The time has come for all of us to face a sobering realization about Shin-Soo Choo.

We may not want to and we may fight it for the longest time until it actually happens.

But if we think Shin-Soo Choo is going to sign a long-term contract extension with the Cleveland Indians, we are simply just giving ourselves a false sense of hope.

A false sense of hope that Choo is not only different from everyone else in baseball but that the Indians would entertain the idea of bowing down to the almighty Scott Boras.

Just as Choo is ready to bow down to the almighty dollar.

Has one offseason given us as much damning evidence to this conclusion? It was the perfect storm of precursors to what we'll eventually be watching three years from now as Choo hits the open market.

Best not fight that statement, because Choo is hitting the market, whether you or I want him to. We may forget about everything that went down three years from now, sort of how we conveniently ignored all other preconceived notions in regards to CC Sabathia just a few years ago.

But Boras and Choo certainly won't.

Exhibits of evidence

The open market is a dangerous place for 65 percent of Major League Baseball. A small portion (Yankees, Red Sox, maybe a few others) have no boundaries when handing out free agent contracts. They can go as high as they want because if they pay for a mistake, they can pay to have that mistake covered up.

Million dollar white-out.

But even some of the teams that have high payrolls cannot afford to make mistakes. The Chicago Cubs were right behind the Yankees and Red Sox in payroll in 2010, but did they make the playoffs?

No, in fact, they finished second-to-last in a division with six teams. When three members of your rotation combine for a yearly salary of over $45 million and produce a 3.79 ERA and a 36-24 record, you aren't exactly getting the premium bang for your buck.

Additionally, three position players made up for over $37 million more of their $141 million-plus payroll. That's well over half of their money going to six players. Those three offensive players

combined for 62 HR and 206 RBI.

Cubs Pitching Trio: 36 Wins

Cubs Entire Team: 74 Wins

Trio's Percentage of Entire Team: 48% of Wins

Cubs Offensive Trio: 62 HR, 206 RBI

Cubs Entire Team: 149 HR, 658 RBI

Trio's Percentage of Entire Team: 42% of HR, 31% of RBI

Total Salary of Six Players: $82 Million

Percentage of Total Salary: 58% of Salary

Who are the six players that take up 58 percent of the payroll for Chicago? Kosuke Fukudome, Aramis Ramirez, Alfonso Soriano, Carlos Silva, Carlos Zambrano and Ryan Dempster are all earned well over $10 million in yearly salary.

Three of those players got extensions, while two got their money on the open market.

While that isn't the overall point, the Cubs clearly are Exhibit A in the case against Cleveland. The Cubs prove that there are teams out there willing to spend, beyond even their own threshold. A top three salary earned them a seat only above the Pittsburgh Pirates in the final division standings, but they are not the first big spending bust and certainly will not be the last.

The percentage of salary taken up by these players cannot even equal the percentage of output in terms of production. That's the big problem teams run into, especially when one pays these players the big bucks to produce the big numbers.

Next year the Washington Nationals are going to pay Jayson Werth $10 million to play outfield. In four years, they'll play him $20 million.

That's a lot of money for a team that had an opening day payroll slightly above the Indians $61 million. There is no point in getting into inflation and projected numbers, because the Nationals payroll will certainly increase, but the Werth deal screams mistake.

But while it screams mistake, it also provides us with Exhibit B in the evidence as to why Shin-Soo Choo will be gone in three years or less.

If Jayson Werth can command a deal in which he'll eventually be paid $20 million in one season, what on earth would a team be willing to give Shin-Soo Choo in three years time?

Exhibit C is Carl Crawford and the richest deal an outfielder has ever received. Year after year, that statement could probably be reproduced, because year after year, the salaries keep getting higher. Crawford has been putting together a fantastic career in Tampa and he's finally cashed in.

If anything Exhibit B and Exhibit C make things impossible for Chris Antonetti and the Indians to work out any sort of short term extension. With the reminder of these deals fresh in the memory of everyone, including agent Scott Boras, the Indians would be wise to not press the issue.

The only "extension" that Boras would consider is one that takes up just three arbitration years, but that would not benefit the Indians in anyway, so neither side is going to get what they want.

What did Jayson Werth need to do to earn a mega contract? Hit 20-plus home runs for the past three seasons? He no doubt has good numbers, but he only has the past two years of production that suggest he could receive the contract he was given.

It begs the question, what more does Shin-Soo Choo need to do to get a mega deal of his own? Better yet, what doesn't he need to do?

