Fresh off a two day bachelor party in Atlantic City where he also got to see his alma mater and hometown school (Dayton and Cleveland State) pull off upsets, Paulie C rolls right into another Lazy Sunday for us here at TCF. In today's piece, Paul talks about the tightening fifth starter race, Adan Miller's finger, DeRosa and Choo's performances at the World Baseball Classic, and the emerging reality that Travis Hafner will simply never come close to being the hitter he once was.

Fresh off a two-day Bachelor Party in Atlantic City (where a Dayton win AND a Cleveland State win did much more than just brighten our Friday), let's roll right into a Lazy Sunday before my body goes into convulsions as it rejects what has gone into it over the last 36 to 48 hours.

Off we go...

Terry Pluto comes correct with his usual bag of Sunday goodies that he's hearing from the Indians. The high points include an explanation of Dave Huff being among those who found himself re-assigned earlier this week, how Tony Sipp could be a valuable contributor in the bullpen at some point this year, how The Zach Attack could be headed for the bullpen (which, as I've said, I think is where the 7th bully spot goes), how Josh Barfield STILL isn't hitting, and how the Indians might eat Kobayashi's contract.

The biggest tidbit of the Spring thus far came out this week, courtesy of Paul Hoynes, who slipped this news into a simple "notes" column :

Scouting Pronk*: Travis "Pronk' Hafner singled in four at-bats Tuesday. The*

Rangers, like Seattle, used the infield shift against him.

Scouts who watched Hafner on Monday against the Mariners said his bat looks slow. He couldn't get around on an 88 mph fastball and fouled it off.

Hafner is hitting .182 (4-for-22).

Not getting around on an 88 MPH fastball?

Isn't that what we saw last year when Hafner's pitch recognition was there, but was undermined by the slowness of his bat speed, resulting in harmless pop-ups and weak grounders?

Hopefully, this is still just an "adjustment" period for Hafner, but the longer this goes on and the longer his struggles continue, the more it becomes apparent that what Hafner did in 2005 and 2006 isn't going to re-appear and even his 2007 season may be unreachable if Hafner's shoulder prevents him from playing back to back games with an injury that a DL stint isn't going to do much for. The more that this stuff comes out, the more I think that the Indians are really going to be picking their spots in terms of when Hafner plays, and not just to protect that shoulder and the lineup...to protect Hafner from what is surely going on in his own head.

At this point, there has to be a lot of hand-wringing when it comes to Hafner as his chronic shoulder injury (which rest and rehab didn't heal last year and surgery doesn't seem to have fully repaired), his inability to play anything but DH, and his contract status is putting some serious doubt as to how much of an albatross his contract will be in the coming years...if not this year.

As for the other major injury news of note, just to bring this Atom Miller finger injury to a head, here's a fascinating and expert prognosis from the LGT , where one of the board members posted his dad's take on Miller's finger.

By the way, his dad has been an orthopedic microsurgeon with a specialty in hands for 30 years so while I can't personally vouch for the validity of this information, yeah...this is about as good as you're going to get without actually seeing Miller's chart.

Sticking with the LGT for a moment, Jay Levin has posted the first of his

three-part series (or something like that) detailing his conversation with Assistant GM Chris Antonetti . A good portion of the interview was published in The Indians Annual 2009, that I was happy to contribute to, but this gives you a pretty in-depth look as to how the Indians make decisions and how involved those decisions are. While Antonetti (obviously) doesn't delve into specific players too much, the depth that he gets into with Levin offers a glimpse into conversations that are likely had on a daily basis at corner of Carnegie and Ontario.

Moving on, if you were holding out hope that the WBC would be the way for The BLC to get that military exemption, think again as it looks like a law that granted exemptions became "extinct" in 2007 and it's unlikely that the military of Korea to make an exception right after the law became "extinct".

While I still think that this isn't too much of a concern as nobody in the Indians organization seems too worried about it, my favorite part of the linked article, however, is this beauty:

"...Choo, who has been limited to four games in the tournament due to the Cleveland Indians meddling in his inclusion on the team, has not lived up to his billing as a U.S. Major Leaguer, going 1-for-9."

The nerve of those "meddling" Indians who want to make sure that Choo's not injured...

On the topic of Indians still in the WBC, Ken Rosenthal has an interesting piece on how Mark DeRosa is fitting in where the US needs him to fill in , this time at 1B. Not a great indication of how important the WBC is for the US that Mark DeRosa is playing 1B for them when only one 1B got hurt. Not to take anything away from DeRosa (who is likely to fill the same "fill-the-gaps" role with the Indians), but he's the back-up plan at 1B?

Moving on to minor matters, Sports Illustrated's Jon Heyman counts Matt LaPorta (perhaps a potential replacement for Hafner's AB later this year) as one of the many prospects who has made quite an impression , saying about LaPorta (and other newly minted Tribesmen):

The biggest name coming back in the CC Sabathia trade hit .296 this spring (.514 slugging). Outfielder Michael Brantley, the second piece in the deal, also got big reviews and hit .360 this spring. Switch-hitting catcher Carlos Santana, who came for Casey Blake, is considered one of the best catching prospects in baseball.

The infusion of talent from what looks like a loaded Columbus team (Adam Miller or no Adam Miller) is going to be one of the interesting developments to watch this season as the length of rope the Indians give some of these players in terms of performance in MLB before they find themselves out of the rotation could be pretty short, particularly if players in AAA force themselves into the discussion by thriving for the Clippers.

For now, it's time to fire up the March Madness On Demand to catch both the UD and CSU games at the same time from the comfort of my own home as going to a bar to watch both games after the last two days in the Trump Plaza and a place in AC called "Game On" would be tantamount to madness...and there's going to be enough madness going around when BOTH the Flyers and Vikings punch their dance cards to the Sweet 16.