



“They did nothing over the off-season to make this team better.” So goes the standard, widely accepted preface to the enormously disappointing tale of the 2012 Cleveland Indians. As to whether it’s the truth? Well, the team certainly isn’t any better, so can’t really argue with that part. But, in the interest of fairness, it’s simply incorrect to say the Indians did “nothing” during the last hot stove season. In fact, they went out and acquired nearly TWENTY players with recent Major League experience—including former all-stars, top ten prospects, ex-closers, and Minor League Players of the Year. Were any of them expected to be big contributors in 2012? Not really. But when you start to consider what really separates baseball’s contenders from the pretenders, it’s often a handful of these overachieving B-listers that wind up tipping the scales. In other words, the production you *didn’t* expect can matter as much as the production you counted on. And in 2012, the Indians’ failure to capture lightning in any of those bottles wound up spelling the team’s doom as much as anything.

A Diamondless Rough

The blame game has no box score. And as the Indians’ season tumbles desperately further into self-parody (see [video representation here](#)), that lack of a definitive scapegoat has become all the more frustrating for a bloodthirsty fan base. Sure, it’s easy enough to prop Ubaldo Jimenez up on the dunk tank, or to question Manny Acta’s laid back demeanor (funny that Robin Ventura is being praised for the same trait in Chicago). We’ve all taken our turn bemoaning those terrible draft classes, too—an argument [well countered once and for all by Al Ciammiachella.](#)

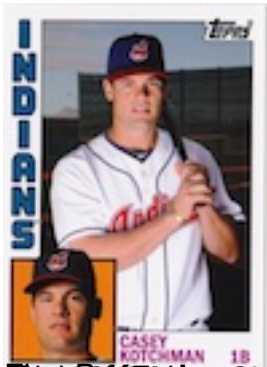
What you won't hear quite so often, though, are statements like, "Man, if only Felix Pie had worked out," or, "the whole season might have gone differently if Kevin Slowey had figured his shit out." Obviously, it'd just be ridiculous to put so much emphasis on any one of those journeyman, shot-in-the-dark pickups Chris Antonetti stockpiled over the winter. However, if we look at the *entirety* of the Indians' off-season acquisitions as one unified entity, it suddenly becomes a lot easier to assess how they helped or hindered the team's efforts to compete in 2012. No GM expects ALL of his low-level free agent signings to play beyond expectations. He should, however, presume that at least a couple of them will.

Every team in the AL playoff race made a few less-than-splashy additions in the off-season that have worked out far better than they could have anticipated. Along with the nice bounce-back season from free agent pitcher Jason Hammel (8-6, 3.54), the Orioles (65-55) have also found diamonds in the rough with a couple cheap pickups in bullpen arm Luis Ayala (2.97 ERA) and young starter Miguel Gonzalez (5-2, 3.38). In Oakland (64-55), Cuban free agent Yoenis Cespedes (16 HR, 60 RBI, .306) has lived up to the headlines, but the Athletics' surprise season is as much about the improbable contributions of the ageless Bartolo Colon (10-9, 3.43) and a relatively unheralded ex-Nationals farmhand Tommy Milone (9-9, 4.03). Then there's Detroit (64-56), where—Prince Fielder aside—you can find a guy like Quintin Berry (.274, 16 steals); a high-energy outfielder cut by the Reds and fished out of the preseason scrap heap.

People can say that luck is the result of preparation meeting opportunity, but sometimes a team just has to throw a bunch of darts at the board and hope a few stick. It's not much more scientific than that. Even the mighty Yankees work that way (albeit with a lot more room for error), as they've managed to get shockingly effective numbers out of presumed baseball corpses like Eric Chavez (13 HR, 31 RBI, .305) and reliever Clay Rapada (3-0, 2.97).

So, if we look at the current Cleveland roster, the question becomes: are ANY of the Indians' off-season signings making a difference? Any whatsoever? Well, to make sure we cover all the bases (weak pun intended), let's actually do a "Where are They Now" for the Tribe's Infamous Hot Stove 2012 Crew.

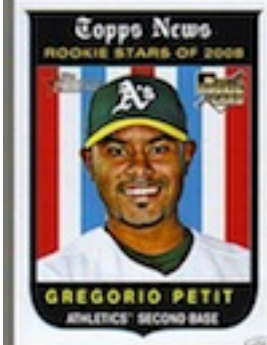
Where Are They Now? The Indians 2012 Hot Stove Team



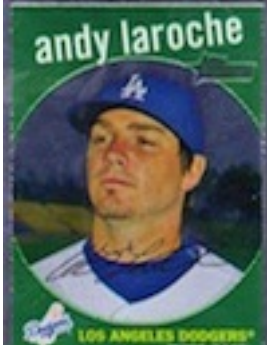
Casey Kotchman (1B) (Cleveland Indians) 19 HR, 16 RB, .266 AVG, .743 OPS



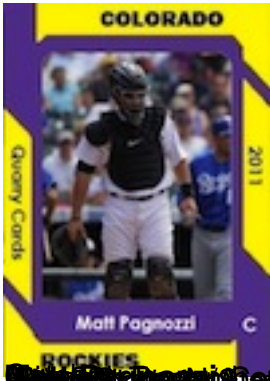
Jose Lopez (1B) (Seattle Mariners) 12 HR, 12 RB, .266 AVG, .743 OPS



Gregorio Petit (2B) (Athletics) 10 HR, 10 RB, .266 AVG, .743 OPS



Andy Laroche (1B) (Los Angeles Dodgers) 15 HR, 16 RB, .266 AVG, .743 OPS



2011 (1 HR, 2 RBIs, 26 AVG, 67 OPS) Parson are killed in a tandem bike



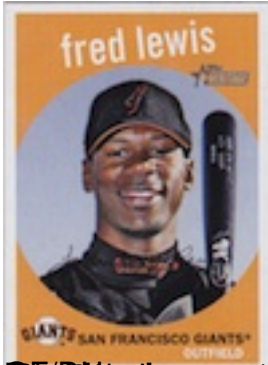
2011 (1 HR, 2 RBIs, 25 AVG, 69 OPS) the bench.”



2011 (2 HR, 2 RBIs, 25 AVG, 67 OPS) never even suited up with the Clippers.



2011 (1 HR, 2 RBIs, 25 AVG, 67 OPS) slot in



...deal for Trevor Crowe, Beau Mills, and Ryan Spilborghs, all of



...Indians' a second



...\$5 million



...fill the gap



Pitcher (1999-2000) in 2001, Seddon (1999-2000) ERA 1.84 WHIP 1.00. He is the only off-season pickups on the



Pitcher (2005-2006) in 2007, Wheeler (2005-2006) ERA 3.00 WHIP 1.26. The Indians took casting calls for the middle



Pitcher (2007-2008) in 2009, Accardo (2007-2008) ERA 4.17 WHIP 1.47.



Pitcher (2009-2010) in 2011, Young (2009-2010) ERA 1.80 WHIP 1.00. Young made the impression on the state capital, making one appearance



~~https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/r/raych01.shtml~~