

Tomahawks Coming From Gray Clouds

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Thursday, October 15 2009 7:00 PM -

Some kind of off-season so far, eh? This week alone has seen John Farrell passing on being interviewed for the managerial job, adding Matt LaPorta to the list of those who have gone under the knife, and the feeling that a CC vs. CP Lee in Game 1 of the World Series coming closer to a reality. With those things in mind (and with snow in the forecast for Friday), let's bring in Paulie C to release just a few tomahawks to recap the events of the week.



Some kind of off-season so far, eh?

This week alone has seen John Farrell passing on being interviewed for the managerial job, adding Matt LaPorta to the list of those who have gone under the knife, and the feeling that a CC vs. CP Lee in Game 1 of the World Series coming closer to a reality. With those things in mind (and with snow in the forecast for Friday), let's release just a few tomahawks to recap the events of the week:



The big news of the week is John Farrell's withdrawal from consideration for the post of Indians' manager, which had been dissected and pored over probably more than it should have been (admittedly by me, among others) in the past few weeks, meaning that the assumed top candidate for the job of skipper is not a candidate at all. While it had been reported by various outlets, [Farrell's statement to the PD](#)

removes any thought that his previously-reported disinterest was a smoke-screen or a deflection of attention while the Red Sox were still in the playoffs.

Tomahawks Coming From Gray Clouds

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Thursday, October 15 2009 7:00 PM -

For Farrell, it represents the third time that he has declined to be interviewed for open managerial positions (the Royals and Pirates were also declined in years past) and the reasons for Farrell to resist what would look to be a job promotion (pitching coach to manager) remain a mystery. As I wrote [here last week](#), there could be any number of reasons for Farrell not to accept a chance to become an MLB manager for an organization that he's intimately familiar with and (apparently) remains close to.

Whether he has been promised the managerial position in Boston, or isn't interested in returning to Cleveland because of concerns about their current situation or Front Office, or that he's seen how green the pastures are on a team with a seemingly unlimited payroll and talent already in-house and with more on the way and isn't interested in scratching and clawing into contention every couple of years, the fact that stands alone, without mystery, is that he's not going to be the next Indians' skipper.

While his disinterest had been reported by various media outlets, his withdrawal is surprising because the "criteria" laid out by the Indians last week for a new manager seemed to list Farrell's resume, with the idea that the Indians were describing Farrell because...he was who they wanted and could go down the list of "criteria" when he was named to hang the "Mission Accomplished" banner.

If you'll remember what they're looking for from [the recap of the presser](#), once you got past the broad generalizations from what they were looking for (a "good communicator"...as if they would be looking for anything else), you saw that the specific attributes that were mentioned essentially described what Farrell would seemingly bring to the table.

To wit, from the press conference and how each relates to Farrell:

8. A big point is to "understand the uniqueness of our situation and how essential young players are to us." This means that the new manager must be strong in player development, especially helping move from the minors to the Majors as fast as possible -- and then helping the players deal with trials and challenges of staying and improving in the Majors.

Understanding the uniqueness of the Indians situation...like, say serving as team's Director of Player Development from 2001 to 2006 so he'd be pretty aware of the

"situation" and would have some experience in developing young players?

That type of "understanding" with a strength in player development?

9. Experience of being a big league manager is "helpful, but not a necessity."

MLB managing experience "helpful, but not a necessity" ruled out that candidate HAS to be a former manager, which Farrell is not.

10. The Indians will have "no pre-conceptions" when it comes to experience, but it will take "a special guy to be considered without Major League experience as a coach and/or manager."

Wouldn't a "special guy" be someone who cut his teeth in the Indians' organization, but may be lacking in coaching/managerial experience outside of being a pitching coach for three years in Boston.

11. The Indians also believe they will have the financial resources to hire the candidate of their choice. They say that money should not prevent them from finding the manager they want.

Financial resources available seemed to imply that compensation and a healthy paycheck were thought to be prerequisites to lure Farrell, but that the Indians would not allow money to be a factor in excluding a candidate.

15. A real emphasis will be place on handling and developing the bullpen. The Indians are open to new ways of doing it, given their struggles with the bullpen in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

Regardless of what this EXTREMELY specific attribute may say about the handling and development of a bullpen by the previous regime, Farrell presided over the bullpen with the 2nd lowest ERA in 2009, the 7th lowest ERA in 2008, the lowest ERA in 2007...so yeah, that fits.

While the "fit" seemed to be there in terms of their expectations and the assumed candidate, Farrell's announcement removes any shadows of any doubts that he's remotely interested and the Indians find themselves looking at a

Tomahawks Coming From Gray Clouds

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Thursday, October 15 2009 7:00 PM -

list of candidates for manager...a list that no longer contains John Farrell.



