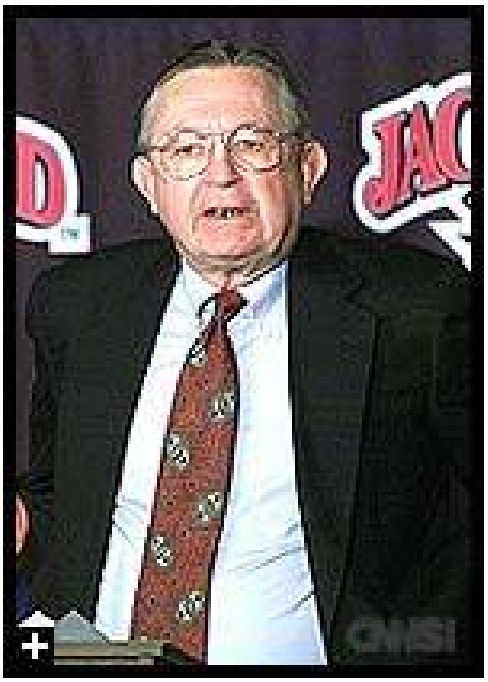
Papa Cass checks in on a Friday morning to weigh in on the Indians recently getting outbid for Japanese third baseman Akinori Iwamura by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. The Indians were the second highest bidder, and lost out by just about one million dollars. Cassano is sick of the Indians coming in second place for all bids, and while it's still early, finds this as a discouraging sign for the 2007 off-season.



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This one will sail under the radar to some extent, but Thursday's announcement that the Indians were outbid for the rights to negotiate with Japanese third baseman Akinori Iwamura is another troubling sign for a team that desperately needs to flex some financial muscle this winter.

Even more troubling is who did win the rights. Not the Yankees, Red Sox or Dodgers. It was the perennial cellar-dwelling Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Cleveland.com reported that the D-Rays bested Cleveland's offer by about $1 million. The Indians' bid was reported at around $3.5 million.

Not good for the Indians, a team that needs someone to push Andy Marte for playing time at third base next spring with last week's departure of Kevin Kouzmanoff.

The Indians had a chance to follow up last week's solid acquisition of Josh Barfield with another score, but couldn't front the money to do so.

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Once again, the Indians are showing that they either A) don't have a good concept of what it takes to sign players or B) won't spend the money.

Once again, they came to the table with a small wad of cash and a hopeful smile, and once

again, they leave empty-handed.

I hope Larry Dolan realizes where his team stands in the battle for the Cleveland sports dollar. The Cavs are hot stuff. The Browns are close to the heart. The Indians are on the bad side of their fan base right now after a disappointing 2006.

The Indians are losing ground. They need to do something to pull back their fans. Getting outbid for a Japanese free agent by the Devil Rays is not a good start.