On Saturday, the Indians completed two trades, with the headliner seeing the team send third baseman Casey Blake to the Los Angeles Dodgers for minor league right-hander John Meloan and catcher Carlos Santana. In the other trade, the Indians traded right-hander Luis Perdomo for right-hander Anthony Reyes. Tony checks in to break down both the deals for us, and give his assessment of the newest members of the Indians organization.

On Saturday, the Indians completed two trades, with the headliner seeing the team send third baseman Casey Blake to the Los Angeles Dodgers for minor league right-hander John Meloan and catcher Carlos Santana. In the other trade, the Indians traded right-hander Luis Perdomo for right-hander Anthony Reyes. Here is a quick breakdown of the two deals below:

Casey Blake for John Meloan and Carlos Santana

This is one of those trades where just about any Indians fan should be happy with the return the Indians were able to get for Blake. Blake was not a star and not overly popular with the fans, so the outcry by those that adored him was minimal if anything when he was sent packing.

In addition to that, Blake is a free agent-to-be, will turn 35-years old in a month, and even though he is enjoying a career year he is a player who should be on the decline after this season concludes.

With the trade of Blake, it also opens up the infield corner positions for third baseman Andy Marte and first baseman Ryan Garko to play everyday. With Blake still around one of these players would have been forced to sit almost every game, but now that he is gone the Indians should get about ten weeks to evaluate Marte, Garko and others like first basemen Michael Aubrey and Jordan Brown. There is also a strong possibility that Blake could be brought back in some capacity as a free agent signing in the offseason.

It is no secret that the Indians feel very highly of Blake, and that the feeling is mutual with Blake

as he is thankful for the Indians giving him the opportunity to become a major league regular.

This is one of those trades where a team overpays for an average talent to fill a need in an attempt to "go for it" that year to win the World Series. The Indians did the same thing last year when they overpaid for the services of Kenny Lofton and sent catcher Max Ramirez to the Texas Rangers.

The two-month rental of Lofton was not viewed as an impact pickup, but more an addition to finish the team off in an attempt to make a long postseason run.

The Dodgers pickup of Blake is viewed almost the same way.

Trades like these often do little in the short term for the team trying to win, and often become a long term steal for the team sending away the aging veteran for good prospects.

We saw this from former Indians GM John Hart in the late 90s.

With the acquisition of right-hander John Meloan and catcher Carlos Santana, the Indians are getting two high upside and high profile prospects. Meloan throws a fastball that tops out around 94-95 MPH, and he compliments it with a nasty slider that is an out pitch.

He also throws a cutter, changeup and curveball which are all good pitches, but are more show-me pitches to set up his fastball and slider.

Prior to this season, Meloan was absolutely dominating as a reliever where in 86 career minor league appearances (nine starts) Meloan was 10-5 with 22 saves and a 2.40 ERA.

More impressively, during that time opposing hitters only hit .168 off of him and he had piled up 236 strikeouts in 157.2 innings for a ridiculous 13.47 K/9 over the three combined seasons.

In addition to his talent, one of the big selling points for Meloan is how much of a competitor he is on the mound and his off the charts makeup. With his pitching repertoire to go along with his makeup Meloan has the makings of a backend reliever down the road, perhaps even a closer, which could be a big reason the Indians were interested in him.

With a fastball and slider that grade out as plus pitches to go along with excellent makeup and composure, he certainly has the intangibles to be a closer.

The only question is how much the Indians consider him for such a role going forward.

Santana fills two needs in the organization in that he helps add talent to the catching position and also adds a big bat to the system. With the injury to Matt McBride this year along with some inconsistent performance by Wyatt Toregas and Chris Gimenez, the Indians need more high quality catching solutions. None of the current crop of catchers in the Indians system are viewed as impact caliber or everyday catchers except maybe McBride, but Santana could change all that with his bat.

Santana showcases above average arm strength, which is no surprise as he is a former third baseman.

His throwing has not been much of a problem for him so far in his transition to catching, but his receiving skills behind the plate are still very much rough around the edges.

It is also possible the Indians may convert Santana back to third base or even the outfield.

Like incumbent starting catcher Victor Martinez, Santana is a switch-hitter who has 20-25 home run power and is an RBI machine. At the time of the trade, Santana was hitting .323 with 14 home runs, 96 RBI and a .993 OPS in 99 games. Santana was 6th in the California League (advanced Single-A) in hitting, 2nd in doubles, 10th in home runs, 1st in RBI, 2nd in walks, 1st in on-base percentage, 4th in slugging percentage, and 3rd in OPS.

In addition to all of the production, Santana has shown an advanced approach at the plate as he has drawn 69 walks to only 59 strikeouts.

He was on pace for around 95 walks, and was only striking out once every six at bats.

Now that Santana is in the organization, he is already being considered Victor Martinez's eventual replacement at catcher in two to three years. With Martinez struggling to stay healthy the last two years with leg issues and now an elbow issue, a move of Martinez to first base full time down the road could pave the way for Santana if he continues to rake at the rate he has.

Luis Perdomo for Anthony Reyes

While the Blake trade made a lot of people happy and made a lot of sense overall, the trade of Luis Perdomo to the St. Louis Cardinals for right-hander Anthony Reyes is not so cut and dry. This is a trade that for various reasons will be contested or defended by many different segments of the Indians fan base, and for good reason.

