Just past the halfway point of the season, Erik Cassano drops in to give us his Indians midterm grades this week here at The Cleveland Fan. The team is in first place. Most of their gambles have paid off. And the farm system has covered for the gambles that haven't worked for us. Papa Cass hands out his grades to all the Indians position players in this piece, and will check in later in the week to grade the pitchers, management, and front office.

The first half of 2007 was pretty good to Cleveland sports fans when you get right down to it. No, there weren't any championships. But three teams Cleveland holds near and dear – Ohio State football, Ohio State basketball and the Cavaliers – all played for championships. Yes, they were all blowout losses, but if you subscribe to the theory of "Try enough keys and one is bound to open the door sooner or later," that has to be a good trend. While we were busying ourselves with basketball between March and June, the Indians put together their best start in eight years, compiling a 33-19 record after the season's first two months and equaling the Cavs' final record of 50-32 after 82 games.

The Indians are sitting atop the AL Central heading into a Fourth of July holiday series against the second-place Tigers. Except for a mid-June hiccup, everything on which Tribe management has gambled has paid off. The farm system has compensated for ownership's inability/unwillingness to finance the signings of marquee free agents. The veterans added to the bullpen have provided the stability that was lacking a year ago.