

Are the Indians on the verge of another rebuild? Publically, they would never admit as such due to the violent reaction it would illicit from an already frustrated fan base. Papa Cass wonders aloud if Mark Shapiro and Eric Wedge possess the necessary sense of urgency that will one day translate all this player development into a championship caliber team on the field. An excellent read here from Cassano.



Visit the Papa Cass weblog at <http://papacass.blogspot.com/>

Think the Indians are chasing their tails? It's not just your imagination, says [The Plain Dealer's Bill Livingston](#)

That organization-wide lack of urgency you have long suspected is there, and it's there by design.

It's what I, and many Indians fans, have feared since this rebuilding process got underway in 2002: the Indians are proving to be adept at grooming talent, but poor at actually translating that talent into winning baseball.

The result could be a lot of really good players who play out the string here in Cleveland without ever reaching the playoffs, then leave for another team where they become icons and win championships.

Why is this happening? As Livingston points out, you can look at the two-headed monster of Eric Wedge and Mark Shapiro for starters.

Wait, did I say two-headed monster? I meant one-headed. Newlyweds only wish they could become one body, one mind and one soul the way the Indians manager and general manager have.

I'm sure the pair have their disagreements, but they are more of the "stop leaving toast crumbs in the butter" variety. As far as bringing different philosophies to the table, you aren't going to find it here.

Wedge and Shapiro constantly rubber-stamp each other's moves in a circular pattern of back-patting that makes an organizational jump-start nearly impossible.

There is no competition like there was between John Hart and Mike Hargrove. There is no desire on the part of one or the other to prove that he is really the man behind the team. When one stumbles, as Shapiro did with his lackluster series of moves this past winter, no one gets

the sense that the other is creeping ahead in the ego race.

That's not to say the Indians would be in better hands if the team were led by a pair of pompous, egotistical jerks, but a healthy underlying competition between the team architect and the field general can prod a team to get better, because they prod each other to get better.

Boats don't move on placid water. They need wind and waves to reach their destinations.

Quiet stability is a necessary incubator for young talent. Wedge and Shapiro provided that for three years. But now that the time has come to kick it up an Emeril-sized notch and start winning, Wedge and Shapiro can't seem to get out of the player-development mode. As a pair, they are way too patient with underperformers, take way too long to make decisions, and altogether seem to lack the ego-driven competitive fires that burned within Hart and Hargrove.

Wedge and Shapiro could be running a widget manufacturing company if you didn't know they were running a baseball team.

Lost in the quasi-business jargon of process management, growth philosophies and the like is the ticking clock that marks the fast-melting several year window the Indians have to win with the likes of C.C. Sabathia, Travis Hafner and Victor Martinez. Sabathia and Hafner are free agents after the 2008 season, Martinez after 2009. Unless owner Larry Dolan suddenly discovers an oil well under his house, it would be realistic to assume their Indians careers will end the instant they become free agents, or sooner should they be pawned off for prospects.

Player development will always be a big factor in the Dolan business model, but if the Indians can never win with the talent they develop, all this team will be is a farm club for teams with deeper pockets.

Wedge and Shapiro seemed to have missed a step. Player development is all about the process. Winning is more about motivation. To motivate, you have to find the right buttons to push with your players, and push each other's buttons as well.

Last season's second-half run looks like it can be chalked up to the leadership of players like Kevin Millwood and Scott Elarton, players who have been through pennant races before and have learned to thrive on them. When they left, the pilot light went out on the fire in the Tribe's collective belly.

And if you're looking for Wedge or Shapiro to stoke the flames again, you're probably looking in the wrong direction. These guys are schooled in organizational teamwork and flow charts, not kicking ass and taking names.

If nothing changes in the way this team is run, all their hard work in putting this team together will yield only two results: a noticeable lack of playoff appearances, and a bunch of ex-players returning to Cleveland in other teams' uniforms.