In acquiring Reyes, it appears Indians GM Mark Shapiro is loading up on young starting pitching. Reyes comes with a lot of hype as just two years ago he was the St. Louis Cardinals #1 prospect and a Top 50 prospect in all of baseball per *Baseball America*. Reyes throws both a two-seam and four-seam fastball where the four-seamer gets as high as 95 MPH, and he compliments his two fastballs with a good slider and changeup.

This could be one of those trades where the Indians are banking on a change of scenery helping Reyes. We all know what that did for Brandon Phillips when they traded him to Cincinnati, or for Jeremy Guthrie when he moved on to Baltimore, so there is obvious hope here the Indians are able to have some luck go their way for once. Plus, the Indians have had a lot of success recently with sinker-ballers like Fausto Carmona, Jake Westbrook, and Aaron Laffey, so it is possible some of that success could rub off on Reyes.

With Reyes, the Indians also acquired a player who should be under their control for at least another four years. Let's face it, the upper levels of the Indians system lacked anything that they could really rely on to help their starting pitching needs in the short term, specifically in 2009. Left-hander David Huff is the only pitcher who appears ready to help the team next year, and if right-hander Adam Miller can remain healthy or is not moved to the bullpen he is the only other option. Others like left-hander Scott Lewis, right-hander Frank Herrmann, right-hander Kevin Dixon, and left-hander Ryan Edell are all good depth options, but none of these pitches are ready to impact the Indians and become stalwarts in the rotation anytime soon, if ever.

On top of that, left-handers Jeremy Sowers and Aaron Laffey have struggled this year. This is clearly an attempt to fill a starting pitching need next year and potentially beyond with a young pitcher who has loads of talent that has only been shown in spurts at the major league level.

With how expensive pitching is in free agency - average pitching at that - taking a gamble on a guy like Reyes may not only be a gamble that pays off from a performance perspective, but from a cost-efficiency perspective as well.

Of course, the downside to this is Reyes is out of options after this season. So, while the Indians have control over Reyes' contract situation for the next four seasons after this year, the Indians could still lose Reyes if he is not on the pitching staff when spring training breaks next year. With all his options exhausted, Reyes would have to clear waivers to be sent to the minors next spring, which he would surely be claimed.

So, Reyes will need to show a lot here over the final two months of the season, in the offseason, and in spring training next year.

As for losing right-hander Luis Perdomo, it is definitely tough to swallow when you lose a guy with his potential in the bullpen. The positive with Perdomo is he can throw a ball through a barn door, as his fastball tops out around 95 MPH. He also throws a wicked slider, which gives him an excellent two-pitch attack plan to use against hitters for one to two innings an outing.

That all said, Perdomo's biggest drawback is that he has been inconsistent commanding his fastball and throwing strikes at times. Also, he dominated the South Atlantic League (SAL) last year at 23-years of age, which is over a year older than the league average age, and this year in the Carolina League at 24-years of age he was again about a year older than the league.

It remains to be seen how he will perform as he moves up to the higher levels with his age and fastball command.

With Perdomo being a Rule 5 eligible pick this year the Indians probably preferred not to wait and find out and instead traded him for something of value now in order not to lose him for nothing in December.

Perdomo's success closing in the Indians system the last two years had many fans thinking he was a closer candidate for the Indians down the road, but just about anyone I talked to felt he was a good 7th or 8th inning reliever down the road. One scout I spoke to a month ago said, "He has done some things that are pretty interesting. To me right now he would be a middle reliever guy and not a setup guy or closer. He would be a good middle relief guy to come in and wipeout righties with that two-pitch plan."

The Bottom Line

Both trades appear to be connected given the way they went down literally within minutes of each other. The Indians had been rumored to be in talks to acquire Reyes as far back as last offseason, and when the Indians and Cardinals agreed on the price of Perdomo it is possible the Indians then went ahead and dealt for Meloan from the Dodgers to replace what they lost in Perdomo.

Meloan fills the loss of Perdomo in the Reyes trade, and is actually a much better relief prospect than Perdomo. In two moves, the Indians were able to upgrade their immediate starting pitching depth with Reyes and also improve their immediate relief pitching depth by upgrading from Perdomo to Meloan. Losing Perdomo is tough, but considering the balance of the pitching scale in the upper minors is more on the relief side, this loss is not as hard to take. With other relievers such as right-hander Jeff Stevens, right-hander Randy Newsom, and lots of young guys in the current major league bullpen, there are options aplenty for next year.

In the end, the net result with the Perdomo trade is the Indians dealt from a position of strength (middle relief) for a position of need (starting pitching).

You have to give up something to get something, and I think this is a fair trade for both teams, and both teams took some risk but at the same time are receiving very good potential.

What makes this overall two-part trade such a haul for the Indians is the acquisition of Santana who is a few years away, but has the potential to be a star offensively. If you combined the players into one trade as Blake and Perdomo for Reyes, Meloan and Santana, the Indians were able to upgrade from Perdomo to Meloan and essentially get Reyes and Santana for a

two-month rental. At this point it is very hard to not be excited at this trade from the Indians perspective.

When hindsight kicks in a year or two from now, opinions on this trade will surely change; however, looking at the trades at today's present value this set of deals could be one where we look back on them as one of Shapiro's best trades during his tenure as Indians GM.