With the Tribe now 81 games into the 2006 season, it's time to hand out the midterm grades says Erik Cassano. In this sweeping review of the Indians organization and players, Papa Cass hands out grades for every member of the Tribe as they reach the halfway point of a very disappointing season.

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Monday's game against the Yankees is game No. 81, the midway point of the season for the Indians. Needless to say, it's been a disappointing season overall. Following Sunday's win in Cincinnati, the Tribe was 37-43, and they needed a 4-2 road trip through St. Louis and Cincinnati to get even that close to .500.

From the roster to the coaching staff to the front office, this team has been lacking something all year. Pin the blame where you want. Everybody has a culprit -- GM Mark Shapiro, manager Eric Wedge and owner Larry Dolan are the big three fans love to blame. All deserve some of it, none deserves all of it.
Below are the organization-wide midterm grades for a team trying to pilot itself through a season gone awry.

The lineup

Ronnie Belliard
.291, 7 HR, 37 RBI

Belliard is kind of a what-you-see-is-what-you-get hitter. He'll hack, he'll swing from his heels, he'll go into long slumps, but the numbers usually color him productive. This season is following suit.

This will probably be Belliard's last season in Cleveland. As a free agent-to-be, he'll be able to get more money elsewhere if he keeps up his current statistical

pace.

Grade: B

Casey Blake, RF
.304, 10 HR, 36 RBI

He's probably still a glorified utility player, but it's hard to argue with results.

Blake struggled with a drastic position shift a year ago, and it killed him at the plate. He became a favorite whipping boy of fans whenever the offense struggled. This year, he's been smarter at the plate, a far more opportunistic hitter, and a solid defensive presence in right field (his arm is actually quite good).

How's this for irony? Blake has missed the past several weeks with a strained oblique muscle, and the Indians actually miss him. The offense has been scuffling without his bat.

Grade: B-plus

Aaron Boone, 3B
.253, 4 HR, 32 RBI

Boone has never been a terribly productive hitter, but the past two seasons are showing that the 30-something infielder has bought a one-way ticket to the land of has-beens.

Fans will be screaming for Andy Marte the more Boone struggles at the plate. But if Boone is traded, it probably won't be a very advantageous deal for the Tribe. It will probably involve getting next to nothing in return and assuming a large part of his remaining salary. In other words, the Indians brass might think it's worth it to just hang onto Boone for the rest of the year.

Marte's production at Buffalo will determine how much of a bite he takes out of Boone's playing time in the second half.

Grade: C-minus

Ben Broussard, 1B
.329, 10 HR, 38 RBI

He is hitting the quietest .329 in the big leagues, largely due to the fact that he has been platooning with Eduardo Perez and seldom facing tough left-handed pitching.

With Perez gone to Seattle, it will be interesting to see if Broussard's weaknesses are more readily exposed. Victor Martinez has been playing a lot of first base recently, but if Martinez struggles defensively, or backup catcher Kelly Shoppach proves to be a liability as an everyday player, Broussard will have to shoulder more of the load.

If that happens, I predict a second-half swoon for the notoriously streaky hitter.

Grade: B

Franklin Gutierrez, OF
.229, 0 HR, 0 RBI

As he has been throughout his minor league career, Gutierrez has shown flashes of tremendous athletic potential, but has yet to put it all together. He is a likely candidate to be sent back down to Buffalo once Jason Michaels is reactivated from the disabled list.

Grade: C

Travis Hafner, DH

.312, 22 HR, 66 RBI

Pronk is putting together yet another solid season, largely under the radar. Much like last year, he is poised to be a leading snub for the AL all-star team.

Grade: A

Todd Hollandsworth, OF
.229, 4 HR, 21 RBI

The stats show a player who belongs in the minors. But the stats lie, at least recently. Hollandsworth should be this team's everyday left fielder even when when Michaels comes back. With the increased playing time, he has become a regular visitor to the basepaths, hitting well over .300 in the past week. And he has shown an ability to flash some leather in the field as well.

Grade: C-plus

Joe Inglett, IF/OF
.143, 0 HR, 0 RBI

His offensive impact will probably be minimal, but he is a true seven-position utility player who could save the defense some nights.

