

Papa Cass is back, and this time to hand out his final grades for every member of the Indians season ending roster, as well as Wedge, Shapiro, and the Dolans. Grady and Pronk both got A's, but where did the rest of the Tribe grade out? Find out here.



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In a follow up to my midterm grades for the team in July, it's time to give the Indians another progress report. "Progress" being a relative term. (Midterm grades in parenthesis.)

The lineup

Casey Blake, OF/1B
.282, 19 HR, 68 RBI

As far as manager Eric Wedge is concerned, Blake is an uber-Indian. He's so versatile, you need to wear versatility shades to watch him play. Once a serviceable third baseman who put his ego on the shelf to become a serviceable right fielder, he again put his ego on the shelf to become a serviceable first baseman.

Wedge and Mark Shapiro agree: he's a great player for this market.

Grade: B (B-plus)

Aaron Boone, 3B
.251, 7 HR, 46 RBI

In the words of Bob Hope, thanks for the memories.

Grade: D (C-minus)

Shin-Soo Choo, OF
.295, 3 HR, 22 RBI

If he's going to hold down a lineup spot, Choo has to do one of two things: hit for enough power to justify placing him in a corner outfield spot, or get on base enough to justify placing him first or second in the order.

My money is on the latter.

Grade: B (acquired after midterms)

Ryan Garko, 1B
.292, 7 HR, 45 RBI

I love what he brought to the table after being promoted in the second half. However, it would be a mistake to simply hand him the first baseman's job in spring training. He's not done earning his place on the team yet.

Grade B-plus (promoted after midterms)

Franklin Gutierrez, OF
.272, 1 HR, 8 RBI

He raised his batting average significantly from his .229 at midterms, but it's a hollow victory since it brought nothing in the way of production.

As of right now, Gutierrez is nary more than a fourth outfielder.

Grade: C-minus (C)

Travis Hafner, DH
.308, 42 HR, 117 RBI

And to think, he did it all in five months before a broken hand cost him September.

If the Indians can't find the cash to lock Pronk up past 2008, or at least force a big market team to pay through the nose to pry him away, the Dolan regime will officially be a joke in my book.

Grade: A (A)

Joe Inglett, 2B
.284, 2 HR, 21 RBI

See Shin-Soo Choo. And my money is on neither.

A respectable bench player, nothing more.

C-plus (Incomplete)

Kevin Kouzmanoff, 3B/DH
.214, 3 HR, 11 RBI

Right now, "The Kouz" serves the valuable purpose of pushing Andy Marte for the third baseman's job next spring. But as much of a fan favorite as Kouzmanoff is becoming, the only way he doesn't start the season in Buffalo next year is if Marte completely bombs in spring training.

Grade: Incomplete (promoted after midterms)

Hector Luna, IF
.276, 2 HR, 17 RBI

If his glove settles back down, he can be a good utility player, but little more. I still find it difficult to believe that both he and Inglett might make the 25-man roster next April. But that might be the case.

Grade: C (acquired after midterms)

Andy Marte, 3B
.226, 5 HR, 23 RBI

He has yet to impress, but he is still the frontrunner to be the team's starting third baseman on opening day.

In my book, he is a future Gold Glove third baseman who will never hit for a high average but should provide 30-homer power every year. Not a heart-of-the-order hitter, but a good option hitting sixth or seventh.

Grade: C (promoted after midterms)

Victor Martinez, C/1B
.316, 16 HR, 93 RBI

Martinez can thank Garko for saving his catcher's job late in the season. It would still be a better scenario if Martinez could take his proficient bat to a less-taxing defensive position, but it appears Martinez is locked in at catcher for the foreseeable future.

Grade B-plus (B-plus)

Jason Michaels, LF
.267, 9 HR, 55 RBI

Got to love his hustle, but I still get the feeling that Michaels is another Casey Blake, a "four-A" player who can only be a respectable major leaguer if he overachieves to the nth degree. Guys like Michaels and Blake are great for rounding out the roster, but you don't want them to be a major ingredient in your foundational concrete.

Grade: C-plus (B-minus)

Jhonny Peralta, SS
.257, 13 HR, 68 RBI

Too often this year, he seemed clueless or disinterested at the plate and in the field. He started to ramp up in the final two weeks of the season, but it's only a small sample of what is going to be needed for him to stay in the team's long-term picture.

As it is, the Indians are going to roll the dice and hope this year was an aberration. If it wasn't, they're in trouble.

Grade: C-minus (C-minus)

Kelly Shoppach, C
.245, 3 HR, 16 RBI

He played like a backup catcher and put up the stats of a backup catcher. The only thing that puts him in the conversation for starting is his arm, far better than that of Martinez.

