



I'm not 100 percent clear on what journalistic integrity means these days, but I reckon it requires me to preface this exciting, breaking news story with a brief, boring clarification of its headline. Technically, before I sat down to type the article you're about to briskly skim, there were-- in fact-- **no rumors whatsoever about Omar Vizquel returning to Cleveland to retire as an Indian**. But hey, you clicked the link anyway, and in the Twitter age, we have the power to nominate our own "reliable sources." So let us soldier on with this breakdown of the possibly imminent waiver-wire deal that will finally reunite the cast of "Omar y Amigos!"

Before these Omar whispers began (one paragraph ago), Indians fans were experiencing what could be called a collective "2:30 feeling"— extreme fatigue on the last stretch of a joyless enterprise. It's certainly hard to summon enthusiasm when the groundhog has foreseen six more weeks of a fidgety Casey Kotchman weakly chopping out to the pitcher. But dread not, friends, for now we have our solution! As evidenced by the jolt of energy that was Jim Thome's dramatically unnecessary return to Cleveland last year, nostalgia is clearly the best (and most affordable!) way to wake up groggy baseball fans in the dog days of football preseason. And in 2012, our retro human bobblehead has a new name—as Mark Tromba used to say it—Oh Mar Veeees Kellllll!

That's right, your favorite Venezuelan (sorry, Asdrubal. sorry, Hugo Chavez.) is coming back to retire as an Indian. I mean, it's a logical assumption at least. The dude played 11 of his 24 seasons here. We weren't gonna let him ride off into the sunset as an effing Blue Jay, were we?

Just a few months ago, Vizquel—who can no longer be described as “prematurely” balding now that he’s 46—announced that the 2012 season would finally be his last as a player. His contributions to the cellar dwelling Toronto Blue Jays would seem to support this conclusion, as “Little Omie” (as my mom used to call him) has managed to hit just .223 in 45 games, driving in 3 runs and stealing 3 bases. Of course, he’s also made just one error in 107 chances split between 2B, 3B, 1B, LF, and his native shortstop. The old man can still pick it with the best of ‘em, even if he was already in the Majors when his infield mate Brett Lawrie was still attached to an umbilical cord (1990).

In any event-- regardless of the sage wisdom Vizquel may have offered Lawrie and the rest of the young Jays this season—Toronto has absolutely no need to ride the season out with a guy capable of remembering the moon landing. They have prospects to develop, after all. If Vizquel wants to go out with pride as an active member of a ball club, it only makes sense for him to land on a squad with little to no young talent worth promoting in September. And that’s where your Tribe comes in!

While the Thome signing supposedly had an on-field purpose a year ago (Hafner was on the DL, so we clearly needed another old, slow, gloveless, strikeout prone, left-handed DH to take his place), it wound up succeeding exclusively as a public relations move—which might be disappointing if not for the fact that it’s been the only “feel good” deal the front office has pulled off in recent memory. Thome’s return helped pacify a fan base that would have otherwise been miffed at the Indians’ depressing collapse from relevance in the final two months of the 2011 campaign. Better still, the boost in ticket sales created by Thomefest would later prove invaluable in funding the offseason re-signings of Grady Sizemore and “Fausto Carmona” (Yay!). So, when a strategy works once, logic always says, **DOUBLE DOWN!**



The Vizquel Farewell scenario even comes with a couple advantages over the Thome version. 1) Unlike Jim, Omar's popularity never diminished in the slightest after his 2004 departure (a perk of being dismissed rather than dismissing ones self). 2) Vizquel is almost definitely retiring for sure, which means less chance of him following Thome's course and giving Tribe fans one last turkey nose gesture before signing with the f\$%#ing Phillies again.

So yeah, we can do the nightly standing ovations and unveilings of "eventual" statues for Vizquel with far less crowing from the contrarian player-haters who were burning their Thome bobbleheads in effigy. Maybe we could even work in a WWE style square-off in the center of the diamond between Omar and Jose Mesa, where the two old foes shake hands respectfully just before Omar drops a surprise clothesline on the unsuspecting Joe Table, dropping him to the turf as the crowd roars in appreciation. The entertainment options are endless, and they all easily trump watching Ubaldo Jimenez labor through another 40 pitch inning.

As one anonymous, imaginary source in the Indians clubhouse put it, "Everybody loves Omar. Especially the ladies. Whose wife wouldn't come out to the ballpark to see old #13 bare-hand one more chopper deep in the hole? Hell, Jason Donald and Brent Lillibridge's wives would prefer that over watching their own husbands."

Indeed, retarding the development of our young players is well worth the temporary joy of pretending that our hero-- and all of us vicariously— might yet be young again. But what about when the season ends? Do we just honor Omar's legacy by spreading the gospel of "If Ozzie Smith is a Hall of Famer, so is Omar Vizquel"? Or could this dance go on a bit longer?

Just this week, Vizquel told reporters that he would like to be a Major League manager as early as next season (a [substantiated fact in this case](#)). That might seem like a bit of a silly goal for a guy with no prior coaching experience, but considering how many radio talk show hosts feel that Manny Acta is the worst manager in baseball right now, it seems pretty fair to presume that Omar—riding a crest of renewed popularity-- would be an immediate candidate for the Indians vacant managerial job this winter. And regardless if he or current bench coach Sandy Alomar snagged the gig, the Tribe PR team would have themselves a dream scenario—free to dive ever deeper into their retro obsessed abyss. "Remember when Kenny Lofton came back? And when Jim Thome came back? And then Sandy? And then Omar? Well what if Bob Feller came back—a soulless Zombie Feller criticizing modern players for their haircuts and tattoos as he feasts upon their brains? What if?"

Seriously though, Antonetti-- just as a good revenue-based business decision-- trade Toronto a bucket of balls for Omar Vizquel. Make my rumor a reality. Because despite every snarky, sarcastic thing I just said, I'd be pathetically thrilled about it. It's either that or I celebrate how the Browns just "beat" the Packers in preseason. Your choice.

