Wednesday will go down as perhaps one of the five or six busiest days of the Indians offseason. You may have a few more days throughout the winter months that get interesting, but if you wanna see the height of it all, it may have been Wednesday.

Between the coaching staff being named officially and the decisions that came down in regards to the options that were picked up and not picked up, there is a lot to dive into.

So why not just dive into it, right?

[WONDERING PRONK]

All I can think is that little Pronk roaming around, all lost and no where to go. Will anyone save him?

Okay, not really. Travis Hafner is getting $2.75 million dollars to essentially "go away" so it is hard to feel sorry for him. But it is the end of an era, so it is rather sad. I know many have soured on Hafner since his injuries have severely impacted his performance, but I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for the Pronk.

If it sounds like I'm talking as if Hafner will not be back, it is because I am. It certainly sounds as if that this is the case. Chris Antonetti definitely sounded like he was saying goodbye to Hafner when he talked to reporters after announcing that they wouldn't be picking up his option.

"Travis, in his decade with us, not only made a huge impact for the organization on the field, but he and [his wife] Amy really immersed themselves in the Cleveland community and really made an impact here with a lot of their charitable work," Antonetti said. "We're very appreciative of all of their contributions, and certainly wish them well moving forward."

Now heck, he could just be saying that as a precaution to him not bringing Hafner back, as he noted the Indians are open to re-signing him, but it sounds like that would be after other things are decided upon and other options are looked into.

Hafner also said that the two sides have talked about and know it is something that will not happen quickly. Hafner noted that he would "definitely" be interested though. However, right now, he's really puzzled as to what will happen with himself.

"I wasn't surprised by it," Hafner said. "At this point, you just kind of sit back and wait, wait for free agency to start. You just kind of see what the interest is like and go from there. At this point, I really have no idea what's going to happen."

I will just reiterate this point one more time. He's an older player, who can't play for half of the teams in the game because he can't play the field. He has injury concerns on top of that. So you know when all is said and done, his options will be very limited and the fact that he has some sort of good relationship with Cleveland may be his best shot to getting in somewhere.

If there is a fit for Hafner, the Indians would go to him first. The thing is, the situation the Indians

are in right now, I'm not really sure there is a fit, let alone a place for the Indians to risk in signing him. Not having anything to do with money either, but rather the at-bats and the opportunities he could take away from someone else.

I don't think, for what it is worth, that this relationship is over though. That does not mean I think Hafner will return at some point in his playing career, but I do think that Hafner has made a mark on this franchise. Fans will remember him. The organization will remember him. They might not have the same love that they do for some players who played as long as he has for the Indians for the pure fact he is not really associated with great memories of playoff contention and the teams of the 90s.

But he hit over 200 home runs for this team. He came up with some really clutch hit at times. I know I said people won't associate him with some great memories? There is no Sandy Alomar Jr., Omar Vizquel, Jim Thome, Manny Ramirez type love that will be associated because the team of this past decade never really endeared themselves to the fan base.

However there were some big hits and fond memories that Hafner was a part of. Remember him coming through with the big hit in extra innings of the bug game against the Yankees in 2007? How about the big home run he hit off Josh Beckett in the ALCS?

The year he hit a ton of grand slams?

I'll remember Hafner and I think that with his work in the community, he has some sort of place in this organization in the long run. I'm not sure if he's the coaching type, but he certainly is the personality type and he is definitely someone who can be a goodwill type ambassador at some point.

That all being said, Hafner thanked the fans for his experience and said that the organization is an extended family to him since he's been around so long. If this is indeed the end of the road for Pronk and the Indians, it has been a wild ride and I for-one, will miss him.

[JIMENEZ RETURNS; HERNANDEZ DOESN'T]

Where as the Hafner decision was probably easy to make on the side of letting someone go, the decision to pick up the option on **Ubaldo Jimenez** was easy to make on the bringing someone back side. For no other reason other than what the Indians gave up and the chance they took on Ubaldo alone, it made sense to pick his option up.

