While Eric Wedge and his coaching staff will remain on board to lead the team in the final few games in Boston, Paulie C checks back in for a little post-mortem on the events of Wednesday as the Indians "dismissed" Eric Wedge and his coaching staff. Paul's take? Wedge was a stand-up guy with many positive qualities. But he was long overdue to be relieved of his duties. And the heat has just been turned up on General Manager Mark Shapiro.

After continuing the tradition of going to the last game of the season (what can I say, some people enjoy the Home Opener, I enjoy the Home Closer) and watching the corner of Carnegie and Ontario come as alive as I've seen it in months as Masterson racked up the K's in Game 2 of the twin-bill, it's time for a little post-mortem on the events of Wednesday as the Indians "dismissed" Eric Wedge and his coaching staff.

While Wedge and his coaching staff will remain on board to lead the team in the final few games in Boston, the commendations of Wedge as a man have begun in earnest with the notion that his managing the team through the end of the season (when he knew his fate for quite some time) serves as a reminder that Wedge is, and always has been, a stand-up guy, never prone to throwing any tantrums while restraining from throwing anyone under the bus and never making excuses or placing blame at a desk that was not his own.

All of this is very true and there's no question that Wedge is an honorable man who has the respect of the players and the organization for being a good soldier in the midst of some very trying times. However, in all of these fond farewells and misty-eyed memories, let's not lose sight of why this was coming and actually overdue.

Not to step on a man when he's unquestionably down, but the dismissal of Wedge yesterday has little to do with his honor or his temperament and has everything to do with the performance of the team since the end of 2007 that he was charged with managing.

After the magical run of 2007, let's remember that the Indians stood at 37-49, 12 games back in the AL Central on the 4th of July in 2008, just past the halfway point of the season.

A season that had started with such promise had (for a myriad of reasons) gone south quickly and three days after the 4th, CC would be on his way to Milwaukee as any and all thoughts of contending in 2008 were out the window with the idea that the pieces that remained, with some additions, would attempt to re-enter the AL Central race in 2009.

As we all know, 2009 began with the idea that the Central remained winnable, despite obvious warts on the Indians' pitching staff. Once again the Indians scuffled out of the gate into the middle of the summer to the point of (just to keep with that arbitrary date of Independence Day) again sitting 12 games back in the AL Central with a record of 33-49 on July 4th of this year. The trades began again, this time with more than just the reigning Cy Young Award winner punching his ticket out of town, and the hope that existed in the Spring of 2008 had completely evaporated.

More than anything else in Wedge's tenure, the slow starts of the last two years that essentially deep-sixed those seasons by July, leading to the rationale behind the trade of CC and not quite as obvious rationale behind the trades of Lee and Victor, served as his downfall. In the face of high expectations (perhaps unfairly high in hindsight), Wedge's teams stumbled to the middle of the season each year, forcing the Front Office to take action with either their pending Free Agents (CC) or to weigh the financial realities of the team against the likelihood that a quick rebound was possible (CP Lee and Vic) for contention in the coming years.

Now, is it fair to heap the blame completely on the shoulders of Wedge and assert that he alone, is responsible for the slow starts and the decisions prompted by the slow starts?

Certainly not, though his fingerprints are at the scene of the crime and when a team underperforms and does not meet expectations (whether those expectations were fair or not), the manager is going to be first in line to get blamed. That's simply the way that things are done in MLB, and really all pro sports. If a team is in need of a change, the change is made with the manager or the head coach with the idea that a new field general can execute a different and more successful strategy with the same troops.

Is it fair to heap the blame on Wedge solely and think that his departure is magically going to put this team where it was after the 2007 season?

No, but in the hierarchy of the organization, the manager finds himself a rung below those in the Front Office and, given that Wedge is Shapiro's first real hire as a GM, he's used up "Get Out of Jail Free" card and the onus is now on Shapiro. With that being said, the fact is that Wedge's time as manager had come and has now passed and the next head on the chopping block is unquestionably that of Shapiro...or at least it should be.

The troubling aspect of the whole handling of the end of Wedge's tenure (and the one where Shapiro's fingerprints abound) is the way that it was strung out from mid-summer to this week as most assumed back in June (or July at the very latest) that Wedge would not be the manager in 2010 and the last three months of the season were an exercise in futility as virtually nothing was accomplished and any positives that could have come out of the season were overwhelmed by the long walk to the execution chamber by the manager.

This is what was written here on July 6th of this year:

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.

Isn't that precisely what happened as the season continues to drag on, with Wedge STILL managing the team through the end of the season?

What was gained by letting Wedge play out the string?

What momentum is there towards 2010?

The fact is that nothing was gained and there is no momentum as the performance of the team from the beginning of 2008 to today, with the moves made by the Front Office reacting to that performance is the reason for where the organization finds itself where it is.

How much of that can be blamed on an honorable guy who honored his

commitment and how much of it was simply playing the cards that were dealt to him?

We'll begin to find out that answer, but the sense that an opportunity to win after the 2007 season was missed and the freefall that the Indians found themselves in after cannot be ignored. One man has walked the plank for the missed opportunity and the ensuing freefall, and the line behind him is starting to form if this ship isn't turned around in a hurry.