With the Indians rumored to be on the brink of signing General Manager Mark Shapiro to a contract extension, Papa Cass takes some time to chime in on the proposed move this Saturday afternoon. Shapiro has had his share of missteps here in Cleveland, and has also made some very solid moves that has prevented this rebuilding effort from morphing into a Pirate or Royal-like endeavor. Cassano is a big fan of keeping Mark in CTown, and elaborates why in his latest.

Every general manager in professional sports deserves some amount of criticism.

Yes, even the ones with championship-adorned track records that we Clevelanders drool over. The Patriots' Scott Pioli, the Pistons' Joe Dumars, the Braves' John Schuerholz, none of them have been perfect. Darko Milicic over Dwyane Wade, anyone?

They just seem that way because they won titles, and we don't follow the teams every day.

It's something to keep in mind when you give Indians GM Mark Shapiro the third degree for the mistakes he's made.

It's easy to get lost in criticizing Shapiro and all of Indians management. Shapiro hasn't produced a playoff appearance since taking over in November 2001. It's easy to finger the Roberto Alomar trade as a major gaffe. It was. So was relying on Jose Jimenez and Scott Stewart as major pieces of the 2004 bullpen. So was letting Bob Howry walk away to the Cubs without a fight. So was blowing up the re-assembled 2005 bullpen, the

American League's best, in a single trade for a player with less than 100 major league at-bats. So was throwing away Brandon Phillips and Bob Wickman for little of consequence.

Shapiro's moves of a year ago killed the 2006 season. Plain and simple. But his moves this winter might have resurrected the Indians in a big way.

That's why, if Shapiro is on the verge of signing a contract extension, I will be thrilled.

Every GM flubs. It's the good ones who figure out ways to rebound quickly. It's the really good ones who can do it while on a short financial leash.

Shapiro is a rebound expert. He never stays down for long. The December 2001 Alomar trade, his first major move as GM, was probably the product of Shapiro trying to announce his arrival with a major splash. It didn't work.

Shapiro quickly found that walking the fence between contending and rebuilding, while attempting to slice payroll, is an exercise in futility. When he committed fulltime to rebuilding, that's when he did the smart thing, using the Tribe's best assets -- their veteran players -- as a resource to compress an entire organizational rebuild down to inside five years.

Instead of letting the entire organization wither on the vine, as the Tigers and Royals of the '80s did, Shapiro took control, and within a year, had Phillips, Cliff Lee, Grady Sizemore and Travis Hafner in the organization.

When the Jimenez/Stewart experiment didn't work, he was able to turn to a pair of injury reclamation projects, Howry and Scott Sauerbeck, to stabilize the '04 bullpen.

When it became apparent that the '06 season was a wash, he used it as an opportunity to add more players to the farm system with a mini-fire sale.

Though it would be nice to see the Indians make a sizeable splash either through a trade or free-agency, Shapiro doesn't force-feed the big splash into happening as other teams have, and have gone on to regret. If he can get a big-name player for a year, thereby preserving some longterm financial flexibility, he'll do it.

Shapiro brings a businessman's sensibilities to the role of baseball GM. Instead of relying solely on the subjective eyes of scouts, he and the front office devised a computer program to analyze and quantify players statistically. There is no substitute for the trained eye of a talented scout, but computer technology is aimed at helping teams hit for a higher average when it comes to player moves.

Shapiro, who has been in the Indians organization for more than 15 years, understands his team and understands the characteristics and limitations of the Cleveland market. In the end, that might be the most compelling reason to want him here. There might be better GMs in the game, but I doubt Cleveland will find a better fit for its team than Shapiro.