While the rationalization over the hiring of Pat Shurmur occupies most minds across the North Coast, now that pitchers and catchers officially report in less than a month, a quiet off-season will finally give way to the crack of the bat and the smack of the ball into the glove, albeit in Arizona. Given that most Indians' fans have been waiting for this time since the final out of 2010 and given that little has changed regarding the make-up of the team from that final out to today, perhaps it's time to take a look at expectations for the 2011 Indians.

Thus, now that the ceilings have been painted throughout my house and with the driveway as clear as anyone could ever imagine with the amount of accumulated snow around said driveway, let's get loose a Lazy Sunday attempting to determine what can realistically be expected from the 2011 Tribe and what the performance of the team, in relation to those expectations, mean to the overall health of the franchise…

You'll remember (or maybe you won't) how this past week's Tomahawks closed ou t, scratching the surface on the idea that "if the Indians were to even stick around .500 for the first couple of months of the season…there may be some seeds of interest sewn around a building team that (quite suddenly) doesn't look as far away or seems to be on par with the other major sports franchises of the town".

If that arbitrary thought planted any kind of seed, leave it to Anthony Castrovince to grab his gardening gloves and watering can as he took great care in nurturing that "seed" of an idea to fruition in a fantastic piece taking that idea and running with it. If you haven't yet seen it, I would encourage you to go and read the whole missive as snippets aren't going to do it justice.

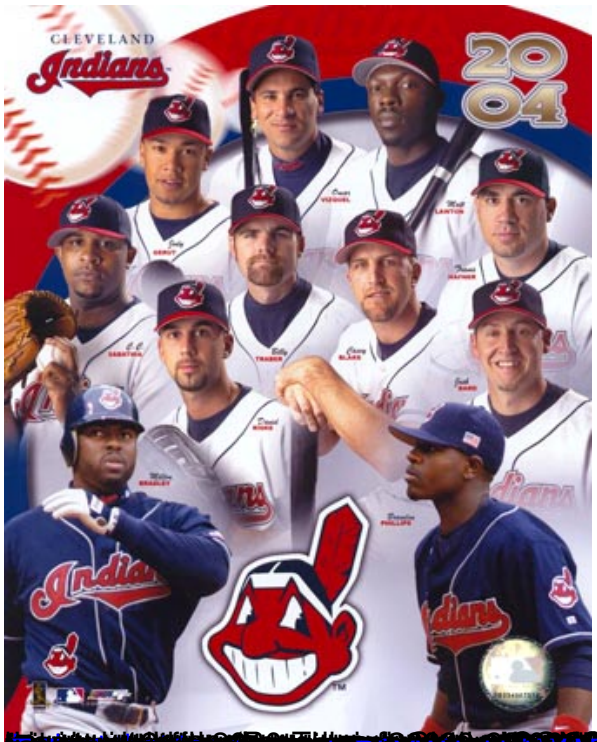
That being said, these would be the two most pertinent thoughts as it relates to where this Sunday is heading in this space:
Never mind that the Indians' last rebuild, tenuous as the end result might have been, saw the club win 93 games and barely miss the postseason just three years removed from the initiation of the process. And never mind that such a turnaround looks like -- wait for it, "Spaceballs" fans -- "ludicrous speed" when compared to the ongoing and longstanding droughts in places like Pittsburgh and Kansas City. Cleveland possesses a bit of an impatient fan base. A nearly 50-year wait between titles will do that to a town.
--snip--
While 2011 is not projected to see the Tribe take that grand leap into contention, it is most definitely a time when this team, which attracted the lowest attendance total in the Majors last season, has a chance to win back the hearts of -- or, at the least, generate some interest from -- even the most fickle fans.

With that groundwork laid, AC then itemizes the major determining factors for the season that I'm not going to cherry-pick from as (again) the whole piece is worth a read as a reminder as to where the Indians currently stand and what needs to go right for them to make 2011 a "success".

But that idea led me to wonder, what would it take – in terms of on-the-field-performance – to consider 2011 a successful season?

Are there benchmarks that would push it one way or another?
Certainly, individual development of particular players plays a major role here as certain players (LaPorta, Masterson, and Brantley) need to take leaps to consistency while other players need to re-capture consistency (Carmona, Sizemore, and Hafner) while still more players need to build upon the lessons, and limited success, learned in their brief time in MLB (Santana and Carrasco, most notably).

But those individual's performances are easily quantifiable and will start to reveal themselves in the first few months of the season and, while those individual performances are going to go a long way in determining the success or outlook for the team, what would constitute "success" or a sunny "outlook" for the team in a big picture view in terms of a win total?



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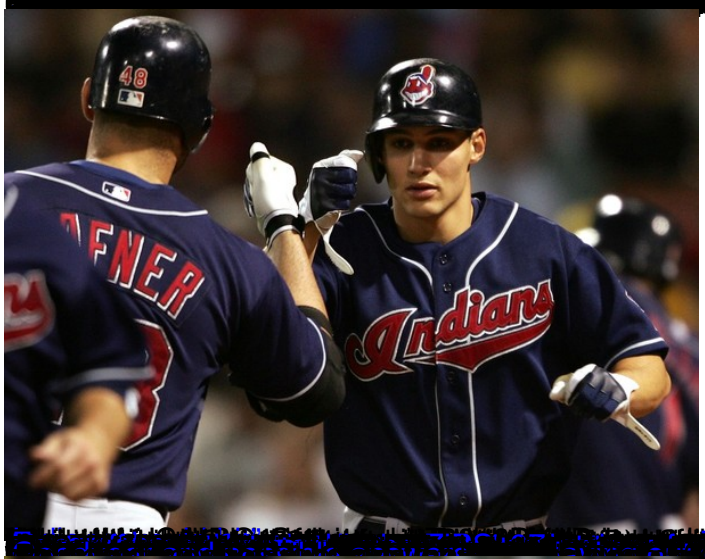

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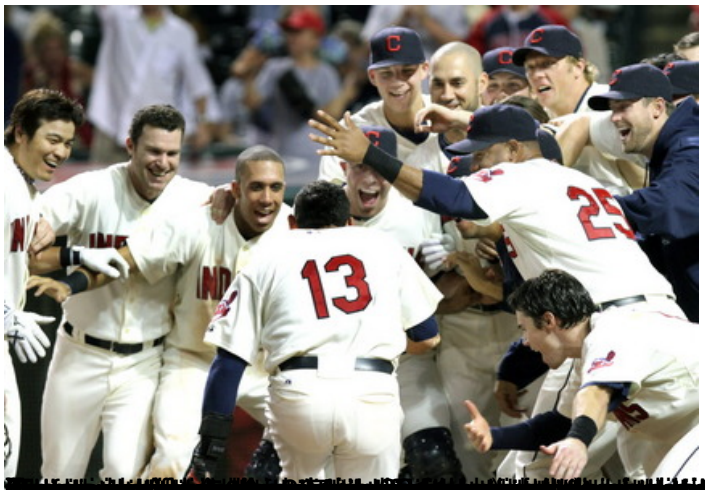

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