Next week is going to be a big week in baseball... In case you didn't know.

The Winter Meetings get underway on the 3rd of December. Usually that short span of three days spurs lots of discussion, rumors, and conversations. With everyone under one roof, discussions are had, names are thrown about, and deals are sometimes agree upon. Both of the free agent signing type and trades between two or more teams.

The last time the Indians were involved in a big winter swing was when they dealt Franklin Gutierrez in the big trade that sent J.J. Putz to New York and also netted the Indians Joe Smith and everyone's favorite little baby guy, Luis Valbuena.

That wasn't THAT big, but you know, it was really a big swap of players that the Tribe was involved in.

Could the Indians get in the mix this year? With guys like Choo, Perez, and the interest Asdrubal Cabrera has generated, they could. Is it likely? Eh. The setting always makes for an easier time to deal because of the face-to-face discussions and negotiations you can have with your counterpart, but it doesn't ALWAYS mean a big deal will happen or a certain player gets dealt.

It all depends on what teams will want to give the Indians for the services of those players and if the Indians deem it beneficial to pull the trigger.

And if you are expecting a free agent signing? Keep expecting, okay?

The Winter Meetings can be uneventful for the Indians. Or it could be really interesting. The only thing you need to know is that the little chat we had on "rumors" a few weeks ago still applies.

In fact, it applies double, triple, quadruple. Rumors are heavy and perhaps with even a little bit more of unrealisticness to them because of the simple fact that many deal ideas are exchanged, but little of them get anywhere of significance.

So stay guarded on what you read. We'll cycle through stuff, but not overanalyze it. Or we will, who knows, I know I like to do that.

[RAFFY "EXIT STAGE" LEFT]

Ohh ho ho ho... What a joke that was. Get it? Yeah, you got it.

Perhaps the biggest news of the past week has been the designation of **Rafael Perez** for assignment. The Indians let the left hander go in order to make room for **Nick Hagadone** on the 40-man roster as they reinstated him from the restricted list.

The significance of doing this to Perez right now? Had he not been tendered a contract on Friday, he would be a free agent. This makes for an interesting situation. Perez would have been getting a contract worth well over what he has earned based off his injury riddled 2012 and, as we will get into in a second, paying him more than necessary is, well, it's stupid.

So essentially, what the Indians are doing is putting themselves in a better position to retain Perez. If you believe what MLB Trade Rumors has as a projection , Perez would have gained somewhere around $2 million in salary through the arbitration process, meaning the Indians would probably pay at least that if they were to tender an offer and Perez would accept it.

That's a good chunk of change for a reliever who showed a lack of durability for the first time in his career. Now don't get me wrong, healthy, he's the man. He has a rubber arm and can get you a lot of innings. He's left handed and when he's on, he's un-hittable.

But then lets look at the other names, including the aforementioned Hagadone. You have a closer in Chris Perez, who MLBTR has projected to earn over $7.2 million in salary next year. You have a set up guy in Vinnie Pestano, and a cast behind them that includes Joe Smith, Cody Allen, Tony Sipp, Hagadone, Scott Barnes.

And oh yeah, the prospects such as CC Lee, Trey Haley, so on and so forth. But just in terms of options for next season, you have a lot, including three left handers.

The problem that I think Rafael Perez runs into is the fact that he is going to make a rather large sum of money, as are some of the other arms. For instance, Perez will get over $7 mil if they hold onto him, Smith is going to make over $2 million and Sipp will make over a $1 million.

That's $10 million already wrapped up in three arms, $12 million if you include Rafael Perez. Plus the extra change that will go to Pestano, Barnes, Allen, Hagadone, etc and you are looking at good portion of your 2013 payroll being devoted to bullpen arms.

So that's the biggest thing that Perez has working again him. But ultimately I do not think Perez's stay with the Tribe is over. The fact that they designated him instead of just non-tendering him tells me they're going to try and hold onto him. I also think the injury is a little unattractive to teams and that if you are going bargain shopping, you are going against a team that makes their living bargain shopping. I'm sure the Indians will try and hold onto him if at all possible.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The Indians announced their minor league staff assignments , which underwent an interesting realignment process due to the promotion of Mike Sarbaugh to the major league staff. The biggest move is **Chris Tremie**'s jump to Columbus after a Championship season in Akron and his steady, but under the radar progression through the Indians system. Tremie has been with the Captains, K-Tribe, Rookie League squad and the Aeros, making the stop in Columbus a full-ride for him.

