



Paulie C. is taking this weekend “off” in order to move himself, a house full of furniture and three young boys into a new home, one that more appropriately fits Mom, Dad as well as 1/3 of a the starting lineup of a baseball team. So I’m sliding into the captain’s chair here on a Lazy Sunday that sees us eight days away from the non-wavier trade deadline. Despite opening the season with somewhat low expectations on their \$49 million payroll

, and despite having Grady Sizemore (x3), Travis Hafner, S.S. Choo, Alex White, Joe Smith, Carlos Carrasco, Mitch Talbot, Matt LaPorta and Fausto Carmona spend time on the DL, our Indians find themselves playing the role of buyer at the deadline for the first time since 2007. Indians fans seem almost confused to be in this role, as some think we should trade for Carlos Beltran and David Wright, some think we’re better of shopping in the bargain bin while others think we should just sit tight with what we have and see what happens. To find out where I fall on this spectrum as well as getting to see my mid-season top-10 prospects list, read on...

The big news from last week isn’t on the trade front per se, but that the Indians have again reached into the upper echelons of their farm system for a top prospect to try to jumpstart the sagging offense. Jason Kipnis was called up to The Show to make his major league debut this past Friday, and went 0-2 with a HBP in a 3-0 loss to his hometown Chicago White Sox. Kipnis follows the trail blazed by Alex White, Cord Phelps and Lonnie Chisenhall before him, as the Indians now have called up four of their top ten (and three of their top five) prospects going into 2011 in an effort to win THIS year. [My thoughts on the Kipnis call up are pretty much contained here](#), but others outside of the Cleveland area have been [weighing in as well.](#) [ESPN’s Jim Bowden, formerly the](#)

### [GM of the Reds and the Nationals, provides a scout's take](#)

on Kipnis (subscription required), saying "While the Indians' starting lineup just improved, we'll have to watch Kipnis' defense closely to see how far he's progressed since he changed positions less than two years ago." Bowden seems confident that Kip's bat will play this year and possibly be at an all-star level down the road, and projects that he will be a league-average defender as well by giving him a future grade of 50 (current grade of 45) in the field on the 20-80 scouting scale.

Staying on Kipnis for a moment, I've been asked a number of times via twitter and e-mail lately what type of player he will be at the major league level. Everyone loves comps, so here's one for you; none other than our very own Carlos Baerga. I think Kip's overall #'s at the plate will be very similar to what Carlos put up in his peak years, but Kip will be better in the field and hopefully have a longer peak than Baerga. From 1992-1994, Carlos averaged .316/.349/.484 with 20 HR, 100 RBI and 11 SB. That's what I think Kipnis could turn into. That's pretty much beset-case scenario and I don't see him finding quite that level of success this year, but based on what I've seen from him, read about him from respected voices in the industry and his minor league track record, that's what we could have on our hands in a year or two. So for those suggesting that the Indians include Kip in a deal for Hunter Pence...would you really give up 6 years of club control of Jason Kipnis as part of a package for 2 seasons of Hunter Pence when he would be eligible for arbitration? I wouldn't.



That dovetails nicely into our next segment here on LS...did the Indians already make their big deadline deal by bringing up Kipnis? [Per CNNSI's Jon Heyman, one unnamed AL scout thinks so.](#)

Heyman

quotes the scout as saying that

*"the Indians just made a blockbuster deadline trade," and added that Cleveland should get a "helluva in-season jolt."*

Hopefully that ends up being the case, as Kipnis to the big league roster as an in-season "trade" was something that has been floated in this space a number of times by both myself and Pauly C. Do I think it is a "blockbuster" trade and one that will propel the Indians to the Central Division crown all by itself? Absolutely not. Do I think that if given consistent playing time Kipnis will be better than Orlando Cabrera at the plate and in the field? I 100% do. So temper your expectations a little bit and give him time to get his feet wet, but hopefully Kipnis is here to stay and will be part of a run to the postseason this year, albeit not the driving force behind that run.

