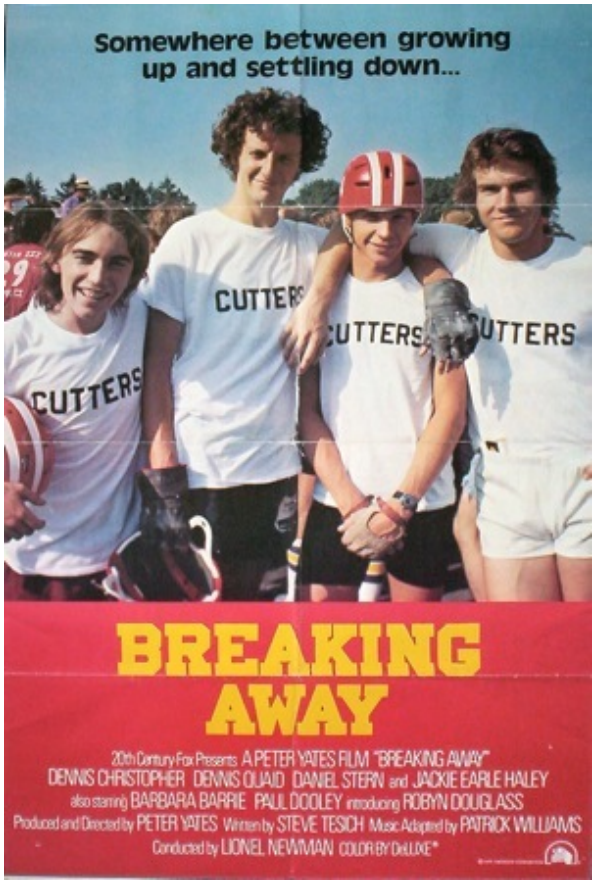
In honor of the Winter Meetings being in Indiana, let's give a nod to the second best sports movie based in Indiana (and if you have to ask why it's only #2, I'm going to have to see your Fan ID) while we release some tomahawks during a week in which we're all feeling like "Cutters" while all the rich kids (and Italian cyclists) enjoy their fun toys. Paulie talks about the Indians (in)activity at the Winter Meetings, and hits on Adorable Jamey Carroll, Jon Nunnally, and who the player to be named later in the Kelly Shoppach trade may be.



In honor of the Winter Meetings being in Indiana and the fact that ["Breaking Away"]
just got added to my DVR this week as it was on HBO on Monday, let's give a nod to the second best sports movie based in Indiana (and if you have to ask why it's only #2, I'm going to have to see your Fan ID) while we release some tomahawks during a week in which we're all feeling like "Cutters" while all the rich kids (and Italian cyclists) enjoy their fun toys:

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Sadly, the only Indians news pertaining to a player (other than the Indians wanting

to get out from under the Wood deal, which isn't happening) is that Jamey Carroll hasn't ruled out coming back to Cleveland. The presentation of this "news" gives me a chance to pass along a helpful guide from Dave Cameron at Fangraphs.com about the doublespeak and outright fabrications that have already occurred this week at the Winter Meetings and are sure to continue:

A Person Familiar With The Negotiations *- Someone who has refreshed MLBTradeRumors.com constantly.*
Major League Source *- Charlie Sheen.*
A Source With Knowledge Of The Player's Thoughts *- The player's agent.*
A Baseball Official *- An engineer at Rawlings.*
Guy Who Gave Jon Heyman His Information *- Scott Boras.*

To wit, Anthony Castrovince provides us the actual text of the e-mail that Jamey Carroll's agent sent out to the Cleveland media :

Jamey Carroll has greatly enjoyed his time in Cleveland. While we are entertaining offers from other teams, we have not ruled out Cleveland because of this simple fact: Management is good, the city is good, and this team CAN compete in their division. The market for free agent infielders is quite good and the numbers of teams that have contacted us is indicative of Jamey's value to any team wishing to win ballgames. No matter what the outcome, Jamey's time in Cleveland has been a great experience.

Of course, this is just an agent doing his job, putting Carroll's "interest" (and I use that term loosely) in coming back to Cleveland out there just in case the Rockies or Yankees or whatever other team has actual interest in Carroll are paying attention. That being the only "news" thus far though has resulted in the beat corps putting out pieces that with titles like "Jamey Carroll says ‘door hasn't been closed' on return to Cleveland Indians" which, while technically accurate, are not really all that indicative of the ruse at play.

Nothing's happening in Indianapolis that pertains to the Indians (Rule 5 Draft notwithstanding) and nothing is going to happen. Sorry if that's depressing, but that's the truth.

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If you want a pretty good indication of why nothing's going to happen for the Indians in Indy, consider that their biggest "need" for 2010 is a veteran inning eater who can sit in the middle of the rotation. Now consider that Brad Penny just signed a deal worth $7.5M with another $1.5M available in incentives and as Jon Heyman points out, "Carl Pavano, one of three free agents to accept arbitration, along with Rafael Betancourt and Rafael Soriano, had to like Penny's deal. He had a better year than Penny and should now have a chance to top $7.5 million in arbitration."

