



Following the 2005 season when the Indians made an incredible, yet unexpected push towards the playoffs, there was some clamoring for them to do something to take that next step. An outfielder, a pitcher, some bullpen help, whatever. There were positives, but there were still holes and a reason the Tribe missed out following a 93-win season.

If you remember from the Kazmir piece, the Indians signed Paul Byrd that offseason, they also added Todd Hollandsworth (spell it again), and traded for Jason Michaels. That was the extent of their offseason, because do we really need to mention Coco Crisp was traded to Boston for Andy Marte? During the spring, they traded Brandon Phillips (oh no) and eventually the season spiral led them to trading Bob Wickman, Ben Broussard, and Eduardo Perez.

That of course netted them the duo of Shin-Soo Choo and Asdrubal Cabrera for that most successful platoon, which would come into play later, but it also set the stage for a new platoon.

With 2006 a failure and pieces still in place, there was a little more urgency to do something for the 2007 season. Shapiro went crazy, signing three relievers (four if you count retired Keith Foulke) for the bullpen, trading for Josh Barfield, and signing veterans Trot Nixon and David Dellucci. Michaels and Dellucci would combine to make for a platoon in the outfield, with

Dellucci serving as the right-handed hitting side and Michaels the left.

I recap all of this to bring you up to speed. It seems as if the Indians are in a similar position to that of where they were in 2005, with the only difference being the lack of playoffs in 2005. Of course there are more differences, but it is almost eerie how the situations are mirroring each other.

And the talking of Michaels and Dellucci? Well, I only say this because it looks as if the Indians are venturing into the realm of platoons in the outfield once again.

[FROM SPITTOON TO PLATOON]

I've always liked **David Murphy**, quietly serving as a nice piece to Texas' puzzle the past few seasons. Attention is and always has been on Josh Hamilton, Nelson Cruz, Elvis Andrus, Adrian Beltre, and Ian Kinsler (uh about that!?), but Murphy has always been in the fold as a key piece to the bigger picture.

The fact of the matter is, you need players like David Murphy on a team. You need your role players to fill out rosters because as Manny Acta would so eloquently say many times...You can't have a lineup of 9 Albert Pujolses and a rotation of 5 Roy Halladays. Of course now a days if you had a roster of those two players, you wouldn't really have a roster, now would you?

[Cleveland made their first real big move of the offseason in signing](#) David Murphy to a two-year deal with a club option for a third in 2016. Murphy is 32 and used to play for Terry Francona in 2006 and 2007 (heyyy....) in Boston. It wasn't until he was sent to Texas in the Kason Gabbard deal (you may remember it as the Eric Gagne deal, I choose to remember it as the Kason Gabbard deal) that he broke through in 2008.

Before I make this incredibly long-winded (like you know I do) and mention Kason Gabbard's name four times (just three so far) we should just focus on the things that matter here, as well as tie in this whole Dellichannels (Dellucci + Michaels, check the graveyard) thing.

Not counting 2009 (because he didn't really play), Dellucci hit .239 in two seasons against right-handed hitters. Michaels in the two seasons Dellucci was there, hit .247 against left-handers. So there ya go. Of course there's more than that, Michael actually played a good amount against right-handers in 2007 and actually had a nice seasons as one of those role players we talked about.

Which scarily, makes the parallels between the Michaels acquisition and the Murphy signing all-too-similar. A lot of people shouted "David Dellucci 2.0!" when the Indians signed Murphy, but really, Michaels is more like the caliber of player the Indians are getting, not Dellucci, even though they share a first name.

Murphy is career .280 hitter against right-handers, compared to the .264 average Dellucci had. Michaels hit .278 against lefties, the guys he primarily was good against. Murphy can play all three outfield spots, much like Michaels could, Dellucci was hamstrung (no-pun intended) to a corner spot and generally wasn't that good in it..

The one thing they seem similar in is the pop, with Dellucci and Murphy mirroring each other in homers. The scary part of all this is that Murphy is the same age that Dellucci was when the Indians signed him, and the Indians are going to pay Murphy double what they paid Delluci. Of course times have changed, but six million per for Murphy?

To me, I like it more than I like the idea of signing David Dellucci, but that's with hindsight and all sorts of venom built up for that man.

Here's where the platoon comes in. Ryan Raburn is obviously the other part of this puzzle. Murphy is going to play more, he plays against the right-handed pitchers which make up more of the starting pitchers in baseball than the left-handers. Of course the Indians are getting a bargain in Raburn at less than \$3 million per year, which brings the total price paid for an outfielder at around \$9 million.

