

## Annoying Storylines for 2011

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, November 25 2010 7:00 PM - Last Updated Thursday, November 25 2010 9:34 AM

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A baseball season is so long, every team is bound to have a question or two that doubles as a storyline.

At the risk of turning the Cleveland Indians into an episode of WWE or Insert Soap Opera here, there are some "storylines" that are just better when they finally come to an end.

The "Shin-Soo Choo Military Storyline" is one that goes right up there with some of the most annoying plots to "As the Cleveland Indians Turn."

With Choo's South Korea team winning the gold medal at the Asian Games, Choo and his teammates were granted an exemption from the military. In addition to not having to worry about upsetting his native homeland by not serving without an exemption, I'm sure the constant questioning about the issue was the worst part of this situation for Choo.

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Now he never has to answer or address that question ever again.

And none of us have to ever ask or hear it. Thank Chief Wahoo that is over.

In honor of finally having the answer to the burning question about Shin-Soo Choo joining the South Korean military, here are five questions/storylines that will stand to annoy us all just as much.

They can also double as the five questions Paul Hoynes gets asked and answers every week.

### **1.) When will the Indians trade Grady Sizemore?**

We've progressed (or should I say, regressed?) from the point of "When are we moving Grady Sizemore to third in the batting order?" to "When are we moving Grady Sizemore?" end of sentence right then and there.

The sad part in all this is that the Indians can still maintain control of Sizemore after this season. But because they dealt Victor Martinez and Cliff Lee with the same sort of situation, the question will continue to come up.

Different situation, different circumstances make this question an easy one to answer.

They won't and you know why?

In addition to Sizemore's value being at all time low, there was financial motivation to deal Lee and Martinez. Sizemore is still young and figures to be a part of this whole thing the next two years.

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While the Indians are pinching pennies right now, they are not trying to dump more salary.

Now things definitely change if Sizemore comes back and starts hitting like the Sizemore of old but the Indians still remain out of contention. But I think the Indians still plan on using that option, meaning if they do consider trading him, it won't be until after 2011 is completed.

So for now, regardless of what Sizemore does on the field, it would be best if we shelved this question until a later date and worry about it when it actually could happen.

### **2.) Fine... When will the Indians move Grady Sizemore to left field?**

I supposed that if Sizemore getting moved from the team cannot be a storyline for this team in 2011, Sizemore moving positions or lineup spots certainly can be. It again goes back to the age old question of the batting order.

Circumstances again have changed the reason for these questions being asked. When fans wondered when Sizemore was going to be moved to third in the order, it was because he was the best thing this team had.

Now we are wondering if moving him from center field would be best for this team because he is no longer the best thing this team has, he's the most injured thing this team has.

With Brantley's young fresh legs and a few Sizemore knee surgeries, the questions are certainly with merit. You would be doing no favors to putting out the best defensive lineup if you did not concern yourself with Sizemore's ability after what he has been through.

But there's that whole veteran stature thing and Manny Acta will probably respect that in regards to making a rash decision out of the gate.

Which means this is something that will probably linger until a move is made or Sizemore dispels the notions that he can no longer properly play center. It has the potential to be like the Peralta to third movement of 2011.

### 3.) Is it time for Lonnie Chisenhall yet?

Taking the place of, "Is it time for Carlos Santana yet?" the question of when Lonnie Chisenhall will make his much anticipated debut is not only tied to Chisenhall's performance in Columbus, but whoever the Indians place at third base to start the season.

This in itself is a question that we will never hear the end of until the Indians actually make a definitive decision. The question there is more so when and that is a question no one can definitively answer.

So it all comes back to this idea of bringing in the young stud to play third base. Last year the Indians had to take a substantial look at Lou Marson behind the plate, solid enough reasoning to keep Santana (along with the idea of development, of course) in Columbus.

This year, even though we do not know who will be the third baseman, we can definitively say that they have no reason to get an extended look at this stop gap of a player.

That is also assuming they make no Russell Branyan-type investment at third. While assumptions are a dangerous business we are talking about the Cleveland Indians here, are we not? While they did make that Russell Branyan-type investment last year, the reports of "no money" have rung loud and clear this offseason.

Whoever this third baseman is, he'll be under the gun. Chisenhall's performance will likely also dictate when this question gets answered. If it unfolds like Santana's situation did last year, with the incumbent flopping around like a dead Lou Marson fish and Chisenhall acting superhuman for the Clippers, the screams will be deafening.

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A bad performance at third, especially defensively will give the Indians no reason to hold Chisenhall back, unless of course Chisenhall holds himself back. It becomes the classic case of clamoring for a top flight prospect to make his debut. That's the stuff the national media loves.

### 4.) Matt LaPorta?

Yes that is a question. I know it is just a name, but it doubles as a question. Why?

Why answer a question with another question? Did your parents not teach you that solves nothing?

Yep, I'm the one that did it. But I'm the writer here, so I can do that.

What I can't do is hit the ball for Matt LaPorta; that is something he has to do all by himself. The time has come for the one Ozzie Guillen calls Matola to walk all on his own in the big boy sandbox.

Potentially, this is a question that could get answered really quickly or linger for the length of the season. With all the other questions you can come up with for the offense (and surprisingly, they are not as annoying as "Matt LaPorta?"), this is one that desperately needs answered this year.

He's running out of excuses, unless of course he gets injured again (and that presents another question in itself). The Indians are going to take the time this offseason to build up LaPorta's stamina with better conditioning, he will be healthy and he certainly has his major league experience.

It is a question that needs nothing more than a first and last name. It is a question that comes

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up with any sort of upper-tier prospect with a lot of hype.

Alex Gordon? Homer Bailey? Matt Bush? Chad Mottola?

Whoa. So that's what Ozzie was talking about. Hopefully that was not an ugly case of foreshadowing.

Andy Marte?

I guess the question isn't just "Matt LaPorta?" but rather if Matt LaPorta can avoid becoming a question.

### **5.) Can we just move Justin Masterson to the bullpen already?**

The running two-year storyline of Masterson's move is quickly climbing the ranks of storylines that need to die and with Choo's military status resolved, now tops my personal list.

And trust me, I have talked endlessly about this topic, but enough is enough. Is this a legit question that still hangs in the balance? Absolutely, but does that mean it has to be a topic of interest every time the guy makes a start?

I've learned my lesson. Handling this start-by-start is wasting breath, ink, pages on the internet, whatever your form of reading or writing about it may be.

But this is a question that is not going away unless Masterson gives us Fausto Carmona circa 2007 and blows everyone away.

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Also consider the other factors that Masterson has no control of. A big reason the Indians didn't feel pressure to make the Masterson move was the lack of options to replace him with. If some of the other rotation options do not hold their end or give the Indians no reason to give them a shot, Masterson's odds of sticking in the rotation go up.

And if the opposite is the case, the pressure on Masterson grows a little more.

The fact of the matter is this. Masterson is masterfully teetering on that line. That line that shows he could hold the potential to be a productive rotation arm, perhaps even as good as top of the rotation. But that also means that if someone believes he cannot be that guy, they'll be quick to say, "Well he would at least be a dominant set-up guy."

I have been that guy sometimes.

Truth is this not going away anytime soon. As long as Masterson is in the rotation and not tipping the scales all the way in his direction, there will be that question.

It hardly makes for good television, but it certainly makes for a popular topic of discussion.

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*You can follow Nino on Twitter @ [TheTribeDaily](#) where he mourns the loss of Andy Marte and now often tweets more about the Cleveland Indians.*