynolds has struck out 13 times in his last 25 at bats. He has 17 plate appearances in July and is hitless, and he hasn't put the bat on the ball in more than half of those plate appearances. Hell, blame Lonnie Chisenhall for Reynolds circling the drain the last couple months if you like. Because as strictly a DH, Reynolds is passable with an .871 OPS. But when he had to move to 3b full time after Chisenhall washed out early on it clearly affected Reynolds' offense as that OPS plummets to under .600.

And it's not a case of Reynolds getting really big hits or coming through in the clutch either. With 2-outs and runners in scoring position, in late and close games and in tie games, Reynolds has an OPS of .670. He's fine when the chips are up, posting an OPS+ of 125 when the Indians are leading, but not much of a help at all when the Indians are down and need some production, as his OPS+ drops to 74.

So what do the Indians do as they sit here 2.5 games behind the Tigers with Detroit in town?

Reynolds is clearly a mess and the Indians clearly need more production from their lineup. They have to seriously consider, barring an epic collapse in the next two weeks or so, seeking a decent bat as well as another arm for the rotation if they're still in contention as July winds down.

I also think they have to consider playing Reynolds OR Chisenhall on a given day and not both. Those guys have each struggled for too long to consider it a blip as opposed to a trend and hitting them back to back in the order like Terry Francona did Friday night against the Tigers was brutal to watch.

I think the next 2-3 weeks are critical for Mark Reynolds and the Indians in terms of where this team is potentially headed as September rolls closer. Reynolds will get the next two weeks because Francona is a believer in giving his veterans every opportunity available and because the Indians don't have the poker chips/prospects to be able to afford both a quality arm and a quality bat as the trade deadline nears.

But the clock is ticking on the Mark Reynolds experiment. I don't expect him to put up April

numbers each and every month. But he's got to pull out of this nose dive he's been in for the past two months to at least put up the numbers that have defined his career.

He needs to get back to being a threat in the lineup. Right now he's just a threat TO the lineup and to the Indians post season chances.

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