

When the subject of Mark Shapiro's greatest trades comes up, the same deals always come up. Hafner for Drese and Einar. Grady, Cliff Lee, and Brandon Phillips for Colon. Eduardo Perez for Asdrubal Cabrera. But Erik Cassano says that there's one deal Indians fans tend to overlook. Milton Bradley for Franklin Gutierrez and Andrew Brown. Many fans forget, Bradley was the centerpiece of the Indians offense at the time of the trade, which was hardly popular amongst Indians fans, even given Bradley's mental instability.



When the subject of Mark Shapiro's finest trade as general manager of the Indians comes up, there are only a select few deals worthy to make the final cut.

Pilfering Travis Hafner from the Rangers for Ryan Drese and Einar Diaz is an obvious one. The 2002

Bartolo

Colon deal that netted Grady

Sizemore

, Cliff Lee, Brandon Phillips and Lee Stevens from Montreal is another possibility, even though Lee landed with a thud this year and Phillips is well on his way to becoming a modern-day Joe Morgan playing second base in Cincinnati.

Eduardo Perez for Asdrubal Cabrera certainly looks like a steal at the moment. But as the San Diego Padres struck an iceberg and began taking on water in the National League wild card race this past weekend, another trade came to mind -- or at least it should have.

Sometimes, it's not who you get. It's who you give up. And there is a growing trend of addition-by-subtraction deals involving Milton Bradley, who is to outfielders what Krakatoa was to tropical islands.

Everywhere Bradley has landed, he has quickly worn out his welcome, largely due to his sideshow-producing temper and apparent desire to needlessly provoke the opposition with flippant, Barry Bonds-esque acts like emphatically snapping open the Velcro on his batting gloves as he begins his home run trot.

Since 2001, the Expos have dumped him off on the Indians, who dumped him off on the Dodgers, who dumped him off on the Athletics. Earlier this year, the A's

dumped him off on the Padres.

San Diego, like every other team that has traded for Bradley, was seduced by his potential. A switch-hitter with 30-homer, 100-RBI ability, he has never hit below .267 in any season since 2003. His career high is .321 in 101 games for the Indians in 2003. This year, he was hitting .306 for the season, .313 since joining the Padres.

The Padres' offense, one of the weakest among baseball contenders, relied heavily on Bradley's bat for several months. Sure, Bradley has a long history of volcanic outbursts, particularly at umpires, but if he can hit like he was hitting this year, the Padres probably figured that they could take the bad with the good. The trouble is, the bad with Bradley can be really, really bad. And Sunday, it reached catastrophic levels.

Bradley insists that umpire Mike Winters baited him, calling him a dirty word as he stood at first base. The accepted story at this point says Bradley and Winters had a beef from earlier in the game when Winters rang him up on a third-strike appeal. But what is for certain is that Bradley needed to be restrained multiple times from going after Winters. Padres manager Bud Black had to hold his outfielder by the jersey to keep him from physical contact with Winters, and the the subsequent fine and suspension it would bring.

(Think Eric Wedge remembers a thing or two about grabbing onto Bradley's jersey and holding on for dear life?)Of course, we all know what happened after that. Bradley thrashed, Black tugged back, then Bradley fell and tore a knee ligament, ending his season when the Padres needed him the most.

And another team likely has second thoughts about trying to build an offense around Bradley.

When Wedge pressured Shapiro to trade Bradley just before the 2004 season began, Wedge was made out to be the bad guy in a lot of circles. He wanted his players to be puppets, detractors said. He wasn't a strong enough personality to take on a talented-but-mercurial player and turn him into a star.

We all had visions of Albert Belle back then. If Mike Hargrove could manage the tantrum-prone Belle to a 50-homer, 52-double season, why couldn't Wedge manage Bradley into a productive player ... that is, if Wedge was worth anything as a manager?

When the final straw snapped that spring, as Wedge benched Bradley for failing to run out a ground ball, then Bradley went AWOL in a taxi, we could all agree that Bradley had some issues to work out -- but that doesn't mean you just quit on a player, does it?

The comparison is faulty. Despite their standing as two of baseball's most temperamental antagonists, Bradley and Belle are not similar. Belle seldom

showed extreme emotion on the field. Bradley, on the other hand, is a powder keg between the foul lines.

It turns out, Bradley has been, is, and always will be a walking distraction to a winning team. He's a fine all-around talent, but the positives begin and end there. Other than that, he's selfish, immature, injury-prone and possesses an ultra-sensitive hair trigger temper.

Trading Bradley for Franklin Gutierrez and Andrew Brown might have sent a bad message to Tribe fans at the time, fans who were looking for signs that the team was starting to pull out of its rebuilding nosedive. At that point, no one wanted to see a promising young player pawned off for yet more prospects who were three and four years away from the big leagues.

But keeping Bradley would have sent a worse message to the other players, a message that management was willing to appease a flaky player like Bradley instead of enforcing the same standards for everyone.

Over the past three years, Bradley's continuing unpredictable behavior and inability to stick in one place for any substantial length of time has proved Wedge and Shapiro right.

It might not have been Shapiro's best trade, but ridding the team of Bradley is certainly in the conversation for the second-best trade Shapiro has ever made. It didn't even take Gutierrez becoming the team's everyday right fielder to justify it. As the Indians found out, as the Padres are now learning the hard way, players like Bradley make poor building blocks for a contender, and parting ways with them is almost always addition by subtraction.