Spring training continues to move along, and Grapefruit League action started up just a few days ago. With very few roster decisions to make, the Indians will use exhibition play to work on several things they normally cannot do in-season, and also get a long look at some of the young kids. But, just because they have so few roster decisions to make ... does that mean they have few weaknesses? As the start of the regular season nears, we asked our panel, what is the Indians biggest need? TheClevelandFan.com writers opine, and the responses are all over the board.

"The Indians Roundtable" is a regular weekly Sunday feature that will continue throughout the baseball season. One question. Several different answers from TheClevelandFan.com Indians panel.

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But, just because they have so few roster decisions to make does that mean they have few weaknesses? Indians General Manager Mark Shapiro did a solid job addressing the Indians needs this offseason, but as the start of the regular season nears, what is the Indians biggest need? TheClevelandFan.com writers opine:

Tony Lastoria: After breaking down the Indians roster in depth with the team preview installments the past two weeks, I'd have to point out four areas which concern me the most where we have our greatest need: right-handed power bat, up the middle defense (namely at shortstop and catcher), the manager, and closer.

While some may disagree, I believe the issues up the middle defensively with Jhonny Peralta at shortstop and Victor Martinez at catcher will work themselves out this year where they are at worst league average defensively, which would be a considerable step up from last year. I'm also apathetic when it comes to manager Eric Wedge. I don't think he necessarily kills this team from a managerial standpoint like many fans think, but I also don't think he is the guy we need to take us to that next level we want the Indians to be. And, as for that power

right-handed bat, it is more a luxury than a necessity. It would be nice to have it since it would more or less complete this lineup and protect Travis Hafner and Victor Martinez. However, even without that power right-handed bat the last three years this offense has been a top five offense in all of baseball.

No, the biggest need is for this organization to develop a young in-house closer. Joe Borowski is a nice stop-gap closer for this season, but once again this off-season - for the third off-season in a row - we will be looking for a long-term solution at closer. In this day and age where average to abover average free agent closers cost anywhere from $6-8 million per year, it is a tough sign for the financially challenged Indians. Also, premium closers in their prime very rarely become available in free agency or in a trade. To get a premium closer, you pretty much have to develop him.

Right now, the Indians inability to develop an in-house closer is one of the major handicaps they are trying to overcome every year. Since the inception of The Plan in mid-2002, the fact that Fernando Cabrera is the only real in-house relief prospect on this roster almost five years later is laughable. While the Indians have added loads of young starting pitching talent to the club since the start of The Plan and have a minor league system chock full of young starters waiting in the wings, the Indians have failed to develop a closer.

Maybe it is time to balance the scales somewhat and use one of those young starters inwaiting in the minors and go after a top closer prospect in a trade. They have many good young relief prospects like Eddie Mujica, Juan Lara, Tony Sipp, Rafael Perez, Tom Mastny, and others in the upper-levels of the system, but right now no one is a sure-fire closer in waiting. Sipp looks to be the closest, and he very might well be, but why has it taken almost five years to find and develop one?

Rich Swerbinsky: The Indians biggest need is a savvy, experienced big league manager. And seeing how badly this team needs a closer, it's a real indication of how little I think of Eric Wedge as a skipper.

Bottom line, this team has performed its worst when the pressure has been on them, and that's an indictment of the leadership of the team in my view. Terrible starts to the last three seasons amid hype and excitement. The colossal meltdown at the end of the 2005 season. When the chips have all been in the middle of the table, this team has folded its cards each and every time.

Statistically, this team has been a lot better than the W-L column results in each of the last three seasons. In one or two isolated seasons, that could be viewed as an anomaly. In three straight seasons under the same manager? Damning. The team has also been sub-par fundamentally on Wedge's watch, and unable to manufacture runs or play "small ball" effectively. Their record in one run games has been awful. The team has been unable to hold opposing runners from stealing despite having three former catchers (Wedge included) on staff. I could go on and on.

With a limited payroll, and residing in baseball's toughest division, the odds are already

stacked against the Indians. And with Eric Wedge at the helm, trying to go toe to toe with guys like Jim Leyland and Ron Gardenhire, it doesn't make things any easier for us.

