

My Closer Vinnie

Written by {ga=riverburns}

Monday, July 30 2012 5:00 PM - Last Updated Monday, July 30 2012 7:44 PM



For the record, I would be perfectly content if [Chris Perez](#) is still employed by the Cleveland Indians on Wednesday morning. They currently pay the man to hurl the ball 60 feet and 6 inches for the last three outs when they have a small lead, and he goes out there and earns his wage.

He's a master of his craft, and there's no doubt about it, but just because you can't spell "relief pitcher" without a "P" and an "R" doesn't mean he needs to excel at public relations.

So, maybe he isn't out to be friends with all of the fans. If you don't do the whole Twitter thing, you may not even know what the hell I'm talking about, but Perez doesn't always come across like he seeks the approval of his so-called fans, specifically his cyber naysayers.

With Twitter, it's an uncensored two-way street that the athletes of previous generations never dealt with, and players like Perez, who choose to tweet, expose themselves to an ugly segment of the population, which mitigates the situation somewhat.

Even with the social media device, Perez is a feisty young man who says what's on his mind even with the more traditional media, with no regard to any popularity contests.

Truthfully, none of that has any bearing on what Larry Dolan, Mark Shapiro, Chris Antonetti, or Yours Truly think of him, and positively does not influence whether or not he's in the visitor's bullpen at Kauffman Stadium on Wednesday night. In a perfect world, this would not even be up for debate. Manny Acta has given him the ball 31 times in a Save situation, and 29 times he has slammed the door shut.

It isn't perfection, but it's pretty damn close; it's close enough that you want this guy on your team if seeing your team win is important to you.

Unfortunately, there's a harsh reality when it comes to professional baseball in Cleveland in the year 2012 and beyond.

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Simply put, Chris Perez may be seen as more valuable as part of a transaction than he can possibly be as a member of the roster going forward. The 27 year old “lights-out” Closer is making \$4.5 million this year, and [can expect to make something in the ballpark of \\$7 million next year if his case goes to arbitration as expected](#)

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The Tribe’s brain trust is going to have to make a difficult decision about whether or not they can contend while they can stay within their microscopic budget to afford Perez’s services.

They do not have to trade him this week, but certainly will if presented with the right offer.

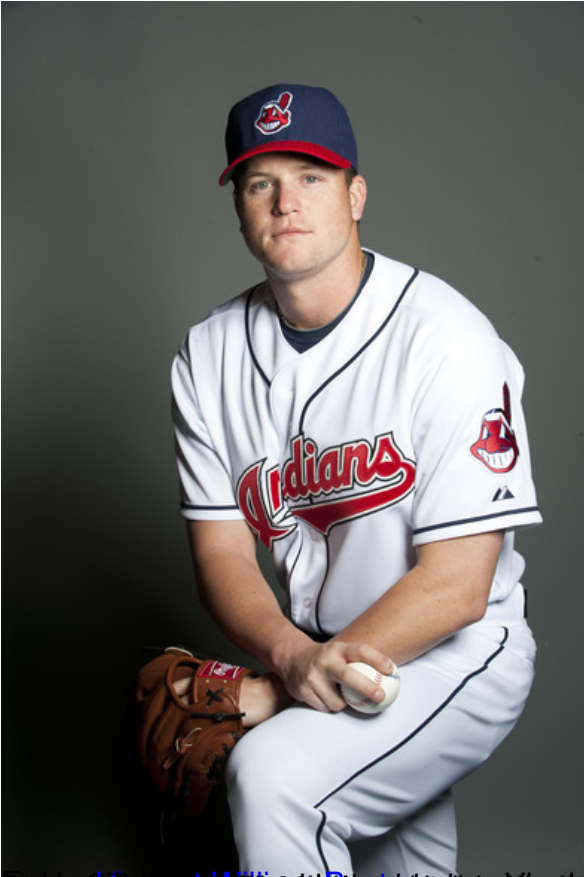
Of course, should Perez leave, the Indians are still obligated to play about 60 more games this season, and are likely to fulfill that obligation. Occasionally, they might even find themselves leading a game or two, needing just three outs to achieve victory.

Without Perez, they do have a capable young man that I believe can get the job done. As much as anyone can appreciate what Joe Smith had done this season, he is probably not the man for the job.

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BJ Ryan

[2004](#)

Jorge Julio(22)

87

[2005](#)

70.1

Francisco Rodriguez

[2004](#)

Troy Percival(33)

84

[2005](#)

67.1

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Mariano Rivera [1996](#) John Wetteland(43) 107.2

[1997](#) --- 71.2

Vinnie Pestano [2012](#) Chris Perez(29) 43



Obviously, there is some precedent to that translation. We could start with the greatest closer the game has ever seen, Mariano Rivera, who once upon a time was John Wetteland's setup man in New York.

The young Rivera dazzled in 1996, playing his role in the Yankees run to their first of four World Championships in five years behind Rivera's 8-3 record and accompanying 2.09 ERA, which put him third in the Cy Young voting that year.

We're not looking to make Pestano walk a mile or even a footstep in the shoes of the greatest of all time, but sometimes it's okay to shoot for the moon.

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Names like Frankie Rodriguez and BJ Ryan or a little more familiar to this planet, so we can justifiably compare their setup campaigns of 2004 to what Vinnie is doing this year. The formula is the same across the board, and that includes Rivera; throw the ball in the strike zone, miss the bats, and make the other guy deal with the pressure.

That may be a bit of a misnomer because another constant for the three guys we're looking at shows that they didn't have to do quite as much once they were handed the closer role.

I'm not saying anything definitive here, but I'm just saying it's possible that Pestano belongs in this company.

With Perez, or without Perez, it appears that Indians fans may be able to breathe some sort of sigh of relief when it comes to holding close leads late in games. The hardest part may be possessing those said advantages, if various pieces/parts are sold off to the highest bidder in the next 48 hours.