After spending a Labor Day weekend doing his best Clark W. Griswold impersonation by building a weekend around a wedding in Philadelphia with stops in Chocolate World in Hershey, PA, Sesame Street Place, and a quick jaunt to the Jersey Shore ... Paulie C checks in to chuck some tomahawks at our readers. Paul hits on Grady's elbow, Brantley's start, Philly's reaction to the Lee deal, Carlos Santana, and the "haves" and the "have-nots" in MLB.

After spending a Labor Day weekend doing my best Clark W. Griswold impersonation by building a weekend around a wedding in Philadelphia with stops in Chocolate World in Hershey, PA, Sesame Street Place, and a quick jaunt to the Jersey Shore, it's time to take a quick break from regretting not seeing the biggest ball of twine in the world during our East Coast Swing and release some Tomahawks:

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The big news in the Tepee is that Grady will be shut down for the season to undergo the elbow surgery that we all knew was coming and also to have surgery on the groin issue that precluded him from playing in the WBC so many months ago when hopes were still high.

While Sizemore's season certainly comes as a disappointment due to his injuries, does anyone realize that Grady's .788 OPS puts him 3rd among AL CF, behind only Granderson (.800) and Adam "Don't Call me Pac-Man" Jones (.792). Detractors of Sizemore love to point out that Grady has yet to take that "next step" into the elite stratosphere of MLB superstars, particularly given that the promise of his age-23 season in 2006 certainly portended greatness for him.

Consider though that in the 106 games (about 65% of the season) that he played this year, he had 44 extra-base hits and 18 HR. Extrapolating those numbers out would give Grady 67 XBH (still down from his 2008 numbers, though not by much) and 27 HR if he were to play 162 games.

The "next step" will have to wait, but for a player who battled injury (in two places apparently) for much of the season, an injured Grady Sizemore is better than most players in MLB at 100%, and getting Sizemore back to that 100% mark should be Priority #1 (or #1a or #1b or something) of the off-season, particularly given his increased importance to this team.

Now with Sizemore shut down, Mike Brantley will get a long look in MLB as an OF and a lead-off hitter without stealing AB from either Matt LaPorta or Andy Marte, and the early returns have been good, as Brantley is off to a hot start, particularly in showing his ability to get on base.

Depending upon what happens at 3B (and as a by-product 1B and...wait for it all to come around...LF), Brantley still probably starts 2010 in AAA, if only because his age and performance in AAA this year show that he could probably use some more MiLB experience before ascending to take an everyday spot in the lineup. However, with each passing AB and while the "Ben Francisco Hot Start" caveat should be blaring in everyone's head, Brantley is showing that he has the talent and the maturity to convey that the spot in the every day lineup is not far off.

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While in Philadelphia, I was reading the Sunday Sports page of the Philly Inquirer and (once I got past all of the Eagles analysis), I caught this little beauty in the "On Baseball" section
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While the Cliff Lee trade has been celebrated in Philadelphia, it has been scorned in Cleveland.

Infielder Jason Donald, one of four players the Indians got for Lee and outfielder

Ben Francisco, has been on the disabled list in triple A with a back strain.

Pitcher Carlos Carrasco was hammered for six runs, including three homers, in three innings in his big-league debut Tuesday at Detroit.

On top of all this, righthander Jason Knapp, the key piece in the deal, was shut down last week with shoulder soreness. Knapp, a 19-year-old whose fastball reaches the high 90s, is already being referred to as damaged goods in Cleveland.

The Indians wouldn't have much of a leg to stand on if they tried to grieve the trade. Knapp had spent time on the disabled list with tendinitis and discomfort in his shoulder before the trade, and the Indians knew that. Their medical people did their due diligence on his condition and still made the deal. As in all trades, it is buyer beware.

The one hope in all this is that Knapp recovers, comes back healthy, reaches his tremendous potential, and has a great career.

"Scorned" may be a strong word as it's obviously far too early to make a fair judgment on anything having to do with the Lee deal from the Indians perspective because of the nature of the players that they received. However, Donald's quick trip to the DL and the continuing concern about Knapp's pitching arm (particularly since he's still so far away from MLB) certainly raise some red flags on some of the principals of the deal.

