

Nearing the end of a decade under the Dolan Era of Cleveland Indian ownership, the relationship between he and Tribe fans seemed similarly destined for perpetual animosity. And then, this season, the Dolan family signed Jake Westbrook and Travis Hafner to the two biggest contracts in franchise history. Jarad Regano says the time has come for fans to bury the hatchet.



Hafner Deal Shoud Exorcise Dolan of Stereotypes

Republicans and Democrats. Wile E. Coyote and the Roadrunner. Seinfeld and Newman. Nearing the end of a decade under the Dolan Era of Cleveland Indian ownership, the relationship between he and Tribe fans seemed similarly destined for perpetual animosity.

A multitude of events had led a majority of Tribe fans to question the validity in ownership's commitment to winning. From slicing payroll off of the most productive team in decades, to failed promises of spending, to signing players from the bargain bin; confidence had waned with many. Fans have mostly responded the only way they can. Ticket sales are currently more reflective of the Indians place in the payroll ranks than their position in the standings. Often-burned Clevelanders were united in declaring that "we too will spend when the time is right." That time is when the Dolans decide to.

Well Tribe fans; that time is now. As an ownership critic for years and years, I was giddy about the Jake Westbrook extension and impressed by the ability to lock him up before allowing him to test free agency. This week's Travis Hafner signing, though, represented something I had long thought was incapable by current ownership. The Tribe paid fair market value for a top echelon player to stay in Cleveland. Not only should Tribe fans be ecstatic that the Indians are in a position to offer such a contract, it should be noted that Dolan's predecessor was

never able to ink a similar deal when a player hit the open market. And that was during a much more profitable time. While most of the response has been overwhelmingly positive over the signing, there are a few skeptics appalled at the size of the contract for a designated hitter. My advice is to get over it. A hitter can help you every day of the week, a pitcher only once. Travis has proven to be very consistent in his time here and will be able to anchor the lineup for over half a decade to come.

It is becoming more and more obvious that many of the near-misses over the years in free agency had more to do with Mark Shapiro's unwillingness to commit years and dollars to players he had not seen on a daily basis than to Dolan's tight pockets. A few poor early signings in your career can do that to you. Shapiro obviously feels he is reducing his risk by giving his big-ticket items to players that have already succeeded on and off the field in Cleveland. The Tribe now controls Hafner, Westbrook, Cliff Lee, Grady Sizemore, Jhonny Peralta and Victor Martinez through a minimum of 2010. Add to that the newcomers either here or nearly here, the team has a lengthy commitment to over a dozen quality players.

Regardless of what happens at the trading deadline, this team deserves the support of its fans. There have been mistakes in the rebuild of course, and some of the promises seem to be coming true a few years later than originally thought. Get down to the Jake for a great pennant race this summer. The Indians have begun their financial commitment to the team. As fans, we now owe that same commitment.