[MLBTradeRumors has](#) Drew Stubbs projected to earn somewhere around \$3.8 million next season either through arbitration or through the Indians signing him, and they have Michael

Brantley right around that price as well. And of course, we know Michael Bourn will earn \$13.5 million next year.

So obviously you have \$30 million tied up in the outfield as of now, but with all those names, someone has to go and everyone automatically is pointing to Drew Stubbs, as they should. Stubbs is the right-handed version of David Murphy. The Indians saw a guy in Raburn that is cheaper, much much better, and more versatile, so that's who've they kept. It became pretty clear that point that Stubbs would be the odd man out and the Indians would find a way to reorganize. Murphy is the way they've done that. Swisher can go back to first full time and split DH duties with Carlos Santana, things look to be lined up.

I think the Indians will end up trading Drew Stubbs. It makes sense to do and the Indians could get some value for him. Even if you wanted to keep Raburn "on the goon squad" in that capacity, Stubbs is the odd man out. If you were to break it down, as good as Stubbs was against lefties last year (and is in his career) at .266/.361/.357 with two homers and 15 RBI, Raburn was just so much better at .308/.403/.617 with seven homers and 21 RBI. Buster Olney [reported that teams have approached](#) the Indians about Stubbs, and perhaps that picks up now that the Indians have Murphy officially in the fold.

Now, Jacob Rosen [brought up an interesting idea on WFNY](#) and one that did cross my mind, especially when you look at the \$13 million price tag this year and the way he ended up playing last year. How about Michael Bourn? As in, how about trading him?

He would obviously net you more value than Stubbs, and also provide much more salary relief, but then you'd have to get another guy to start in center with Stubbs, or trade Stubbs too and just find a way to sign Carlos Beltran.

Jacob's point is well put though, because exploring a deal for Bourn could be something the Indians entertain down the road if the price doesn't match the production. I'd hate to give up on Bourn after one year though, because I think we all know he's capable of so much more than what he contributed in 2013 and he can be that game-changer at the top when he's healthy and stealing bases.

Back to Murphy to wrap this all up... [Mark Simon of ESPN's SweetSpot](#) had a post on Murphy and if he could rebound. He uses that BABIP luck stat to show Murphy ran into a bit of bad luck. Then he went to the video to see why his groundball hit rate was down. Simon ended up concluding that there are some things to fix with Murphy, but there is a middle ground from his really good 2012 and his really bad 2013.

Strangely, this was first reported by a newsman in Texas through Twitter, who caught wind from someone who heard his daughter talking about it at daycare. That's a first and hopefully it doesn't lead to reporters going to the schools and daycare places of kids of ballplayers.

And before we move on, if you know me, you know I can't continue without pointing out that David Murphy shares a last name with one of the great animated characters of this generation, Captain Murphy, who gave [us one of the great lines ever](#) and perhaps the name I will be calling David moving forward. EGGERS!

[BYE BYE SMITTY]

Joe Smith will wind up actually a tick north of \$15m for 3 yrs on [#LAAngels](#) deal. had very nice '13 season.

— Jon Heyman (@JonHeymanCBS) [November 24, 2013](#)

And with that, Joe Smith is gone. That is a lot of risk with a reliever. If Joe Smith ends up pitching in 70 innings the next three seasons and is effective, more power to the Angels, but rarely does that ever happen. Most teams who sign relievers to these deals are doing it for the first year or two.

Smitty served the Indians well and they got a lot of value out of him, but the writing was the wall. He was set to earn way too much money in this process. He was one of the most coveted non-closer relievers out there because of his versatility, durability, and talent.

The Indians need to move on at this point and they'll look to in different creative ways. But they just paid David Murphy \$6 million to play the outfield. Maybe Smith is worth \$5 million next year, but as we've seen year-after-year with relievers, it is the long-term that is sketchy.

Last [Friday the Indians added another option](#) to their growing bullpen refrigerator magnet throw (toss a bunch, see which stick) this spring by signing Mike Zagurski to a minor league deal with a spring invite. Zagurski is a hunking left-hander who kind of looks like Bobby Jenks but probably doesn't pitch like him. He spent the majority of last season with the Pirates but also spent time in the Yankee organization. Point is, he has a 7.05 career ERA in the majors, so set your minor league stats aside, he's never really done anything his opportunities at the major leagues.

There will be more of these moving forward, but I would be shocked if the Indians made any sort of guaranteed deal, like Joe Smith received from the Angels.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Speaking of the Angels, there was some rumor floated out that the Indians and Angels were going to exchange **Corey Kluber** and Mark Trumbo. First off, yuk.

