The arbitration process has started in MLB and the mere mention of the word and the process has Indians' fans bracing themselves for the worst as it relates to Shin-Soo Choo...but why? Is "arbitration" really the dirty word that it has been made out to be on the North Coast this off-season?

Not at all and perhaps because nearly everyone knows that the Indians haven't gone to arbitration with a player since The Guv'nor (that's Jerry Browne for the uninformed) did in 1991...a full twenty years ago, there is a level of uncertainty and trepidation around the whole process when it is largely undeserved. Given that Jerry Browne bit of trivia and because of the way that the Indians have avoided it by inking young players to long-term deals buying out their arbitration years as an incentive to buy out FA years, most people who follow the Indians aren't all that familiar with arbitration or the process that leads up to it.

Don't take that to mean that I'm going to wax poetic on how the whole process works, but with players who are arbitration-eligible beginning to sign deals around the league (thus avoiding arbitration), I thought it would be instructive to re-visit how all of this works and how it relates to the most famous arbitration eligible players in the history of MLB...or at least on the North Coast – The BLC.

Trust me, I'm not anxious to tread once again over this well-worn ground as I've been over this too many times already this off-season, going back to linking the MLBTR piece on legitimate comparables for Choo , proposing the even-loaded extension in an attempt to buy out some FA years by guaranteeing more money up front , to finally attempting to contextualize the arbitration process with some pertinent links to B-Pro and ending up with the idea that perhaps the best thing for all parties is to simply go year to year on contracts in these three arbitration years .

You can re-read all of those if you'd like as it certainly has been a long, strange trip...

However, the Choo situation becomes relevant once again (unfortunately) as this is the week that teams and agents will exchange numbers as a prelude to arbitration. Again, I've gone through those potential numbers more times that I'd like to count, but the interesting development over the weekend of Joey Votto signing a 3-year deal with the Reds worth $39M brings some renewed focus to the situation because most Clevelanders will see the Reds making this kind of signing and wonder, why aren't the Indians doing something like this with Choo?

Actually, the better question is – frankly, why would they?

Joey Votto, prior to the signing of this "long-term extension" was scheduled to become a FA after the 2013 season.

Joey Votto, after signing this "long-term extension" is now scheduled to become a FA after the...say it with me...2013 season.

Despite all of the good press that Cincinnati has garnered for this "signing", the only benefit that the Reds gained in this deal was cost certainty and insurance that the next two years of Votto's arbitration eligibility would have put that 3-year cumulative contract at a higher number than $39M. In guaranteeing $39M to Votto, they did not gain any more control over him than they held prior to the "extension", which was really just a 3-year deal instead of the three consecutive one-year deals that the majority of MLB players deal with.

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