As far as actual trades from outside the organization go, your guess is as good as mine at this point. It's pretty clear that the Indians need a righthanded outfield bat, and they've been loosely linked to every name from Carlos Beltran to Coco Crisp. As my esteemed colleague Brian McPeck has pointed out, at this point the MLB trade deadline feels like almost as much of an ESPN creation as the ESPY's, and the "rumors" are just that, created to generate frequent page clicks and rake in advertiser dollars. [Baseball Prospectus takes a funny look at just how some of these rumors might get started](#)

and the ridiculousness of the whole situation. If I had to guess, I'd agree with guys like

[Kevin Goldstein](#)

and

[Jim Bowden](#)

who think that if the Indians make a move at all, it will be for a middle of the road bat like Ludwick or Crisp, and I'm fine with that. As I alluded to above when talking about Kipnis, I don't see how the Indians can even entertain the idea of giving up some of their valuable prospect currency for a short-term rental. I'd be ok with a minor prospect for a guy like Ryan Ludwick, but I wouldn't want to give up players who will be cheap and under club control for two+ months of Carlos Beltran. The way this team is set up, the 2012 Indians should be better than the 2011 Indians, and the 2013 club should be better still. If I was confident that this team was one player away from the World Series this year, I'd say trade anyone who won't be on the playoff roster and have at it. But they aren't quite there yet, and I'd hate to trade away a shot at the 2012-2016 postseason for a better chance at the 2011 one.

On the non-trade/non-prospect front, Grady Sizemore is once again on the disabled list. [Pauly pretty much captured everything you'd every want to know about Sizemore earlier this week](#), so I'm not going to linger on this very long.

[ESPN's "Injury Expert" Stephania Bell weighed in on news as well](#)

with some medical terms that I really don't understand. The bottom line is that Grady now has had trouble in both knees and has now had surgery to repair a "sports hernia" twice in the past

two years. Dr. Bill Meyers is apparently the Dr. James Andrews of the sports hernia world (who knew?) and he conducted the surgery, but I think that at this point anything we get from Grady down the stretch will be a pleasant surprise and certainly not anything that can be counted on in advance. I hope he comes back healthy and productive as he is a joy to watch when he is going good on the field, I just don't see how anyone can

*expect*

rather than

*hope*

for that at this point in time.



[Jordan&nbsp;Bastain takes a really interesting look at Justin&nbsp;Masterson's las t start](#), in which he threw one slider and 103 fastballs in 7 2/3 shutout innings against the Twins last Tuesday. I repeat, he threw 104 pitches, 103 of which were either 2 or 4-seam fastballs. The slowest fastball he threw was 89.9 MPH, and the fastest was 97.9. Basically, 99% of his pitches were over 90 MPH. One of the most significant developments between this season and last season for the Indians is the development of Masterson from a potential bullpen arm to a dominant front of the rotation starter. Justin Credible has a 3.77 ERA against lefthanded batters this year, who are hitting .278 off of him. That's a nice improvement over last year, when he posted a 4.02 ERA and a .290 average against southpaws. Any way you look at it, the 26-year old Masterson has taken a tremendous leap this year. If he can sustain his 2011 form, it will go a long way towards anchoring a solid rotation on the North Shore for the foreseeable future.

Like he does pretty much every time he steps up to the plate, [Anthony Castrovic knocks one out of the park](#) with his look at the trade market, injuries and whether or not this is a team of destiny. He tackles the buy/sell/hold question as well as anyone I've seen, and basically comes to the same conclusion I have. He just says it much better than I ever could:

*Yet the Indians carry on in this crazy division, and they have 10 days to decide how serious they want to take this final push. By and large, I'm not a big believer in Trade Deadline acquisitions*

*truly deciding divisions... at least, not in trade markets like this one. There are no CC Sabathias or Cliff Lees to be had here. By and large, the deadline is a pretty overrated avenue for improvement. I wrote some version of it before and I'll say it again that, with all apologies to the Ryan Ludwicks, Josh Willingham, Melky Cabreras and Aaron Harangs of the world, getting Choo or White back in the near term will do more wonders for this club than any of the reportedly available options on the market would.*

Basically, the best shot making and finding success in the playoffs this year will come not from external options but from the Indians own players getting healthy and productive. I still think we could see Nick Hagadone, C.C. Lee or Josh Judy up in the bullpen for the stretch run, so it's not like there are no more options from inside the organization. Nick Johnson appears to be healthy and hitting (3 HR in his last 7 games). So even if there isn't a major move in the next week or so, there could still be an infusion of talent in the days to come that could help push the team over the top.

