Enough is enough with Jason Johnson and Guillermo Mota says Erik Cassano. He also argues more moves may be necessary, but that this is a good place to start. Link to Erik's superb Papa Cass weblog is included in the body of the column.

Visit the Papa Cass weblog at http://papacass.blogspot.com/

Indians GM Mark Shapiro recently said the Indians' pitching problems are too widespread to begin dropping guys from the roster. If the Indians' pitching woes could be whittled down to a couple of players, he said, it would be a different story.

After watching Friday's 10-3 beatdown at the hands of the Angels, that statement seems like a cop-out to buy more time, a stall tactic by the geologically-slow Indians front office.

It is becoming painfully obvious that the Indians' pitching staff would be a better, more productive place without the presences of Jason Johnson and Guillermo Mota.

Johnson is 3-5 with a 5.92 ERA. I wish it was even that good. In the month of May, he went 1-3 with a 9.13 ERA. His four-earned-run outing Friday gives him a 7.20 ERA to start June.

Friday, he had zero consistency finding the strike zone, walking four. When he did find the strike zone, it was with disastrous results.

Heading into last night, the Indians were the only American League team Vladimir Guerrero had never homered against. A fat first-inning fastball from Johnson remedied that. The Angels went up 2-0 and never looked back.

It's not all on Johnson. The Indians offense couldn't figure out Angels rookie starter Jered Weaver. But the point is, Johnson didn't give his team a chance to win the game. And he hasn't been giving his team a chance to win games for quite some time.

You can't tell me the rotation wouldn't be better-served with youngsters Fausto Carmona or Jeremy Sowers holding down the fifth spot. Sure, they might struggle, too. But at least they'd be gaining big-league experience that would serve them well down the road.

Johnson, 32, has topped out. He's not going to get any better.

Johnson left the game after five innings with his team in a 4-0 hole. Leave it to Mota to deliver the knockout blow.

In 1 1/3 innings, Mota managed to cram in five Los Angeles runs on four hits, including a pair of bombs off the bats of Dallas McPherson and Garret Anderson. By the time manager Eric Wedge mercifully pulled the plug on Mota, the Indians were in a 9-0 hole.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, Mota was the vicious guard dog that protected the ninth-inning lair of Dodger closer Eric Gagne. Together, they formed one of the best late-inning tandems in recent history.

But the Dodgers abused his arm and shipped him to the Marlins, where the abuse continued. The Red Sox, who acquired him from Florida along with Josh Beckett, must have sensed Mota's arm was hanging by a thread and all-too-readily shipped him to Cleveland weeks later in the Coco Crisp trade.

Now, the great stuff he had in L.A. has been compromised by a worn-down arm. The movement on his pitches is gone, as is the ability to consistently throw strikes. Much as with Johnson, when Mota does find the strike zone, it's usually with a get-me-over fastball that gets crushed.
In 24 innings of work, Mota has surrendered eight home runs. Simple math tells you that if he works 72 innings this season, that's 24 homers -- a ridiculous pace.

Again, If this is all the supposed veteran stalwart is going to give this team, I'd rather see the youngsters from Buffalo get their sea legs, even if they struggle at first.

Wedge is saying all the right things about his pitchers, soapboxing about "having something to build on" and "getting (the pitching) straightened out." But it's already June. The Indians are already facing large deficits in both the division and wild card races, and can ill-afford to fall farther back.

Other Indians pitchers have also fallen on hard times this season. But if Shapiro is looking for some branches to start pruning, Johnson and Mota would seem to be good places to start. They're leading the charge toward the bottom of the standings.