Trot Nixon is a Cleveland Indian. Is it because of his bat? His glove? Or is it something else? Super-talented Eric Cassano says it might be for another reason.

When the Indians first announced the signing of Trot Nixon to a one-year deal Friday, I was a bit perplexed.

Why Nixon, when you signed a very similar player in David Dellucci to a three-year deal only last month?

Both are left-handed hitting corner outfielders. Dellucci has a bit more power, Nixon, when healthy, is a bit better defensively.

You'd want neither out there against left-handed pitching. Over the past three years, Dellucci has hit .185 versus lefties, Nixon .207.

At one time, Nixon was probably capable of hitting in the top or middle of the order, provided he was surrounded by enough power and speed. Now, both Nixon, 32, and Dellucci, 33, are probably best suited to hit sixth and down, though the Indians are confident Nixon will be able to hit second.

Truth be told, looking at the career numbers of Nixon, I couldn't really tell how a well-endowed team like the Red Sox let him patrol right field in Fenway Park for almost a decade.

A .278 career average is respectable, but 133 career home runs for a right fielder who spent 81 games a season taking aim at Fenway's short "Pesky Pole" doesn't see like a lot. At his power zenith in 2003, he hit 28 taters.

And yet, here was Nixon, a rock of stability in Boston's lineup for years.

There must be something more to it. And then it hit me.

Nixon is a clubhouse guy. Wait, before you roll your eyes and go back to YouTube, hear me out.

I know the Indians have plenty of "clubhouse guys." In many cases, it's a euphemism for ".240 hitter who doesn't spend his nights snorting coke and banging hookers." I know you think it's just a byproduct of the tightwaddish Dolan regime. I know you'd rather have a combination of Rick James and Mike Tyson in baseball spikes if he hit .330, won the AL MVP and got the Indians to the World Series.

Shoot, all of that nearly happened with Albert Belle.

But think about it. Think of all the outfielders who have come and gone in Boston without an affect on Nixon's starting job. Manny Ramirez was shifted to left field because Nixon was a better defender.

Troy O'Leary is long-gone. Johnny Damon came, saw, conquered and left. Coco Crisp was acquired a year ago. The Red Sox paid a king's ransom for J.D. Drew this offseason.

In the end, it was injuries that forced Nixon out of the Red Sox lineup, and eventually out of Boston.

The Red Sox, a team with the cash to contend every year, kept Nixon around and starting alongside players that typically put up gaudy stats every year. He must bring something to the table beyond what he does between the foul lines.

This guy isn't Dellucci. He's not a journeyman who happened to win a championship by being in the right place at the right time. He held down right field at Fenway for nearly a decade. He was one of the rocks upon which the Red Sox's 2004 championship was built. A small rock, but a rock nonetheless.

Nixon could turn into Keith Hernandez and spend his Cleveland stint in the whirlpool more than the outfield. Or he could become a similar rock for team in desperate need of experienced leadership.

For one year and $3 million, why not take a chance? At least when Nixon flashes his World Series bling, we know there's something in the man to back it up.