Unbeknownst to most of America, the Indians now stand a mere 2 ½ games behind the Red Sox in the race for the best record in the AL, and all of MLB. They can't buy a spot in the first half hour of Sportscenter. Joe Baseball Fan has no idea who Rafael Perez is. And the local media keeps sitting, waiting, and wishing for the Indians to fall apart so they can pounce on the Dolans, Shapiro, and Wedge. And that's JUST the way Paul Cousineau likes it.

Unbeknownst to most of America (and apparently most of Cleveland, as many tickets for next week's series against Detroit remain), the Indians now stand a mere 2 ½ games behind the Red Sox in the race for the best record in the AL, and all of MLB. Their Magic Number to clinch (11) matches that of the Angels in terms of having the lowest number of cumulative wins, coupled with losses by the 2nd place team, to ensure a divisional title.

Why has this information escaped the everyday sports (and even baseball-centric) fan?

Because, according to most published reports and national broadcasts, the Red Sox and Yankees continue to fight it out for the right to represent the AL in the World Series. Despite results on the field that dictate otherwise, the preoccupation with the idea that meaningful baseball doesn't happen outside the East Coast has not only taken over that network with 4 letters, it's become the accepted line of thinking across the country.

Ask a baseball fan who Rafael Perez (54 1/3 IP, 1.49 ERA, 0.90 WHIP) is and see the blank stare that you get.

Now try Joba Chamberlain (14 1/3 IP, 0.00 ERA, 0.77 WHIP).

Ask a baseball fan who Asdrubal Cabrera (.849 OPS, 3 HR, 16 RBI in 99 AB) is, then Dustin Pedroia (.843 OPS, 7 HR, 47 RBI in 459 AB).

The notion that the Yankees vs. Red Sox in the ALCS is some sort of rite of Autumn is so ingrained in the national consciousness that it fails to take into account that neither team has made the ALCS in the past two years…despite growing payroll and nauseating media coverage.

You know what, though?

That's fine with me.

After years of frustration about the lack of knowledge (or even caring to know anything) and dearth of coverage from the national media about the Indians and their promise, I'm HAPPY that the Indians aren't getting any kind of attention. Sure, Peter Gammons (perhaps the last truly knowledgeable person in Bristol) has devoted his last few columns to C.C. and how the Indians (and the Angels) are probably better suited for a playoff run than the "elite" of the AL East.

But, who cares?

Let Indians' highlights show up in the last ½ of recap shows, let the Indians build up a giant chip on their shoulder to feel underappreciated and underexposed. Let the Red Sox go into the playoffs with giant expectations and watch the Indians play the perceived role of David (however inaccurate that may be) with Sabathia, Carmona, and Westbrook manning the proverbial slingshots.

And while you think that the lack of coverage or respect is just national, watch a local sports broadcast. The Indians are getting as much press locally as they were last year, when they were afterthoughts in the AL Central race. During the Indians-Tigers series (when the Tribe took 2 of 3) about a month ago, the lead story on most 6 PM sports segments was…Brady Quinn's new haircut.

Despite the fact that the Browns have become irrelevant (once again) before the start of Week 2, the trade of Charlie Frye (how talent evaluation and organizational confusion can result in the starting of a QB, then trading him in less than 48 hours is beyond comprehension) and the Romeo Crennel Death Watch are the topics of conversation on Clevelanders' lips.

Yet the Cleveland media keeps sitting, waiting, and wishing for the Indians to fall apart, ready to pounce on the Dolans, Shapiro and Wedge if the Ghost of 2005 rears its ugly head and sabotages the Tribe's playoff push. While the waiting

continues, the Indians remain an afterthought in the city, somehow still transfixed by yet another Browns' debacle and the ensuing mess.

You have to wonder if the average Clevelander knows much about the current incarnation of the Tribe and the roll they find themselves on. You can almost picture Garko and Michaels going into a bar and letting on that they play for the Indians. The scene would mirror that of the dinner party from Major League:

Cleveland Bandwagoneer: You play for the Indians? You mean, here…in Cleveland. I didn't know we still had a team. I thought the team disbanded when Thome, Omar, and Manny left.

Garko: No. We're still here and it's really great. We've got uniforms and everything. We're actually in 1st place.

But, again, who cares?

Let the bandwagoneers fill up on the corner of Carnegie and Ontario with people who will break their Tribe gear out of mothballs after 10 years of sitting in their closet. Let the Tribe "fans" hop on for the ride.

We've been on this ride for a while and it's been a hell of a lot of fun.

Who cares if nobody else has noticed this, or if everyone's attention is diverted elsewhere?

See the perceived disrespect fuel The Hefty Lefty and his boys through October.

You can almost hear C.C. saying, "We're not sneaking up on anybody. We knew we were this good. I told you that we would win the division. I told you we were a good team. It's YOU who didn't care to know that we ARE this good...and that's on you, not me"

The Indians aren't surprising anyone who's been paying attention and the fun is only beginning.