As for the names that are on the list, [the only name that has been confirmed in connection to actually interviewing for the job has been Manny Acta](#), who is also allegedly interviewing in Houston for the open Astros' job.

At first glance, Acta makes little sense if you're looking strictly at the performance of his teams (73-89 in 2007, 59-102 in 2008, 26-61 in 2009 when he was fired) in Washington, but let's remember what a couple of notable MLB managers had on their resume from their first managerial stint before dismissing Acta as a non-factor:

Terry Francona in 4 years in Philadelphia (1997-2000): 285-363

Joe Torre in 5 years with the Mets (1977-1981): 286-420

Maybe that's picking just a couple of instances of managers who took some time to find their footing (not to mention the right situation in terms of talent) and other managers find success at different times and with different organizations, but it speaks to the idea that past success (or failure) does not guarantee results of either kind in terms of managers.

That's not to say that Acta simply needs to be put in a different situation to succeed, but [this interview with him](#), completed after the surprisingly good 2007 season as Nationals' manager, paints the picture of a dynamic young manager who would represent a change in attitude from the dugout from what has resided there since 2002.

In terms of how he fits the Tribe's criteria (from above), he's been exposed to managing young players in Washington, has managerial experience (also from the World Baseball Classic), and has experience in handling and developing a MLB bullpen as his 2007 bullpen in Washington actually posted the 4th lowest ERA in the NL with a group of players that very few outside of the Beltway have ever heard of. Granted, his 2008 bullpen was 14th in ERA in the NL, but it goes back to the question of what a truly great managerial candidate looks like.

Tomahawks Coming From Gray Clouds

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Thursday, October 15 2009 7:00 PM -

Is Acta a compelling candidate?

I suppose at some level, but as nice as it would be to find the next Mike Scioscia or Joe Girardi, the candidates named from here on out are likely to elicit the same type of response as the mention of Manny Acta.

Do the names of Bob Brenly (who may or may not be interested in leaving the Cubs' broadcast booth and has said in the past that he probably wouldn't take a job with a rebuilding team but that "things can change") or Clint Hurdle or Bobby Valentine or Tony Pena REALLY get you that much more excited about the outlook for the 2010 season?

Maybe they do for you, but the "meh" factor is rising for me...



Far from a "meh" reaction is my astonishment to the news that [Matt LaPorta underwent surgery on his hip and \(less importantly\) his big toe](#), meaning that he's likely to miss the start of Spring Training, with AC even putting the atrocious thought that "his situation might be comparable to that of Travis Hafner this year" to let the water out of my perpetually half-full glass.

The timeframe that's being given for LaPorta's return is 4 to 6 months, which would come somewhere between mid-February and mid-April and, considering that the first game is on April 5th, let's all hope for the 4 month recovery time.

As a quick aside here, does anyone remember [Wedge's quote when the hip injury cropped up](#), as LaPorta was attempting to score from third against the Tigers?

"The pain is still in there," Wedge said. "We think he just tweaked it when he turned for home there.

"I'll tell you what happened. I guarantee you it's from him moving from the outfield to the infield. It's happened before. You're using different muscles at first base. You're doing a lot more squatting, a lot more bending. I'm sure that had something to do with it."

Tomahawks Coming From Gray Clouds

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

Thursday, October 15 2009 7:00 PM -

Seriously, that is how the injury was initially explained...putting the idea that "using different muscles at first base" left his hip to be more open to injury.

Or was more open to a "tweak"?

Certainly the surgery (on an injury that occurred in the September 22nd game in Detroit...after which LaPorta started 9 of the 12 remaining games on the schedule) would suggest more than the idea that he "just tweaked it when he turned for home there". Is anyone else getting tired of these "surprises" in terms of surgeries or should we suspend any additional "squatting" and "bending" from players' usual activities?

Why is it that the players that have now gone under the knife (with the exception of Sizemore) were actually the top performers in 2009, or at least projected some hope for 2010? Asdrubal, Chris Perez, and LaPorta actually looked to be strengths of the team in 2009, with very little concern that recovering from an injury (OK, we knew about Perez's foot for a while) would affect their performance in 2010.

Where's the news that Peralta was battling a hip injury all year or that Rafael Perez had issues with his left elbow or that Fausto had difficulty with a loose bone and a cyst on his foot?

Wouldn't all of that make you feel better about the 2009 performances of those players, not the news that two of the best players on the team (Grady and Asdrubal), the best power hitting prospect on the team (LaPorta) and the possible closer-in-waiting (Chris Perez) will all be coming off of not just injuries, but injuries that required surgery, for the 2010 season?

Alas, the gray clouds that usually settle over the North Coast from November to March have arrived early and are hanging low over the corner of Carnegie and Ontario.