

Asdrubal Cabrera: Why The Tribe Should Hold On To Asdrubal For 2014

Written by {ga=papabearjere}

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This has been one of my favorite MLB postseasons to watch in recent memory. The four LCS teams (Dodgers, Cardinals, Red Sox, and Tigers) all boast impressive combinations of talented lineups, deep starting rotations, and shutdown bullpens. But, as always, I'm viewing the playoffs through my Tribe-colored glasses,

and the one conclusion I keep coming back to regarding my favorite team is this: The four LCS teams are significantly more talented than the Tribe.

Now, this isn't to fault the Indians' front office. They've done a fantastic job over the past year of putting this team in a position to be playing October baseball (and doing so on a much tighter budget than the aforementioned teams). But at the same time, the reality is that this roster still needs work to join the upper echelon of major league teams.

That's why...

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(Hold on, let me put on my [TV talking head face](#))...

That's why this offseason is so critical for the Tribe. The front office has done the tough job of getting this roster to the precipice of contention; now comes the even tougher job of getting this team over the top and into the World Series.

With the offseason set to unfold, the Tribe has several decisions that will determine the direction of this ballclub, but the one decision that will most influence the Tribe's path this offseason is what the team decides to do with Asdrubal Cabrera.

Back in July, when Cabrera was struggling and his name was [being bandied about in trade rumors with the St. Louis Cardinals](#)

, my opinion was that unless the Indians were getting back one of Shelby Miller or Trevor Rosenthal, i.e., someone who could help the team this year, they should hold onto Cabrera (this was back when Michael Wacha was still in the minors and not doing his best

[Johnny Vander Meer impersonation](#)

). My reasoning was that the Indians were serious about making the playoffs, and teams that are serious about making the playoffs don't trade their starting shortstop in the middle of the season, even if he is struggling.

Well, it turns out I couldn't have been more wrong. Our own Adam Burke detailed [some of Cabrera's struggles last season](#)

, but the main point is that Cabrera struggled mightily to eek out a positive WAR. Now, a lot of that comes down to Cabrera's perennially poor performance in defensive metrics, but whatever way you look at it, Cabrera had a really tough season in 2013. Going forward, this leaves the Tribe with three options:

1. Hold onto Cabrera and hope he bounces back in 2014
2. Trade him during the offseason
3. Try and work out a long-term extension

We can dismiss option three right off the bat. With Francisco Lindor on the way to Cleveland, Cabrera is as good as gone after the 2014 season if the Indians don't trade him first.

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So that leaves the Tribe the options of either trading him now or holding onto him heading into 2014. Frankly, trading Cabrera now would be the wrong move. His trade value is at an all-time low. If the Indians could turn around deal Cabrera for [Carlos Martinez](#), I'd be all for it (Also, I just realized that Carlos Martinez was born just a month before me, which makes me really depressed that I'm not currently a flamethrowing reliever for a playoff team. What am I doing with my life?). But right now, coming off a down year with only one year left on his contract, it seems any Asdrubal Cabrera trade would be strictly a salary dump.

Now there would be advantages to dumping the \$10 million owed to Cabrera in 2014. In theory, it would clear up a \$10 million salary slot for another player or players. But moving Cabrera would open up a hole at shortstop that the team would have to fill, and the potential replacement options don't inspire much confidence.

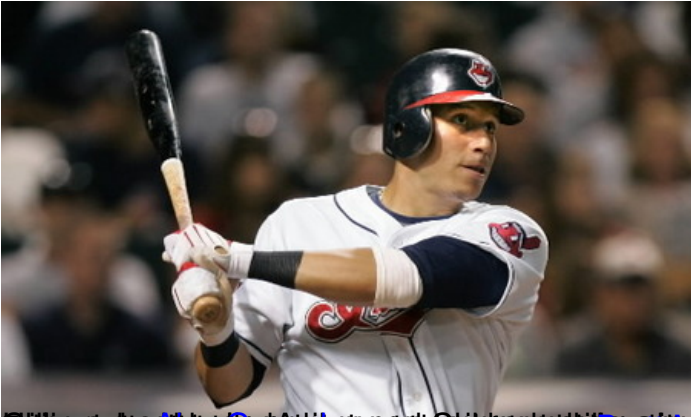
First off, can we cool it with the Mike Aviles talk? The guy hasn't posted an OBP above .300 once in the past three seasons. He's an unmitigated hacker at the plate, and he's at best an average defender at shortstop. Mike Aviles is a great guy to have as a utility infielder, but he's not a starting major league shortstop, and thirty MLB teams would seem to agree with me. On top of that, making Aviles the every day shortstop means the team will have to add a player to back up Lonnie Chisenhall in case he posts a .270 OBP again in 2014. The other internal option is to hand the job to Lindor, but I'm typically against tying playoff hopes to a soon-to-be-20-year-old with just 91 plate appearances above A-ball.

Either way, the Indians would have to eat into that \$10 million saved by moving Cabrera to sign a guy who can play on the left side of the infield, and the available options are [less than stellar](#), considering the team is not going to splash the cash to sign Stephen Drew or Jhonny Peralta to multi-year deals. And lest we forget that last offseason the White Sox [gave \\$12 million to Jeff freakin' Keppinger](#) so that he could post a -1.5 WAR for them. Basically, giving significant dollars to marginal infielders is generally a fool's errand.

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