

We all remember Paul Shuey. Mid-90s fastball, knee-buckling curve and filthy split. But he couldn't stomach the pressure, injured just about every joint in his body thanks to a violent delivery, and retired a couple of years back as a forgotten player. Erik Cassano says every team has one of those guys. And in the wake of the trade that sent Jason Davis to Seattle ... Fernando Cabrera is now carrying the Paul Shuey torch for the 2007 Indians.



For the past five years, Indians fans have been searching for "The Next."

Who is going to revive the magic of the 1990s? Is Travis Hafner "The Next Jim Thome"?  
; Is Josh Barfield "The Next Roberto Alomar"?  
Will Jhonny Peralta ever be good enough to even carry the dirty undergarments of Omar Vizquel?

How burned into our subconscious is that seven-year run of revivalist baseball? We're even searching for Paul Shuey's spiritual heir.

You remember Pauly. Mid-90s fastball, knee-buckling curve and filthy split. I mean, that split was X-rated enough to make Larry Flynt blush. He was supposed to be the next great reliever in baseball. But he couldn't stomach the pressure, injured just about every joint in his body thanks to a violent delivery, and retired a couple of years back as a forgotten player.

Except in Cleveland, that is, where we always like to find barometers by which to

measure failure.

Ever since Jason Davis first came on the scene in 2002, we started to assume he was the man to bear the Shuey torch. He possessed a great arm, capable of sniffing the upper 90s on a radar gun. But he never lived up to the hype. In his first few seasons, he was too jittery, prone to compulsively hurl

pickoff

throw after

pickoff

throw to first base, until he finally uncorked the magic sinker that skipped past Ben

Broussard

and allowed the runner to reach third.

In recent years, he's become more controlled on the mound, but when he was asked to take something off his fastball, it became mediocre in the process.

Now Davis and Broussard are teammates once again in Seattle, thanks to a Sunday deal that sent Davis out west. JD is free from the

Shuey

yoke, which never really suited him anyway. He wasn't groomed for a relief role until recently.

But for every door that closes, another opens. Much in the same way that the departure of Manny Ramirez made us realize just how bad a baserunner Vizquel was, the departure of Davis shifts the spotlight to Fernando Cabrera.

Suddenly, the Shueyness of Cabrera is startling.

As if on cue, hours after Davis was traded, Cabrera took the mound and gave up a game-losing three-run meatball to minor-league wonder child Jack Cust in the Tribe's 10-7 loss to the Athletics Sunday.

After three-odd weeks of crazy-good dominance reminiscent of the Cabrera of late last season, Cabrera has regressed mightily since posting a win over Texas on April 25. Since then, he's lost twice and his ERA has steadily climbed from 1.50 on April 28 to 3.24 as of Monday.

Great stuff. Sporadically dominant. Gets your hopes up. Teases. Falters. Gives up

big hits and too many walks. Makes any nearby female member of your family say "Maybe you should go outside for a while" after you made the cat sprint for the safety of the bedroom by practicing primordial scream therapy at the TV.

Paul Shuey did it. Fernando Cabrera does it.

Cabrera is the reliever who will always make your stomach churn because you don't know if Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde is going to jog out of the bullpen gate. Yet he has the full faith and backing of Eric Wedge, as Shuey did with Mike Hargrove and Charlie Manuel.

All this time, you thought it was Davis. You didn't care enough about Davis. None of us did. But Cabrera, out there, trying and failing to take a game into extra innings and salvage a .500 road trip, you definitely noticed that.

If Shuey doesn't have anything else to mark his checkered past in the Indians' bullpen, he at least has a successor.