In his latest, Gary hits on a very interesting story on C.C. Sabathia in Monday's Plain Dealer. In it, C.C. blames the game of golf for the pulled oblique muscle injuries he's suffered the last two springs. Yes, that's right. Golf. Apparently lugging around 325 pounds had nothing to do with it. Gary's take is that CC's weight is a very real issue, on a number of levels. And that Indians management is ignoring it.

It's well understood that professional athletes live in a bubble where little is their fault and there's always an external factor to blame for something that goes wrong. Who hasn't seen the pro golfer miss a critical putt only to then immediately tap down an imaginary spike mark? So, too, it is with C.C. Sabathia who is busy tapping down the imaginary spike marks that are to blame for the tender oblique muscle.

Monday's story by Paul Hoynes in the Plain Dealer about Sabathia was a fascinating journey into the mind of today's professional athlete. Sabathia touched on a number of subjects, not the least of which was the potential derivation of the oblique muscle he pulled each of the last two seasons that cost him several starts. According to C.C., his pulled muscle may well be due to the game of golf, which he took up five years ago.

As Sabathia related it: "It just wasn't working, me going out and shooting in the 90s and being on the [disabled list] in April," said Sabathia. "I want to stay healthy this year. I go down to the weight room every day and work on my core." Indeed, it must be the golf.

Sabathia has been a good pitcher for the Indians and if past performance is indicative of future

results, the Indians can ill afford to let him get away. Except for his rookie year when he won 17 games, his won/loss record has been disappointing and frustrating. But by most other measures, including innings pitched, hits, strikeouts, ERA, he's clearly established himself as one of the better pitchers in the American League if not all of baseball. Last year, for example, he had a 3.22 ERA and led the American League with six complete games. Given his talent, you have to think the won/loss record will improve, particularly if the bullpen improves.

But as Sabathia acknowledged, his health is critical to the success of the team. It may be a bit of an overstatement on his part when he suggested to Hoynes that his stint on the disabled list for the first few weeks of last season was a key to the Indians descent. At least as responsible was the poor defensive play on the left side of the field and an inflammatory bullpen. But certainly Sabathia's early-season injury didn't help.

Thus, given how critical Sabathia is to the overall success of this team, one wonders why he continues to look for the goblins in his golf game as the reason for the muscle pull instead of facing the hard truth that he is woefully out of shape and grossly overweight. Equally puzzling is why Indians management continues to coddle him by publicly aiding in the deception by suggesting that C.C. is simply big boned.

The guess here is that Rosie O'Donnell thinks she's just big boned, too. But she's also, as David Letterman said of former pitcher Terry Forster, a fat tub of goo and so, too, is Sabathia. There is a long and grand history of out of shape pitchers, not the least of which was the aforementioned Forster. Others such as Aurelio Lopez, aka Señor Smoke, Mickey Lolich and Denny McLain come to mind as well. But even at their heaviest, all looked positively Kate Moss compared to Sabathia. If you saw any of the highlights of Sabathia's first pre-season start on Sunday, it's pretty obvious that C.C. still has much more work to go on his core.

According to Baseball Almanac, the heaviest player ever in the major leagues was Walter Young, who weighed in at 315 pounds when he played briefly for Baltimore in 2005. But that dubious statistic is likely based on the weight as reported by the club. Cecil Fielder was officially only 240 pounds when he played, too, but it's hard to believe that he was lighter, let alone 20 pounds lighter, than his son, Prince Fielder who is currently listed at 260 pounds. It's not beyond the pale that there's some fudging going on. Officially, the Indians list Sabathia a 6'7" and 290 pounds. We'll buy the 6'7" part but Sabathia hasn't seen 290 pounds since his

rookie year. Maybe television adds 10 or so pounds, but it would be hard to believe that right now Sabathia is less than 325 pounds.

The truth, of course, is that this really isn't a joking matter for any number of health-related reasons. Right now, Sabathia is 26 years of age and probably doesn't give this issue that much thought. But if left unchecked, it will soon take its toll on him physically and well beyond a pulled oblique. At that weight, Sabathia is headed for battles with high blood pressure and diabetes, either of which could shorten his other promising career. Even more likely is a knee injury. As a power pitcher, Sabathia relies so much on his legs to drive through his pitches. But the weight Sabathia carries puts a great deal of strain on both knees and it would hardly be a surprise if that's the next body part to give way. The only way to reduce the strain on the knees is to lose weight, something Sabathia has been reluctant to embrace.

Right now Indians management seems to be ignoring the issue. But as Sabathia inches closer to becoming a free agent, his weight will take on greater importance, at least to those being asked to open their wallets. If Sabathia doesn't commit now to conditioning, he will make it tough on the Indians or anyone else to want to invest $15-20 million a year for five to seven years, which is the kind of dollars his record to this point would otherwise command.

Sabathia can continue to blame it on golf, but that hasn't seemed to slow the careers of guys like John Smoltz or Roger Clemens, both extremely avid golfers. Sooner or later the truth can't be avoided but for Indians fans sake here's hoping that this isn't the year.