With a couple days to reflect, Paulie C checks back in with to chuck some CC (no periods) trade related tomahawks at our readers. Paul talks about when we can expect to see Matt LaPorta in Cleveland, and at what position. He gives us some quality analysis of Zach Jackson, Rob Bryson, and the two rumored players to be named later. And he talks about what the trades mean for Ryan Garko and farmhands Jordan Brown and Trevor Crowe.

Let us all stare, open-mouthed, at the picture to the right of CC (note the lack of periods **as per his absurd request**) in a Brewers' uni, collect ourselves because "The AppreCCiation" is forthcoming ... and release some tomahawks:

Much has been thrown out there regarding when Matt LaPorta figures to arrive in Cleveland and what his position will be. Though Tom Haudricourt of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel said yesterday that LaPorta is "certainly ready for AAA", the Indians will start him in Akron to give him some sort of comfort level there, then will proceed with him accordingly. Given LaPorta's success, however, in AA and the fact that the Indians (whether they would come out and say this) want LaPorta to be a fixture in the Cleveland lineup by early 2009, at the latest, I can't see how he doesn't make a move up to Buffalo at some point this year with at least giving a thought to a September call-up, if waiting to give him a shot at breaking with the team out of Spring Training.

Ideally, the latest that I would like to see LaPorta in a Tribe uniform would be mid-May of 2009 or so, which would follow what the Brewers did with Ryan Braun

last year, allowing him to get into a rhythm in AAA, and easing the transition to MLB without the added pressure of breaking camp with the team. But, again, I'd have to think that the mid-May call-up scenario would be about as late as the Indians would like to stretch this thing out, given the dearth of power at the big league level for the team.

As for his position, it looks as if the Indians will take a wait-and-see approach to evaluate for themselves how LaPorta looks in the field in Akron (or Buffalo) before making a decision. It does look as if LF and 1B would be the two likely destinations for him and the performance of the players in the organization already (Garko, Brown, and Aubrey at 1B; Chootierrez and The Ben Francisco Treat in OF) will play just as big of a role as to where he ends up. If Garko continues to regress and is unable to recapture any semblance of power or approach and Brown is unable to generate power at AAA, LaPorta could revert back to his college position of 1B, which most things that I've read report is his more "natural" position. If Garko or Brown push their way back into some future plans and Chootierrez continues to either flail away at the plate (Frank the Tank) or play inadequate defense (The BLC), LaPorta could be given the keys to LF, where his average arm is less of a liability, while RF becomes the land of Benny, Franky, and Shinny.

I'm not sure why, but visions of Ben Broussard running around the LF pastures in Jacobs Field have me hoping that LaPorta ends up at 1B, which is only one of the reasons that I'd prefer to see LaPorta end up at 1B, in addition to the fact that I'd like to see him upgrade the popgun options that currently exist in Cleveland and Buffalo. Certainly he's going to fill one of the two holes that exist at both spots, but I'd rather see the Indians add a OF bat, independent of LaPorta, as opposed to sticking what could be a defensive liability in LF. Back to 1B, though, as a BIG fan of Jordan Brown, I can't help but be disappointed by the continued lack of power from him as he climbs the ladder and, on a team that figures to need power going forward, these extra-base hit totals are hard to ignore:

LaPorta - 45 XBH in 296 AB in Huntsville at age 23
Brown - 49 XBH in 483 AB in Akron at age 23 (he has 25 XBH in 249 AB in Buffalo this year)
Garko - 56 XBH in 430 AB in Kinston, Akron, and Buffalo at age 23

Garko's totals, by the way, after the 2004 season listed above are as follows:

2005 - 47 XBH in 452 AB in Buffalo at age 24
2006 - 52 XBH in 549 AB in Buffalo and Cleveland at age 25
2006 - 50 XBH in 484 AB in Cleveland at age 26
2007 - 15 XBH in 275 AB in Cleveland at age 27

If LaPorta does end up at 1B, where do Jordan Brown and Ryan Garko fit going forward?

Add that to the list of questions that need to be answered as 2008 draws to a close with eyes fixed firmly on 2009.

Getting into the other two known quantities of the deal, **LHP Zach Jackson** looks to be little more than roster filler in the hopes that he could develop into a feasible middle relief option and more than just the warm body that he looks like to help the Indians get through the 2008 season without dipping too far into the minors to eat innings.

Though he is the player who has played at the highest level to date, if you were to rank the acquired players in order of significance to the deal, Jackson would round out the deal as the least important part, seen mainly as an arm that can perhaps play at some point this year in Cleveland, but without too much upside or hope that he will ever become a cog in the rotation or the bullpen.

Much more interesting in **Single A pitcher Rob Bryson** , whose future is murky as to where he projects, be it the rotation or the bullpen. Most reports focus on the 20-year-old Bryson's 90+ MPH fastball and an effective slider that have translated into 73 K in 55 IP this year after netting him 70 K in 54 IP last year. If that is, in fact, the case, Bryson would likely project as a two-pitch reliever, though very far away from realistically contributing in Cleveland as he has pitched only as high as the South Atlantic League, which is the same league as the Lake County Captains. Though his K/9 rate ranks him in the top 3 of the Sally League, putting any kind of timeframe or projection on a 20-year-old pitcher who has yet to pitch in High-A ball is extremely premature.

Bryson will likely join the promising bullpen arms in Lake County like Josh Judy and Mike Pontius, and if those are names that you've never seen before as an Indians fan, they give you an idea as to where Bryson fits in terms of readiness

and talent. He's pretty far down the line and, regardless of how good his 2007 numbers look, the road from Classic Park to the corner of Carnegie and Ontario is a lot farther than the **almost 18 miles that Mapquest tells you it is** .

