One step forward and two steps back is certainly not the way to make up ground in a race, but the Indians find themselves once again simply trying to tread water in an increasingly winnable AL Central ... just maybe not winnable for them the way that injuries have forced their complementary players into core roles and their fringe players into complementary roles. As this all shakes out over the next three weeks though before the DL (hopefully) gets a little less crowded, let's get off on a Lazy Sunday with Paulie C.

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The big news of the week was the deep demotion of Carmona, whose apparent Faustian Bargain of 2007 has come due as he now finds himself under the hellishly hot summer sun in Arizona to find what has apparently left him. It seems as if the depths to which Carmona found himself sinking to with each passing start are just as deep as the Indians think Carmona's problems appear to be as he's not going to Columbus or Akron or even Lake County (and all of the "bright lights" there)...no, he's going back to be rebuilt from the bottom up in the hopes that the 23-year-old pitcher whose 2007 season was on par with that of Cy

Young Award winner CC Sabathia can be found amongst the cacti.

Whether that can be accomplished or not remains to be seen, but there's no question that this move was going to come if it wasn't already overdue as ESPN.com's Rob Neyer asserted
, saying:

The only thing Carmona did well last year was keep the ball in the ballpark, which presumably was due to a combination of his sinking fastball and his unwillingness (or inability) to throw the ball through the strike zone...I suspect that the Carmona Experiment is over for not just today, but for some time. Whatever made Carmona a Cy Young candidate in 2007 seems to have completely disappeared. And now, every time Carmona pitches he just embarrasses himself and the rest of the organization.

Can anybody find the counter-argument to that?

Back on March 12th, I wrote this regarding Carmona's importance to the Indians' season :

As much hand-wringing as there has been about the middle-to-back-of-the-rotation (admittedly by me), I still think that the key to the Indians' season is which Fausto Carmona shows up in 2009... as the difference between Carmona v.2008 and Carmona v.2007 showing up this year has the potential to be a huge factor in the difference between an AL Central Championship and irrelevance by the All-Star Break.

I think it's fair to say that we have an answer on one of the counts at the beginning of June - that would be Carmona v.2008 and the "irrelevance by the All-Star Break" may not be far behind if this team can't at least tread water until Westbrook and Laffey are (allegedly) ready to come back in about three weeks.

Terry Pluto hits on the descent of Carmona (amongst other things) and puts the ugly numbers out there for all to see in terms of his inability to throw strikes. The whole ordeal is frustrating, if not completely mystifying, but what the Indians are doing with him may be just what he needs and is not without precedent (as Pluto references in his piece) as Doc Halladay underwent a similar "rebuild" back in 2001, the comprehensive story of which can be found told very effectively here

.

By the way, if anyone is in Goodyear reading this and spot this book (referenced in the Halladay story) arrive at the facility from a Cleveland address, please forward it along to Fausto.

Thanks.

Staying with rotational issues, one of the "ones that got away" that fans often bemoan can apparently be had for the "right price", according to Ken Rosenthal, as the Orioles are listening to offers for Jeremy Guthrie. Depending upon what the Orioles are looking for in terms of a return, it would be interesting to see how the Indians' brass approaches his alleged availability as they're obviously intimately familiar with Guthrie and, now that he has blossomed into a middle-of-the-rotation starter (and don't misread this as me saying that Guthrie is "the answer" for the rotation as his career ERA+ is 114), it would be an interesting return for a pitcher who the Indians had high hopes for and has turned into exactly the middle-of-the-rotation innings eater that we all took for granted with Jake Westbrook and Paul Byrd in terms of performance and consistency for the past few years.

What would the Orioles be looking for?

Who knows and whether the Indians would have an interest in Guthrie just as he's becoming arbitration-eligible is certainly up for debate - but it raises a good question in terms of how the Indians are likely going to be looking to make some moves to re-make their roster over the next few months.

By now, everyone's pretty aware that the old George Costanza idea that "I think I figured out a way to get Griffey and Bonds...and it wouldn't cost us that much" application to moving multiple players with limited ceilings for one great player is nothing more than a pipe dream. But is it possible that some of their more highly-touted prospects who play the same position as one another could become the bait that the Indians use to fill organization holes that have revealed themselves this season?

