



It's July 31st, and you're Chris Antonetti. Before you lies an underachieving team with its playoff hopes fading to a flicker. In your rearview mirror-- the twisted wreckage of the Ubaldo Jimenez trade. You're feeling gun-shy. Probably best to stand pat this time around. ...But that's when you get the phone call. It's Dayton Moore, GM of the Kansas City Royals, and he is about to offer you a deadline deal of unprecedented proportions. "Our roster for your roster, straight up," he says, matter-of-factly. You chuckle at first. These are the last place Royals—owners of two winning seasons in the last two decades. The mere thought is ludicrous! But then, just for the hell of it, you scan the KC roster. And you glance back at your own. You check out the contracts, the stats, the bats, even the bullpen. Suddenly, the cat's got your tongue. You're actually rattling this thing over in your mind. Maybe it could be a fresh start? Change the cast to save the show. New blood to stir the fan base. Is it crazy? Do you do it? With the future in mind, would you take these Royals over your Indians?

Of course no offer like this ever was, is, or ever will be on the table. But as the Royals look to sweep a series from the Indians and potentially hammer the last nail in Cleveland's 2012 coffin, it's at least an interesting question to ponder. For while the Tribe's obligatory "window of opportunity" might be cracked open a tad wider than the Royals' at the moment, it's hardly a slam dunk to say the Cleveland roster—as currently constituted— really offers more reason for optimism.

I suppose it should be mentioned that, through 103 games, the Royals (43-60) currently have the worst record in the American League—a pretty big disappointment considering this was supposed to mark the beginning of their ascension into borderline competitiveness. They sit 6.5 games in back of the flat-lining Indians (50-54), a team that has spent large chunks of time in

first place each of the last two seasons—creating a perception of relevance. Judging by the standings, anyone would prefer sticking with the roster Antonetti has already assembled (hoping they pull it together) rather than taking on the seemingly monumental task of lifting the Royals out of their cellar-dwelling comfort zone. With both teams basically entering a 2013 mindset at the moment, however, it's probably worth looking beyond the wins and losses to see how they have truly stacked up.

2012 Indians and Royals Team Stats (Through July 31)

.....AVG..... OPS ... HRR..... SB ERA WHIP K/9 BB SV%

Indians25372493 ... 439 68 4.65 1.40 6.65 358 ... 84%

Royals268727 82 42364 4.52 1.45 ... 7.43 365 ... 68%

These don't really look like two ballclubs with light years of distance between them, do they?

Heading into this season, the Tribe's central point of superiority over KC was starting pitching—which isn't saying much, considering every team in baseball looks down on the gopher-ball delivery company that passes as the Royals starting rotation. The Ubaldo deal has been a massive success compared to the atomic wedgie KC inflicted on itself with the Melky Cabrera-for-Jonathan Sanchez swap this past winter. With an offense that looked loaded for bear and a rotation in the usual shambles, sacrificing a top bat (with a ballooning contract) for a pretty decent left-handed starter seemed like a smart, practical move. Unfortunately, Sanchez adapted to his new environs by becoming the worst pitcher in baseball, posting a 7.76 ERA and 2.04 WHIP in 12 starts before getting sent back to the NL like a bowl of soup with a hair in it. Making matters worse, Luke Hochevar has yet to relinquish his role as the Royals' staff ace, despite an ERA of 5.22 (right around his CAREER mark of 5.27). So yeah, this is not a pitching staff anybody in their right mind would wish to adopt. It's just worth noting that while KC does rank 13th in the AL in starting pitcher ERA (5.44), the Indians sit right next to them at #12 (4.99). We're really just talking about degrees of suck here.

AND then you've got those bats. Even with Melky Cabrera's exit and the backward steps taken by Alex Gordon, Jeff Francoeur, and Eric Hosmer this season, the Royals have the makings of a very strong lineup for years to come. As Hosmer has proved (much like Carlos Santana), no youngster is ever going to be 100% dependable. But because KC has developed a boat load of its top draft picks into Major League contributors, they still appear to be a team navigating forward with at least some semblance of competency—just a couple of those elusive arms shy of legit respectability.

So is the Royals' window destined to swing open wider than the Tribe's? Does the departure of FOUR first round draft picks from Cleveland in the past year indicate where the stories of these two clubs really diverge? Well, as we're prone to do in these situations, let's just compare the line-ups head to head as they stand right now and have a gander. Indians vs. Royals: which roster would you want to wake up to tomorrow?