After walking around Sesame Street Place and counting ten (that's right...TEN) Cliff Lee Phillies' jerseys among the Philly faithful, let's just say that reading that in the paper a couple of days later did not sit well with me...or maybe it was all the delicious Yuengling the night before at the wedding.

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With the minor-league seasons pulling into the gate and the MiLB hardware being handed out to the likes of Carlos Santana and Jeanmar Gomez, I thought it might be a good time to list off the players in the Tribe organization who posted the

highest OBP, SLG, and OPS at Lake County or higher with more than 300 cumulative AB.

For some of the players, the numbers are cumulative at a few levels, but the names (with applicable ages and levels) should be fairly well-known at this point:

OBP

.413 - Carlos Santana (Age 23 - Akron)
.386 - Cord Phelps (Age 22 - Kinston)
.383 - Tim Fedroff (Age 22 - Kinston)
.381 - Jordan Brown (Age 25 - Columbus)
.378 - Jose Costanza (Age 25 - Akron)

SLG

.551 - Andy Marte (Age 25 - Columbus, Cleveland)
.532 - Jordan Brown (Age 25 - Columbus)
.530 - Carlos Santana (Age 23 - Akron)
.501 - Matt LaPorta (Age 24 - Columbus, Cleveland)
.489 - Matt McBride (Age 24 - Kinston, Akron)

OPS

.943 - Carlos Santana (Age 23 - Akron)
.913 - Jordan Brown (Age 25 - Columbus)
.900 - Andy Marte (Age 25 - Cleveland, Columbus)
.867 - Matt LaPorta (Age 24 - Columbus, Cleveland)
.829 - Matt McBride (Age 24 - Kinston, Akron)

So...what number do you think Santana will wear in Cleveland so I can pre-order a jersey?

Seriously though, lots of those names have become common knowledge over the course of the year, but it's always interesting to see guys like Matt McBride "break through" and put up a big year with numbers that look great...until you consider their age against players also at their level. If you consider that Nick Weglarz played the whole season in Akron at the age of 21

(posting a .808 OPS) and Lonnie Chisenhall played in Kinston and Akron at the age of 20 (posting a cumulative .797 OPS), you start to see how the disparity in ages starts to separate some of the more exciting players (like Weglarz and The Chiz) from guys that may make it to MLB, but likely not as potential impact players.

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One of the big topics on conversation at the wedding this weekend was the structure of baseball in terms of the "haves" and "have-nots" as fans from Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia all weighed in on what we've covered here at length.

As usual, Joe Posnanski offers an insightful and thought-provoking article on just that topic with some jarring reminders on the recent track records of particular franchises:

Here's the thing. You already know that the Pirates now have 17 straight losing seasons. But what you might not know -- or at least might not have thought about -- is that over those 17 years, eight other teams have had long stretches of losing baseball.

- *The Baltimore Orioles have had 11 straight losing seasons, and they are one loss away from extending that streak to 12.*
- *The Cincinnati Reds are likely to clinch their ninth straight losing season soon enough.*
- *The Kansas City Royals have had losing seasons 14 of the last 15 years and -- this is actually quite remarkable -- have more losses over the last 17 years than Pittsburgh.*
- *The Milwaukee Brewers had 12 consecutive losing seasons end in 2004, and after rising up and making the playoffs last year, they are struggling again.*
- *The Detroit Tigers had a stretch of 12 consecutive losing seasons end in 2005.*
- *The Tampa Bay Rays had 10 straight losing seasons before shocking everyone last year.*
- *The Minnesota Twins had a streak of eight consecutive losers end in 2000.*
- *The Philadelphia Phillies had a streak of seven straight losing season end in*

2000.

The whole piece is worth your time, if only to get a look past the bubble that we sometimes live in as Indians fans...particularly in an awful season like this one.

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As for me, it's time for a nap after a 10-hour trip back on Labor Day in the old Family Truckster, fighting Jersey Shore traffic back West and disappointed by not being able to listen to a Tribe game for the last couple of hours.