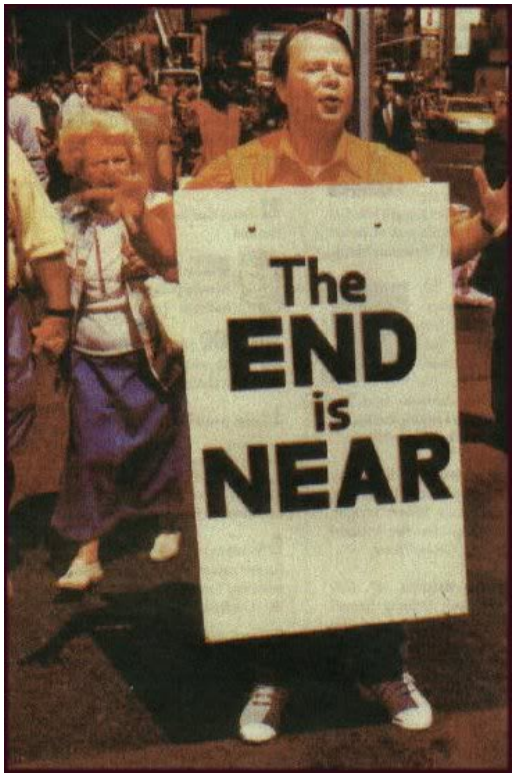
The trade deadline came, and the trade deadline went. And like most of the contenders, the Indians were unable to swing a deal to bolster their club for the stretch drive. Predictably, the talk shows and message boards were filled with angry fans last night. Brian McPeek says that this is not the time to panic Tribe fans. This is a good baseball team as is, and there are still opportunities to improve it out there.



By nature, I'm a glass-is-half-empty kind of guy. I can typically see the negative in any situation. That trait suits me well in this town and I'm not sure if I was born with that ability or if it was cultivated over years of watching our sports team continuously come up short when it mattered most.

Which is why nobody is more surprised than me that I see the Indians lack of involvement at the trade deadline in a relatively positive light.

Yes, I would have loved for the Tribe to scoop the rest of the league by going out and acquiring Eric Gagne, Dan Wheeler and Jermaine Dye in exchange for a pocketful of beans and some low level prospects. Throw in a Mark Loretta or Rob

Mackowiak for good measure to provide some utility depth at this critical time of the season. But that's not being anywhere close to realistic.

Not that being a Cleveland fan has any basis in reality. The talk shows and the message boards were abuzz with the typical gloom and doom we've become accustomed to over the years. People blame Tribe GM Mark Shapiro for sitting on his hands and his prospects and failing to improve the team. Apparently dealing away the fruits of the farm system is what passes for dedication and desire to win. And I understand their frustration.

But the fact is this team, as it's currently comprised, sits today with the 4th best record in all of baseball. And that's despite getting next to nothing from previously key contributors like Cliff Lee, Jake Westbrook, and Travis Hafner and less from some guys with decent track records in the big leagues like Trot Nixon and Davis Dellucci. That's also while watching promising lefthander Jeremy Sowers struggle and eventually be sent down to Triple A. That's the 4th best record in baseball despite Aaron Fultz and Matt Miller, two established major league relievers, spending the better part of their season rehabbing various injuries in Akron and Lake County and not lending much needed support to the big team's bullpen.

With all the acknowledged issues and shortcomings this team is still poised and positioned to make a run in the next couple months that could take them to the playoffs. Mark Shapiro sees that too. In fact, despite what many believe, he has a much better perspective on what this club needs and what his prospects are worth than any of us do. And with that in mind, and despite efforts to improve his club at the trade deadline, Shapiro decided to stand pat and not pay exorbitant prices for players that don't guarantee meaningful games in October and who were not likely to remain here next season or beyond.

Shapiro understands that he needs more than he has at this moment to fortify this club. The bullpen is shaky beyond Joe Borowski, Rafael Betancourt and Rafael Perez. But Shapiro believes there is better value in getting Fultz and possibly Miller back, or perhaps getting something out of his young prospects, than he does in sending those promising prospects out of town for a short term fix. And while he understands that he needs to get improvement there, he is acutely aware that there are options available that may get him to that point that don't include big names or deadline deals. He needs to be better than he is in the bullpen. He can get there either with players already on the roster or with waiver-wire deals that seldom are as expensive in terms of salary and loss of prospects as those deadline deals are.

If you are currently driving a 1986 Honda Civic that sometimes won't start, sometimes smokes and stalls and sometimes costs you more than what its worth, you don't have to replace it by going to Chicago, Kansas City or Texas and renting a brand new Lexus that costs you tons of cash. You have a lot of options that are much more economical and may be just as effective in getting you where you want to go. You can fix that Accord with parts already in your garage or you can shop for a different car that, while not as glamorous or as glitzy as the Lexus, provides you something that's better than the broken down vehicle you're currently in at much better value.

It's safe to say that the team on the field tonight is not going to be the team you see in a month. Shapiro will do his due diligence to add parts (bullpen help) and pieces (another bat) in an attempt to get the team running smoothly and effectively. The fact he's not shopping the showroom but is instead scouring the used car lots may not be exactly what the fan base prefers. But if his team is playing deep into October and folks are packing the Jake to watch playoff baseball, no one is

going to care in which car he got them there.