The Indians don't have the largest contingent at Yankee Stadium for this week's all star festivities. But the two players they did send should arrive and depart packed in egg crates. Both Grady Sizemore and Cliff Lee are having amazing seasons, and it is possible that the Indians, a team that appears destined for 90 losses, could still tout the AL's home run king and a second straight Cy Young Award winner after the season. Erik Cassano writes about our two All-Stars in his latest column for us.

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All star week is a who's who of valuable players. The rosters are overflowing with team home run leaders, RBI leaders, strikeout leaders and shutout leaders. But few teams have more riding on their all stars than the Indians do on Cliff Lee and Grady Sizemore.

Lee and Sizemore are both having great seasons. The particularly obsessive fans can pick apart their performances, nitpick Sizemore's underwhelming .273 batting average in relation to the rest of his stats, fret over Lee's tendency to lose command of his stuff for an inning or two, but for the sweeping generalization needed to pack this judgment into one paragraph, we can say Lee and Sizemore are having great seasons. In New York, the Tribe's dynamic duo is in good company. Once the season resumes in Seattle on Friday and the pair are once again surrounded by their struggling last-place teammates, greatness will be a

lonely pursuit.

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The pessimist would call it a waste of two perfectly good seasons by a bumbling organization. The optimist would call it proof positive of better things to come. The realist would probably say that if the Indians want to have better seasons in the future, they need Sizemore and Lee to produce like this every year. That's a lot of weight to put on the slight shoulders of two of the Tribe's skinniest players, but when you consider the uncertainty swirling around the rest of the team, Sizemore and Lee comprise the closest thing the Indians might have to a bedrock foundation for '09.

When two players are having seasons like Sizemore's and Lee's, and it still isn't enough to counterbalance the sheer volume of injuries and underachievement on the rest of the roster, it's not exactly a glowing recommendation for the other 23 guys. Of course, as badly as things have gone for the Indians this season, we could reasonably expect some players to bounce back in '09. Baseball is all about giving the law of averages every chance to take effect, after all.

But a quick glance at the rest of the roster reveals a relative sliver of certainty and a whole heaping helping of question marks for next season.

Victor Martinez is recovering from elbow surgery. He was hitting for average for the first couple of months of the season. We can reasonably expect him to bounce back. He's been with the team long enough that we know what to expect from him. Outside of Lee and Sizemore, Martinez might be the only close-to-sure thing Mark Shapiro can offer up for 2009 without making some significant moves this offseason.

Travis Hafner is recovering from an injured shoulder, but he hasn't been right at the plate in over a calendar year. Ryan Garko shows flashes of his 2007 form, then regresses into a pull-happy hacker. Johnny Peralta is producing in the cleanup spot, but this is his fourth season in the

bigs
, and inconsistency is the name of the game with him.

Casey Blake will likely be gone at the end of the year, if not sooner. Franklin Gutierrez will probably never hit for a high enough average to be an everyday player in Cleveland. The sample sizes of Ben Francisco, Shin-Soo Choo and Andy Marte are still too small to accurately gauge their long-term impact. Regardless, none of them project as heart-of-the-order hitters.

In the rotation, Fausto Carmona has a stellar '07 season sandwiched in between a disastrous '06 closer experiment and an injury-plagued '08 campaign. Right now, his career could go any one of a number of directions. Jake Westbrook is recovering from major elbow surgery and is effectively lost as a front-of-the-rotation starter until 2010. Aaron Laffey is in the same boat as Francisco and Choo -- promising, but way too young to proclaim a core player moving forward. Jeremy Sowers needs pinpoint control and excellent command to be effective, and so far, he's had neither.

When you consider all of the above, it's apparent that the Indians have a large portion of both their present and future on display at Yankee Stadium this week.

While it's fantastic to see Sizemore compete in the Home Run Derby as a prelude to appearing in Tuesday's All-Star Game, while it's a thrill to see Lee named the Tribe's first All-Star starting pitcher since Charles Nagy in 1996, the glow will dim noticeably once the grind of the season starts up again and you realize there might not be much more to smile about when it comes to the Indians, this year or next -- or at least until Matt LaPorta makes his already-highly-anticipated big league debut, which might still be a year or more away.

For now, Lee and Sizemore are the genuine article, producing at a high level and bringing positive attention to the Indians during this mostly-miserable season. Others might join them later this year and next year, but anyone else in the Indians organization is saddled with that two-letter blanket qualifier,

"if."

If Travis Hafner returns to form... If Victor Martinez can start hitting for power again... If Fausto Carmona doesn't suffer any setbacks...

If Andy Marte earns his keep at third base... If Ben Francisco continues to hit... If Mark Shapiro can ever find a long-term solution for the closer's role...

Lee and Sizemore are the only two Indians who don't need "if" right now. That alone makes the Tribe's two representatives in the Bronx this week worth their weight in gold.