It's been a busy week for Indians GM Mark Shapiro. Kerry Wood is in town today getting a physical before signing a deal to become the first Indians closer to throw over 80 MPH since Jose Mesa. And yesterday, the Indians were part of a three team deal with the Mets and Mariners. The Indians acquired RP Joe Smith and minor-league 2B Luis Valbuena ... and sent packing in the deal was OF Franklin Gutierrez. Paulie hits on the trade, and a myriad of Kerry Wood related topics in his latest.

As this K-Man news really starts to settle in, I keep coming back to the length of this deal - 2 guaranteed years...for one of the top five dominant closers in baseball, just hitting his early 30's?

Is anyone else completely blown away by this?

As the FA closer market began to reveal itself (who's out there, who's looking, etc.), I thought that guaranteeing a 2nd year to the 41-year-old Trevor Hoffman is the risk the Indians would have to assume to ink a back-end stopper.

But this?

Only two guaranteed years with an option for the 3rd year that gives the Indians a limited commitment to Wood with the possibility of extending his stay on the North Coast? This is almost too good to be true. Did Wood's agents survey the landscape of the FA market for closers and decide that this was the deal that would be the best offer on the table, after they went into the off-season reportedly looking for a 3-year, $30M deal?

Truthfully, I don't care why Wood agreed to the (alleged) 2 years and I'm not going to pretend to care - the fact is that the Indians, in adding Wood, have the dominant back-end of the bullpen pitcher that has victimized the Tribe time and time again. How often did you think that the game was over when a Papelbon or a

Nathan entered the game?

Guess what, we just got that dominance in the 9th without a huge commitment of years to do so for a player that already hates the White Sox .

Cue the closer music at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario, it's time to "take 'em to the Wood Shed".

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In this InterWeb world of rumor and false reporting, how spot-on has Anthony Castrovince been on this whole Wood thing and the alleged 3-way deal (more on that later)? AC was talking to the folks at MLB.com on this video feed as the only things coming out of the rest of the media outlets was the melodious music of crickets.

Despite this, the "traditional media" outlets remain unwilling to give credit where credit is due as I heard (while driving this afternoon listening to...against my better judgment...WKNR, "the Plain Dealer is reporting that the Indians have agreed to terms with Kerry Wood on a 2-year deal" at about 2:30 PM on Wednesday afternoon.

Wait, the PLAIN DEALER is reporting it?

You mean, the Plain Dealer has finally decided to acknowledge that the deal that was reported a full 24 hours earlier by Castrovince as something that may happen?

MLB.com (which is Castrovince) was cited as the source by multiple media outlets, including the AP, but for some unknown reason the credit doesn't seem to be going to the proper channel - which is Castrovince, who broke the story and had the particulars of the deal done on Tuesday afternoon (as evidenced by the video link above) while the rest of the "beat writers" wrote their vague, "it's-not-done-yet" drivel that has become the norm for the troika that has covered the Indians' beat for too long now.

I'm not quite sure why this bothers me so, as I have no interest in ever "breaking" a story, but it's right to give credit where it is due and Castrovince called the Wood deal early and correctly (assuming the particulars are worked out) and he deserves the credit for it.

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Speaking of "breaking stories", how much frustration is everyone else feeling towards the Worldwide Leader this week, as they only focused on (big surprise) the Yankees and Red Sox and the CC Sweepstakes?

I know that ESPN is supposed to be THE source for inside information, with their varied stable of baseball writers and insiders, but if the news wasn't specifically "broken" by them, it's as if it didn't even happen. Maybe I'm just bitter as one of the biggest off-season acquisitions that I can remember for the Indians (maybe the biggest FA signing) was simply brushed under the rug while all of the ESPNites fell all over each other to talk about the CC-to-the-Bronx situation, but ESPN is getting awfully close to being dead to me.
Look, I know how this all works, that ESPN covers the bigger stories and the "bigger" teams and have been doing so for years - but this Wood coverage has me past the breaking point. Start with the ESPN Baseball Tonight (which is a joke in and of itself) Winter Meeting Special on Tuesday, during which Tim Kurkjian's comments that it "wasn't likely" that the Indians would sign Wood (after the story that the deal was imminent had broken) because he "knew" that the Indians wouldn't go over $7M or $8M annually and that Wood would easily command more than the Indians could ever afford.
Way to know the market there, Tim.

It rolled on with Steve Phillips' "reporting" that it was likely that, "Kerry Wood appears to be headed to either Cleveland or Texas, likely for two years and $12 million-$14 million", not specifying if it was $12M to $14M per or total...again coming AFTER the news from AC that the deal was imminent.

Hey, Phillips...OK, it's not even worth it to pile on the carcass that is Steve Phillips.

