As the season has turned to the time for Clambakes and Oktoberfest from GLBC, the Indians' season rolls right on and, as the final games wind down, the Indians' season has little left of interest. When the season ends though...that's a whole different story as reading the tea leaves long ago told us that the final game of 2009 would be The Atomic Wedgie's last game as manager of the Erie Warriors. Not surprisingly, that very topic is the topic of the day (among others) as we roll off into a Lazy Sunday ...

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The eulogies have begun for The Atomic Wedgie, including this one from Shelly Ocker, with me lifting my season-long ban on linking Sheldon, just long enough for him to make the startling assertion that
"regardless of whether Wedge returns next year, he will have made an impact in Cleveland. Only four managers have guided the Tribe longer than Wedge, who is fifth in wins (557) and is one of only four Cleveland skippers to win a postseason series."

If you were looking for a legacy for Wedge, there it is from Ocker, being 5th in wins (failing to mention that he's 4th in games managed) as an "impact" essentially because he was (and, yes...I'm using past tense already) manager for seven years. If Wedge's fate is sealed (and even he seems resigned to that fact if you read his words here) and this is the best thing that Ocker can muster up in his eulogy (5th in wins without mentioning that he's also

3rd in games lost...and only 24 losses behind Mike Hargrove, who managed nearly 200 more games), that's not exactly the fondest farewell.

For a pretty good sense of why Wedge will find himself still drawing a paycheck, but not managing a big-league team in about 10 days, let's refer to the Indians' entry in Baseball Prospectus' series of team obits, appropriately called "Kiss 'Em Goodbye":
The Indians have approached the last several seasons with an eye on contending. In three of those four years, though, they've stumbled out of the gate, dooming their chances of playing meaningful games after June. In the process, they've had to make deals, including shipping away the past two AL Cy Young winners. They've brought back some quality prospects, but it's clear that they're in no position to contend in 2010, mainly because they haven't had much success with their high draft picks in recent years. ***Given their penchant for underachieving on skipper Eric Wedge's watch, they're almost certainly better off with a new manager, too*** .

To that end (the "new manager" part that I admittedly bolded), AC comes correct and in full effect with a look as to why The Atomic Wedgie won't be helming the good ship Tribe a week from now:

Though Shapiro has always backed Wedge publicly, the decision is ultimately believed to be in the hands of the Dolan ownership family. Team president Paul Dolan recently told reporters that Wedge's accomplishments over his full body of work in seven seasons at the helm are significant, but he also voiced dissatisfaction with the club's performance over the last two seasons and acknowledged that Wedge's popularity among fans is at a low point.

--snip--

Though player development is a primary focus in the season's second half, the club's 3-16 record in September can't possibly serve to strengthen the job security of Wedge or his coaches. Wedge held a team meeting with his players in Minneapolis last week -- a rare move for a club out of contention this late in the season -- in which he stressed the importance of finishing strong. The Indians proceeded to lose their next seven games.

Obviously, since the time that was written, losses in their "next seven

games" turned quickly into 11games and this creep to the finish, not surprisingly, has taken the air out of the argument (that AC alluded to above) that Shapiro may have had in keeping Wedge, as SI.com's Jon Heyman asserts :

Eric Wedge's chances to keep the Indians managing job are decreasing by the day. The Indians have now lost 11 straight, so it should be no surprise that GM Mark Shapiro is now being pressured to fire Wedge, according to people familiar with the Cleveland situation.

--snip--

Shapiro is believed to have had no intention to fire Wedge. But with the Indians having been outscored 71-30 in their 11-game slide, it's becoming increasingly difficult to make a compelling case to keep him as manager. His salary for 2010 is believed to be for $1.25 million, but the cash-strapped Indians saved about $15 million for next year with the trades of Cliff Lee and Victor Martinez.

Heyman ends the bit with his obligatory mention of John Farrell as a likely candidate to replace him, and I suppose it's finally time to release a look at potential managerial candidates this week that go a little deeper than "bench coach experience a plus".

Since most people have focused on John Farrell from Day 1 on this idea that Wedge wouldn't be managing in 2010, perhaps now might be a good time to mention one name that will not appear on the list of prospective candidates that I'll work up this week.

That name is...wait for it...John Farrell, who has a clause in his contract with the Red Sox that prevents him from interviewing for managerial positions until after the 2010 season , according to Ken Rosenthal:

The exact length and complete terms of Farrell's contract are not known, but he likely gave up his right to manage before 2011 in exchange for a like show of commitment by the Red Sox. Rival teams repeatedly have asked for permission to interview Farrell, sources said.

