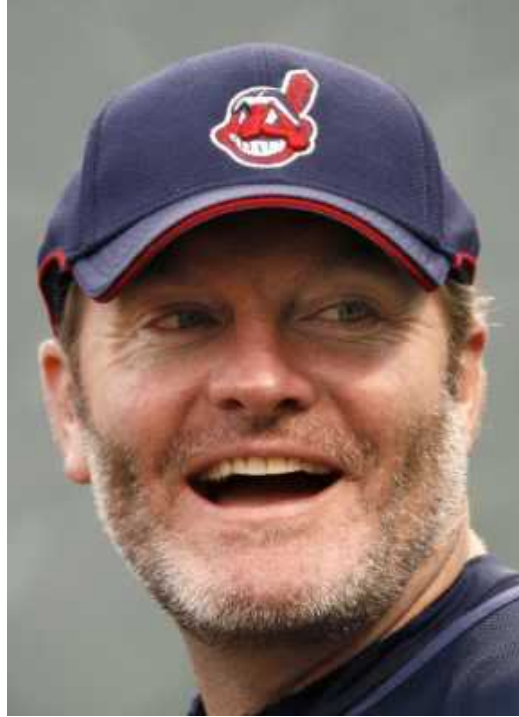


Trophy Trading

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Wednesday, November 14 2007 7:00 PM -

Another day, another award for the Indians as Eric Wedge was named American League Manager of the year on Wednesday. Wedge becomes the first Tribe skipper to ever win the award, and the honor is well deserved according to Paul Cousineau. The Tribe has truly done what they set out to do, building a Dr. Spock "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few" mentality here in CTown, and hopefully these awards are harbringers of just greater things to come next season.



Another BBWA award announcement, another hearty congratulations for a Cleveland Indian - this time to The Atomic Wedgie for being [named AL Manager of the Year](#), and rightfully so for leading a young Indians team to a tie for the best record in MLB and one win away from The Fall Classic. This week has been quite a week to fill up the trophy case down at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario as Wedge joins C.C. as a recipient of a major award given out by the BBWA (and the first Tribe skipper to be named MOY since they began the award in 1983) in a matter of a couple of days.

With all of these individual accolades and awards flowing into the North Coast, however, I'm reminded of a story that appeared recently in an article in *Sports Illustrated*

about New England Patriots' Player Personnel Guru Scott Pioli addressing the Indians team in 2002, when Eddie Murray was still the hitting coach and the Indians were still a team full of young players trying to find their way in MLB:

Scott talked to our team after the Patriots won their first Super Bowl," says

Cleveland Indians' general manager Mark Shapiro. "He said, 'Who here has played in a World Series and an All-Star Game?' Eddie Murray was the only guy who raised his hand. Scott said, 'Which was better?' And Eddie said, 'No question, the World Series.' That was Scott's point - we all play this game to win championships."

I can't imagine the effect that the conversation would have on the young players in that clubhouse (like Sabathia) as Murray, regardless of how effective he was as a hitting coach, was wildly respected by the players as an MLB legend and a Hall-of-Famer. His admission (and quick one at that) about the differences between individual success and recognition and team success articulates why being recognized for being a great PLAYER is fine and dandy, but fleeting; while being a part (any part) of a great TEAM is something that can never be taken away. To wit, Mike Pagel is seen as some sort of "celebrity" and "expert analyst" in Cleveland because he BACKED UP Bernie Kosar on a Browns' team over 20 years ago that captured the hearts and imagination of the city.

The Indians, like most teams, rightfully stress the "team-concept" over the accomplishments of a few (Sabathia and Wedge this week), which is why these awards are nice things to put on the mantle; but, at a certain point they ring hollow as they only serve as a reminder of what could have (and probably should have) been. Knowing fully what the answers are in reality, I find myself wondering again why the Indians couldn't close the Red Sox out in Game 5, with the AL Cy Young Award Winner on the hill, and seemingly undone by the AL Manager of the Year's bullpen mismanagement in the game.

But what's done is done.

You would hope that C.C. would like to trade in his Cy Young for a ring (does anyone question that Wedge would give his Manager of the Year trophy to second place finisher Mike Scioscia in exchange for a WS ring?) and that he feels that this award is a reminder that he WAS the best pitcher in the AL in 2007, he just stopped being so once the playoffs rolled around.

Predictably, Wedge is downplaying the importance of this award and spewing some sort of lingo having to do with the team "grinding" and "separating" having nothing to do with the award when asked about the AL Manager of the Year. But ask me what I think Wedge's real feelings are

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and I'd tell you that he probably thinks that these trophies are nice, but really only one matters...the one that slipped through their fingers in the ALCS.