Walking out of Wrigley Field, head hanging for the second straight day as Cubs' fans alternately told him to "go back to Cleveland" and commiserated with my experiences of the last two days in a feeling that they know all too well, the words were inescapable in his head. It's over. Unfettered, Paulie marches on with another Lazy Sunday, much of which discusses the merits of potentially trading Cliff Lee or Victor Martinez.

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Whatever hope that may have taken up the smallest recess of my body that the 2009 season was salvageable disappeared as Kerry Wood's offering hit the backstop as the stark realization that the Indians, outmanned as a team and outmaneuvered on every occasion by the opposing manager in this series, had dropped their 5th straight to once again fall 12 games under .500 and erase any thought that a "run" or a gallant sprint to the finish would represent anything more than too little too late at this point.

Trace it to Prince Fielder's GS off of Rafael Perez if you like as Monday's eminently winnable game against the Brewers served as the dropping point as the bullpen, mismanaged and ineffective regardless of whom was thrown out there, was where it had been for the better part of the early season - as the reason for the lost season.

Words are difficult to find to express my frustration as Cubs' fans (and non-Cubs' fans) asked me around the trough (yes, they still have troughs for urinals) if the Indians' manager had any concept of how to match-up pitchers or how to use

strategy in a baseball game. At one point, a White Sox fan pulled me aside and told me that he wanted to cheer for the Tribe against his hated Cubs, but could simply no longer bring himself to do it as he knew what the outcome was going to be...and this was after the 8th inning of Friday's game.

What that White Sox fan was trying to avoid - inevitable heartbreak - is something that we, as Indians' fans, cannot escape this season and as we wait for the inevitable firing of The Atomic Wedgie and the moves to come, we're only left with what-ifs and what-could-have-beens in what is now unquestionably a lost summer.

Nevertheless, because it is Sunday and because The DiaBride has given me the hall pass to sit in her parents' house and hammer out a Lazy Sunday (it is Fathers' Day, after all), let's roll right into it, if only to divert my attention from the disappointment that the games cast upon the last two days sitting under the Chicago sun, that even prodigious amounts of Old Style were unable to brighten:

It seems like the hot topic on everyone's mind as we pass through mid-June is which teams are going to be looking to add pieces and which teams will be looking to move pieces prior to the July 31st trade deadline, and Kenny Rosenthal (not surprisingly) has the Indians as a seller . Reading the piece more closely however, reveals that he has them as a seller in terms of DeRosa and Pavano (assuming he's healthy) as neither really factors into the long-terms plans for the team and has them moving players that DO factor into the 2010 plans (Vic and CP Lee) only if an overwhelming offer comes around.

Will that overwhelming offer come around for Lee though, as Jon Heyman states that the SP market is going to be thin and Bedard and Halladay just hit the DL ? A bounty could likely be had for him, but to me there's no reason to trade Lee unless you can legitimately get an arm that can slot into his spot at the top of the Indians' rotation from Day 1 and would remain under club control for the next 4 or 5 years...and players like that simply don't exist on the open market and the teams that have them certainly aren't anxious to move them.

In fact, the best piece that I've read on the "Should They or Shouldn't They" debate for CP Lee comes via Joel Sherman, who nails the argument that, realistically, Cliff Lee shouldn't be moved under any circumstances :

So if the Indians trade Lee between now and July 31, they are not only damning any long-shot chance they have to get back into the AL Central race this year. They also are pretty much erasing contention next season. That might be more tolerable if they were playing in the AL East, where they would have to be thinking of ways to contend for the long term against the Red Sox and Yankees. But they play in the tepid AL Central.

"There is no reason in the world they can't compete in their division next year," an AL executive said. "At some point it has to be about winning and not selling off parts for a sunny day in the future."... With the chance to get healthier both physically and against a weaker set of opponents, the Indians want more time to try and contend in 2009. They can't do that without Lee, and they almost certainly couldn't contend without him in 2010 either.

