As the free fall continues and the bottom is no longer visible, due in no small part to the Indians not learning from mistakes of the past and from the team simply going through the motions, it's time to release some Tomahawks. Except this time, the Tomahawks don't have a lot of air under them or that nice little arc ... no, these are dropping like rocks. Paulie hits on managerial head scratchers, trading Ryan Garko, the bullpen from hell, and B.J. Ryan in this week's installment.

As the free fall continues and the bottom is no longer visible, due in no small part to the Indians not learning from mistakes of the past (is there ANYONE outside of the Indians' dugout on Tuesday night who thought that getting some arms up in the bullpen didn't make sense to start the 6th...you know, just in case Jeremy Sowers gets into trouble his 3rd time through the lineup) and from the team simply going through the motions, it's time to release some Tomahawks.

Except this time, the Tomahawks don't have a lot of air under them or that nice little arc...no, these are dropping like rocks:

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From the "What exactly is Wedge thinking" file, David Huff has 10 starts under his belt as a starting pitcher for the Cleveland Indians. In 5 of those starts, Ryan Garko has been the starting LF and, in fact, all of Garko's career starts in LF have come with Huff on the mound.

Just to clarify any confusion that may be out there, Garko is a converted catcher who now plays 1B and is ideally a DH on a deep AL team. He also happens to have played LF in half of the games that the Indians' best pitching prospect at the upper levels has pitched this year.

Isn't there something to putting your players in the best positions to succeed and backing your young pitchers up with the best defensive alignment possible?

Is putting a converted catcher in LF with a young pitcher whose flyball ratio in the minors was 40.4% really putting up the best defensive alignment possible?

Really?

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Speaking of Garko, does anyone else have a sneaking suspicion that a deal is coming having to do with Garko...Polo?

Connect the dots here while allowing me to vent for a moment...

First we have this ridiculous quote regarding LaPorta or Brantley getting promoted:

"There's no opportunity for young guys to play right now," said Shapiro. "If there are guys pushing to get up here from Triple-A or guys traded off the big-league team, we'll react appropriately."

"Pushing to get up here" like...say...Matt LaPorta posting a .922 OPS in AAA (good for 2nd in the International League behind the 29-year-old Shelly Duncan) after posting a cumulative .924 in AA the previous year while playing the two offensive positions of most need for the parent club?

Without getting into the utter insanity of the notion that LaPorta's not topside because Ben Francisco can "play" CF and they need Frisco on the team to spell Grady from time to time, which sounds strangely like the...wait for it...4th outfielder role that Francisco is best suited for, while the club carries 13

pitchers (of whom two are named Mike Gosling and Winston Abreu), look closer at what Shapiro's saying.

"Guys traded off the big-league team", like who?

A player whose "best" defensive position is one of relative strength in the organization with a potential logjam occurring there in the very near future, whose movement to another team perhaps presents an opportunity to turn a expendable player with a MLB track record but not a clear future in this organization into an arm that would be more useful for the remainder of this year and beyond?

Could that Master of the RBI, Ryan Garko, be on the block as his performance peaks?

Maybe, and while we know Garko is what he is (a high-OBP, medium-SLG, mediocre place-holding 1B), it's possible that Garko could be seen as an offensive upgrade for a playoff contender whose price (in terms of what the playoff contender would have to give up) may not be as high as other offensive players purported to be on the market.

The thought is not without merit as (while this is nothing new around these parts) Garko has positively crushed LHP this year, with his numbers against RHP looking about average for a ML player:

Garko vs. LHP - 2009
.318 BA / .400 OBP / .568 SLG / .968 OPS

Garko vs. RHP - 2009
.248 BA / .337 OBP / .390 SLG / .727 OPS

That being said, Garko would have some value on the trade market given his ability to hit LHP and to provide some increased production for contenders without costing too much in terms of what the Indians would be looking for in return (that would be an arm...any arm) and in terms of salary. Also working in the Indians favor would be the fact that a number of contending teams find themselves in need of an offensive upgrade at 1B or thereabouts.