Grade: Incomplete

Victor Martinez, C
.296, 10 HR, 51 RBI

Much like Hafner, he is putting together another good season under the radar. The only real blemish in his game is a weak throwing arm that allows baserunners to steal almost at will. But the pitching staff --

notorious for doing a poor job of holding runners on -- deserves a huge assist there.

Given his strong bat and weak arm, Martinez's future is probably as a first baseman.

Grade: B-plus

Jason Michaels, LF
.277, 5 HR, 25 RBI

A definite downgrade from Coco Crisp, but at least he hustles and gets the most out of his limited athletic ability. Having said that, he best fits as a platoon player, the role he filled in Philadelphia. Hollandsworth should get the lion's share of innings in left field with Michaels getting the start against lefties, where he has historically excelled.

Grade: B-minus

Jhonny Peralta, SS
.250, 7 HR, 35 RBI

He has been the victim of a textbook sophomore slump as pitchers have adjusted to him. His seven homers are a dropoff from last year's pace, but probably more realistic of the type of hitter Peralta will be over the long term. He seldom had gaudy power numbers in the minors.

Peralta's bat has shown some signs of life in the past few weeks. Now his glove has to follow suit. Shortstop is simply not a position where a team can have inconsistent defense. If Peralta's defensive struggles continue, a position shift for 2007 might be in order.

Grade: C-minus

Kelly Shoppach, C
.222, 0 HR, 2 RBI

He dropped a pop-up in St. Louis last week that helped pave the way for a loss, but Shoppach still has the makeup of a good defensive catcher. He moves well behind the plate, has a strong, accurate throwing arm and has had little trouble quarterbacking the pitching staff so far.

If Shoppach's bat is even adequate, it might help pave Martinez's move to first base. But it's still too early to tell.

Grade: Incomplete

Grady Sizemore, CF
.299, 15 HR, 41 RBI

Some say Sizemore is headed to the heart of the order. I say, who is going to replace him at the top?

Sizemore is quickly becoming an elite leadoff hitter. If the Indians don't have an ultra-fast Kenny Lofton type to bat leadoff anymore, they might as well have someone with the quick bat of Sizemore.

Sizemore is the closest thing to a five-tool player the Indians have. He hits for average and power, is quick (though not lightning fast) on the bases and has very good range in the outfield. The only thing missing from his cache is a strong throwing arm. But he gets by without it. Next week, he'll make a well-deserved first appearance in the All-Star Game.

Grade: A

Ramon Vazquez, IF

.159, 0 HR, 5 RBI

Politics won out over talent when the Indians kept Vazquez and traded Brandon Phillips. It probably wasn't going to work between Phillips and the Indians, and nobody could have foreseen the success Phillips would have with the Reds, but after watching Vazquez play, only one question comes to mind:

"The Indians traded Phillips, and kept this guy?"

Grade: D

The pitching

Rafael Betancourt
0-3, 5.40 ERA

Earlier this season, it looked like Betancourt would hold down the fort as the eighth-inning setup man. Then he hit the skids, and we now realize we are seeing a middle reliever pitching out of position. Betancourt works hard, but his stuff isn't good enough for him to be a late-inning fireman.

Grade: C

Paul Byrd, RHP
6-5, 4.10 ERA

After a slow start, he's become pretty much what the Indians expected him to be. He's a .500 pitcher with limited stuff who usually pitches well enough to give his team a chance to win most games.

Grade: C

Fernando Cabrera, RHP
1-1, 5.86 ERA

We can only hope this is a sophomore slump, because this is not the aggressive pitcher we saw last year. Cabrera's stuff has looked downright average this year, and he has the lukewarm stats to prove it.

Grade: D

Fausto Carmona, RHP
1-2, 4.46 ERA

He began the season as a starter, but found his way to the back of the bullpen, where he has flourished. He has electric stuff: a mid-90s fastball and a slider with bite, perfect for late-inning pressure situations.

Carmona's future might be at the back end of the 'pen, particularly if fellow young guns Cabrera and Jason Davis continue to struggle.

Grade: B

Jason Davis, RHP
2-1, 5.04 ERA

Davis has been downright maddening to watch. He has so much potential, yet is apparently incapable of harnessing it to the point of consistency. Send him down to Buffalo, he becomes a legend in the making. Bring him up to Cleveland, he's a 5-ERA mop-up boy. Only the Indians front office knows how many more chances Davis is going to get.

