

Adios Johan! Don't let the door hit you in the arse! The news broke yesterday that the Twins are ready to send Santana to the Mets for a package of prospects, and the deal has immediate impact on the Indians. One, forget about the Twisn being a threat this season. And two ... how will the current negotiations between Johan and the Mets affect the Indians as they conduct their own negotiations with a one Carsten Charles Sabathia? Paulie Cous gives us the 411.



With the news that Johan Santana is headed to Flushing for ( [as ESPN calls it](#) ) the fourth best offer on the table, the Twins ace thankfully seems to be on his way out of the AL. The deal is obviously contingent on the Mets and Santana reaching a contract extension, as Santana is reportedly looking for a 6-year, \$150 deal.

The obvious corollary to this (outside of that the Twins are really no longer a threat in the AL Central) is how it affects negotiations with another certain LHP who also calls the division his home. Much has been made and written (admittedly here) about the wisdom of awarding a contract to Sabathia rich in years, given the track record of long-term contracts to pitchers, regardless of their pedigree. So the question that is often posed is what a fair deal to Sabathia would be, if Sabathia would accept it, and how much risk the Indians should expose themselves to.

Knowing about the success (or lack thereof) of [pitchers working under long-term contracts](#) , I'd offer Sabathia a contract long on dollars, but perhaps shorter on years than the one that Santana is reportedly demanding. I would offer a 4 year, \$89M extension with a vesting player option for a 5th year. That would give the Indians 5 more guaranteed years of Sabathia (and bump up his 2008 salary) and keep some flexibility to make sure that Sabathia's 5th year option (which is really 6 years from now) is triggered by something like the Cy Young vote or innings pitched.

His contract would break down like this:

2008 - \$20M (currently under contract for \$11M, so \$9M additional)  
2009 - \$20M  
2010 - \$20M  
2011 - \$20M  
2012 - \$20M  
2013 - \$20M vesting player option

Would all those numbers look like that?

Probably not as there would be some progression of earnings, but you get the idea...it's a giant deal.

Some could say that the Indians, small-market team that they are, couldn't afford such an annual salary...until you consider that C.C. and Paul Byrd will be paid a combined \$19M in 2008 with Byrd coming off the books after this year, likely to be replaced by a suitable youngster earning a minimum salary in the rotation. The [framework of the Tribe's salary structure](#) affords them the luxury of signing a few big-ticket players (like Hafner and Westbrook, to date) as the majority of the roster is designed to be filled with young, talented players earning well below fair value unless the Indians see a player that they feel is special enough to lock up (see Sizemore, Grady).

It remains entirely possible that Sabathia's people would demand a 5th year guaranteed with a 6th year option (which would really give Sabathia 6 years of guaranteed money due to him, being under contract already for 2008) likely giving the Indians pause as Sabathia represents everything that they have strived to do as an organization - to build strong starting pitching from within. Realizing that Sabathia is essentially the poster child for ["The Plan"](#) is the moment that would force the Indians to consider the risks associated with guaranteeing the years and associated money to Sabathia versus the reward of (ideally) penciling him in at the top of the rotation until 2013 or 2014.

If he agrees to the 4 guaranteed years and the option, he's already signed; but if he demands more than the 5th year guaranteed and adamantly sticks to that demand, I would let him walk...as much as it would pain me to see the Hefty Lefty walk away.

The 5th year guaranteed with a 6th year option, however, remains the gray area. If the Indians are willing to extend themselves beyond what they call their

&quot;comfort zone&quot;; and Sabathia's agents are willing to point to the [contracts signed by Carlos Zambrano and Roy Oswalt](#) instead of the deal that Johan seems to be in line for, a happy medium could be reached and the Crooked Cap could be a fixture on the North Coast for years to come.

However, if C.C. sees the Santana deal as the harbinger of &quot;what he deserves&quot;;, the Indians will rightfully let him walk after the year...for better or worse.