

Not Much Sizemore

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}

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As the Indians find themselves in the midst of a portion of the schedule heavy with AL Central opponents, the season has taken another hard left turn as Grady Sizemore has found his way back to the DL with what could be a major knee injury that puts his season, and maybe even his career as an Indian, in question. As Sizemore made the turn around 1B on Sunday in Baltimore, something obviously gave way in his knee and his intimations that the injury feels a lot like the last one certainly don't bode well for anyone with a dog in this fight. Though [the results of his initial test](#) "did not initially reveal any signs of serious damage", allowing everyone to exhale (for a moment at least), there is still something wrong with Grady's "other" knee and what we saw on Sunday may be an indication that serious underlying issues may exist as generally "contusions" do not come about from hitting 1B the wrong way or simply by running around bases.

What those issues may be are anyone's guess (and remember that, with the Indians' reportage of injuries, actions speak louder than words), but Sizemore's injury certainly provides the Indians' season with a whole new angle as, although Sizemore had been scuffling since his return from the DL in late May, he remained unquestionably one of the most talented players on team, whose early-season tear now looks to be a fading memory of what once was and what we thought (not so long ago) what could be again. Suddenly, the Indians are faced with the prospect of not having Sizemore for the foreseeable future (and at least the next two weeks), with the option that the club holds on him for 2012 completely up in the air.

But that's getting a little ahead of ourselves as before looking forward, let's go back a little bit and see the similarities between the two injuries that Sizemore has now endured on his two knees. Lest anyone forget, Sizemore originally injured his knee in April of 2010, diving back to a base and attempted to fight his way through the injury until he "re-injured" it on May 16th of last year, sliding into a base. That "re-injury" in May of 2010 was what resulted in Grady's

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microfracture surgery, leading to the questions as to whether the Grady that we had come to know and admire was ever coming back to the North Coast.

Of course, when he returned in mid-April of 2011, he was gangbusters as he proved the skeptics wrong. Suddenly, he was that Grady that we all like to remember, posting a .974 OPS with 16 XBH in only 18 games...that is until he hurt his "other" knee sliding into 2B on May 10th, landing him back on the DL. While everyone breathed a sigh of relief that the injury was to his "other" knee, when Grady returned (on May 27th), all of that early-season momentum seemed to be gone as from his return on May 27th through his first 137, this is what he did at the plate:



Sizemore – 2011 (from May 27th to July 4th)

.189 BA / .270 OBP / .320 SLG / .590 OPS with 11 XBH, 47 K, and 10 BB in 137 PA

Why do I use the 137 PA mark, only up to July 4th?

Well, because it is instructive to look at similar timeframes when comparing Sizemore attempting to overcome his injury on May 10th of 2011 to the late-April injury of 2010. By that I mean, see that line up there?

Here's what Sizemore did to start the year last year, until the "re-injury" that resulted in his microfracture:

Sizemore – 2010

.211 BA / .271 OBP / .289 SLG / .560 OPS with 6 XBH, 35 K, and 9 BB in 140 PA

Could that be a coincidence?

Sure...and he had a little more power when he returned this year from the "initial" injury, but in both seasons, it was obvious that something was not quite right with Sizemore, something most noticeable in his alarming K rate and his defense, where he just seemed to be missing balls that he would have easily flagged down in previous years. After both "initial" knee injuries, Grady attempted to play through it until a seemingly innocuous "second" play (sliding into a base in 2010 and rounding 1B in 2011) caused enough damage that his long-term prospects came into question. We all know what the result of the 2010 surgery was and it remains to be seen what the doctors find this week in his other knee, but the possibility that the warning signs were there and the idea that Grady may have been pushing his luck after the first knee injury (which was

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obviously affecting him) because of his 2012 option, or because of the Indians' need for him, or it just being his nature to push himself is hard to ignore.

Where Sizemore goes from here is anyone's guess (depending upon the medical examination and despite the initial positive reports) as his last injury caused him to basically be out for a year and if we're talking about a similar injury or any other knee injury, it would be tough to imagine the Indians simply picking up a \$9M option (merely based on "what he could be") on a player that may be playing on two knees with major surgery on them in the past few years.

Maybe the allure of what Grady could be and his value as a "known" name play a role here more than it should (although this Front Office is known for making decisions with their head over their heart), but two strengths of Grady's game have always been speed and defense and with both knees perhaps undergoing procedures since May of last year, the wisdom of picking up that option (Grady's status as a fan favorite and as the onetime "Face of the Franchise" considered) wouldn't look too prudent as the Indians could simply pay the \$500K buyout to decline the option.

