



Excuse me if I'm not at all impressed by the deals that some teams have been handing out to starting pitchers thus far in the MLB Hot Stove season.

Targets, who in other years the Indians might be interested in at lower prices. Targets, who became pick-ups for other teams because they went ahead and just did a little more than what we've become accustomed to.

Look, I know there is more money out there with TV contracts and rules changes and all the fun jazz that we have as reasons for inflated contracts or teams spending what you are not accustomed to them spending. Are we really surprised when the hottest free agent, this year Robinson Cano, can take in that much money? It sometimes is a surprise in who that free agent signs with; raise your hand if you saw Seattle as the team doing that deal a month ago.

Minnesota has dished out over \$70 million over the course of the next four years for two starting pitchers who, at the end of the day, can be big questions marks. Scott Feldman (from across the hall) got a three year deal.

And here ya go... The Oakland Athletics didn't need to go three years to pry Scott Kazmir away from the Indians, they just needed to give him more money. I would have said that Kazmir signed with the Indians if all he got was a two year deal, because I thought that he would win out if there was a similar offer somewhere else, as long as no one went three years. The Athletics just needed to offer too much money for Kazmir to deny and the Indians to match.

Shoot, look at those relievers. They're getting paid too. Remember Eddie Mujica? Yeah? Boston just paid him way too much money to be a set-up man. Thanks, but no thanks on that. If you can afford it and you have a need, great. But the Indians are better off going with their young upside arms than investing money in that volatile position.

And please, save your "Yankees showing restraint" non-sense. They've signed Carlos Beltran, Jacoby Ellsbury, and Brian McCann and re-signed Hiroki Kuroda and that will cost them well over \$300 million. Not even they have the financial ability to sign all those guys and then sign up Cano too. In fact, it is just smart that they let Cano walk or else they wouldn't have been able to make the moves they made.

And here we have the Indians. I know you are all discouraged a bit because a team like the Twins can go out and sign to starting pitchers, one of which could have been on the Indians radar if things weren't inflated.

But here's the deal, the Indians do not strike at this point in the offseason. They never have and they never will. That's the a reflection of the types of players being signed and the contracts they are being given. Yes the winter meetings start this week and that's all well and fun, but if the Indians make a significant move, it will be through a trade.

If you want more reaffirmation of this, [go ahead and read this](#) , and meet me back here in 5 minutes, unless you are a speed reader, then I'll see you in two.

[UMMMM... OKAY]

The reason for that rant and extended intro was simply a product of the fact that we have no

headlining bit for this edition of the Offseason Rundown. That doesn't mean I don't have things to talk about, but there is no story that really jumps out as the big one. There is no one story that really makes me think I have a lot to say. I'm not going to sit here and dwell over the loss of Kazmir, that ship has sailed.

While it would have been nice to have Scott back in the fold, not at that price. The Indians need to be smart about things, especially when you are talking about pitching. You wanna know why signing Kazmir was brilliant in the first place? The Indians risked nothing.

You want to know why Brett Myers wasn't an incredible blunder? It was for one year. You want to know why the Indians capitalized on Kluber and McAllister? Because Myers wasn't handcuffing the Indians and they felt the need to get him back or keep him in the rotation, the Indians were able to go to those secondary options.

What the Indians are going to do at some point is sign a starting pitcher, but he will simply be an insurance option. They won't spend a large amount of money, but they may spend some money on that insurance policy. And that is smart money because even if you spend it and it goes for not, you have options behind that you may be able to rely on and give an opportunity to.

Alright so I'm kind of extending my rant, but the point is, there is no reason to be discouraged by the lack of activity. So let's embrace what we have right now and wait for the entire offseason to play out. Not to mention at this point last year, the Indians didn't even finalize things with Nick Swisher, so at this time last year, you were probably singing a similar tune if you aren't buying what I'm saying.

And you may be a little disappointed if you think [the winter meetings are going to yield any more discussion](#). I mean, there might be some rumors to talk about, but you know my policy on rumors. Especially around the winter meetings. Antonetti gave us the good old "we want to make a move, but only at the right price" line and that's where we can leave it.

"It would be our preference to improve on the options that we have," Antonetti said earlier this week. "But it has to be the right guy at the right value. If that pitcher is not available through trade or free agency, we're comfortable going with the guys that we have."

With the Indians payroll already looking like it may hit the \$80 mark just in what the team has tied up in players that have been signed and will sign official deals, don't expect a big purchase.

And in case you didn't get enough Antonetti quotes that crush your hopes and dreams, Chris [has said it over and over again](#)

. In many different ways. You just need to make sure you're well-versed in Shapiroese, or at least know someone (me!) who is. Antonetti simply says that last year was a offseason where the Indians wanted to put themselves in a better position and now, well, now they're going back to how they normally operate.

"This year, we've already made what we feel is a significant acquisition in David Murphy," Antonetti said. "We expect there will be other activity between now and Spring Training. The magnitude of that, or exactly what shape that'll take, is hard to say right now."

I'll be here with you through the meetings, but please temper your excitement and stay realistic. We've had some fun with David Murphy and there are other moves to look at, but know your Indians, know them well enough to know when they're springing into action.

[THE AXE MAN IS ON THIRD]

I struggle deciding if this is big or not. It can be, or it may be just something that is happening. Yes, Carlos Santana is open to trying out third base. Yes, the Indians [will let him experiment with it in winter ball](#). Yes, this is a story worth monitoring going forward.