Former Marlin's manager Edwin Rodriguez will be sticking around, moving up from Carolina to Akron and David Wallace will also be bumped up. The new addition to the managerial ranks is Scooter Tucker (who doesn't like a guy named Scooter?) taking over as the manager in Lake County, after serving as the hitting coach in Carolina.

Other notable names include Adam Everett, who will basically flip assignments with Travis Fryman, who will be a special assistant. Everett is now the team's infield coordinator, a little more responsibility and duties for him to handle. Steve Karsay is now the Mudcat's pitching coach.

The fates of Tom Widenbauer and Ruben Niebla have been revealed. They'll be sticking around in a capacity, with Niebla supervising the pitching of the organization. Lots of things look rather the same. Ted Kubiak is the Scrappers manager and Anthony Medrano will be the Rookie League skipper. He'll have former major league Scott Erickson as his pitching coach, who moves down from the Carolina squad. Dave Miller, who was also on last year's staff, will stick around as a scout
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The other bit of coaching-sort-of-news is the passing of former coach Ken Rowe . Rowe has been in the system since 1991 doing multiple different jobs, from a pitching coach to whatever else you can think of. Many of the players who have had Rowe as a coach that are on the big league squad and on the minor league squad have been tweeting out about how great of a guy he was. He passed on Thanksgiving, which is downright awful for his family to have to go through. Well wishes to his family during this time.

The Indians re-signed **Jose Flores** last week. Flores was picked in the Rule V draft by the Mariners and eventually returned. He had a decent year for the Tribe last year and should continue going through the system. They also signed an infielder by the name of Nate Spears. In other news, no one really cares about Nate Spears, at least I don't. But he is coming to spring training . So get ready!

Maybe Spears can replace **Brent Lillibridge** and his light bat, because Lilly is off to free agent land where he'll surely nab a minor league signing with a major league spring training invite. It just won't be in Cleveland.

Other 40-man causality, **Fabio Martinez** survived the waiver process and was outrighted to Columbus , so the Indians still have control over the live arm of Fabio.

Scott Kazmir sighting. No one has fallen further than the former Ray and Angel. The guy was a stud in 2007 and then was traded to the Angels in a few years and has recently fallen off the face of the earth. He did not pitch in the major leagues last year, but signed with the Sugar Land Skeeters (you read that right), where I think he was Roger Clemens' teammate for a brief while. Now the Indians are one of the few times who have been rumored to be scouting him according to Buster Olney.

We'll see there, folks.

Just in case you are keeping up on the outfield market, B.J. Upton signed a five year deal

worth $75 million . So there you go. You can underachieve for most of your career and still get paid pretty well. Can you imagine what some of the other outfielders will get? The Indians will need a bargain to fill left.

One intriguing move to me was the dealing of Denard Span to Washington. It cost the Nationals their first round pick from 2011, Alex Meyer, who seemingly is moving up the ladder quite nicely as a starting pitcher but still some time away from arriving. You can look at Choo in the same light. If Span is netting that type of return, Choo could pull in a good amount. Span however has three years of control left, where as Choo obviously only has one.

Justin Masterson was elected as the alternate player association representative to Curtis Granderson and Jeremy Guthrie. He'll serve in that post for the next two years. If Kevin Slowey returns to the Indians, the Tribe will also have another rep as he will serve as an alternate to the pension committe.

Finally, I think it is rather cool to point out a great article by Jonah Keri of Grantland, and not just because it is a good article, but because **Jason Kipnis** got some major pub in it. The article is the MLB Trade Value rankings and it goes over the players in the game that are most valuable if you were to trade them. Essentially, really good players, that are really young or really cheap.

Jason Kipnis clocked in right at the beginning of the second part at 31 , right behind two other second basemen in Ben Zobrist and Dustin Pedroia.

Kipnis hit .272/.333/.507 in his 36-game audition in 2011, and looked on his way to challenging those numbers after a blistering start this year before hitting just .233/.322/.328 in the second half. Still, Kipnis was a three-win player in his first full major league season, he plays an up-the-middle position, and his minor league track record points to a player with pop, speed, and a good batting eye.

Very cool for Jason.

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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.

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