Grade: D

Jeremy Guthrie, RHP

0-0, 6.59 ERA

Call it a hunch, but I don't think the Indians have had a good read on this guy since the day they drafted him.

Grade: Incomplete

Cliff Lee, LHP
8-5, 4.69 ERA

After a brutal start to the season, Lee is once again showing his knack for picking up wins in bunches.

He has now won his last five decisions, and heads into the second half with an outside chance at 20 wins, though 15 to 18 is more realistic. At the end of the season, he will reclaim his place as a front-of-the-rotation pitcher.

Grade: B

Guillermo Mota, RHP
1-3, 6.53 ERA

One of the supposed veteran anchors for the back of the bullpen, Mota has been anything but a steadying force. Unfortunately, the Indians are paying for the sins of the Dodgers and Marlins, who abused Mota's arm in recent years.

Mota's arm has begun to show signs of life. But he is no longer a top-shelf reliever. I'd be surprised if he's back with the Indians next year.

Grade: D

Rafael Perez, LHP
0-0, 2.84 ERA

It's way too early to tell if Perez is a future bullpen stalwart, or just riding a hot streak. But he has given the sagging unit a lift. Along with Carmona, the two comprise the only real lefty-righty setup combo the Indians have.

Grade: A-minus

C.C. Sabathia, LHP
6-4, 3.90 ERA

He was injured on opening day, rebounded for a fabulous May, then regressed in a big way in June. Will the real C.C. please stand up? C.C. gets docked points for mailing it in during a June start against the Cubs. Not exactly a way to gain your teammates' trust.

Grade: B-minus

Jeremy Sowers
0-1, 7.20 ERA

For a kid who was just thrown into the fire, he is adapting well. After a tough-luck loss to the Reds in his first major league appearance, he is rebounding with a strong effort against the Yankees as I write this.

Grade: Incomplete

Bob Wickman
12/15 saves, 4.68 ERA

He saved his first eight of the year with no difficulty. Since then, it has been a roller coaster ride. Wickman still has some gas left in the tank,

but nobody knows how much. Sooner or later, his arm is going to say "no more," and the Indians had better be developing a successor to the closer's role in the meantime.

Grade: B

Off the field

Eric Wedge, Manager

It is a manager's job to make sure he has a good read on his team emotionally. Wedge failed at the outset of the season when he let his team get too high on themselves. Teams like that are ripe for a fall. Instead of nipping a mentality problem in the bud, Wedge let it grow into full bloom. That's his share of the blame in a disappointing first half.

Grade: C-minus

Mark Shapiro, General Manager

Shapiro has gained fame for his ability to spin scrap heap straw into gold. That didn't happen this winter. He whiffed badly on Mota and Jason Johnson. He was forced to settle for his third closer option by re-signing Wickman. The Coco Crisp trade was a calculated risk aimed at adding a top prospect to the organization in Marte, but downgraded the team for this year.

In terms of attempting to build upon the success of 2005, Shapiro's moves this past winter did anything but that, at least as far as 2006 is concerned.

To the front office, it might be taking a step back to take a step forward. To the ticket-buying public, it looks like the Indians spent all winter blowing smoke into a certain bodily orifice.

Grade: C-minus

Larry and Paul Dolan, Owner and President

The ground rules: you have the owner you have, not the owner you want. Mark Cuban is not going to swoop in and buy the Indians.
The Dolans have a very good picture of the role a farm system plays in building a mid-market team. But beyond that, I don't know if they have a realistic idea of just how much money it's going to take to build a contender in Cleveland.

Shapiro has had two main channels for building a roster so far: the farm system and the bargain bin. Bargain hunting is great, but it's not a recommended pillar for continued success.

Sooner or later, the Dolans are going to have to fork over the cash to add at least one or two moderately expensive free agents, or this team will never rise above "catch lightning in a bottle" status.

Nobody is expecting the return of Manny Ramirez, but the ability to sign a good player to a three- or four-year deal in the $20 million to $30 million range is a must.

Maybe the Dolans were burned by the four-year Matt Lawton deal. But they have to get over that debacle. The Dolans have to be at least somewhat of a player in free agency, or be able to assume some salary of note in a trade, or this team will simply tread water over the long haul.

Grade: C