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That's terrific news for fans of consistency and really bad news for fans of winning baseball. Apparently Shapiro puts more emphasis on stability than success regardless of the cost. To me it reeks of whistling past the graveyard and of Shapiro buying himself more time in an attempt to keep his own job. Shapiro is still offering up injuries and misfortune as

the reason for the Indians steady descent to the bottom of the American League standings. There may be some truth to that excuse but fans here don't recall Shapiro's and Wedge's healthy teams of years past exactly kicking sand in the faces of other clubs.

When you formally join the manager and the GM at the hip and the GM provides this ordinary manager mediocre talent you cling to each other to survive.

"As I said all along the responsibility for the disappointments of the season doesn't rest on one person," said Shapiro. "The responsibility is spread equally throughout -- the players, the front office, Eric and his staff."

That's very democratic. Unfortunately Shapiro bears responsibility for all three of the facets he touched on. It's Shapiro who acquired the players, Shapiro who had carte blanche to assemble his own front office and Shapiro who has stuck with Wedge through thin and thin.

What's that mean for the near future? Well, it likely means five different lineups for every seven games played and it likely means that attendance will suffer. The former is a concern when played against Shapiro's comments that he expects to evaluate his younger players over the course of the remaining 80 or so games. Young players (and many veterans) typically prefer coming to the park knowing if and where they will be playing every day and where in the order they will hit. Guys have enough to worry about without playing lineup roulette every day.

The attendance issue may be the only message that the Dolans ultimately understand. They can't be pleased with the fact that a July 4th weekend series with terrific weather and fireworks drew just about 50,000 people. Not for one night but for the entire series. People have less money to spend in general right now with the economy as bad as the baseball team and they're not going to lay out hard earned money to watch the AL version of the Washington Nationals.

It's just not going to happen.

Etcetera

- Trevor Ariza heads to the Houston Rockets and Ron Artest goes to the Lakers to kick off the NBA's free agent frenzy in the past few days. There were other moves of note, like Hedo Turkoglu stiffing the Portland Trailblazers and heading to Toronto, but Ariza and Artest were two guys the Cavs set their sights on and failed to sign.

Ariza going to Houston doesn't bother me too much because I'm still not convinced he's a guy you want to commit multiple years and millions for here in Cleveland. Yes he's talented, but I'm not sure he's that complimentary player you're dying to see in a Cavalier uniform. Artest was a proven commodity and a guy that could have made a huge difference here in Cleveland

given his defensive ability and his ability to knock down some shots. He also brings enough craziness to be dangerously effective as a bad ass. The Cavaliers lack that element even with Shaquille O'Neill.

But Artest opted to go to a city and a team that just won an NBA title and a city that simply has more to offer socially than Cleveland does. With an aspiring (if not misguided) rap career that he's trying to get off the ground, LA simply has a better team and town to lure a guy like Artest. When the money is even (as it was in this case) you can't argue with a guy making a choice based on titles and social aspects.

- The whole goal for the Cavaliers this off season is to be better come October than they were in May.

I think they already are.

They turned Ben Wallace and Sasha Pavlovic into an aging Hall of Fame center who still can give you close to 20 points and 10 rebounds every night while effectively clogging the middle of the year. That's better than they were in may when Wallace, besieged by age and no

offensive game, and Pavlovic, besieged by brain lock and an inconsistent game, were getting minutes.

The issue for the Cavs is other teams are also improving or looking to do so.

I have no idea if what the Cavs have done is enough. There are reports that the Celtics are pressuring Rasheed Wallace hard to come to Boston and give them the size and shooting ability that the Cavs are also seeking. On paper that certainly helps the Celtics if that deal gets done.

The Cavs still need an effective, athletic, long armed perimeter defender. All the better if he can score a bit. With Ariza and Artest out of the mix they'll need to find that guy elsewhere.

But they do need to find him.

- Sad news out of Nashville regarding the violent death of former Texan QB Steve McNair. McNair was apparently shot dead by a 20 year-old female 'friend' who apparently then took her own life.

McNair was married with 4 young children.

Now, I've been to Nashville a number of times and I've never been shot in the head by a 20 year-old woman who was not my wife. So to me this looks like a senseless tragedy. Maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was an unpreventable situation. But if life provided you one of those odds calculators like you see on ESPN's poker coverage I have to believe the percentages for living likely go way up if you're not in the home of a 20 year-old waitress who isn't your wife at 2am on a Saturday morning.

And the likelihood that four kids of a wealthy, young, former NFL QB in Nashville would wake up fatherless hours later would have probably been nil.