As the nightmarish 2009 season mercifully comes to an end today, and having written just about everything possible about what's gone irreparably wrong, Paulie C casts his eyes forward (again) and takes a look at the latest and greatest in the rumor mill regarding the managerial search for the Tribe. Is John Farrell a realistic candidate? Or not? Paulie tries to sort through everything that's out there and make some sense of it all.

As the nightmarish 2009 season mercifully comes to an end today, and having written just about everything possible about what's gone irreparably wrong, let's cast our eyes forward (again) and take a look at the latest and greatest in the rumor mill regarding the managerial search for the Tribe.

It's a bit of a wild ride...so buckle up:

The newest bit of information comes via ESPN.com's Buster Olney , who reports that
"John Farrell, the pitching coach for the Boston Red Sox, has removed himself from consideration for Cleveland's managerial opening, according to sources...Farrell has indicated to the Indians that he will not be a candidate. Farrell, 47, is nearing the end of what is his third season as Boston's pitching coach."

Yep, that's right...according to Olney, Farrell has "removed himself from

consideration", which comes only a day after SI.com's Jon Heyman reported that Farrell was "such a strong candidate he may at the moment be the whole list" in the greater context of why Farrell perfectly fit the bill:

Red Sox pitching coach John Farrell is believed to be at the top of the Indians' wish list to replace Eric Wedge as manager. In fact, Farrell is seen as such a strong candidate he may at the moment be the whole list.

Farrell appears to be the perfect man for the job. Beyond being Boston's very successful pitching coach, he pitched for the Indians and worked in their front office. He is also an intellectual heavyweight who should mesh well with GM Mark Shapiro, a Princeton man.

Suddenly, in this cloak-and-dagger world of smoke screens and - we're still just talking about managing a MLB team right - differing stories are coming from different sources. So what is to be believed?

Has Farrell REALLY pulled his name from the list or is it simply what he has to do at this time as the Red Sox pitching coach to remove any potential distractions during the Red Sox post-season run?

Perhaps Farrell has legitimately and definitely told the Indians that he isn't interested now and won't be interested at any time this off-season, but isn't he just saying pretty much what he's supposed to say?

Sure, we'd all love if the brilliant exchange imagined by Anthony Castrovince between the assembled beat writers and John Farrell was how things worked on this...and remember, this is FICTIONAL:

Our brains fried from a season of watching bullpen implosions, chasing down trade rumors and, most recently, waiting for the gauntlet to fall on Eric Wedge, Hoynes and I began to invent a dream scenario -- the type of scenario that, if you spent 100 years covering Major League Baseball, would never take place. It goes kind of like this:

***Us**: "Hey, John."*
***Farrell**: "Hey, great to see you guys! Since you're here, I might as well tell you that I'm 100 percent interested in the Indians' job. In fact, I just got off the*

phone with Mark Shapiro. I start Tuesday."
***Us**: "Awesome. What's your Opening Day rotation?"*
***Farrell**: "Westbrook, Carmona, Laffey, Masterson, Huff."*
***Us**: "Great! Anything coming down the pike this winter?"*
***Farrell**: "We're trading Wood on Dec. 10."*
***Us**: "Good to know. Any word on the Press Tour schedule?"*
***Farrell**: "Yep, I've got it right here. I'll see you Jan. 15 in Ashtabula."*
***Us**: "Sounds good."*
Somehow, it never works out this way.
That's gold, AC! Gold!

Maybe Farrell doesn't have an interest, maybe he does...

Regardless, I don't think that there's much doubt that he's the most obvious and likely best candidate, for reasons already laid out and discussed at length on this week's "Smoke Signals"
(during which Tony mentioned that you could cross Red Sox 1B Coach and former Akron manager Tim Bogar off your list...if you're keeping such a list), and this new "revelation" that he's not interested is one that I'm having trouble parsing through.

Perhaps it's because Farrell seems like such a perfect fit - to the point that Justin Masterson recounted the story of his arriving in Cleveland this week
, saying that
"the first question I got when I got here was, 'How's my boy John Farrell doing?' " Masterson said. "That was from everyone."
- that I'm having trouble separating my hope that Farrell is simply giving lip service that he's not interested from the reality that he may, in fact, not be interested for reasons known only to him.

If he's not interested, the parallels to the last managerial search may start to get eerie if you remember this piece , written when Eric Wedge was named Tribe skipper on October 22nd:

Anaheim pitching coach Bud Black was Shapiro's No. 1 candidate when the regular season ended. When Black withdrew from consideration before the start of the World Series, Shapiro turned his attention to Wedge.

Wait...an initial front-runner with past ties to the organization, now the pitching

coach for a successful franchise, turning the Indians down prior to the postseason?

Is history repeating itself, and if so, who is this year's Eric Wedge if Farrell is this year's Black and does indeed pass on being considered?

Really, nobody knows...maybe a guy like a Joey Cora (who interests me only if some sort of "blood feud" were to start with Ozzie Guillen for leaving him to join a divisional rival) makes that list; but at a certain point, it all becomes a list of names that may or may not even be under serious consideration

For those of you who are still in the "Bring Grover Back" camp, here's a little tidbit from Ken Rosenthal as to how that return to past glory is working in Toronto:

The Blue Jays' rehiring of manager Cito Gaston last season started out as a feel-good story, a link to the franchise's back-to-back World Series titles in 1992 and '93.

A mere 15 months later, the mood inside the Jays' clubhouse has turned decidedly sour.

The players are fed up with Gaston and do not want him to return next season, according to multiple major-league sources.
"It's nearly a mutiny right now," one source says. "He has lost the entire team."

--snip--

Once the team started losing, Gaston became impatient with his players, sources say. The players, in turn, began tuning him out.

While it looks like Gaston will live to manage another day in Toronto, with Jays' GM JP Ricciardi getting his walking papers this weekend, the description of Gaston's second stint in Toronto serves as a reminder that reputation takes a manager only so far in a clubhouse...particularly a clubhouse that doesn't contain any of your former players.

Maybe Olney's correct in saying that Bobby Valentine is going to get an interview,

in the piece that "removes" Farrell from consideration, but Valentine's name is just going to be one of many that we're going to start hearing as rumor and conjecture reign.

One name that I haven't heard mentioned in connection to taking the job is that of a 34-year-old up-and-coming MiLB manager who has compiled a 391-315 record in the Minors as a manager and whose recent AAA team went 87-57, a year after the AA team he managed went 91-51.

Oh, wait...that was the resume of Eric Wedge, on October 29th of 2002.

Ahem...is this season over yet?