

The Indians season is teetering on the brink of destruction. Will the team finally start playing some kids, or stick with the same tired vets that have led us to this terrible start? Will Wedge survive the season, and if he goes, will Shapiro go with him? Here's what I feel the Indians SHOULD do with the remainder of this season, including a proposed managerial change and potentially new shortstop of the future for the Tribe.



Realistically speaking, the Indians season is over. The team would need to finish out the season going 64-30 the rest of the way to get to the win total in the mid-nineties that will likely be mandatory to advance to the postseason in the American League.

Facing this sad truth, it is my strong opinion that the team should begin to focus on 2007 immediately, dumping players not likely to be here next season, and also using this opportunity to find out what exactly we have in some of these young prospects we've accumulated.

My guess is that the Indians will not do this. They will continue to talk about how "due" they are, and will keep on trotting the same old tired vets out there. Playing rookies will kill revenues, as attendance will sag as the team essentially throws in the towel on the season. Walk ups will vanish, as will stadium revenues as many of the presold ticket holders will stop coming.

Larry Dolan will pray for a miraculous run like last year, and try and squeeze every penny out of this teams fan base ... even though it is not in the best interest of helping this team win a World Series in 2007 or 2008.

HERE'S WHAT I WOULD DO ...

- ~Get whatever you can for Perez, Broussard, Belliard, Michaels, Byrd, Wickman. Hopefully they can yield a shortstop or some bullpen help for '07 and '08.
- ~Move Peralta to 2B the second Fat Ronnie (Belliard) is dealt.
- ~Bring Andy Marte up to play 3B. Resign Boone now to be your utility guy the next two seasons if he buys into that role and doesn't want to kill you financially. This may be a stretch considering the fact Boone likely still thinks of himself as an everyday 3B. If so, dump his ass too. While Boone is still putting up numbers commensurate to a starting third baseman, I see Boonie as a player in decline that would actually be an ideal utility man for me who could still start close to 80 games a year at 2b, SS, and 3b.
- ~Teach Hafner to play 1b. Enough is enough already. Its 1st base. Having to DH him every night kills the lineup flexibility. Why this guy has not been playing 1b and hitting 3rd the last two years is mindboggling to me. The only people playing 1b next year should be Hafner, Victor, and potentially Garko.
- ~After you unload Bennie and Eduardo, platoon Victor with Hafner at 1b, and play Shoppach four games a week at catcher so we know what we have going into next year.
- ~Sell high on Michaels once he comes back and use LF to get looks at Franklin Gutierrez, Brad Snyder, and Ben Francisco.
- ~Pick up Westbrooks option for next year at 7 million.
- ~Bring up Sowers immediately. Cut Jason Johnson. Trade Paul Byrd, and use the five spot in the rotation to get some looks at some kids.
- ~Dump Mota. Again, giving look-sees at young arms with that bullpen spot. Use Carmona and Cabrera in the 8th and 9th innings.
- ~Fire Wedge, hire Tony Pena.

Now ... that is what they should do. Lets see what it is they actually do.

SPEAKING OF PENA

I love this guy as a potential next manager of this team, and the Indians should take advantage of the fact he is still out there on the market.

Pena will be hired by someone soon. He's currently managing first base for the Yankees and this is the time of the year heads start to roll in the MLB coaching ranks. He's just three seasons removed from leading the Royals to a 83-79 record, and being named the AL Manager of the Year.

He's everything Wedge isn't. Instinctive, fiery, full of emotion, not afraid to do whatever it takes to yield the best results on the field. I'm so god damn sick of the same old cliches we get from Wedge every night like he's reading off cue cards. He should be pissed that we aren't winning, not offering up monotone excuses why he thinks "we'll get this thing turned around."

Detroit and Chicago are very good baseball teams that appear set up to be pretty good for the immediate future. In Leyland and Guillen, they have what Wedge lacks, and what I seek out of Pena.

Sadly, the Indians will not jump on this opportunity, and someone else will hire Pena. Shapiro will continue to claim he and Wedge are "joined at the hip" and that Wedge is "part of the solution, not the problem." Meanwhile, Pena will excel elsewhere, and the Indians will realize their mistake too late, likely midway through next season.

BIG ARMS SET TO ENTER MARKET THIS WINTER

By all indications, it appears as if the following starting pitchers will all hit the open market this off-season ...

Jason Schmidt, San Francisco

Mark Mulder, St. Louis

Andy Pettite, Houston

Several others as well. Kerry Wood, Brad Radke, and Mike Mussina will also be available.

Will Larry Dolan finally live up to the promise he made fans when he bought this

team, and "spend when the time is right?" With CC and Lee under out control for 2-3 more seasons, I would love to see this team pick up Jake Westbrook's option for next year, and then spend some money on a legitimate front of the rotation arm.

How nice would Schmidt, Sabathia, Lee, Westbrook, and Sowers sound as the 2007 rotation?

JULIO LUGO ANYONE?

One guy I would love to see the Indians pursue at the seasons end is Devils Rays shortstop Julio Lugo.

At age 30, he's a couple years younger than Ronnie Belliard, and can play 2B or SS ... depending on where Peralta ends up playing next year. He's got great speed, which this team sorely lacks. He's stolen 68 bases over the last season and a quarter, getting caught just 17 times ... an 80% success rate. He's also added pop through an era of testing where many have seen their power number fall off. Lugo's current pace this season projects to almost 30 home runs over 160 games.

While his on base percentage is down this year at the expense of a much higher slugging percentage, Lugo has been a .350-.360 OBP guy the last three seasons, strokes alot of doubles and triples, and hits into next to no double plays.