That said, perhaps another option could exist (and it's [one that I've](#) been [touting for a while](#)) as perhaps the Indians attempt to re-negotiate with Sizemore, using that club option as the carrot to dangle in front of Sizemore to add more club control at lower numbers past 2012. Or, perhaps they approach Sizemore on an incentive-laden deal past 2012, again using that \$9M as incentive for him to accept lower numbers than he'd thought he'd be earning past 2012. Unfortunately for Sizemore, the big contract that seemed so obvious for him may not come as he'll be left to prove that he's healthy and can be effective, a stunning downturn of a career that once seemed so limitless and [on a path only treaded by some of baseball's elite](#)

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Of course, maybe Sizemore's new knee injury turns out to be a "minor" issue, but his play since the injury on May 10th of this year seems to suggest that this may be more than a "minor" injury and (even worse) could be a sign of more bad things to come. While some could point to Carlos Beltran as a player who was able to overcome serious knee injuries to recapture his former glory (and I'll get back to Beltran in a little), Beltran's knee surgery (on one knee) was in January of 2010 and it's taken him more than a little time to ramp back up to his former production. If

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Grady does have two surgically repaired knees (and I realize that this is taking a leap, given that the test results will come out later this week), how much are we to really expect from him going forward?

That's the question now facing the Indians, as they await the results of these tests, as Grady (as we saw him for a month in April and May) is probably more talented than anyone in the organization, but is THAT player ever really coming back?

There's a \$9M club option hanging out there in the off-season that will show what the Indians think that answer is, and in the here and now, the Indians are left with the possibility that they may be without both Sizemore and Choo (whose self-proclaimed "2nd week of August return" is something I have yet to see an update on) for the next few weeks...at the very least. With that in mind, the Indians are in an unenviable position that they didn't occupy before Sizemore's injury as Grady's trip to the DL means that basically any player is going to upgrade this Indians' roster as the Tribe tries to keep pace with the Tigers and the White Sox.

Though a player like Zeke Carrera has value (mostly as a 4th OF) and Kearns and Buck haven't been THAT bad in Choo's absence (though Buck's HBP to the head is another factor here), not having the threat of Grady in the lineup (or even the threat of Grady, as he once existed) would seem to point that the Indians are going to add a bat...probably RH...and probably for the OF. While I'll hold out hope that they add a player that can help in the near-and-long-term (like Mike Morse), the growing likelihood that the team is going to pick out of the Ryan Ludwick/Josh Willingham pile has become too obvious to ignore.

While calls for Hunter Pence (who is overrated and will only get moved if someone DRASTICALLY overpays for him...and I hope that the Indians aren't that team) and Carlos Beltran persist as that "big BAT", the reality is that neither of those players is coming to Cleveland. While I've stated this before on Beltran, it is worth re-posting this as it is new from Jon Heymann as he attempts to gauge the market for Beltran, [dropping this in on the Tribe and the unlikelihood of him coming to Cleveland](#)

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Beltran has a no-trade clause and he has said he wants to play for a World Series contender, so the teams that are more certain to make the playoffs are most likely to be approved.

--snip--

7. Indians. *The American League's surprise team is determined to add an outfield bat. But with Beltran holding veto power, he could easily force his way to a team that's more of a sure thing.*

Since I'm not going to attempt to get into Beltran's head on this, just realize that Scott Boras is Beltran's agent and Boras and Heymann have a...um, relationship in which what Heymann writes (particularly on Boras' agents) is the message that Boras wants to convey. While I'm not going to go further than that (you can read [this](#) if you want), just realize that if Heymann is writing that about Beltran, a Boras agent, that's what is happening.

So where do the Indians go from here, particularly if Sizemore's knee injury is one that brings into question the prudence of picking up that 2012 option as it currently exists?

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Maybe they stick with Carrera, Buck, and Kearns to fill 2/3 of an outfield that was thought of to be a strength of this team going into the season to see if one of them can step into the void and take advantage of the opportunity in front of them...

Maybe they go the "rent-a-player" route and add one of the RH bats that have been bandied about that, though flawed, represent upgrades over what the Indians' current options are, particularly if Buck's HBP results in him missing more than a few games...



Maybe they get more aggressive in their pursuit of a long-term option as you're talking about a team that is now almost certainly in need of an OF for the next month, and perhaps into next year. Perhaps that means making a play for a Mike Morse or another similarly under-club-control player, stepping outside of their comfort zone to do so and [using their knowledge of their OWN players to make the right moves](#) and part with the "right" mix of players...

At this point, it certainly feels like a move is coming as the Front Office knows an opportunity when one is presented to them because of the first three months of the season. What that move is (assuming there is one) may tell quite a bit about what the Indians think of their chances this year and beyond and may even perhaps be telling as to whether they start making plans for "Life Without Grady".

While that notion of Sizemore NOT being in an Indians' uniform in 2012 may have been laughable just a few years ago, it's possible that Grady isn't playing in Cleveland in 2012, either because of a decision by the organization in the off-season or because of a prognosis of his doctors in the coming weeks...