



You'll have to forgive me if this week's edition of Lazy Sunday is both short and a little discombobulated. I started writing it earlier in the week, and then got a bit sidetracked when I was forced to spend all day Friday and most of Saturday in the hospital. Long story short, I woke up at 3am with horrible stomach pain and finally went to the ER at around 7am Friday morning. A quick ultrasound later, I come to find out that I have gall stones and my gall bladder has to come out, immediately. Immediately is a relative term in a hospital of course, but I suppose that it's a miracle of modern medicine that about 12 hrs after arriving at the hospital, I was lying in a recovery bed sans gall bladder. So much of this week's article will be written under the influence of perchocet as I lie in bed on the road to recovery. Please forgive both the brevity of the piece as well as any misspellings, but with the trade deadline fast-approaching, I wanted to get some thoughts out there for you all. So with that said, let's kick off the first ever Lazy Sunday under the influence of drugs...

The first domino in the annual July trade deadline fell at the beginning of last week, when the Texas Rangers acquired starting pitcher Matt Garza from the Chicago Cubs for minor league 3B Mike Olt and a pair of young arms. The Indians, looking to shore up their starting rotation heading down the stretch, were reportedly interested in Garza as well. With few legit starters on the market though, it was a sellers' market, and the Rangers were able to meet the steep price that the Cubs were asking for the righty. Garza is going to be a free agent following the 2013 season, and with the new collective bargaining rules, the team that loses Garza won't even be eligible for draft pick compensation since he was traded mid-season. The lack of club control and the high cost in prospect currency combined to keep the Indians out of serious contention for Garza's services, and with good reason. A very rough guess as to a comparable package from the Indians would have included Lonnie Chisenhall, Scott Barnes and T.J. House. That's an awful steep price for 2 ½ months of Matt Garza.

Speaking of Chisenhall, his defensive struggles are overshadowing the fact that he's been a pretty good hitter of late. In 15 games in the month of July, Chiz is hitting .269/.333/.462 with 4 2B, 2 HR, 8 RBI, 5 BB and 5 strikeouts. He's not setting the world on fire, but he's put together a solid stretch of games since being recalled from AAA Columbus. Chisenhall is still just 24 years old, and if he can just figure out how to hit lefties at the ML level (.374 OPS against LHP in 36 plate appearances with Cleveland), he can be a very solid player at the hot corner for the Tribe.

This of course brings us to the question of what the Indians are going to do here at the trade deadline. As of now, it appears that three options are on the table; buy a bullpen arm and a starter on what has become a sellers market, try to take advantage of the sellers market by moving players of their own, or simply doing nothing. The Padres have made relievers Huston Street and Luke Gregerson available, and Gregerson would look awfully good as a setup man in what has become a terrible Indians bullpen. But in my mind, buying is the least attractive option for the Indians this season. With the market shaping up like it is, the prospect currency it would take to add even one impact arm looks to outweigh the benefit. Detroit isn't running away with the division, but they're a talented club that looks primed to improve their overall winning % down the stretch, not collapse. So that leaves the team with the choice to sell or sit pat.



I received an e-mail from Pauly C. down at Del Boca Vista earlier this week [pointing me in the direction of this piece in the Chicago Tribune.](#)

I'll snip the most relevant section here:

*The Sox are listening to proposals. They turned down a deal involving pitcher Carlos Martinez, the Cardinals third-highest rated prospect, for shortstop Alexei Ramirez, according to a scouting source.*

*Martinez, 21, is 4-2 with a 2.05 ERA in 11 starts at Double-A Springfield and Triple-A Memphis. Martinez, who possesses a fastball in the high-90s mph range, has struck out 44 hitters in 52 innings.*

Leaving the fact that the White Sox must be crazy not to take that deal, let's put it in the context of what the Indians could offer the Cardinals. Yes, we're back to the possibility that Asdrubal Cabrera could be dealt to St. Louis to strengthen the most vulnerable part of their roster. If the Cards were willing to offer Martinez for Ramirez, who hasn't posted a OPS+ over 100 since his rookie season back in 2008, what would they be willing to offer for Asdrubal? Cabrera is coming off of back-to-back all-star seasons in 2011/12, and while not setting the world on fire this year, his .737 OPS in 2013 far outpaces Ramirez's .664 figure. Going back to that e-mail from Pauly, would the Cardinals be willing to part with Martinez, Matt Adams (blocked at 1B) and another arm for Asdrubal and a lower-level prospect? It sure seems that way, although we of course don't know for sure. If that deal is on the table, I think that Chris Antonetti and company would be crazy to let it pass by. Martinez is a top-50 prospect who could break in out of the bullpen this year and assume a role in the starting rotation next season. Adams is under club control, and could be a long-term solution to the DH/1B woes that have plagued the Indians for so long. It wouldn't kill the Indians playoff hopes this year due to the presence of Mike Aviles, and would really go a long way towards strengthening next year's team. [If you're still not convinced, humor me and read this scouting report on Martinez from the good folks at Baseball Prospectus:](#)

