



The World Series is over, and the long-suffering Boston fans are finally toasting to another championship. The city hadn't won a title since way back in 1918, when the Bruins hoisted Lord Stanley's Cup. To think, there were 2-year olds in Boston who hadn't had the chance to witness a title parade! In all seriousness though, I am happy for Boston winning a title so soon after the horrifying marathon attacks in April of this year. That senseless and meaningless act by two loser brothers who immigrated here to leech off of our benevolent society energized a Boston fanbase that saw the Red Sox stumble to a last place finish in 2012, and a team with fewer stars than we're used to seeing in Beantown made a somewhat unlikely run to the 2013 title. Only one Sox regular had an OPS over .842 and hit the 30 HR threshold (Ortiz) and their best pitcher (Buchholz) was hurt for most of the season. I'm not trying to paint the big-market and big-money Sox as some sort of underdog story, but to show that they weren't THAT much better than this year's Indians. If the Red Sox could do it in 2013, what's to stop an improved Indians team from making a similar run in 2014?

The Indians made two significant personnel moves on Thursday, [resigning Jason Giambi to a minor league contract with a spring training invite](#)

and

[cutting ties with beleaguered former closer Chris Perez.](#)

The Giambi signing was pretty predictable, and it will allow him to at the very least fulfill his roving hitting instructor role in Goodyear next spring. Pauly and I discussed Giambi pretty extensively a couple of weeks ago, and we both agreed that Giambi would be back with the 2014 Indians in some capacity. Signing him the day after the World Series sends a statement about just how important the club feels Giambi was last year and how important he is moving forward, and I wouldn't be surprised at all if he was a coach in the Indians organization somewhere in 2015. But for now, Tito has his MVP back in the dugout, and Giambi will serve as a pinch hitter extraordinaire with the occasional start at DH against tough righties. He can thank the versatility of Raburn, Aviles and Swisher for that, as many clubs don't have the luxury of carrying a player with Giambi's current skill set regardless of his impact in the clubhouse.

Giambi won't take up a spot on the 40-man roster this offseason, which will allow some additional roster flexibility come time for Rule 5 cuts.



Giambi will almost certainly begin the season on the active roster, but might not have enough gas in the tank to play the entire season. With that being said, there's a real wild card possibility for Giambi at some point in 2014; hitting coach or even manager for the Mahoning Valley Scrappers. Before you start thinking that I'm completely crazy, I put this at maybe a 2% chance of happening, but wanted to throw it out there. If Giambi realizes in May/June that he's just not able to help the ballclub, there's really no immediate role for him to transition to at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario. Brad Mills and Sandy Alomar aren't going anywhere in mid-season. Moving Giambi to the short-season New York-Penn League would allow Giambi to work with young hitters, something he excels at, and remain in the organization to await a TBD role in the offseason. Sandy Alomar is likely to receive manager consideration next offseason, and if he departed to run a ballclub, it would create a natural slot for Giambi to slide in to. That is, if Giambi isn't starting somewhere else as a manager himself. Another option would be minor league hitting coordinator, a role that would allow him to work with players throughout the organization while still spending time in BrOhio with Swisher, Kipnis and his other friends in Cleveland.

That brings us to the unceremonious dumping of Rage Perez. Again, both Paul and I predicted Perez's departure, but the manner of his dismissal from the team caught me by surprise. The non-tender deadline is December 2, just shy of a month away from today. The Indians could have held onto Perez's rights until then, hoping a closer-hungry team would come along and offer them something, anything, for the right to offer Rage salary arbitration (and pay him upwards of \$9 million in 2014). The Tigers, Rays, Mets and others lack a proven Closer®, and the Indians could have used the month of November to dangle Perez on the trade block in the hopes of recouping a player or two in exchange for the mercurial righthander. Instead, they cut ties with him about 12 hours after the Red Sox popped their first champagne corks, sending a clear message that Perez was more trouble than he was worth this season, and they're ready to

move on.



On the field, Perez had an up-and-down season. From the beginning of the season through May 17, Perez saved 6 games, blew only one save opportunity and allowed just one earned run in 14 IP. In the three appearances after May 17, Perez allowed 7 ER (3 HR) in 2 2/3 IP, blowing a save, taking a loss and winding up on the DL for nearly the entire month of June. Coming off the DL on June 28, Perez put together his best stretch of the season. From June 28-August 4, Perez saved 11 straight games, allowing just 2 ER in 19 IP. Then came August 5, and the real unraveling of the Chris Perez Era in Cleveland. In a high-profile game against the Tigers with the Indians still very much in the hunt for the AL Central Division crown, Perez came on in the 9th

inning of a 2-0 game and promptly allowed 4 ER without recording an out. The Indians never recovered in the division race, and the already-angry fans never forgave Perez for blowing that game. From August 5 through the rest of the season, Perez did manage to save 8 games, but blew 3 save opportunities and allowed 16(!) earned runs in 18 1/3 IP. He came dangerously close to costing the Indians a home Wild Card game on Sept. 24, blowing a save against the White Sox but

[was bailed out by the 9](#)

[th](#)

[inning heroics of Jason Giambi](#)

. Simply by his performance on the field, Chris Perez was playing his way out of Cleveland.

But there was so much more than just that on-field performance to worry about. Perez dealt with minor injuries in Goodyear the past two springs, causing head trainer Lonnie Soloff to famously remark in 2012 that “His body was clearly not ready for the intensity of that bullpen session.” That could mean a couple of different things, but the implication that Perez didn’t head down to Goodyear in optimal shape was what many read into the comment. That it happened again in 2013 only reinforced that opinion. The best closers usually only throw between 55-75 innings in a season; if you’re paying a guy upwards of \$7 million to throw fewer than 100 innings, it’s pretty frustrating to see him spend time on the DL every year.

In addition to the injury woes, Perez and his wife faced some off the field legal trouble in 2013. Perez famously had a package containing marijuana delivered to his house, resulting in 4th degree misdemeanor charges being filed against both Perez and his wife Melanie. Perez plead no contest to the charge, and in September was fined \$250 and sentenced to one year of probation. He canceled his twitter account and instituted a season-long media ban, refusing to speak with reporters after wins, losses or anything in between. Rebuffing reporters after tough losses and leaving your teammates to clean up your mess does not exactly speak to positive leadership qualities, and there were rumblings around the clubhouse that Perez was providing more of a distraction by his refusal to talk than if he would just step up and take responsibility for his struggles on the mound.

When you look at all of the on and off the field issues, it became clear that the Indians were likely to cut ties with Perez this offseason. Eligible for arbitration for a third year, Perez was due for a raise despite his less than stellar 2013, and the two-time All-Star closer was expected to be awarded around \$10 million in arbitration. Even if Perez were still performing at an all-star level, \$10 million is too much for a team like the Indians to be paying a Closer©. Internal options such as Vinnie Pestano If He’s Healthy, Cody Allen and Bryan Shaw will likely be given a crack at the role, as will Joe Smith if he resigns with the club. Grant Balfour is an external name to keep an eye on, but the closer of the future is almost certainly already in the organization, which will free up a great deal of money for more economical use elsewhere. The Chris Perez Era in Cleveland is over, and he departs in 3rd place in franchise history on the saves leaderboard behind Doug Jones and Bob Wickman.



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