That is, if the Indians have what looks to be depth at the 1B/LF position in players

like LaPorta, Mills, and Weglarz all in AA and AAA without even looking at guys like Brantley or Jordan Brown or the players already topside in Frisco and Garko, doesn't it stand to reason that they may be able to deal from a position of depth to add some much-needed arms, even if these guys are included in some sort of a package to net some MLB-ready pitchers?

Whatever pieces they may eventually decide to be arbitrary or redundant, can I...um...make a case that Akron catcher Carlos Santana should be held pretty tightly?

Not sure if you've heard of this Matt Wieters fella who just came up to catch for the Orioles after topping nearly every prospect list going into the season. If you haven't, here's a piece that JoePos did on him with Bill James that puts how much hype he's received into perspective.

OK, got that?

Check this:

Matt Wieters - AA Bowie 2008 - Age 22

.365 BA / .460 OBP / .625 SLG / 1.085 OPS with 12 HR, 14 2B, 38 BB, 29 K in 250 PA

Carlos Santana - AA Akron 2009 - Age 23

.284 BA / .417 OBP / .547 SLG / .964 OPS with 9 HR, 12 2B, 37 BB, 25 K in 192 PA

While Wieters numbers are a bit better, look at the HR, 2B, and BB/K rates of the two with Wieters having more plate appearances and know that Wieters BABIP in Bowie last year was .378 while Santana's in Akron this year is .293, which is obviously going to have some bearing on the BA and OBP numbers to date.

While we may not see any websites like this pop up about Carlos Santana or see statements (shamelessly stolen from the linked site above and altered for my own pleasure) emerge that " *Carlos Santana Sometimes Impatiently Homers From The On Deck Ci* rcle" and "

Carlos Santana Picked Himself To Be The Best Man At His Wedding. It Was His Only Option
"...um yeah, he still looks like the real deal he was purported to be.

Back to the burgeoning trading season that seemed to be kicked off with the McLouth deal, Nick Cafardo at Boston.com has an interesting piece taking a look at the landscape of what teams are looking for and what teams are offering as well as asking GM's "when" the right time to make a deal is. Milwaukee GM Bob Melvin (who may have some interest in a certain Cleveland IF) has an interesting comment about multiple teams looking for hitting but not being willing to part with pitching to get it. Isn't that the situation that the Indians likely find themselves up against in an attempt to look for MLB-ready arms?

Deeper in the Cafardo piece, he notes that Carl Pavano (if he were to be traded) could not be dealt until after June 15th (which is, of course in about a week) and touches on the Mark DeRosa trade rumors, saying that "*there are still a lot of rumblings about his availability. With so many teams needing hitters and good chemistry guys, the Indians may have to consider a deal. The Giants are pounding the door for hitting, and DeRosa's name has popped up in their internal meetings. The Giants would part with lefty Jonathan Sanchez*
."

Let's see, Sanchez is a 26-year-old LHP who throws a low-90's fastball and has compiled an ERA of 5.06 with a WHIP of 1.50 over the last two years starting in the dreadful NL West while walking 6.2 batters per 9 innings this year, which is a little higher than that of FAUSTO CARMONA's 6.1 this year.

A soft-tossing LHP on the south side of 25 with control issues?

Pass.

With the 2009 Draft coming up on Tuesday (quick show of hands who knew that), now might be a good time to get an update on some of the principals of the 2008 Draft class, via Tyler Chirdon at the LGT. Tyler wrote a tremendous piece in the IA2K9 regarding how the amount of the signing bonuses doled out to the draftees/signees of the 2008 crop are a better indication of which players were thought most highly of after all of the signings were complete.

Finally, Indians' fans everywhere bid a fond farewell to former owner Dick Jacobs, who passed away late this week. In my 32 years as an Indians' fan, there have been players that have donned the Tribe uni and need only to be mentioned by their first name for recognition of their accomplishments on the field - Jimmy, Manny, Albert, Sandy, Omar, Kenny, Charlie, CC, Grady, Victor, and so on.

But none of these players would have existed in Cleveland if not for the one man about whom Terry Pluto so eloquently wrote about at his passing in terms of what he did for the city and for the Indians' organization. For that reason, there's no doubt in my mind that Dick Jacobs is the greatest Cleveland Indian of my lifetime.

Rest in Peace, Mr. Jacobs...and thank you.