Even after the story was picked up by the AP and the local papers (probably begrudgingly) jumped onto the bandwagon, albeit late, ESPN was more interested in what was happening with the Yankees or what the Red Sox would do.

If ESPN hadn't fallen out of your rotation as a legitimate source for baseball news (its shelf-life as a source for legitimate analysis expired long ago), this week in Las Vegas should have thrown the last shovelful of dirt on the grave of what was once a marvelous baseball resource with knowledgeable baseball insiders and

analysts.

If you're not on Rosenthal and AC by now, that's on you.

Then again, maybe I'm just bitter because CC is going to the Bronx and every story that I read has no mention of the time he spent as an Indian.

Did he have a great "career" as a Brewer...all 17 starts?

Absolutely, but he was an Indian for 7 ½ years, people...at least acknowledge it.

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Back to the Wood Shed, while he represents more of an "expert in the bleachers" (not unlike myself), I asked my brother-in-law (a die-hard Cubs fan who is LEGITIMATELY a die-hard Cubs fan) for his thoughts on the Wood-to-Cleveland deal.

His response when the deal was first reported as a possibility?

I think it is a great move for the Indians and for Wood. There is always the injury question but he has shown that his arm can hold up over the last year plus in the bullpen. I think he can be a solid closer and a 2 to 3 year contract doesn't have too much risk if he does get hurt. They also don't have to give up a draft pick because the Cubs were afraid that he would accept arbitration and didn't offer it. I am interested to see the money but the number of years on this contract just increases my frustration with the Cubs not bringing him back.

Wood has always been a standup guy, clubhouse leader (as much as a pitcher can be), is good in the Chicago community and always accountable for how he pitches. I think he can continue to develop as a closer and be solid for years. He is still young enough for a five to seven year run of success with this workload. Adding those saves to the bullpen is a big help for the Indians and helps them as they try to get back to the top of the division. The big thing here is that it lets you slot your relievers into more effective roles. I think this is a better move than Hoffman because of the age difference and power arm difference. In my opinion, it is a great move by the Indians.

Needless to say, he doesn't think that Kevin Gregg taking over Kerry Wood's innings (even if the specific inning - 9th vs. 8th or 7th) represents a positive development for the North Siders.

I think his comments underscore what is one of the most intriguing parts of this (alleged) deal for me....that the Indians are the team GETTING the player that the former team's fans wanted to keep!

How often does that happen to us in Cleveland?

While we can all moan about CC (who would have taken less money, if it was ANYWHERE near what the Yankees offered him and got an absurdly good deal with a opt-out after 3 years somehow written into his deal), but Cubs' fans wanted Wood back...and he's ours. It's an unusual feeling for those of us with the inferiority complex stamped right into our heads, but it's a feeling I could get used to.

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In matters not constructed of Wood, Anthony Castrovince (again) has an early jump on a potential deal that may be happening with the Indians, Mets, and Mariners
. The way that he reports is that the following players would be heading to the following teams:

To the Mets - JJ Putz, OF Jeremy Reed, RP Sean Green
To the Mariners - Frank the Tank, P Aaron Heilman, OF Endy Chavez, 1B Mike Carp
To the Indians - RP Joe Smith and minor-league 2B Luis Valbuena

At first glance, this one seems a bit confusing as the Indians add ANOTHER arm to the bullpen that suddenly looks awfully crowded, particularly given the young arms (Miller, Meloan, Sipp, etc.) that figure to perhaps come into play for 2009 and the fact that Valbuena has only played 58 games in AAA, before playing 18 games for the M's

last year .

Now, Joe Smith is an interesting arm as he is only 25 and has been successful as a young reliever in New York . But don't we have a bunch of guys like this just waiting for a chance? And Valbuena is a nice looking 22-year-old middle infielder from Venezuela and the Seattle organization (which is a nice combination, though Asdrubal is actually younger), but aren't the Indians looking for a 2B for this year?

Both players would be decent additions (though one wonders if Frank would be more valuable as part of a package and not on his own, given his defensive wizardry), but it doesn't seem to solve many issues - only create more. And maybe that's where this is going, that this is simply the first domino to fall to give the Indians depth at 2B (even if Valbuena won't be on the parent club in 2009) and in the bullpen. What it may allow the Indians to do is include Josh Barfield in a package (with the idea that Valbuena starts 2009 as Columbus' 2B) and throw some of the AAA arms in on a deal that may net that starting pitcher or LEGITIMATE 2B option for 2009.

Again, the trade looks curious for the Indians when initially examined (and not because Frank the Tank is going as most thought that he would be some sort of bait this off-season), which leads me to believe that it's a "depth" move to facilitate another move that has greater ramifications for the parent club.

More on this later as details emerge...I'm off to order my Kerry Wood jersey.