And... boom goes the dynamite .

Not sure if the Indians knew this and just never let it on or if this revelation by Rosenthal is just that - a startling revelation - or even if there's an avenue around the clause. I suppose the pie-eyed optimist could say that his contract doesn't mention anything about Farrell making a lateral move to another organization (like becoming a pitching coach for a certain former team of his), but I think it's pretty safe to cross Farrell off the list of potential managers or coaches for the 2010 Tribe, given that a buy-out or an agreement with the Red Sox would have to be consummated.

Who does make that list? Stay tuned...

One name who may make that list (perhaps more as a potential coaching staff candidate than as a managerial candidate...though I have heard the argument for him to be the 2010 manager) is the subject of a very personal-interest story from SI.com's Jeff Pearlman. Pearlman relays the amazing story of Sal Fasano as husband and father , recounting his struggle to provide for his family in light of health issues for his young son in an absolute must-read:

Two years ago, just when Fasano was thinking of finally retiring, his wife, Kerri, gave birth to the couple's third child, a boy named Santo. He was born with hypoplastic heart syndrome, a condition in which the left side of the heart is underdeveloped. "It was devastating, of course," Sal says. "Your son is helpless, and there's not that much you can do."

There was one thing Sal could do -- find a way to remain in the major leagues. Although baseball diehards who salivate over the perks of the game tend to speak of cathedral-like stadiums and million-dollar paychecks, of fancy travel and high-profile endorsements and red carpet fame, an element they tend to overlook is the major league health plan. If you are a ballplayer, and you spend so much as a second on a major league roster, you are entitled to a year of coverage that, says one major league executive, "takes care of pretty much everything you can think of."

That's why, in 2007, Fasano was thrilled to spend 16 games with the Toronto Blue Jays. Last season, being called up by the Cleveland Indians in June was an answered prayer. "We need the coverage," Fasano says, noting that, thus far, Santo has undergone two surgeries exceeding $1 million in costs. "Playing major league baseball is awesome. I love it, I enjoy it. But this is about my family first. About Santo."

I don't know how much a bullpen coach makes, but I would imagine that they'd be included in health coverage...so, is it time to start a grassroots movement for Sal Fasano to be a part of the Indians' 2010 coaching staff?

Sticking with SI.com and changing gears a bit, here's a look at the FA market this off-season (something the Indians shouldn't be entertaining in the least, even if Paul Hoynes thinks they need a veteran catcher despite the fact that Toregas, Gimenez, and Marson have caught all of the principal options throughout their minor-league careers...not to mention the fact that Sal Fasano WILL be around) from Joe Sheehan, who concludes that, *"if teams want to invest wisely, they should take this winter's free-agent budget and buy a 12-month CD. Next year's class could be a monster, with the possibility that Joe Mauer, Roy Halladay, Josh Beckett and Cliff Lee will be available."*

While the names listed above certainly wouldn't legitimately be in the Indians' crosshairs, the idea of adding a piece in 2011 (and NOT this off-season) certainly starts to make sense when you figure that the contract of Westbrook ($11M), Wood ($10.5M, assuming his option doesn't vest), and maybe Peralta ($7M option for 2011 that certainly looks unlikely to be picked up) all figure to be coming off of the books after 2010, if not sooner, as the chance of any or all of those three being traded mid-season in 2010 is not beyond the realm of possibility.

Thus, if we're not figuring that the Indians will make no ripples in the Free Agent pool this winter, what can we get excited about in terms of adding players to the organization? Well, as the Indians' dropped in the standings down the homestretch, the one thing that did climb for them (and could continue to climb) is their spot in the 2010 MLB Draft.

With the Nationals and Pirates unquestionably locked into the top two picks, the Indians look, right now at least, to be somewhere between pick #3 and #5 (unless Wedge has one last parting shot for the organization and inexplicably goes on a hot streak to drop them) in next summer's draft. While this type of conjecture is usually reserved for the end of a Browns' season (and while I try to figure out who the Mel Kiper-equivalent of this MLB draft thing is), I actually went out and found a 2010 MLB Mock Draft ...no, seriously.

Remembering that the Tigers and the Royals found their aces in the top 6 picks of

the amateur draft, I'm going to start following LSU's Anthony Ranuando, Ole Miss' Drew Pomerantz, and UNC's Matt Harvey.

OK, maybe I won't, but until the imminent firing of Wedge actually takes place...yes, it's come to that.

Until then, where's that Oktoberfest?