By all accounts, more than the two pitchers, the PTBNL is the second most important piece of the deal after LaPorta and ahead of the two pitchers. Most reports have the Indians negotiating the option of choosing either **AA OF Michael Brantley**
or
Single-A 3B Taylor Green
, and having until the end of the 2008 season to come to a decision.

Taylor Green is a name that has been connected to the trade talks since they hit the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel blog. Green was the 2007 Brewers' Minor League Player of the Year who doesn't project as a big bopper at 3B, as he has posted solid, if not spectacular, numbers at his three minor league stops leading up to his stay in Brevard County (same level as Kinston) this year as a 21-year-old. Interestingly, the Indians may be looking at Green as more of an option at 2B, as the internal options past Josh Barfield are essentially Akron SS Josh Rodriguez (who has posted a .738 OPS in Akron as a 23-year-old with 81 K in 87 games) and Kinston 3B Jared Goedert, who, like Rodriguez and Green, would have to make the transition to 2B at some point. Goedert, who had a tremendous 2007 season, has posted a .723 OPS in Kinston as a 23-year-old, while Green (who is 2 years younger) has posted a .813 OPS to date for Brevard County.

That being said, Green would fill an organizational weakness if he does project to a solid bat (10th highest OPS at .833 in the Florida State League among players with more than 50 games played in the league...just below prized Phillies' 2B prospect Adrian Cardenas, whose name was connected to CC in trade talks, by the way) and may be waiting to see how he performs throughout the course of the year before making the decision whether to choose Green (who has been more widely reported to be the favored option) or Brantley.

As for the other perceived option, you may ask why the Indians would be interested in Michael Brantley, an OF with good on-base skills and speed when a

player like Trevor Crowe seemingly already exists in the system. The reason is that Brantley JUST turned 21 in May of this year and has posted a .324 BA / .405 OBP / .412 SLG / .817 OPS with 15 2B, 4 HR, and 25 SB in a half season in Huntsville after getting exposed to AA briefly (59 games last year as a 20-year-old) while Crowe, who turns 25 this November has posted a comparable line (albeit with a higher SLG) this year at Akron with a .325 BA / .415 OBP / .506 SLG / .921 OPS with 14 2B, 4 HR, and 9 SB.

Same player, right?

Not even close, as Crowe is putting these numbers up in Akron after having spent part of 2006 there (with 154 AB) and all of last year there (with 518 AB) posting OPS of .643 in 2006 and .694 in 2007. While hampered continually by injuries, Crowe is closing in fast on his 25th birthday and, not having moved past AA and really finding his first success this year after amassing 672 AB there prior to this year, the clock is ticking on Crowe's clock to even be considered a prospect anymore. Brantley, on the other hand, has experienced immediate success in AA and has continued to move up the organizational ladder quickly enough to position himself, at a young age, to make an impact above AA in the very near future.

This is not to knock Trevor Crowe or his standing in the organization, as he COULD still emerge as a viable ML player (though I have trouble seeing him being much more than a 4th OF, given his advanced age and the fact that his first success in AA came after spending a year and a half there), but more to illustrate how important age is at particular levels of the minor leagues and how it is helpful in evaluating where a player is in their development and how high their ceiling could be. Brantley, as one of the youngest hitters in the Southern League, posting a .405 OBP with 25 steals by the end of June, looks to have a pretty high ceiling, which is why the Indians figure to have him on their radar. If the Indians feel that the power that they get from Grady in CF allows them to fill LF with a speedy, leadoff-type hitter who may not produce the power generally associated with corner OF, Brantley would seem to fit that profile.

As for the decision between the two, the Indians have time to determine if Green has the ability to play 2B (while they have no control over where Green plays while in the Brewers' system) as well as determining if Brantley's bat projects as a leadoff hitter that their system seems to be lacking.

Time will tell...

In case you were wondering where the Dodgers were on this whole CC situation as they looked to be the best match in terms of young, MLB-ready talent, **it looks like the Dodgers' owner may have nixed a deal** that would have sent CC, Blake, and Carroll to Chavez Ravine for a healthy package of prospects including (perhaps, as the writer is simply conjecturing what the return would be) Matt Kemp.

Alas...

With all of the glum faces these days regarding the parent club and the small solace that having Sizemore and Lee representing the Tribe in the Midsummer Classic has provided, the Indians now have three players in the Futures Game that takes place over All-Star weekend. The **US team** boasts Matt LaPorta and Akron 3B Wes Hodges, while the **World team** features Kinston SP Hector Rondon, who has notched 89 K to 25 BB in 81 2/3 IP while compiling a 6-3 record with a 3.31 ERA and a 1.26 WHIP...and he just turned 20 years old in February.

Anyone else setting their DVR's for that one?

In case you missed **Anthony Castrovince's piece on the CC trade** , it puts a nice bow around how the whole thing happened as well as projecting why the Indians weren't interested in AAA outfielders saying "they did wish to stay away from Triple-A outfielders, because of their belief in the bats of Shin-Soo Choo and Ben Francisco, the glove of Franklin Gutierrez and the potential of Double-A prospect Trevor Crowe."

I find it interesting that they remain as optimistic as they do on that foursome (if

they really do) given the advanced age of all four and that none has emerged as much more than a complementary part this year, although the quote does address essentially the one strength of each player. I think that their focus on LaPorta had more to do with him being one of the best power hitters in minor league baseball (currently **ranked #4 prospect in MiLB** and the **20th best prospect under 25, regardless of level**, by Prospect Project, whatever that is), and the fact that he projects as better than most AAA OF/1B out there had more to do with it than confidence in what is already in-house.

Much more to come on this as more thoughts, details, and news occurs.

For now, it's back to baseball played on the field and to see if the Indians can stop this 8-game losing streak with CC Sabathia pitching tonight...for your Milwaukee Brewers.

Oof.