But we are so early in the stages of it happening for anyone to really put a large amount of stock into it. If he plays well in the winter leagues, then the Indians will most certainly explore it this spring. You would love it if he can play there because it does two things.

Most importantly, it pretty much sures up a need the Indians have and that's a legit third

baseman. Santana's bat is valuable, but much more if he's at a position and even more valuable at third than it would be at first.

Secondly, it frees up the designated hitter spot for the Indians to remain flexible and use it how they did last year until they found a combo that worked with Santana mostly starting there due to Yan Gomes. But now Yan Gomes is the catcher and you'd expect Swisher to play most of his time at first, meaning that Santana and him would probably swap between the two positions to keep them both fresh. Ideally if you had DH open, it would get Swisher some rest because all the shifting he did last year definitely cost him some games and some time.

But, again, not going to get too ahead, because this is early.

"We're getting a little ahead here," Francona said. "He's going to go over there and play a little third, just to see. He came up as a third baseman, but I think he's about eight years removed. It can't hurt anything. He wanted to get some at-bats anyway. If he wants to go over there and do that, all that can really happen is positive."

It is not far-fetched though because Santana has played third in his career, it is the position he came up through the ranks in before the Dodgers thought catcher was possible. And when you look at a guy like Miguel Cabrera playing third and not costing the Tigers too terribly much, then how much could it hurt the Indians? Especially if Santana takes to it. He's a great athlete, and if he can add that position he will definitely extend his career and even extend his career in Cleveland.

Let's not completely say, "Well the Tigers survived with Miguel there, Santana will be more than fine!" Because that's just dumb. You need to maintain a defensively sound configuration and make sure to not handcuff yourself too bad. The Tigers are going to try and outscore everyone with what they were working with, they didn't care how bad defensively they were, they were hoping Prince and Miguel back-to-back would make up for it all. And in a way, it did.

This is obviously a tell at how the Indians feel about Lonnie Chisenhall, but don't think it means the Indians are in the market for a third baseman. It simply is a way for them to maximize their opportunities and situations. Chisenhall is still in the fold and the Indians will find a way to utilize him, but I don't think they are ready to completely give up on him.

He definitely has not locked anything up though, and his spot on the roster is dependent on the Indians situation and how he plays in the spring.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The Indians have some more space upon up on their roster with some moves they made over the past few weeks and they [opened up some more with some non-tendering](#) of players before the arbitration deadline. Lou Marson being the most notable of them all. They've also non-tendered Matt Carson and Tyler Cloyd (who knew he was even on the 40-man roster dude!) and have their 40-man sitting at 38.

The question now becomes, is Lou Marson a viable backup catching option? If the Indians thought so, they would have probably kept him around. I don't Carlos Santana starts many, if any at all, games at catcher, so the Indians need to make sure they have a stable backup. There is probably some questions about his health but I think the biggest thing was the money. Marson was arbitration eligible, so he actually stood to make more than a pretty penny. The Indians probably feel they could make a more economically responsible decision in their backup catching position.

Marson could be signed to a minor league deal, there probably will not be many, if any, teams knocking down his door for a guaranteed 40-man roster spot. The Indians could bring him back, in fact, would probably like to, but I'm sure they'll go elsewhere if they have to.

Other Indians-related sources have linked up to it and I will go ahead and do the same. Yeah it isn't really Indians related, but it is a MUST read for any baseball fan. Eric Wedge, and a host of others, came out firing [at the Seattle front office contingency](#) , mostly GM Jack Zduriencik this past weekend. Wedge pretty much walked away from the Mariners situation after the season. We know him from his time in Cleveland he's not really one to be outwardly vocal. But he was highly critical and didn't pull any punches about the situation up there in Seattle.

More importantly for us, he was highly complimentary towards his good buds in Cleveland comparing his tenure in Seattle to his tenure in Cleveland as night and day. And since he hasn't

been hired anywhere else, I would wonder if a return in Cleveland could be in the works. He is looking at analyst jobs, but down the road, it wouldn't shock me if the Indians brought him back in that typical "special advisor" role that many former managers that can't get a managerial job elsewhere get hired to. There is certainly a strong personal connection to Wedge and Shapiro and while it may not happen this offseason, don't ever forget it is a possibility.

So there's that, another endorsement for the Indians doing it the right way. Their ownership group, their front office, if you can't be proud of the Indians and the way they run their organization, you can't be proud of anything. I know you want a championship, I want one badly as well, but this team is not run poorly. Things could be worse. We could be Seattle or one of these poorly run baseball franchises where things can turn sour like it has for the Mariners.

And the well-run Indians organization got such a positive response to last year's Tribe Fest that they're going to do it again and do it bigger. Check [out the details for it and get your tickets](#) , it should be a nice event once again.

Finally, Lonnie Soloff, [the long-time Indians athletic trainer](#) has been promoted. He'll assume a new role as Senior Director of Medical Services. To replace him on the field the Indians have promoted Triple-A Columbus' James Quinlan as their head athletic trainer. There's your big move Cleveland!

Tread waters lightly this week with winter meeting news. I'll be here to sort through the riff-raft with you.

-

Read more from Nino on [The Tribe Daily](#) , his own Indians blog. Don't miss all the fun, photoshopped Indians players, and LOL Tribe ridiculousness.

[Follow @TheTribeDaily](#)