But as Antonetti explained, there was simply economics at play. If they wanted Jimenez back and decided to just decline the option, buy him out for $1 million, and offer arbitration, they'd have had to get him signed for less than $4.75, which was not happening.

Oh and first and foremost, Antonetti says they believe he'll be better. They believe that, we hope it.

"[We want] to make sure we get this thing started from scratch at the beginning of his throwing program," Francona said. "Getting him in the right frame of mind and proper mechanics and things like that, so we have a better chance of him having success."

So that's that. Might as well close the book.

Antonetti says that Ubaldo "continues to show" that he has "the ability to be a successful Major League starter". That's all well and dandy and he has shown it. But he hasn't shown a lot of it and seeing as how he was a Cy Young contending pitcher not too long ago, he should be doing more than "showing he has the ability" he should be showing the ability, rather than that he has it.

On one side you have Ubaldo, and on the other you have Roberto Hernandez, the artist formerly known as Fausto Carmona, of course. His option was not picked up. You have to figure with them already investing a good chunk of change into Ubaldo, that investing the same amount into a guy who is now three years older than they originally thought and was hurt when he did return last year was not economically sound.

That and you could probably re-sign him now for a much cheaper rate than $6 million dollars.

So unlike Hafner where the book looks like it is really closing on him and his time with the Tribe, I wouldn't completely turn the page yet on Fausto. How teams value him will be interesting. You know if there is a team out there that thinks he can still pitch, they'll take a chance. He doesn't have any sort of suspension or anything anymore and we now know who he is and how old he is.

But you have to figure that if the Indians are to take a chance out there on a pitcher, they'd probably prefer to take it on Fausto, since the familiarity.

If you figure there is an open spot somewhere in the rotation, the Indians could fill it with an arm that they know about and can work with, or they can fill it with the uncertainty of a young player. Carrasco, Jimenez, Masterson, and McAllister all probably have spots. Do you give a shot to Kluber? No five guys remain in the rotation all year, so even if you don't give the first shot to him, you know he'll get one. And if you can get Fausto really cheap and take a shot, part of me says you might have to consider it highly.

[STAFF ANNOUNCED]

You knew the Indians and Terry Francona would do two things in completing the staff. The first is that they'd bring in people Terry Francona wanted and the second is that they'd bring in some guys the organization has been grooming. They did it with Acta and there is no doubt they were going to do it with Francona's staff.

We already knew about Mike Sarbaugh, a well-deserved promotion to the major leagues as the first base and infield coach. He'll be groomed under two guys who have managerial experience and know what to do and I have to think that when Sandy does move on to a job of his own, Sarby will be groomed in the same fashion of being the next man up.

And as we've discussed endlessly here, we know the situation with Sandy Alomar Jr. and if he does end up sticking around, we figured he'd be the bench coach. There still seems to be a lack

of interest and Alomar has said he hasn't really received any. So the writing may be on the wall and Alomar knows that a return to Cleveland in 2013 is very much what is likely to happen at this point.

Of course, we also knew that the worst kept secret around this staff was that Brad Mills would be signing on to coach with his good buddy Terry Francona and if Alomar were to leave, serve as the bench coach.

Either way, Mills plays into the Francona part, Alomar and Sarbaugh play into the Indians part and the rest of the names would fall into place.

"I think we actually have a really well-rounded staff," Francona said. "It wasn't necessary for me to have prior relationships with people. But I think in some instances, when you're looking for coaches, that's probably the reason you're looking for guys. You've been around them and you appreciate the way they work."

The Indians would get one more of 'their guys' in pitching coach Mickey Callaway, who replaces interim coach Ruben Niebla. Callaway has been moving up the ranks and was recently the minor league pitching coordinator in 2012 and has stints at both A-Level teams for the Indians. He's very much a "new hire" though as someone with no prior experience as a major league coach, but perhaps a fresh perspective, yet someone who's worked with some of the arms is just what the team needs.

"We really went deep in the process to make sure we got the right guy," Francona said. "It was a tough decision, but Mickey did an incredible job of preparing and taking it on as a challenge. ... I think he's going to be a star."

