

Papa Cass weighs in with his thoughts on the Indians recent trade, and is genuinely excited about their young infield of Garko, Barfield, Peralta, and Marte. In the same breath, Cassano wonders aloud where the veteran presence and leadership is going to come from. And should the Tribe have used Kouz to shore up their bullpen instead?



Visit the Papa Cass weblog at <http://papacass.blogspot.com/>

I didn't think it was possible, but the Indians managed to [get even younger Wednesday.](#)

The acquisition of 23-year-old second baseman **Josh Barfield** will give the Indians an infield chock full of youthful exuberance next year, and the accompanying inexperience.

If we assume the infield will consist of Ryan Garko, Jhonny Peralta, Andy Marte and Barfield, it would mean Garko, currently 25, would be the granddaddy. Marte and Peralta are both 24. Only Peralta has more than one full year of experience in the bigs.

More on that in a few paragraphs.

At first blush, I like the acquisition of Barfield, whom Baseball America rated as the Padres' top prospect in 2004 and '05. This past season, his first in the big leagues, he hit .280, a number that likely would have been much higher had he not called the wide open spaces of Petco Park home.

Barfield hit .241 at home, .319 on the road. He managed 21 stolen bases, 13 homers and 58 RBI largely hitting down in the order.

Best of all, this means the Indians aren't going to be calling on Joe Inglett, Hector Luna or Craig Counsell to start at second base.

I only have two real reservations about the deal:

One, could a trade of Kevin Kouzmanoff have been better used to shore up the bullpen, a place that will be much harder to address in free agency than second base?

Kouzmanoff, a big bat with upside, was quite possibly the biggest trade bullet the Indians had to fire this winter, and not only did he not yield any pitching, the Indians had to give up a pitcher in the deal, packaging Andrew Brown.

It begs the question: what, exactly, is Mark Shapiro going to do to beef up his threadbare relief corps? I'm not seeing a whole lot of options.

Two is the youth issue. The infield, combined with 24-year-old Grady Sizemore and 24-year-old Shin-Soo Choo in the outfield, might mean that two-thirds of the batting order could be 26 or younger on opening day.

That's not the age bracket of a contender; that's the age bracket of a rebuilding team still trying to get experience.

Young talent is great. Teams like the Indians thrive on it. But this team will need capable veterans to provide the backbone as Kevin Millwood, Bob Howry and Bob Wickman did in 2005.

The Indians love their young core. They talk about the core all the time. The core is great. Long live the core. But to make this a team, and a team that can win, those elder statesmen will have to come from somewhere.

And no, I'm not talking about Casey Blake and Jason Michaels.