With the news coming on Sunday from Mark Shapiro that The Atomic Wedgie and his coaching staff will finish out the season, Paulie Cousineau is surprised at the reaction that he's feeling. It's not anger or rage or even an urge to release vitriolic condemnation on the decision. Rather, all he feels is disappointment and dread. And he says that as a season ticket holder. Paul explains his position in his latest piece for us here on the site.

With the news coming on Sunday from Mark Shapiro that The Atomic Wedgie and his coaching staff will finish out the season, I'm surprised at the reaction that I'm feeling...it's not anger or rage or even an urge to release vitriolic condemnation on the decision.

Rather, all I feel is disappointment and dread.

Not disappointment that a man gets to keep his job or that the season is suddenly lost (as that feeling came during a walk out of Wrigley Field a few Saturdays ago), but the disappointment that I feel is that the obviousness that a message needed to be sent to acknowledge that the present course that the Indians find themselves on is an unacceptable one and that a sign that continuing on such a path is not condoned needed to be sent.

Whether that's fair to scapegoat Eric Wedge or one of his coaches is up for debate, as (by Shapiro's own admission) there's plenty of blame to go around and simply blaming one man for the mess is an unfortunate conclusion to draw. But a conclusion needs to come for this organization to draw a line by which they can move on, and the opportunity to draw that line neatly and forcefully has now come and gone.

However, disappointment is not the overwhelming feeling that fills me...no, that would be dread.

Why, you ask?

Well, we all know what happens if the Indians' slide continues into the second half as Wedge and most of his coaching staff will be let go (certainly no declaration was made that Wedge is "manager for life"...at least I hope not) and the Indians will attempt to lick their wounds, survey the scene for a new manager and coaching staff turning the page from the Eric Wedge Era.

This does not fill me with dread...and I say that as a season-ticket holder.

No, what fills me with dread is the very real possibility that the Indians finish the year out strong and pull off one of their second half pushes, even if it's only to the measured mediocrity that they reached last season.

What happens then?

What happens if the pattern of second half surges continues, as they have in three of the last four years?

Second Half 2005 - 47-34 (.580 WP)

Second Half 2006 - 40-41 (.493 WP)

Second Half 2007 - 47-34 (.580 WP)

Second Half 2008 - 44-37 (.543 WP)

Now that the team is looking like it was supposed to, with Sizemore (allegedly) healthy, Pronk back at some percentage of his former self, Cabrera healthy, Westbrook close to being ready, Laffey working his way back...what if this team starts playing well and some of the young players like Huff and Hurricane Perez start contributing, as do Matt LaPorta and Michael Brantley?

Is the argument gong to emerge to keep Wedge, because he kept the team "fighting" by "separating" and having players "run into one" now and again?

I certainly hope not because the second half has never been a problem for Wedge-managed teams that were thought to be contenders...the first half on the other hand, that's another story:

First Half 2006 - 38-43 (.469 WP)

First Half 2007 - 49-32 (.605 WP)

First Half 2008 - 37-44 (.457 WP)

First Half 2009 - 32-49 (.395 WP)

We all know why this is relevant, but I'm going to put this up here in another manner to essentially put to rest the idea that keeping the Wedge for the second half of 2009 is going to "build momentum" under the guise of "stability":

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After the excitement of the 2005 season, when the Indians came up just short in the playoff chase, the team played 5 games under .500 in the first half in 2006...

After the 2007 ALCS year, the Indians came out of the gate flat, playing 7 games under .500 in the first 81 games in 2008...

After the furious finish of 2008 was supposed to "build momentum" for this year, the Tribe sat at a 17 game deficit under .500 after the first 81 games...

So, after the three best second half records posted over the last 4 years, teams managed by Wedge (with essentially the same players that closed out the years so strong and additions made in the off-season) saw their winning percentage drop precipitously enough to debunk any kind of absurd notion that stability from year to year, in terms of players or managers, has benefitted the Indians under Wedge.

That's the fear though - what if the Indians go 48-31 over their remaining 78 games to finish 81-81 again (that's a .607 WP clip) with pieces and parts healthy and the difficult portion of their schedule behind them...does that keep Eric Wedge's job safe to start 2010?

If the idea that keeping Wedge to create momentum to 2010 is folly if you're looking at a four-year body of work, what's the upside in keeping Wedge aboard?

The argument is out there that the Indians aren't going to find their long-term solution in early July and that interim managers don't really do much more than hold the place on the bench for the manager to come; but what is the harm in allowing an interim manager to close out the season if a change is a necessary message that needs to be sent across the organization and with the knowledge that the 2009 season is over in terms of won-loss records?

If Joel Skinner closes out the year as the manager - so be it.

He knows he's not the long-term answer just as well as the Indians do and the idea of getting a guy like Mike Hargrove or Buddy Bell (someone who's killing time in early July with an MLB season underway) isn't all that appealing to me. The guys they should be targeting (most notably John Farrell) have jobs right now and won't be available until the off-season, but at least with Wedge securely out of the way and with the matter decided now, a search can start in earnest as soon as the season ends and we won't be forced to go through this nonsense for the rest of the season with the dread of Wedge keeping his job hanging over our heads.

At the end of the day, the Indians find themselves now stuck with two scenarios, both equally distasteful - on one hand, the season continues to go south and Wedge is fired after the season, on the other hand, the season improves greatly and the "Should they Keep Eric Wedge" debate rages on into October.

A chance to acknowledge that this team is headed down the wrong path by sending a message that poor results won't be tolerated in the name of "stability" and a chance to make a turn off of that wrong path has just been missed. As a result, we find ourselves on this same lonely path, accompanied by a dead man that we still find walking with us.