As a special feature here on Lazy Sunday, I'm going to unveil my updated top-10 prospects in the Indians organization, plus a few who just missed. Fear not, as I will take a more in-depth look at all 50 from my preseason list as well as some of the guys who have played their way into the upper echelon of talent in the organization down the road, but here's a sneak peak at the top-10. As a reminder, players eligible for this list must have fewer than 50 IP or 130 AB at the major league level and have to be signed and in the organization. No Francisco Lindor here, yet.

### **1. Jason Kipnis, 2B-CLE**

He was #1 going into this year, and didn't do anything to lose that ranking in AAA Columbus. He was a AAA all-star, hit a HR in the MLB Futures Game, and put up a .279/.361/.481 line with 12 HR, 55 RBI and 12 SB in 13 attempts. Hopefully he's up in Cleveland for good, and will get consistent playing time as the everyday 2B.

### **2. Drew Pomeranz, SP-AKR**

I had him at #3 in March, he pitched his way up to the #2 spot with a dominating half-season in the Carolina League. He was promoted after the Futures Game and has made two starts in AA Akron, and he's put up a 1.87 ERA and 106 K in 86 2/3 innings of work between the two levels.

### **3. Lonnie Chisenhall, 3B-CLE**

Chiz wasn't setting the world on fire in Columbus when he was called up, but had put together a solid season and scouts were pretty much unanimous in their praise for his sweet lefthanded swing.

### **4. Alex White, SP-CLE**

White dominated at AAA Columbus and earned a ticket to Cleveland, where he pitched well before injuring his middle finger and going on the DL.

### **5. LeVon Washington, CF-LCC**

Washington hasn't been great in Lake County, but it is his first year in professional baseball and he's still just 19 years old.

### **6. Nick Weglarz, LF-AKR**

Wegz was primed for a big year in AAA Columbus, but tore his meniscus prior to the season and has only played ## games for AA Akron. He's struggled in Akron and still doesn't seem like he's 100% healthy, but he's one of the few power OF bats in the Indians organization.

### **7. Cord Phelps, INF-COL**

Phelps has been outstanding in Columbus, but struggled during his brief promotion to Cleveland earlier this year. Didn't exactly get consistent playing time on the North Shore, and will likely be

back at some point as a utility infielder.

### 8. C.C. Lee, RP-COL

Lee has been one of the most dominant relievers in the system this year, posting a 1.83 ERA and striking out 77 hitters in 54 IP between Akron and Columbus.

### 9. Nick Hagadone, RP-COL

Like Lee, Hagadone began the year in Akron before working his way to Columbus. He has a 2.86 overall ERA and 52 K in 50 1/3 innings of work, and will be a power arm in the back end of a major league bullpen sooner rather than later.

### 10. Chun Chen, C-AKR

The reviews on Chen's defense are improving, and his bat is still solid. He's hitting .280/.329/.475 for Akron with 10 HR so far this season.

**Just missed:** Zach McAllister, Scott Barnes, Zach Putnam, Jason Knapp, Joe Gardner, Rob Bryson



Last but certainly not least, I'd like to offer a heartfelt congratulations to former Indians Robbie

Alomar and Bert Blyleven as they enter the Hall of Fame today. Neither will wear the Chief Wahoo cap in the Hall, but both had some pretty good years on the North Shore. I'll never forget watching Alomar and Omar Vizquel play together up the middle, as every groundball hit by the opposing team was a potential webgem. Seeing them turn doubleplays was poetry in motion, and Robbie was no slouch with the bat in Cleveland either. He averaged .323/.405/.515 with 21 HR, 103 RBI and 35 SB in his three years playing for the Indians, the best three year offensive stretch of his career. Blyleven had four solid years in Cleveland, but he was a little before my time as his 1<sup>st</sup> year in Cleveland was the year I was born. So congratulations to both on their well-deserved induction into Cooperstown, and I look forward to seeing their plaques on the wall the next time I visit those hallowed grounds. Until next time....go Tribe!