Grade: C-plus (Incomplete)

Grady Sizemore, CF
.290, 28 HR, 76 RBI

He's so good as a leadoff hitter that part of me wants to keep him there. But with his bat in the third slot, he could easily have passed the 30 HR, 100-RBI mark. If they can find a competent leadoff hitter (Choo, are you listening?), I'd be all for a Sizemore-Hafner tandem batting third and fourth, the back-to-back lefties theory be damned.

Grade: A (A)

The pitching

Rafael Betancourt
3-4, 3.81 ERA

I still haven't seen anything out of him that makes me think he's any more than a solid middle reliever. But the Indians reportedly will continue to try and shoehorn him in as a setup man.

Grade: C (C)

Andrew Brown
No record, 3.60 ERA

Live arm, questionable control. Possibly trade bait to find a more experienced reliever.

Grade: Incomplete (promoted after midterms)

Paul Byrd
10-9, 4.88 ERA

He started slowly, improved in the middle of the season, then slumped again in September. A passable No. 4 starter, but there's no way he's earning his \$7 million salary.

Grade: C-minus (C)

Fernando Cabrera
3-3, 5.19 ERA

Suddenly, like magic, the light bulb went on in August and he became competent again. Kind of like the team.

If he wants to realize his potential, he needs to bring it for six months, otherwise he's a waste of time.

Grade: C (D)

Fausto Carmona
1-10, 5.42 ERA

He was "Tim Couch" by the Indians in the middle of the season, thrown into the ninth inning fire with very little preparation.

Unlike Couch, his handlers suddenly came to their senses and reinstated him as a starter, where he showed steady improvement as the season drew to a close.

If Shapiro has any sense, Carmona will start next season in the rotation, otherwise they will mess up this promising young pitcher beyond repair.

Grade: C-minus (B)

Jason Davis
3-2, 3.74 ERA

His stuff is mouth-watering, but he rarely impresses. This has been going on for parts of five seasons. Something tells me he's going to be traded in the offseason.

Grade: C (D)

Jeremy Guthrie
No record, 6.98 ERA

His contract is up, as is his time with the Indians. Both sides tried and failed to make it work. Don't be a stranger, Jeremy. Stop in and visit sometime.

Grade: D (Incomplete)

Juan Lara
No record, 1.80 ERA

The sample of his work is too small for any real analysis. He might have a future as a situational lefty.

Grade: Incomplete (promoted after midterms)

Cliff Lee
14-11, 4.40 ERA

He somewhat rescued a disappointing season in September. His ability to go deep into games is a concern. He simply can't fall as hard as he consistently did in the sixth and seventh innings this year. Perhaps conditioning is the issue?

Grade: B-minus (B)

Tom Mastny
5 saves, 5.51 ERA

He saved the closer's role to some degree, but he blew a few saves, too. He's not a closer, but he might have a future in the bullpen.

Grade: C (promoted after midterms)

Matt Miller
0-1, 3.45 ERA

I wrongly declared his career dead and buried when he reinjured his elbow for the umpteenth time earlier this year. He did a reasonably good job in September and appears to be in line for a bullpen spot next year.

Grade: C (injured at midterms)

Edward Mujica
No record, 2.95 ERA

Do the Indians really need two Raffy Betancourts?

Grade: C-plus (promoted after midterms)

C.C. Sabathia
12-11, 3.22 ERA

I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to fall in the trap. The instant I declare C.C. an ace is the instant he starts next season 0-4 with a 6-plus ERA. He had a fine finish, that's all I'm going to say.

Grade: B (B-minus)

Brian Sikorski
0-2, 4.58 ERA

Thanks for playing. We have some lovely parting gifts for you.

C-minus (acquired after midterms)

Brian Slocum
No record, 5.60 ERA

He moved to the rotation at season's end. I doubt he'll be there to start next season without an overhaul of the rotation. If anything, he can be a nice insurance policy at Buffalo.

Grade: C (promoted after midterms)

Jeremy Sowers
7-4, 3.57 ERA

The Indians were right to shut him down in September. I would have done it even sooner. He looks like the meal ticket for this rotation in years to come.

Grade: B-plus (Incomplete)

Jake Westbrook
15-10, 4.17 ERA

He's the quintessential middle-rotation starter. He keeps churning out consistent decent work. I have no problems with him.

Grade: B

Off the field

Eric Wedge, Manager

If a team is a reflection of the manager, look no further than the team's record as a mathematical quantification. In Wedge's case, it's a mediocre 78-84.

Grade: C-minus (C-minus)

Mark Shapiro, General Manager

His winter moves put this team behind the eight-ball. His summer moves were a direct consequence of the non-contention the winter moves caused, but they were still mostly good given the situation. Choo, for one, looks like a solid find.

Grade: C-plus (C-minus)

Larry and Paul Dolan, owners

They haven't earned their grades yet. They have set the table by promising a significant increase in payroll for 2007. We'll see what happens from here.

Grade: Incomplete (C)