That would be the same Brad Penny was released in late August of last year by the Red Sox (who were trying to make a playoff push...something starting pitching is usually instrumental in) after posting a line of 5.61 ERA and a 1.53 WHIP in 131 2/3 IP in the AL for Boston in 24 starts. I'm not going to question St. Louis and Dave Duncan's track record at resurrecting guys that are EXACTLY like Brad Penny and turning them into cogs in the rotation, but the Penny signing just set the bar for starting pitching in the FA market. If that signing means that Carl Pavano may be getting MORE than $7.5M in arbitration from the Twins as Heyman asserts, the FA market for starting pitchers just spun out of control and WAY out of the Indians' orbit.

Just as a reminder if you still think that the need for a starter is there, remember that CP Lee and his $9M club option were traded in July and I'm going to go out on a limb and predict a better 2010 for Clifton Phifer than for Penny or Pavano. As for why Lee finds himself in Philly, I'll direct you to a terrific article from Russell A. Carleton at Baseball Prospectus (subscriber content) examining the similar situation that the Blue Jays face with Roy Halladay. It details the no-win situation that Toronto finds itself in with Halladay and whether or not to keep him, regardless of whether the return is sufficient (in terms of prospects) and the whole thing puts the Lee situation in July of this past year into a pretty interesting context.

You may not agree with the fact that Lee was dealt last year or for whom he was dealt, but if you were waiting to subscribe to Baseball Prospectus (for far less than what a month of delivered newspapers costs you these days), now is the time to

do it if only to read this article .

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As for the only other pertinent player-related news, Paul Hoynes of the PD reports that the PTBNL for Kelly Shoppach looks to be shaping up like "a return similar to what they received from the Giants for Ryan Garko", which was the 22-year-old LHP Scott Barnes, who pitched in A and AA last season, to enough critical acclaim (combined 3.41 ERA, 1.26 WHIP, 8.7 K/9 in 142 1/3 IP in 27 starts) that it earned him a spot as the 10th best Tribe prospect in the recent rankings by Fangraphs .

Remember that whole "layer of arms" thing that the trades of Lee, Martinez, and DeRosa and (to a lesser extent) Garko and Betancourt brought into focus? The Shoppach PTBNL looks to be a continuation of that idea as it would certainly seem that the Rays would have some compelling candidates who would be a little more exciting than just a "low-level arm", but it remains to be seen what the return truly ends up being.

Seeing as how the Nationals inexplicably just gave Pudge Rodriguez a 2-year deal for $6M to be their backup catcher, showing just how many teams were willing to pay a catcher $3M annually, let's hope that this "low-level arm" has some upside. Judging by recent history, I would guess that the PTBNL is a young, high K rate arm and there are plenty of them that fit that bill in the Tampa organization like Nick Barnese or Matt Moore or (to a lesser extent because of health issues) Jake McGee to dream on and to add to one of the layers.

While those names mean very little in the middle of December when the Indians' brass is content to make their appearances in Indianapolis and not do much else, the likelihood of another young power arm entering the organization brings the bigger picture back into play. As for the name of that "bigger picture",

I'm thinking "Layer Cake" .

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Finally, in the non-player-related news from the North Coast, Jon Nunnally has officially been named the hitting coach
and while I'm not going to pretend to know who Jon Nunnally is or what he's accomplished as a coach, the line that "he was instrumental in the improvements Andy Marte showed in '09, and he received vocal support from Travis Hafner, who worked with Nunnally while on a rehab assignment last year" is enough to earn the benefit of the doubt for me.

While his last name is certain to be misspelled on a regular basis (as I keep repeating 2 N's, 2 L's), it should be noted that Nunnally not only had exposure to the likes of LaPorta, Brantley, Marte, Valbuena, and Marson (among others) while in Columbus in 2009, but has also worked with Carlos Santana, Nick Weglarz, Beau Mills, Carlos Rivero, and Wes Hodges (among others) as the hitting coach in Kinston in 2007 and 2008. Essentially, outside of Grady, Peralta, Cabrera, and Choo, all of the re-inforcements that figure to arrive topside to the Tribe in the next few years (offensively, at least) will have some level of familiarity with Nunnally.

Whether that's a good or a bad thing remains to be seen as I'm more interested as to whether this announcement leads to the standing joke of "Get Thee To A Nunnally" gaining some traction in the clubhouse for a player in a slump and in need of some hitting advice even though it's likely that Jeremy Sowers is the only one who's going to get the joke...besides Peralta, obviously.

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With that all in the rearview and with the Winter Meetings likely to continue without much participation from the Erie Warriors, if you'll excuse me I have to go catch Moocher's turn on the bike in the Little 500 bike race.