A deal with the devil

He was coming off a career year in which he accomplished something that only some of the most versatile players in the game can accomplish. He was quickly becoming the face of the franchise. Previous faces had been dealt in a financial purge that was aimed at getting back to the top later rather than sooner, but a lot quicker had they not dumped salary.

One more season and he may not just be the face of a franchise, but a superstar amongst the game's elite. On the brink of breaking through as one of the game's premiere hitters, he is already the most celebrated hitter to come out South Korea in recent history.

So why would Shin-Soo Choo feel the need to make a deal with baseball's devil?

Scott Boras acquired yet another young and up-and-coming talent when he lured Choo away from Octagon Worldwide and added him to his stable of players approaching the most opportune times in their careers to get rich.

Fans of small market teams could equate Boras to poison. With one dose given to their favorite team it stands to be potentially fatal for a franchise.

The Cleveland Indians have now been injected and Boras is spreading fast. Not only does Boras have Choo, but young slugger Matt LaPorta, infielder Jason Donald and recent draft pick LeVon Washington.

One could wonder that if the massive injection of Boras poison will set the Washington Nationals back even further than they already are. Stephen Strasburg and Bryce Harper commanded some of the most ridiculous signing bonuses in the history of the draft. But Strasburg is likely out for the entire 2011 season due to an elbow injury.

What if mega-deal Werth gets hurt or goes the way of an Alfonso Soriano? Werth's contract could cripple a club financially. No production from a large portion of your payroll and the inability to add to that payroll. It's part of the side-effects of the Boras poison.

Boras is employed by the best of the best. He has three of the last five first overall picks in the MLB Draft in Strasburg, Harper and Royals pitcher Luke Hochevar. He also has numerous big contract free agents such as Mark Teixeira, Barry Zito, Matt Holliday and Carlos Beltran and plenty of aging veterans who coaxed out one last lucrative contract.

Not to mention that stable of young players getting ready to cash in for the first time. Prince Fielder, Jacoby Ellsbury, Carlos Gonzalez, Kendry Morales and Jeff Weaver all could command big money within the next few years in one way or another.

Jayson Werth just did so this offseason and Adrian Beltre, no stranger to big time contracts, is primed to cash in for the second time.

This is a man who has squeezed ever last penny out of teams in signing players like Johnny Damon, Jason Varitek, Ivan Rodriguez, Magglio Ordonez and Derek Lowe to contracts above what they were probably worth.

Boras is known for creating mystery teams and making initial offers that sound ludicrous. But when the ink hits the contract, he likely has what he's desired, making his tactics successful.

Teams know these tactics, but they continue to fall for them. If Boras does not have a player like Teixeira who creates a bidding war sans Boras-warfare, he finds ways to generate extra revenue for his players.

This is why players love him. Who wouldn't sign with this guy if they had the opportunity and they wanted to make mega-dollars? The questions should rather be: Why do teams continue to put up with this guy and do they even have a choice?

No urge to fix the problem

Is Scott Boras the agent for every high-priced free agent that signed a mega-deal with a MLB team?

Is Scott Boras the only agent that has robbed team's blind by garnering extra cash out of free

agents that were old or broken down?

Is Scott Boras really the root of what is wrong with the MLB and the way their system is structured?

The answer to each and every one of those questions is no. Simply put, Scott Boras thrives off the system and he's escalated a lot of this free agency warfare with cunning tactics and ridiculous demands.

But to lay the blame squarely at the feet of Scott Boras and Scott Boras alone would not be pointing the finger at the right people. At least not all of the right people.

The first reaction for any fan is to blame the sport for not having a salary cap. Certainly that has a lot to do with it and a salary cap would prevent players from getting contracts that eat up a large percentage of a team's budget.

But the problem isn't the lack of a salary cap, rather the lack of desire for change. The number of have-nots certainly outweighs the number of haves, so what is stopping the have-nots from teaming up and initiating a reformation of the way things are structured?

A lot of have-nots have found a way around the current system and are perfectly content with their way of doing business.

To that end, the MLB Players Union has become so strong and tied to the MLB contingency, there is little room to put up a fight at the negotiating table. Of course the MLB Players Union is happy with the way things are, they are getting paid and making oodles of money.

Of course the Yankees are happy with the way things are, they are competitive year-in and year-out and still finding ways to make money because their fans support a winning effort.

Other teams that don't spend the massive amounts of money on a yearly basis are making money and finding success. Why should the St. Louis Cardinals have any issue with the way things are?

The Minnesota Twins have long been one of the models in terms of a team that makes more out of less. They make money and now they are even able to keep big talents like Joe Mauer and Justin Morneau around.