Second off, [there was confirmation from the Angels side](#) that the report was, at least to them, shocking.

It would shock me as well because this team just lost two of its starting pitchers, at least, will lose two of their starting pitchers when (not so much if) Kaz and Ubaldo sign their new contracts in new places. To lose another one, especially a young one under team control for a few more years and at a cheap price?

That's not the Indians MO, and it sounds like a fan-dreamed up scenario by either the Angels sides or someone who doesn't realize how good Kluber is on the Indians side. Some fans, pfft.

Speaking of Kaz and Ubaldo, if you wanna see how the market is shaping up, look [no further than the four-year \\$32 million deal](#)

the Kansas City Royals gave to Jason Vargas. Hey, decent left-handed starting pitcher these days. But for eight million a year? No thanks. If Vargas gets that, what is Ubaldo going to get? This even helps Scott Kazmir because even though it was one year, someone will want Kazmir because he's left-handed.

This all but sealed the fate of Kazmir with the Indians if you ask me.

I think we've also seen the fate sealed of what the Indians themselves will do with **Asdrubal Cabrera**

While it didn't seem like it at first, I think the Indians not only will hold onto Asdrubal, they WANT to hold onto Asdrubal. He seems very much in their plans moving forward for 2014 and seeing what the St. Louis Cardinals just did, I think there is two lines of thinking.

With Kinsler off to Detroit for Prince, that effects the Indians in two ways. First, it makes this head-to-head interesting between Detroit and Cleveland. It also removes Elvis Andrus from the trade market, which is a direct competitor to the Indians in trading Asdrubal. Perhaps causing what the Cardinals did.

Secondly, it sets a good market for what Asdrubal Cabrera, who is a free agent after 2014, could get on the open market. Despite the frustrations, there is the ability for Asdrubal to be a top shortstop in this game. It also removes a huge suitor for Cabrera because now, there aren't many teams that are interested in trading for a shortstop.

What happened exactly? Well it appears as if the St. Louis Cardinals are signing Jhonny Peralta to a four year contract. Yes, 31-year-old Jhonny Peralta, a four-year contract and it is presumably to play shortstop, seeing as that is a big need for them. [It's also worth \\$53 million](#) . Yikes. Have fun with that St. Louis!

Seeing how they're going to get a pick for Ubaldo Jimenez, the Indians could take the same line with Asdrubal. Contract year, hope he plays big and gets them to the playoffs, perhaps further,

and get a draft pick. If things go south, they could trade him then, because surely a team will want him if he's playing well.

You could also argue his value is probably down from what it was a few years ago.

So I think not only with the Indians hold onto him, they want to hold onto him. They seem very much committed to Cabrera based off what Antonetti and Francona have said and they want him to be their guy. It keeps their "goon squad" as a strength too with Aviles not being in that full-time starting role.

The Indians probably won't be getting an extension off the ground for Cabrera, but they're going to look into a Masterson deal and **Justin Masterson** [would listen, according to Paul Hoynes](#) . His agent says that there are a lot of other things the Indians are worried about right now before they bring up Justin's contract and Justin's side is willing to wait. This is a conversation that gets revisited leading up to spring because right now, the Indians need to see how their 2014 payroll will shake out prior to signing Masterson to a new deal.

The Indians [made some moves in regards to their 40-man roster](#) with the Rule 5 Draft looming. They cut Cord Phelps for now to make enough room for five guys to be added prior to the deadline. Those five guys are Carlos Moncrief, Austin Adams, Bryan Price, Jesus Aguilar, and Erik Gonzalez. Aguilar, Moncrief, and Adams are pretty much no-brainers as they near the major league level and have high value. Price is a little bit of a surprise but as close as he is, the Indians obviously feel like he's one of those guys in the mix, and the biggest shocker of them all is Gonzalez, who's spent years in the rookie ball level until this past season.

The team likes Gonzalez though, almost in a Jose Ramirez sort of way I guess. He's young and has some versatility, so, there may be something there, but there isn't a whole heck of a lot known about him.

They still need to clear a spot for David Murphy though, which could happen any day now when the deal is officially finalized and Murphy is added to the roster.

The Indians did add to their coaching staff though, hiring Matt Quatraro to their major league staff as the assistant hitting coach. This now adds a second guy to work with hitters along with Ty Van Burkleo and the result of the Indians taking advantage of the ability to add another person to their major league staff. This is essentially the game evolving with staffs having two pitching guys, it only makes sense that a staff can have two hitting guys and now the Indians have their second. Quatraro beat out Luis Ortiz and has spent the past few years in the Rays system s a hitting instructor, coordinator and manager.

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