*Martinez has always drawn considerable praise for his exceptional fastball. He consistently sits in the 94-97 mph range with his four-seamer and has regularly touched 99 mph in the past. Even his sinking two-seamer has excellent velocity, sitting in the 92-93 mph range and touching 95 when he wants a little more. Martinez likes to attack with his fastball and shows the ability to move it around the zone when he doesn't overthrow. To back up up his fastball, Martinez offers both a very good curveball and changeup. His curveball will occasionally work as a plus pitch with tight rotation and good depth.*

*As if that weren't enough, Martinez's changeup could be a second legitimate plus-plus offering. He has tremendous arm speed when throwing it, affording him excellent deception. Martinez*

*routinely throws strikes with all three pitches and over the last two seasons has developed his ability to work outside the zone and make the “pitcher’s pitch.” If the Cardinals decide to keep Martinez in the bullpen long term, he could become an All-Star-level closer. But many scouts still believe Martinez has a future as a no. 2 starter in a championship rotation.*



That of course all depends on the Cardinals putting the right offer on the table for Cabrera. If not, I think the Indians would be served to sit tight at this year’s deadline. Normally, I’d be strongly against this option, as I feel like teams should either go all-in or move everything not nailed down in an effort to improve next year . [But when you look at this Joe Ponanski piece on the Royals offseason trade for James Shields](#)

, you can see how the desire to make a move, any move, can sometimes backfire. With Salazar, Bauer and Carrasco as rotation options next year, a healthy Vinnie Pestano reclaiming the 8<sup>th</sup>

inning and an intelligent offseason addition or two, the Indians are really built more for 2014 than 2013 anyhow

. [That’s pretty much the thesis of this ESPN Sweet Spot article, which closes with this paragraph](#)

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*With a core of [Jason Kipnis](#) , [Carlos Santana](#) , [Justin Masterson](#) , [Nick Swisher](#) and [Michael Bourn](#)*

*, the Indians are close to contending. However, this probably isn’t their year. So while it would be fun if they tried to make a splash at the deadline, the lack of available upgrades and the fact they are not quite as good as the Tigers suggests the will (and should) stand pat.*

And that article doesn't even mention the Indians three young starters who could contribute next year.

Everyone who expected Scott Kazmir to be pitching effectively for the Indians through August, stand up and be recognized. I was bullish on Kazmir going into the season, but didn't expect him to stick in the rotation for this long. I figured he'd either be injured and on the DL or replaced due to ineffectiveness. Instead, the 29-year old lefty seems to be getting stronger as the season goes on. He's pitching his best baseball of the season of late, and hasn't given up more than 3 ER in a start since June 15. In his 7 starts since then, Kazmir has gone 4-3 with a 1.60 ERA, 35 K and 12 BB in 45 innings pitched. Opposing batters are hitting just .148 against him, and he's allowed only 2 HR. Kazmir's emergence as a consistently reliable option helps the Indians front office, as they don't have to make a panic move to acquire a starting pitcher in a difficult trade market. When the Astros are reportedly asking for not one, but two "top prospects" in return for Bud Norris, you know it is not exactly a buyer's market. Kazmir might just be pricing himself out of an Indians uniform, as if he can stay healthy and effective he's in line for a decent payday this offseason. That was pretty much unfathomable just a year ago, when he was pitching in the independent leagues.

It's hard to believe that Danny Salazar's electric debut was just over two weeks ago; it feels like an awful lot has happened since then. Since returning to AAA Columbus, Salazar has allowed a pair of earned runs in 7 IP, striking out 10(!) without walking a batter. He's biding his time with the Clippers, waiting until injury or ineffectiveness necessitates a return trip up I-71 for the talented young righthander. But it doesn't have to be that way. A more effective use for Salazar this season might be out of the Indians bullpen, especially with the recent struggles of the relief corps on the North Shore. Salazar could be a dominant, multi-inning force out of the pen, and even act as a "piggyback" for Ubaldo every 5<sup>th</sup> day. The Big U has been somewhat effective of late, but he's been a 5-and-fly guy who can't get through a lineup the third time through the order. If Ubaldo can go five solid innings and turn it over to Salazar for three, the Indians could have a sort of two-headed monster at their disposal. Salazar's already electric stuff would play up even further in shorter bursts, and it would allow the Indians to manage his innings coming off Tommy John surgery last year. It would get him valuable experience pitching in pressure situations against major league hitters, and allow the Indians to shore up what has become the weakest aspect of the club this year.

