With Jhonny Peralta now shipped off to the Tigers (a transaction that increases Detroit's employment rate by 2.3%, incidentally), our Indians have taken another symbolic step toward enacting their perpetual positioning statement: "Playing for the future."

With Peralta's paltry .246 batting average now finally removed from the Cleveland lineup like an infected cyst, it opens the door for a kid like Jared Goedert, who might be able to hit, say, .250.

We all know "Playing for the future" is the baseball equivalent of "The check's in the mail," allowing the front office to plead *no mea culpa* for the lousy condition of the here and now while simultaneously trying to distract us with romantic visions of a rosier tomorrow, when all of its apparently nonsensical trades and draft picks are sure to pan out.

We also know tomorrow rarely comes. A Pittsburgh Pirates fan who went into a coma in 1993 and woke up today, for example, would have missed literally nothing.

On the other hand, as talented 10-year-old girls in bright red curly wigs have been harmonizing on Broadway for three decades, sometimes tomorrow does, in fact, arrive.

The Indians' scrappy, enjoyable play since the All-Star Break can't help but rekindle visions of the 1993 Tribe.

1993, you ask? Don't remember them? Honestly, there's not much reason to. It posted the club's seventh consecutive losing season – but also its last for the next decade. After a typically crummy Indians' start (though, it must be noted, a start defined by the tragic deaths of Steve Olin and Tim Crews in spring training), emasculating any pipe dreams of contention before they even got started, in late June, something started to happen.

They started to win. And they started to win with the kids.

They carried an unheard-of eight-game winning streak into Independence Day, part of a string of 11 victories in 12 games. By season's end, Cleveland boasted one of the better offenses in the American League – ranking third in overall team batting average and hits.

Kenny Lofton, in his second full season, would hit .325 and steal 70 bases. Carlos Baerga, in his third, would hit .321 with 114 RBI. Albert Belle smacked 38 homers – the second in what would become a string of eight straight 30-plus-homer seasons – with a league-leading 129 RBI.

Twenty-seven-year-old Sandy Alomar suffered through another injury-plagued campaign but

still did some good behind the plate. A skinny, baby-faced third baseman named Jim Thome bounced back and forth between Cleveland and Triple-A. And a 21-year-old kid by the name of Manny Ramirez played in 22 games in the final month of the season.

Jose Mesa led the team in innings pitched. Eric Plunk had the most saves. Twenty-six-year-old Charles Nagy was the opening day starter, coming off a 17-win season before missing most of 1993 to injury.

After a 26-40 start, the ’93 Indians went 50-46 over the final three months of the season. Many gaps were left to fill, but the foundation for two pennant-winning teams began to solidify over the last half of that summer of ’93.

Five months later, Jacobs Field opened, and we were off to the races.

Since the All-Star Break, even the most pessimistic pessimist (which, in this town, would have to be a freakishly dark individual) has to admit this year’s Tribe has looked remarkably different. Sparked by the promotion of Carlos Santana and the return of Asdrubal Cabrera, the gritty play of Jason Donald, Trevor Crowe, Shin-Soo Choo, and Matt LaPorta, along with the surprising pitching debuts of Jeanmar Gomez and Josh Tomlin, the Indians look like a very different team than the one that pissed away April and May with Russell Branyan and Mike Redmond in the lineup.

Since losing 11 of 12 in late June to drop 20 games below .500 – a streak of misery that finally forced the front office to abandon any hopes of even modest success with its patchwork assortment of cast-offs – the Indians are 16-12. They roared out of the gate to start the second half, winning six straight – including a rare four-game sweep of contending Detroit – and seven of eight, and over the past week have stood toe-to-toe with the robust Devil Rays and mighty Yankees.

Fausto Carmona, just now 26, is poised to win 15 games. Mitch Talbot, also 26, has been stunningly consistent on the mound. Chris Perez, 24, has two more saves and one-third the ERA of hired-gun closer Kerry Wood.

Feel like 1993, anybody? Or more to the point, could there be another 1995 just over the horizon?

I'm not saying, I'm just saying…