There are truly a small number of "have-nots" that are continuously getting dumped on by the current system and there is nothing they can do about it. So in the end, they keep quiet and act as if it is their job to deal with the circumstances.

One of those true have-nots is the Cleveland Indians, but you already knew that.

History repeated

Time and time again, history has repeated itself, but we as fans have decided that the course of history can easily be changed by one individual if they so choose. That individual has yet to choose the way of the fans.

You can trace it back to Manny Ramirez, the one player the Indians actually tried to keep with a contract that was probably more than they could realistically handle long term. It was a valiant effort on the part of the Tribe, but Boston had more coin and they were not going to be denied his services.

Could the Indians have kept Omar Vizquel? If they truly wanted to, they probably could have, but it was clear that a new era was underway and Vizquel does not exactly fit the mold of "mega-deal player" that has been discussed. Jim Thome preceded Vizquel and after the boys of the 90's had moved on, the new breed continued the pattern.

CC Sabathia was the first of his kind. What was different this time around was the shrewd, but risky, blueprint of Mark Shapiro. What Shapiro decided to do set up the Indians for that run in 2007 and it prolonged the Tribe careers of several talented players.

But eventually, those players would get their leverage and their leverage would end with a new logo on their ball cap. It was even more so the case with a player like Sabathia.

The Indians tried, they really did. They reportedly offered Sabathia a deal that would pay him $18 million per year for four years. Not willing to risk the potential side effects of Boras poison (Boras does not have to be involved for his disease to spread) even further with contracts already handed out to Travis Hafner and Jake Westbrook, this is as far as the Indians would go for an initial offer.

Would they have gone a little higher and more than four years? We will never know because the first offer was deemed to not even be close to what Sabathia and his crew were expecting and extension talks died before they even got started.

This was all prior to the year where Sabathia would hit free agency after the season's conclusion. We all know the ending to this story. Indians fall out of contention, trade Sabathia to eager Milwaukee, Sabathia hits market, gets largest contract for a starting pitcher ever.

History repeats itself with Cliff Lee, only sensing less of a possibility of contending, Cleveland's front office decided to maximize their value for Lee and trade him with more time remaining on his contract for more in return.

And now as Lee hits the market, he could have very well toppled Sabathia's mark with Texas or New York. But Lee's surprise move to Philadelphia shows that while money is a whole lot of something, it may not be all of that something.

Like Sabathia, Lee too signed an extension that cut into his free agency years. The Indians

struck early and in the end, it could best be described as a perfect storm of cunning moves that worked out.

And if that is the perfect storm of moves that worked out for the Indians, then what is happening with their latest star is a perfect storm of moves that is working out for him.

A new twist

Shin-Soo Choo is going into his first year of arbitration. By hitting the arbitration process, Choo gets the right to demand a higher salary than the league minimum. While that right will not extend to demanding a salary up there with the ones like Werth will make in one season, Choo will be living comfortably in 2011.

Werth and Crawford signing deals will not equal Choo getting an astronomical one-year salary, not even Ryan Howard could beat the process into oblivion and Howard was an NL MVP award winner.

But make no mistake about it, Werth and Crawford signing mega-deals will give Boras ammunition to do something that the Cleveland Indians have not done since 1991: Go to arbitration.

Never before in the recent history of this new era of Tribe baseball has a player of Choo's caliber given the opportunity to hit arbitration with Cleveland and never before has he had a hired gun as powerful as Boras.

Hafner, Westbrook, Lee, Sabathia, Victor Martinez, Grady Sizemore and Jhonny Peralta, they all had been extended and thus avoided the process the Indians have become so good at avoiding.

The beauty of the arbitration process is that it is just that, an arbitration process. Boras can

demand whatever he wants, but he won't necessarily get what he wants.

Stuck in motion

Would the Indians like to have an even playing field where they had the opportunity to keep some of their prime talent rather than see them receive blank checks from the likes of New York and Boston?

Absolutely, but the Indians fall in that group of teams believing it is their job to work with the circumstances. They are the blue-collar worker that works as hard as possible even though the conditions around them are not very good and other workers may get more benefits.

Given that, are we just to sit here and accept that fact that in three years Shin-Soo Choo will be gone? And in six years maybe Carlos Santana will be as well under the same circumstances?

The Indians have accepted it before and will likely do it again.

Perhaps we might as well and get ahead start now. It might make it less painful with three years of anticipation.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he campaigns for Scott Boras' removal from the universe and often tweets about the Cleveland Indians. You can also follow his blog on Facebook

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