The trade deadline is less than a week away.

For various reasons the July 31st non-waiver trade deadline has come to be known as the most relevant time of the year for Tribe fans. It's the time when the Indians are staples at the top of the ESPN broadcasts and the talk of a lot of baseball people throughout the game. Of course, it is unfortunately because they are having to trade off soon-to-be free agents who are deemed unsignable in yet another fire sale because of the financial disparity in the game between the have's and have not's.

Compared to the past two July's, things are much quieter on the trade front for the Indians this year. Unlike the past two years they don't have a reigning Cy Young award winner to dangle in front of teams in hopes of landing some young talent to help them rebuild. They don't have an All Star catcher nearing free agency to trade, or a solid producing third baseman available whose name sounds a lot like Basey Clake.

No, right now the Indians have very little "available" to trade that teams are actively pursuing. The only player who has gotten a lot of interest is right-handed starter Fausto Carmona, but he is almost definitely going nowhere unless the Indians are bowled over in an offer they can't

refuse (though wasn't that the mantra last year with trading Cliff Lee? Sometimes finances can change things, so maybe Carmona is not as untouchable as he appears).

It is widely known that the four players the Indians are looking to trade are free agents to be right-handed starter Jake Westbrook, right-handed reliever Kerry Wood, outfielder Austin Kearns, and third baseman Jhonny Peralta. The Indians actually have a club option for $7 million on Peralta next year, but since they likely will not pick it up, he essentially is considered a free agent.

With a lack of any players available with any real punch, there also comes a lack of any real rumors with substance to them. After consulting several industry-wide sources over the past few days, it looks like interest in these players will carry over into August, a time where teams often look to fill out their benches and bullpens. A time when teams can move on to Plan F, G and H, and also pick up exorbitantly high contracts and only have to pay a much smaller fraction of it.

While July 31st is often celebrated as the trade deadline, the true deadline is August 31st. The difference is on July 31st players do not have to clear waivers to be traded, whereas from August 1st to 31st the only stipulation is the players involved in a trade who are on the 40-man roster have to clear waivers. In the case of Wood, Westbrook, and Peralta, they all surely would clear waivers because of their contracts. Kearns may not clear waivers because he is signed to a cheap, near minimum major league deal.

Things can change in a hurry though, and sometimes the players not being talked about in a trade can all of a sudden have interest from another team which the Indians will gladly accept. This happened with the Russell Branyan trade a few weeks ago. The Indians had no interest from any team, then Seattle came out of nowhere in a sudden proposal, and then the Indians completed the deal very quickly, almost as if to do it before Seattle would have time to have any second thoughts.

The same could happen again for the likes of Wood, Westbrook, Peralta, and Kearns.

Westbrook would seem to have the most value of all the players available because he can give a team six innings every start and have a proven track record of being a reliable third or fourth starter. But, he is also four months into his first season back from Tommy John surgery after hardly pitching the two previous years, so there are some concerns league wide about how he will hold up down the stretch and if he can be reliable and not wear down.

There was talk recently that the St. Louis Cardinals were in on Westbrook, but those talks have cooled considerably to where according to sources the Cardinals have moved on and have decided to go in a different direction.

“The [Indians] are in a tough spot,” said one league executive on Westbrook. “They’ll get interest on Jake but I’m not sold they’ll end up liking the value they get, especially if they’re going to have to pay escalators.”

Wood and Kearns have hurt their stock some with their recent injury setbacks. According to an AL Scout who has seen Wood pitch recently and followed him he thinks he will be an August waiver pickup. Clubs are always looking to add bullpen arms to shore up the middle of their bullpen for a stretch run, and he said “if Wood proves he’s healthy it’s hard to picture him finishing the year in a Tribe uniform.”

As for Kearns, his trade value has plummeted to next to nothing at this point. Although it is not like there was much interest in him before when he was playing well the first two months of the season as the interest in him then was pretty much non-existent then as well. He will likely be another August trade option if he can get healthy and start swinging the bat better. If he does that, then a team may look to pick him up as an outfield option off the bench because of his right-handed pop and good defense.

Peralta is the toughest one to figure out. His performance has really flat-lined this year and his once promising career just two to three years ago is in serious jeopardy in the near future of becoming one where he is just a bench option for teams or insurance at Triple-A.

There is some thought among rival team personnel that the Indians may just decide to keep

Peralta around the rest of the season and next year as well as a stop gap for expected third baseman of the future Lonnie Chisenhall. At the moment, Chisenhall appears to be on track for a promotion to Cleveland sometime in June or July next season (like Santana did this year) and when he does he will (hopefully) be the everyday third baseman in Cleveland for the next several years.

But, that's not the feeling I am getting from the Indians on Peralta, as it seems like they would definitely like to move him and almost certainly will not pick up his option for next season or offer him arbitration, thereby making him a free agent.

With that in mind, it looks like they may want to pull the plug on Peralta soon and get a look at the hot hitting Jared Goedert who has lit up the Double-A and Triple-A circuit this year (.315, 23 HR, 67 RBI, .983 OPS). Lots of different Indians personnel have seen Goedert the past few weeks, and the prevailing thought appears to be that now may be the best time to see what they have in him. The one stumbling block though is clearing a spot for him, that being Peralta.

Still, the Indians should not expect a lot in return for Peralta. "If someone has an injury then maybe they go over the top for Peralta, but I don't really see it based on how he's played this year," said an NL scout. "He is just not driving the ball for extra bases the way he has in the past."

Yes, the trade deadline is fast approaching, and the Indians are surely to be mentioned in a lot of rumors with these four players over the next several days as July 31st nears. But, don't expect all of them to be dealt by the end of this coming week. Also, when they are eventually dealt it will likely be more about saving money and/or creating roster opportunities for other young players already in the system instead of getting back a meaningful prospect.

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