Who might show an interest in a package involving Garko?

Texas

As Chris Davis' struggles (.671 OPS) have resulted him now being sent down to AAA, it would seem that the Rangers are in need of a 1B (unless they want to fast-track prospect Justin Smoak, who is coming off an oblique injury and just joined AAA Oklahoma City) or at least as a RH complement to 1B/DH Hank Blalock, who has posted a .877 OPS vs. RHP and a .613 OPS vs. LHP. Even if Davis turns himself around or Smoak gets the call, Garko could provide the Rangers with (at the very least) an option at DH past Blalock for next year and some offense this year in their push for the AL West.

Atlanta

Casey Kotchman's disappointing season (.272 BA / .338 OBP / .387 SLG / .725 OPS) with 3 HR and a dreadful line against LHP (.257 BA / .305 OBP / .338 SLG / .643 OPS) have contributed to one of the many holes in the Braves' offense, which looks to be the weak spot of a team still very much in the NL East race. Atlanta is allegedly looking to upgrade a punchless offense and, while Garko isn't going to be an addition in the vein of Mark Teixeira (no...really?), he could be seen as an improvement on what the Braves are currently getting from their 1B.

Florida

While 1B isn't the problem in Florida, 3B is as Emilio Bonifacio is currently sitting on a .620 OPS. Certainly nobody would suggest that Garko could play 3B (LF and RF is enough of a laugher), but the Marlins could move current 1B Jorge Cantu back to 3B (despite the fact that he's an absolute butcher at 3B) to take AB away from Emilio Bonifacio, and upgrade the offense in the process. The infield defense would be an absolute horror show with Garko, Dan Uggla, Hanley Ramirez, and Cantu...but I wouldn't bring that up to Florida officials.

New York Mets

Desperate for production from 1B until Carlos Delgado gets healthy, the Mets' current Daniel Murphy is sitting on a .665 OPS, over which Garko certainly represents an upgrade. After (or is it "if") Delgado returns, Garko could serve as a RH bat off the bench or even as a platoon partner with Ryan Church (.182 BA / .245 OBP / .205 SLG / .450 OPS vs. LHP) once Delgado is healthy if the Mets can take "The Adventures of Garko the Outfielder" in the

expanses of Citi Field.

All told, LaPorta is likely coming up in the very near future (wish I had a nickel for how often I've written that) and one would think that he'll be playing LF and 1B when Victor is not so...the odd man out there would be Garko, right?

If Garko has some trade value and can be packaged as part of a deal, now would be the time to do it instead of giving him AB for the remainder of the season over a player like LaPorta who significantly figures into the future of this organization...or at least he should.

In terms of a package deal, if you're thinking that Winston Abreu was brought aboard to simply be part of a package to a team that was interested in him but couldn't get him in the waiver process (though his Tuesday debut didn't exactly put a lot of shine on his apple and if there was an interested team, I'd like to see how "interested" they are now), maybe a deal with Garko as the "centerpiece" and Abreu as the window dressing is possible.

All those teams listed above are likely to be looking for bullpen help at some point as Texas just moved their prized prospect Neftali Feliz to the bullpen to assist the parent club, Atlanta always looking to add arms to their stable to be massaged by Bobby Cox, the Marlins have brought in Luis Ayala and Brendan Donnelly (yes, that one) as FA signings and are watching Scott Williamson in the minors, and the Mets are in their annual search to fill out their bullpen with quality.

Maybe you can add Boston to this list with Lowell's injury (though I can't bring myself to think of Garko going to New England and becoming some kind of folk hero), but let's acknowledge that it's time to clear the decks for these youngsters to get ready for 2010 and beyond. If moving Garko is involved in that "clearing" to make way for LaPorta, clear away...and take Abreu with him.

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On the topic of Winston Abreu and the bullpen, does anyone else get the sense that no matter what arm the Indians add to the bullpen or trot out there, the results

are going to have the same effect on the lining of our stomachs?

