As the smoke clears and the emotions tone down from the maelstrom of vitriol that accompanied the news that CP Lee was now a Phillie, Paulie C checks back in today to try to take a step back and look at this deal from a rational viewpoint, if only to see if the deal looks any better with emotion removed and to see if it tells us anything about the future of this team, in terms of 2010 and 2011.

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Starting out, the gnawing sense of frustration that colors much of the feelings on the Lee deal is that the Indians were not necessarily compelled to trade Lee this week as his contract ran through next season at an affordable number and could wait for the perfect deal to come around. If that perfect deal didn't materialize, the thought that the Tribe could simply hold onto Lee to take their chances with him in the rotation in 2010 always remained an option, even if the return this time next year would be expectedly lower. The idea being that contention in 2010 was easier to envision with Lee in the fold than without him, unless that deal came around that replaced him ostensibly in the rotation immediately and effectively...if that deal didn't come around, you wait it out.

That "perfect deal" however, did not materialize nor did the Indians find themselves content to "wait it out" with Shapiro pulling the trigger on what he deemed to be the best offer on the table at this time. As Anthony Castrovince writes , the move was an admission that "the Indians decided that even with Lee on board, they had little chance of contending next season...because ownership told the front office that it will not commit any significant dollars to club construction in the offseason." and went the route of rebuild now with the idea that Lee's value (1 ½ affordable seasons of club control) would never been higher and with the idea that freeing up Lee's dollars would allow them the flexibility to improve the team in other ways for years past 2010.

Is that a salary dump, to clear payroll while maximizing return whether the return is satisfactory or not?

It sure comes off that way and in return, they received three players who likely factor into 2010 at the very latest (assuming no other deal is coming involving one of them) in Carlos Carrasco, Jason Donald, and Lou Marson with the high-upside player coming in the form of Jason Knapp. With that haul, the blue-chip prospect seems to be lacking for the Indians to hang their hat on in the deal, opting instead to go for a number of players that can contribute, to varying degrees, relatively soon and a youngster with a high risk/reward factor.

In a piece detailing the players on their way into the Cleveland organization by Jayson Stark, it sounds as if that philosophy comes by design:

The Indians have done extensive studies of deals like this and found that teams which concentrate on "big league-ready" prospects as the centerpieces of these trades often make out the worst. Cleveland aims for upside -- and it ranked 18-year-old smokeballer Jason Knapp as having the highest ceiling of any arm in the Phillies' system, including Drabek's.

One scout we surveyed Wednesday compared Knapp to a young Jonathan Papelbon. Another said: "If his medicals check out, they may have gotten a young Roy Halladay."

Meanwhile, Baseball America ranked the other three players in the deal --

right-hander Carlos Carrasco, catcher Lou Marson and shortstop Jason Donald -- as the Nos. 2, 3 and 4 best prospects in the Phillies' system entering the season.

"Carrasco is a power arm with three plus pitches, and he's 22 years old," said one scout who covers the Phillies system. "I think Donald will be a very good player. I know some people think he'll have to change positions. But I still wouldn't rule out shortstop. My comparison for him has always been Rich Aurilia, a guy you look at from afar and say, 'He's not a shortstop.' Then you watch him play and say, 'Yeah, he is.' I see him as a guy who can hit 20 homers, hit .275 or .280, and play real good shortstop.

"And I really like Marson. I think he'll be a good player and a regular catcher in the big leagues. And what is he -- 23 years old? So I think both sides did well. Just because the Phillies have a good big league club and didn't fast-track these guys to the big leagues doesn't mean they're not good players. I think they are."

The return, on the surface, starts to make some sense if that's the best offer on the table and the Indians were going to make a move on the "best offer", if you buy into the idea that Carrasco is on par with the top pitching prospects in the game at the age of 22 in AAA with good peripherals. Certainly Knapp sounds like a prospect and an arm to dream upon, but the inclusion of what look to be a middle infielder and a catcher on a team with young players who already play those positions in Cleveland (Cabrera and Valbuena) or represent the best of their farm system (Santana) is where the package gets puzzling.

If we're looking for MLB-ready arms by 2010 and high-upside power arms for Lee, Carrasco (who Rob Neyer thinks could be the Indians' best starter as soon as next summer) and Knapp make a lot of sense, but Donald and Marson make less sense, purely from the sense that the Indians had their pick of any of these ancillary players and specifically chose these two, even having to throw in Ben Francisco to "sweeten the pot" for the Phillies on the deal to net the foursome. Donald and Marson both look to be about MLB-ready and, while neither profiles to be an instant (or even eventual) star, they do have some value, but Donald and Marson simply play positions that are not positions of need at the MLB level for the Indians...and both are reported to be close to that point in their development.

That being said, if you assume that Donald is a 2B/SS close to being ready for MLB and Marson is a close to being C ready for MLB, wouldn't it stand to reason that more trades are coming, either involving those specific players in a package or the players that would be ahead of them in the organizational pecking order to clear a path for them?

Is Donald simply a replacement for Carroll or is he a player that can be flipped as part of a larger package? I know, Winston Abreu was supposed to serve the same purpose, right?

Well, when you're talking about a young player with some defensive versatility like Donald has and is young, affordable, and purported to be MLB-ready, his value may be greater to a team looking for a young 2B/SS or one that doesn't have a Cabrera/Valbuena (both younger than Donald) combination starting to gel. I suppose he could be insurance against a sever Valbuena regression, but his presence in the trade portends that more may be afoot.

If Donald's inclusion in the deal looks to be the precursor to another deal, what can be gathered from the Indians picking a 23-year-old AAA catcher from the Phillies when the organization is already brimming with upper level talent at C in Martinez, Shoppach, Gimenez, and Torregas with the idea that the position will belong to Carlos Santana by 2011 (or maybe even at some point in 2010) - wouldn't this serve notice that someone else is moving?

The obvious answer is that Victor is next in line as the Lee trade decreased his likelihood of remaining an Indian into August as the Indians simply look to be re-shaping their roster with players that will factor in when 2011 starts, and Victor is not on that list. Marson could be paired with Shoppach next year behind the dish, or Shoppach could be moved in a deal, or Marson could also be moved in a deal...all before the 2010 season, depending upon the return that might be available for each.

Suddenly, nothing looks off-limits and the idea that the Indians would only move if they were "blown away" seems to be off the table as (regardless of what Shapiro's track record has been on veterans-for-prospect moves has been...and it's been good to great) the return for Lee doesn't look to have that "overwhelming" feel to it and feels more like the first domino of many as the Indians are likely to look quite a bit different on Friday evening than they did even a week ago.

For today, we're left asking whether Clifton Phifer was worth more or if we had been deluded by grand packages being mentioned for Roy Hallday and wondering what it all means in the grand scheme of things.

In terms of whether the Indians could have netted more for Lee - we'll never know, just as we'll never know if contention in 2010 was possible with Lee fronting the rotation (at least to start the season) - but the overhaul seems to be on in full force and while the blue-chipper doesn't seem to have emerged yet, the Indians certainly look to be just starting the Extreme Makeover of their roster with an eye towards sustained contention...starting in 2011.