**Indians vs Royals:
Position By Position Comparison - 2012
Catcher**



Carlos Santana, age 26 (.750 OPS) vs Salvador Perez, age 22 (.882 OPS)

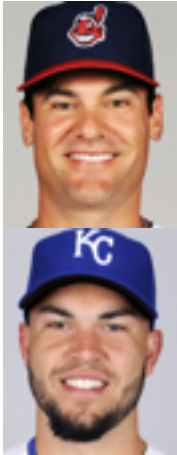
2012 Salary (+Year Eligible for Free Agency)

\$502,000 (2017) vs \$750,000 (2018)

Acquired

Casey Blake Trade, 2008 //// Amateur Free Agent, 2006

First Base



Casey Kotchman, 29 (.650) vs. Eric Hosmer, 22 (.660)

Salary

\$3,000,000 (2013) vs. \$503,000 (2018)

Acquired

Free Agent, 2012 ///// Round 1, 2008 Draft

Second Base



Jason Kipnis, 25 (.748) vs. Chris Getz, 28 (.703)

Salary

\$482,000 (2018) vs. \$968,000 (2015)

Acquired

Round 2, 2009 Draft // // // // Mark Teahen Trade, 2009

Shortstop



Asdrubal Cabrera, 26 (.789) vs. Alcides Escobar, 25 (.771)

Salary

\$4,550,000 (2015) vs \$1,000,000 (2016)

Acquired

Eduardo Perez Trade, 2006 // // // // Zack Greinke Trade, 2010

Third Base



Lonnie Chisenhall, 23 (.756) vs. Mike Moustakas, 23 (.770)

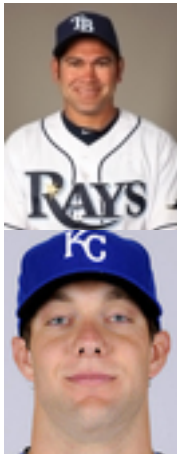
Salary

\$414,200 (2018) vs. \$487,000 (2018)

Acquired

Round 1, 2008 Draft // // // // // Round 1, 2007 Draft

Left Field



Johnny Damon, 38 (.621) vs. Alex Gordon, 28 (.809)

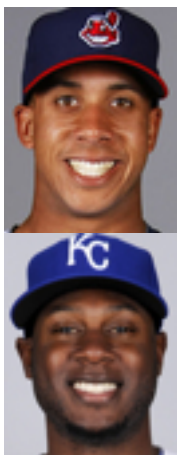
Salary

\$1,250,000 (2013) vs. \$6,000,000 (2016)

Acquired

Free Agent, 2012 // // // // // Round 1, 2005 Draft

Center Field



Michael Brantley, 25 (.763) vs. Lorenzo Cain, 26 (.756)

Salary

\$495,000 (2017) vs. \$481,000 (2018)

Acquired

Sabathia Trade, 2008 // // // // Zack Greinke Trade, 2010

Right Field



Shin-Soo Choo, 30 (.855) vs. Jeff Francoeur, 28 (.642)

Salary

\$4,900,000 (2014) vs \$6,000,000 (2014)

Acquired

Ben Broussard Trade, 2006 // // // // Free Agent, 2010

Designated Hitter



Travis Hafner, 35 (.784) vs. **Billy Butler, 26** (.880)

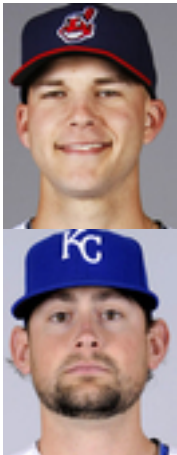
Salary

\$13,000,000 (2013) vs. \$8,000,000 (2015)

Acquired

Einar Diaz/Ryan Drese Trade, 2002 // // // // Round 1, 2004 Draft

Starting Pitchers



Justin Masterson, 27 (4.47 ERA) vs. **Luke Hochevar, 28** (5.22)

Salary

\$3,825,000 (2015) vs. \$3,510,000 (2015)

Acquired

V. Martinez Trade, 2009 // // // // Round 1, 2006 Draft



Walter Jimenez, 28 (5.28) / **Bruce Chen**, 35 (5.49)



Tech McAllister, 24 (2.62) / **Luis Mendoza**, 28 (4.32)



Robert Hernandez, 31 (2.64) / **Jeremy Guthrie**, 33 (6.68)





~~Winnie Pustino, 27 (5.17), 2009 Draft~~ ~~Greg Holland, 26 (3.63)~~



~~Joe Smith, 25 (4.97), 1st round, 2009 Draft~~ ~~Deon Crow, 25 (3.68)~~
Other Bullpen Arms

Tony Sipp, 28 (5.19) // // // // Kelvim Herrera, 22 (2.92)

Nick Hagadone, 26 (6.39) // // // // Tim Collins, 22 (3.29)

Esmil Rogers, 26 (2.74) // // // // Jose Mijares, 27 (2.15)

Cody Allen, 23 (0.00) // // // // Louis Coleman, 26 (4.41)

Bench Crew

Jack Hannahan, 32 - 3B (.642) // // // // // Yuniesky Betancourt, 30 - 2B (.666)

Shelley Duncan, 32 - LF (.744) // // // // // Jarrod Dyson, 27 - CF (.656)

Lou Marson, 26 - C (.707) // // // // Brayan Pena, 30 - C (.651)

Jose Lopez, 28 - 3B (.646) // // // // Johnny Giavotella, 24 - 2B (.521)

So, you're Chris Antonetti, and you're having a crazy psychedelic dream in which Dayton Moore offers to swap the entire Kansas City Royals roster for the entire Cleveland Indians roster. You know your team was a contender as recently as a week ago. You know the Royals were a contender as recently as 1985. And yet, you're thinking about it, aren't you? You're thinking it just might make sense. ... Waking up in a cold sweat, you decide you might as well hold a press conference to introduce Lars Anderson to the Columbus faithful.