At this point, it's become almost comical (because we'd all be crying if we couldn't laugh) that the Indians have been unable to cobble together a consistent bullpen in 3 of the last 4 years (and 2007 was really only saved by Lewis and Perez joining an out-of-his-mind Betancourt down the stretch) in terms of how every other team is seemingly able to pull off a moderately effective mix of veterans and young arms from year to year.

Forget about wishing that we had a bullpen full of Joe Nathans and Mo Riveras, why is it that the Indians can't pull together a mixture of pitchers that can perform at even a league average level?

Want to know how shockingly bad the Indians have been in terms of having multiple relievers contribute 30 innings (a pretty low number) exclusively as a reliever or more at simply MLB average numbers (using ERA+ as the gauge) since they were thought to be contenders at the beginning of the 2006 season?

You might want to make sure that you're near a garbage can for this:

2006 - 128 relievers in MLB pitched more than 30 innings with an ERA+ of 100 or above
2 of those relievers were Indians (Rafael Betancourt and Jason Davis)

2007 - 125 relievers in MLB pitched more than 30 innings with an ERA+ of 100 or above
3 of those relievers were Indians (Betancourt, Rafael Perez, and Aaron Fultz)

2008 - 129 relievers pitched in MLB more than 30 innings with an ERA+ of 100 or above
2 of those relievers were Indians (Jensen Lewis and Perez)

2009 - 134 relievers have pitched in MLB more than 15 innings with an ERA+ of 100 or above
3 of those relievers are Indians (Betancourt, Matt Herges, and Joe Smith)

OK, pull your head out of the toilet or garbage can or whatever other receptacle you were using there...

Sure, building bullpens is a crapshoot and relievers are, by nature, a volatile bunch but of the 516 seasons put forth by relievers over the past 5 years that had an ERA+ of 100 or better, 10 have been done in an Indians uniform...or about 1.9% of the LEAGUE AVERAGE seasons or better by relievers have come for Cleveland Indians.

What's the answer?

Who knows at this point, but they need start asking some different questions if we're on the fourth year of this mess with the results getting worse and worse, seemingly on a nightly basis.

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Is BJ Ryan a possible answer?

I'm not even going to venture a guess (though the guy did post the 22nd best WXRL last year, so he's not that far removed from effectiveness), but this is an interesting quote in the article announcing his release:

On Monday, Ryan said he believed his sporadic use was contributing to his location woes .

"It's frustrating," Ryan said on Monday morning. "It's frustrating when you sit and you wait to pitch and you get in there and you don't do good. It's tough. You kind of find yourself in that same circle. You sit for four or five days and you get out there and you want to make pitches and you don't."

Ryan, who saved 32 games in 60 games for the Blue Jays a year ago, said his situation has been made tougher by the fact that it seemed as though his manager had less confidence in him than he did in himself.

"Absolutely. 100 percent," Ryan said. "That's universal throughout all of baseball."

Sour grapes?

Probably, but it would be interesting to see how usage patterns affect how these guys throw, particularly because they seem to consist of nothing but charged particles.

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Finally, I believe that I've concocted a wonderful (relatively speaking) way to watch this team play.

Step #1) Find a show that you've always wanted to see or have heard good things about and add the 1st season of said show to your NetFlix (or whatever you use) queue...right now, The DiaBride and I are enjoying "Mad Men".

Step #2) Set the DVR to record the Tribe game from the beginning.

Step #3) Watch a few episodes of the TV show on DVD (2 episodes for a 7 PM start, 1 episode for an 8 PM start).

Step #4) Upon completion of your episode watching, pour yourself a stiff drink, cue up the game on DVR, and watch the game on fast-forward to limit frustration and cursing.

Step #5) Once you catch up, survey the score and decide whether to continue watching the game or to simply enjoy a beautiful summer evening with very little of your night committed to the game (time-wise), but fully aware of everything that's happened.

I'm telling you, it works and it is terrific.

The games I'm watching after "Mad Men"...not so much.

But "Mad Men"?

Just great, though my gin consumption is increasing.