

## Is It Time?

Written by {ga=pup}

Thursday, May 11 2006 7:00 PM -

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Cris Sykes becomes the first Cleveland journalist to call for Eric Wedge's head on a platter. Is he an insane boob overreacting after just 35 games? Or a wise sage who will be vindicated as the season progresses? Judge for yourself ...



Is it time for the Mark Shapiro to consider was unthinkable just a few weeks ago and replace manager Eric Wedge?

Is the recent stretch of games, which includes getting swept by the AAA Kansas City Royals, too much for this organization to overcome? Have the players begun to tune out the 'let's be friends' and 'stay on an even keel' manager?

I believe there are 5 reasons why it is time for the Cleveland Indians to make a managerial move.

1. Wedge's inability to make the proper decisions when it comes to pitching changes. Whenever he thinks it is best to let a guy pitch to one more hitter, that hitter usually comes through. When he decides to go out and make a change, whomever he brings in seems to struggle just as bad. There is a feel to handling pitchers, and I don't think Wedge has that feel. In 2004, Cleveland had no trouble scoring runs, but their pitching staff was absolutely raked on a nightly basis. In my opinion, his inability to handle pitchers was masked by a group of guys coming out of the bullpen in 2005 that were lights out most nights. He was getting quality starts most nights, so his by the book, this guy for a batter, and this guy for an inning strategy worked. You could still point at how he handled the bullpen as a possible reason for the Indians running out of gas the last week. Maybe had he been willing to use someone like David Riske in some of those situations, the rest of the bullpen (Bobby Howry) would not have been exhausted. Now in 2006, we are seeing the same problems with in game pitching changes that we say in '04. What good is a manager if he only gets wins based on having guys play out their ass? If that is the case, why even have a manager?

2. I know this will sound like sour grapes, or hindsight being 20/20, but Brandon

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Phillips has kept me up late at night. It would appear the only reason he was left off the roster was because of his attitude. If that were the case, then I would imagine Wedge had a pretty high level of input on that choice. Well, I hate to break the news to you Eric, but your job is to handle different attitudes and mesh them into a cohesive unit. How can we have any faith in your ability to handle other potential players if you couldn't handle Phillips? Do we have to hope that all of the other big prospects in our minor leagues are great character guys? Which brings me back to the same question from point #1. If we have all great character guys, who hustle on every single pitch of the game, what exactly is your job Eric?

3. This one probably does not hold as much water as the first two, but every once in a while, it might not be a bad idea to attempt a hit and run. Or maybe call for a sacrifice bunt. I know the players all want to take their swings, and Wedge wants to be loved by his guys, but come on. Both of these moves have been used for over a century to aid the offense. Sure we are scoring a boatload of runs this season, but obviously we need to score a couple more. In 2005, when the offense was struggling early in the year, there was still no sign of trying to spark the offense.

4. Is there a worse fundamental team in the big leagues? Does anyone get picked off second base, besides the Indians? Has anyone run themselves out of more innings than this team? I doubt it. A team's ability to play fundamental baseball is a direct reflection on the coaching staff.

5. Eric, do you know that you are allowed to change the batter order? For two straight years now, people have gotten off to either real slow or real fast starts and you have done nothing. You have your spots where guys are supposed to bat and that is where they will bat come hell or high water.

I guess, overall, my point is this: If you are just going to sit over there and let the players play, then why are we paying you? I mean really, couldn't just about any human sit in your seat and produce the exact same results? If the only times the Indians are going to win is when the players outplay the other team, what is your function? You have shown no ability whatsoever to turn things around. All you do is sit there and hope that your players go out and beat the other teams players. You may or may not know this Eric, but if you ever lead this team to the playoffs, you would be royally screwed. When you need to play a game for one run, what would you do? Nothing. That is what you would do. Sit there and let your players play.

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Here is what I am saying Mark Shapiro, you have done an excellent job of assembling a very talented team with a very limited budget. Please do not let it go to waste by sticking with Eric Wedge. You need to make a move, or you will lose this opportunity. The more I watch, the more of Mike Hargrove I see in Eric Wedge, and we all know how that turned out for the fans of Cleveland. I am sorry, but it is time, fire Eric Wedge before he ruins this city's chance for a World Championship. If your manager brings nothing to the table when your guys are between the lines doing battle, isn't he just a public relations guy?

I guess I should at least off another option. Is there anyone available that could maybe bring some fire to the team? Hmmmmm. Maybe someone that won't be these guys friend. Hmmmmm. In the immortal words of Rachel Phelps, "I think the problem is we're coddling these guys too much." I think I know of a guy that fits this mold. Hey Shapiro, why don't you give Sweet Lou Piniella a call and see what he is doing for the rest of the year.