Gary Benz: Certainly going into the season the Indians have two major obstacles to overcome: poor defense and poor relief pitching. Mark Shapiro at least has attempted to address both needs by rebuilding the bullpen, acquiring Josh Barfield, and finding a pair of contacts that Jhonny Peralta will wear. So now it's a question as to how this all plays out. In any season, a few leaks appear in the boat that were not anticipated and it's always a question as to how the front office or the manager can respond. But right now, from purely a player standpoint going into the 2007 season, their needs are not that great.

In my mind, though, I think there are fundamental needs for this franchise, the biggest of which is the need to get off this yearly treadmill where seemingly half the roster turns over and you never know from one year to next what you have. One of the ways this gets accomplished in my view is a better financed organization, one that can find a way to stop filling its holes through free agents with an injury history. It's just these kinds of players that put the Indians on the treadmill. You don't want to make a long-term investment because of the huge risk. Yet if/when they do come through such players are often priced out of our ability to sign them and we're left once again to fill a hole. While this makes great fodder for those of us who spend our idle time writing or commenting on the comings and goings of the Tribe, it ultimately makes for a much less stable franchise.

Erik Cassano: It's a recurring theme on all three Cleveland teams: The Indians' biggest need is leadership.

The 2005 squad appeared to really respond to the presence of playoff-tested veterans like Kevin Millwood, Bob Howry and Arthur Rhodes. In 2006, all three were gone, leaving Bob Wickman, Aaron Boone and Jason Michaels to fill the void, with unimpressive results.

At times last year, it seemed like the Indians were 25 guys going in 25 different directions. There was no cohesion and no feeling that the entire clubhouse was working toward a common goal.

A lot of fans would love to place all of the blame at the feet of Eric Wedge and the coaching staff, and personally, I've never been impressed with Wedge's leadership ability. But he and his staff can't do it alone. If anything, this team needs veterans to compensate for what Wedge's doesn't bring as a leader.

Last year, the Tigers showed what a strong manager and a few well-placed veteran signings can do for a talented young team. This year, the Indians are trying to replicate that with multiple veteran additions to the outfield and bullpen. Already, the World Series experience on the roster has taken a hit with the retirement of Keith Foulke. It's going to be up to the remaining playoff-tested veterans like Joe Borowski and David Dellucci to fill the leadership role.

If they can't, the Indians might end up spinning their wheels and the 2007 season will follow

'06 down the drain.

Jarad Regano: Following my theme from last week’s discussion , I still feel that the team's biggest need is another impact bat in the lineup. This could be in the leadoff role, allowing the Tribe to push Sizemore to a more impactful run-producing slot in the lineup. Or, it could be a right-handed bat to hit between Hafner and Martinez.

The number of runs scored last year was second in the AL, which deflated the urgency in the front office to push harder at either a trade or free agent signing. The only real player that was targeted via free agency that would have filled this role was Moises Alou, who passed on the Tribe's offer. I remain very skeptical that last year's total runs scored number was somewhat flawed, both because of an inordinate amount of blowout wins, and the fact that the numbers included production from the first base platoon of Broussard and Perez (second only to Albert Pujols).

I felt the Indians overspent on money and quantity of average relief pitchers (relatively speaking to what the Indians had available to spend). The retirement of Keith Foulke should give the Tribe ample cash flow to address the above problem if it becomes an issue.

Todd Dery: The biggest need for the 2007 Tribe is too obvious in my estimation. The answer is simple - a big bat to protect Travis Hafner and Victor Martinez. In the grand plan for 2007, Mark Shapiro and Eric Wedge are again hanging their hat on the man I love to hate, Casey Blake. Yes, that's right, the Indians think they can contend with Casey Blake batting 5th. Go back to the magical 1994-2001 Indians runs and you will see Manny Ramirez, Jim Thome, Eddie Murray, etc hitting in the all important fifth spot. 2007 reality has Casey Blake there. They are similar players, right? It’s laughable.

During the offseason, the Indians tried hard to acquire Gary Sheffield to be that big bat. Rumors swirled that they were after Manny Ramirez as well, but that was a pipe dream. Imagine one of those two hitting in between Hafner and Victor. It is exactly what this team is missing. If you are an American League manager and you EVER give Victor anything to hit in a big spot, you should be fired. Mark my words - this will be the #1 problem all season - Casey Blake's lack of clutch hitting in the 5 hole. They will try others like Trot Nixon and David Dellucci, but this will be a sore spot all year. One can only hope Jhonny Peralta gets back on track and Andy Marte hits the way the Tribe brass thinks he can.