The other two hires were more or less connections to Francona in some way, yet still intriguing. Kevin Cash will round out the pitching coaches and this is really his first job after playing as recently as 2011. He was a scout last year, but the former catcher spent time playing for Francona in Boston and was even Tim Wakefield's personal caddie a few years ago.

Of course he's a catcher, so you know those guys, always born to be managers.

"When he was still playing, I thought he was a potential coach in waiting," Francona said. "He's a guy who is going to rise through the coaching ranks quickly and will be a manager."

So even though he's not really a pitcher, but will be handling the relievers, you know there must be a big belief he can deal with those guys, especially since he has that experience in dealing with them.

The one addition that is "kind of" a Francona add is hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo. While he doesn't have a direct connection to Francona, he did coach with Brad Mills in Houston, but it wasn't a direct thing as he took over as the hitting coach once Mills' staff was let go. He has been a bench coach though, under Don Wakamatsu in Seattle and has been a major league hitting coach for Oakland. So he has experience and Francona raved about the fact that he was raved about.

"Van Burkleo is a guy that we researched heavily," Francona said. "I talked to managers, coaches, players throughout the league that just raved about him. When I talked to him, it just seemed like a really good fit. Hard worker. A guy that loves to live in the cage."

And yet another new voice. This one perhaps is the most intriguing in that he is not a guy that is directly associated with Francona or the Indians and he could bring a different type of perspective into the organization. Shaking things up is always a good idea, especially for an offense that has struggled to find a consistent identity.

Back when the Indians hired Manny Acta, he got to bring in a guy like Tim Tolman to be his bench coach, much like how Francona has brought in Brad Mills. But it really has followed the line of the way the Indians did when they hired Acta. You have a guy in Sarbaugh as the Indians up-and-comer that they want (it was Sandy back then), you have a pitching coach who has been in the system, but is untested in Callaway (was Belcher). So there are some similarities, but there are some fresh faces, some fresh perspectives, and some different things going on.

All of this though, as we've discussed, matters very little in terms of the whole picture. This coaching staff needs talent to work with. Point blank.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Pitchers don't usually have the greatest time down in the Arizona Fall League, but **T.J. House** is making a name for himself as he starts to come into his own. He pitched four scoreless innings on Wednesday and has given up just three runs in 17 frames of work thus far.

"I think mainly I've wanted to work on my changeup and first-pitch curveballs, those are two important keys for me to get later into games," he said. "Using [the changeup] in effective pitch counts and continuing throwing the curve, those are the main keys. Just staying in the strike zone -- the more you throw strikes, the deeper you'll go, and that's a big part of being successful."

House is a guy that is coming along since being drafted out of high school. And he's a lefty, so you know he'll get a good look if he continues to make this progress up the organizational ladder.

While the Indians declined the options on two players, they actually optioned two more to Columbus. Vinny Rottino and Kevin Slowey were sent to Columbus. Looks like they are planning on holding onto both for now.

They won't be holding onto Scott Maine though, as he was claimed off waivers from Toronto. I say, that is probably a good call considering he didn't look all that impressive.

Hey look at the Royals... Last year they traded the Milk Man to San Francisco for Jonathan Sanchez, a move that I thought would really help them. Sanchez didn't pan out and they traded him to Colorado for former Indian Jeremy Guthrire. Now they're getting bold again and adding a pitcher to their rotation, this with a little more of track record and a little more expensive.

The Royals added Ervin Santana, trading a minor league reliever to Los Angeles for Santana and a million bucks, meaning they only have to pay $12 million of his 2013 salary, a salary the Angels picked up.

It is an interesting move, but if it works out and Santana bounces back, the Royals have themselves a capable veteran reliever for their rotation. The Royals also let Joakim Soria walk, or at least decided not to pick up the option that was worth $8 million on a reliever who is recovering from major reconstructive elbow surgery.

This is already starting out to be an intriguing offseason, and we're only a few days into it.

-

Nino can be found with glue and scissors and pictures of Vinnie Pestano and himself on The Tribe Daily, his own Indians blog. Hearts may or may not be invovled.

Follow @TheTribeDaily