



One of the toughest things about writing a weekly column around these parts is that despite time passing by at what seems an accelerating pace, nothing much seems to change. There's a balancing act if you're not detailing each and every game between trying to inform and entertain versus often trying to come up with different ways to say that nothing has changed since last week.

There are times when I'll put to electronic pen to electronic paper and crumble it up when I'm finished because I'm sick of reading it myself. There are also times when I'm tempted to just break out an article from a year ago, change a few names and details, and put it out there and see if anyone notices.

I say this only because after a couple weeks off to cart kids to one volleyball or soccer event or another, not much has changed since I last wrote. So stop me if you've seen this before:

The Indians

The Tribe has managed to keep their heads above water as we head toward August and they're on the fringe of contention in the AL Central. They're not likely to be a serious wildcard contender and they're simply not as talented or as deep as the Detroit Tigers team they're trying to catch. The Indians have some issues with their pitching (though this year it's the bullpen and not the starting rotation causing the angst) and they have a few holes in the lineup that they probably don't have the money or the prospects to fill before Wednesday's deadline.

The team plays hard and they're fun to watch and I'll certainly enjoy and appreciate every day

they're in the race, but realistically I don't have expectations beyond staying in the race for another month or so. The only real hope I have for the race coming down to the wire is that the Indians add a bullpen arm and that a couple guys in the everyday lineup pick up their production significantly over the last 8 weeks of the season.

I'm looking squarely at you, Nick Swisher and Asdrubal Cabrera.

Both Swisher and Cabrera have been okay but they haven't picked this team up and carried them offensively for any period of time this season and they're going to have to if the Indians don't want to spend September giving major league at bats to some younger players as the season plays out. Cabrera and Swisher are both at or near the .250 mark in batting average and they've combined for 19 HRs and 72 RBI. Compare and contrast that with 2B Jason Kipnis who's put up 15 HRs and 63 RBI himself and you can see why the Indians, despite sweeping Texas this weekend, can't seem to pick up any ground on the Tigers who played the past week largely without MVP candidate Miguel Cabrera.

That Swisher and Cabrera are your 2nd and 4th hitters respectively (roles that have flip-flopped in the last week to try and get more from both of them) makes it problematic for the Indians.

The Indians have a big week ahead of them. They are legitimately within striking distance of the division crown but they're handcuffed financially and don't have a wealth of top-tier minor league talent they can use as trade chips.

Do they pull the trigger on a deal that increases their chances or do they stand pat and hope that guys like Swisher and Cabrera increase their production? Can they include Lonnie Chisenhall in a deal and watch Mark Reynolds continue to flail and struggle on both sides of the ball? And what about the bullpen? Can Joe Smith right himself? Is Rich Hill here to stay or is he only here because he's the lesser of three evils when you consider it's either him, Scott Barnes or Nick Hagadone as your left-handed options? Can Vinnie Pestano get back to the form he showed last season or is there more to Pestano's struggles than we're being told?

I can literally see them going either way as Wednesday's deadline approaches and I wouldn't blame them or criticize them for either route they take. But I'm not sure what message it sends to the team or to a fan base reluctant to fully embrace this team after the past few seasons if

they stand pat. Justin Verlander's struggles this season may be the chink in the armor that inspires the Indians to make some move this week to narrow the gap between them and Detroit.

In other words, we've been here before with this team. That bitter spot between mediocre and good is a nasty spot to be in. At the end of the day this team, as presently constituted, simply isn't among MLB's elite teams. Weird things can happen if you make the playoffs and get hot at the right time. But right now is the time the Indians need to get hot and they need their veterans who have been lagging behind for the majority of the season to get them there.

The Browns

I can't count the number of times over the past 14 Browns seasons that I've heard:

~ "If this guy matures and that guy gets better and we stay healthy we should be an improved football team."

~ "There's a lot of talent on the sideline and if we can just find a QB..."

~ "We're looking to change the culture around here and we think Fschit Xghylno is the right coach to begin that process..."

~ "Jabyslk Ngomwq has all the talent in the world. If he can stop doing motorcycle stunts and stop smoking weed and stop robbing the elderly and stay out of the bars and quit with the purple drank, well, the sky is the limit for him..."

~ "This is the most talented roster of players we've had here since last season when I stood here and said THAT was the most talented roster we've ever had here..."

~ “I’m not going to stand here and throw out a number of wins that will signify improvement. We’ll simply look back in January and see where we are then as compared to where we were a year ago...”

~ “This organization has a rich tradition of excellence and these fans here are some of the greatest football fans in the world and we’re going to work our asses off to give them a winner...”

~ “He can make all the throws...Hell, he can throw a feather through drywall...”

~ “He’s not the biggest or fastest guy out there but he knows how to win...”

~ “Everybody out here is competing for their job...”

~ “Bmslois Hqzlpod is our guy and we’re confident the other two guys could step and lead this team if Hqzlpod can’t get it done...”

Excuse me if that sounds jaded or pessimistic but I’ve heard it all before. Organizations HAVE to say that shit every year to ensure someone buys tickets and fills the coffers. I have zero faith that this regime will be any different based on what they tell me. I’ve been through attacking defenses and bend-but-don’t-break defenses. I’ve been through 4-3’s and 3-4’s and vertical passing games and west coast offenses. I’ve been through the big, dumb QBs who can make every throw and through the cerebral, gritty, loveable guy who’s a leader but doesn’t have the arm to hit the TV with his remote from his couch.

What they say and what their increasingly lap dog media vomits back to us doesn’t even register for me anymore. I’m not going out to Berea this year to watch fast guys in shorts and shells dazzle me in 7-on-7 drills. That doesn’t mean shit. I’m not interested in a rocket-armed QB wearing a don’t-hit-me jersey stand in a perfect pocket against no pass rush and throw a ball 65 yards in the air to a receiver playing against some hump who will be applying at my company in 6 weeks. That doesn’t mean shit.

What I know about today's NFL is that you better have a guy calling the signals who can not only make throws but who can think his way through about 65 pressure-filled equations every Sunday and not just survive those but who can manipulate the answers. Your QB better have brains or be a football savant and recognize what defenses are doing on a given play or formation and then manipulate them with his own sets and formations to get the most out of a situation.

If we have that guy here I'll know when September comes. If we don't have that guy here I'll know when September comes. Nothing else matters. Bad teams will usually win at least four games. Good teams will typically lose four games. Those other 12 games, regardless of the bullshit that spews forth from Berea or reporters or forum boards or anywhere else, will tell you all you need to know.

So I'm not going to sit here and put a number on improvement. I'll just look back in January at what I see and let you know if it's better than what I've seen in the past. See how easy that is?

The Cavs

Shit, at least they seem to be trying.

I loved the creativity of the Andrew Bynum signing all the while believing we'll be lucky to see him suit up in 50 games this season. But it showed that Chris Grant can maneuver and negotiate and do what good NBA GMs are supposed to do.

I loved the Anthony Bennett pick too. I think that kid has a ton of talent regardless of his 'tweener' issues in terms of where he plays. The Jarrett Jack signing was also a good one. When you have a guy with a glass chin like Kyrie Irving it's paramount to have another guard on the roster that can score and Jack has that ability.

What also shouldn't be overlooked is that the three free agents signed by Grant, Jack, Bynum

and Earl Clark, all have playoff experience.

Grant and the Cavs are stockpiling talented players, both big guys and little guys, and that's an improvement over the collection of castoffs and stiffs that populated the roster the last three seasons. The Cavs are going in the right direction and while they might be taking back roads and alternative routes, they're moving toward a playoff spot in 2013-2014.

[Follow @Peeker643](#)