While I know that Sherman is a NY Post writer who has generally made a name for himself in the Midwest as a little too NY-centric, anybody who feels that Lee should be moved this year or this off-season should simply have this piece placed in front of their nose to see the reasoning for keeping CP Lee laid out in a clear and complete manner.

Not to be outdone by Sherman, Jayson Stark lays the wood to the idea that Clifton's headed anywhere and (rightfully) throws El Capitan into the same boat before effectively putting the argument that DeRosa is the biggest piece of bait in the Indians tackle box:

Can we pull the plug on the Cliff Lee and Victor Martinez rumors now? They're irreplaceable players, with affordable options for next year. So the Indians have no incentive to trade them, unless the payback is insane. That makes DeRosa far and away the best chip in town if they decide to sell. He's already up to 13 homers, 48 RBIs and 46 runs scored. And only six other players in the whole sport can match him in all three categories, none of them third basemen or second basemen. So Mark DeRosa gets more marketable by the minute.

This is about as good of a quick synopsis as I've seen in terms of identifying how important Vic and CP Lee are to the team next year and how DeRosa remains the biggest chip for the team, for whom changes are most certainly coming.

What type of changes?

According to what Terry Pluto is hearing from the Tribe , it wouldn't be too surprising to see Mike Brantley up topside soon with Trevor Crowe (of whom I was asked by a Cubs' fan to describe when he pinch-hit for Garko yesterday, to which I responded, "a pinch runner who can't hit"...when the guy said, "I thought that was Josh Barfield", I sunk a little lower in my seat) being sent down and Ben Francisco being relegated to 4th OF status.

Pluto also reports that Wyatt Toregas is getting rave reviews in AAA and one has to think that with LaPorta playing 1B in Columbus and Gimenez's ability to catch as well as Torregas being an option that something may be afoot with Kelly Shoppach in terms of him being an auxiliary part.

As for what the Indians should be doing, I'll try to throw something together in terms of what the Indians might be able to salvage in this lost season, some of which is brought up by Tyler Chirdon at the LGT , who has a couple of little snippets about a few relievers who were thought to potentially be heavy contributors in the Indians' 2009 bullpen (Mayday Meloan and Stomp Lewis) and what, exactly, seems to have gone wrong with each. Not to throw a total damper on the day with the piece, though, his bit about Mike Brantley...um, yeah, it has me excited.

On the topic of prospects, Kevin Goldstein of Baseball Prospectus fame (he's their Minor League guru) was kind enough to join Tony Lastoria and I on this week's edition of Smoke Signals
, and if you're blown away by the depth that Tony goes into in his analysis of Indians' prospects (and put me in the "blown away" category every time I read his stuff or talk to him), to hear Goldstein go on about Weglarz, Chisenhall, Carlos Santana, and others is simply unbelievable as Goldstein knows this stuff about EVERY prospect in MLB and speaks, at length, about all of these Indians' guys with the knowledge and passion that we've grown to love with Tony. Quite simply, it's a must listen...if only to brighten up your day.

As for me, thank goodness that I decided against going to the Sunday game prior to the trip as I don't think the dread that filled me the last two days, knowing that the other shoe was on its way to the floor, is something that I want to continue to feel.

Finally, thanks to everyone who came out to Sheffield's after the game yesterday as the Tribe was well-represented and while rumors that the owners of Great

Lakes Brewing Company were in the bar were never confirmed, to meet serial posters like milwaukeeTribe and s_bricker, as well as hang with site stalwarts Cy Slapnicka and t-bone, was unbelievably cool for me, if only to talk some Tribe after a tough weekend with some guys who were feeling it just as much as me.

See you on the other side as I'm heading back to Cleveland tomorrow...not sure if I can say the plans are as concrete for The Atomic Wedgie to accompany the team to Pittsburgh for Tuesday's tilt.