

Talk about a quiet off-season for the Indians. The team did almost nothing outside of signing a veteran Japanese relief pitcher that most Indians fans have never seen throw. And now, with C.C. Sabathia shutting down contract negotiations, it's apparent that we'll lose the big guy after this season. In Jarad Regano's latest, he examines GM Mark Shapiro's off-season inactivity, and also makes the argument that the Indians absolutely should field trade offers for Sabathia.



Life is full of questions that we may never be able to find suitable answers to. What happens when you die? Are we alone in the universe? Who thought it would be a good idea to give Donny Deutsch his own show? You get the idea. Mark Shapiro's inability to gauge the trade and free agent market ranks right up there with the aforementioned doozies.

An otherwise astute and successful general manager, it is almost unbelievable how poorly his track record has been in entering free agent markets and in seeking veteran talent through trade possibilities. This offseason looks to be a repeat of the winter of 2005 when the Tribe was coming off of a stellar 93-win campaign. Despite losing several key components including Kevin Millwood, Bobby Howry and Coco Crisp, the Indians countered with ... Jason Michaels.

This offseason the Indians admittedly were in the market for a power-hitting outfield bat through trade. The other 800 pound gorilla in the room (not intended to reference his weight) was the issue of C.C. Sabathia and his contract that would expire after 2008. In a perfect world, the Tribe would have addressed both before spring training. Instead, the Indians entertained their light-hitting middle infielder fetish and traded for Jamey Carroll.

Per usual under the Shapiro regime, the Indians were unable to put a package together to bring Jason Bay or Alex Rios to Cleveland. They also came in second in the Dan Haren sweepstakes. On the C.C. front, I really believe the Indians front office feels (or maybe felt is a better word) that they would be able to re-up with Sabathia. That scenario is very unlikely.

The bottom line is that the Indians entered the off-season with a chance to either get the player to hopefully put them over the top, or to lock up a #1 for years to come. Having failed at both, and assuming neither is addressed in spring training, the Indians need to at least field every possible trade offer for Sabathia.

Forget the message that it would send. That message was already sent to fans by not improving the club this winter. Should the Indians get nothing for him at year's end, the franchise will be set back several years. The counter argument of "going for it all" this year is fine, but there are so many variables in baseball that are not part of the equation in other sports. A single player's performance can be very volatile from year to year. The five game divisional series in baseball is a complete crapshoot. And the compensation for C.C. with a draft choice could quite possibly turn out to be - Brad Snyder. And for the fans that want to take their chances in the open market for Sabathia's future services, have you not been fooled before? Once it gets to that stage in the game, the player is gone.

I am not advocating a "Milton Bradley Everything Must Go Sale." But the larger market teams had better know that they could have C.C. for the right price. If that package starts with Phil Hughes, Howie Kendrick, or Chad Billingsley - Mark should get a deal done.

In baseball, I would much rather try to build a team that will be a potential playoff contender for years and years to come, than one that looks to be on paper as a favorite (which I have my doubts about anyway without another bat). I am not sure if the deal that needs to be made is out there right now. But knowing the pressure of big market teams, I bet it will be available over the next eight weeks.

And when it arises, the Indians should pounce.