Welcome to The Starting Rotation, where we take the five most recent news items concerning Cleveland Indians baseball.

If you are familiar with my blog, The Tribe Daily, you'll notice a similar format to my daily updates. I've expanded that format to cover a variety of topics and have including the usual "Random Rundown" or as we will call it here, "Out of the Bullpen." Because who doesn't like a good baseball themed column?

Today, Grady Sizemore makes his triumphant return, Travis Buck not only closes in on a roster spot, but tries out a new position, Jensen Lewis may be on the way out, and Adam Everett stubbed his thumb.

[SIZEMORE RETURNS]

Grady Sizemore is back; everyone can now go ahead and calm down. He won't be ready for Opening Day but he's playing, and that is indeed a good start.

I find the plan the Indians took for bringing him back really interesting. Knowing Sizemore like they do, I'm sure it was in the back of their heads that it was better safe than sorry. Could he have been back for Opening Day? Sure, he had the surgery a long time ago and it seems like he was running and throwing in camp for multiple weeks. Did they really have to wait that long to let him slide into a base?

I say yes, and it comes down to the way Sizemore plays the game. We all know how all-out Grady can be when it comes to playing baseball and perhaps that is a reason he is where he is right now. So why not make sure he's 100 percent ready to go with no restrictions before you let him out of his cage. Don't let him hit and say, "Well Grady, you can play, but if you hit a ball on the infield, try not to run as hard so you don't tweak anything."

Or don't put him out in center and say, "We're going to let you play the field, but don't be diving for balls that you think you might be able to catch."

That just is not the way Sizemore plays the game and to shackle him like that wouldn't be fair to anyone. The way they've handled Grady up to this point has been really smart and so what if he isn't ready for the first few weeks in April, is that really going to make a big difference?

Sizemore is going to play three innings in center on Tuesday against the same Arizona team he got two at-bats against on Sunday. The way I see it, they continue to play him for a few more games and then place him on the disabled list. Then they can just play it by ear as far as extended spring training goes. He gets caught up to a point where he can make a quick rehab assignment where he's allowed to play full games and back-to-back games and then he comes to Cleveland.

This way, he's out in the good Arizona weather, he's 100 percent ready and they can slowly bring him to Cleveland the right way. And with that, we hopefully have a healthy and highly productive Grady Sizemore.

[BUCKIN' AROUND THE DIAMOND]

I hate to be cliché, but that's why they play the games. And in this case, that's why they go through spring training. What fun is there in picking all 25 players that will be on the roster correctly without a few surprises?

What is the likelihood? Unless your team is the Phillies and pretty much every job is nailed down, it would probably be very difficult and injuries are always a given.

Is it a complete shock that **Travis Buck** will likely be a part of the active 25-man roster come April? Yes, but it is not a complete shock that someone like him will be a part of the active 25 man roster. There's always a name or two that find their way in, it's just a matter of picking the right one.

We all thought Grady Sizemore was iffy for Opening Day status. But things started to materialize for Buck when days kept coming off the calendar and Trevor Crowe still hadn't participated in any way, shape, or form. Crowe still hasn't seen the field and news on him is scarce, which all but guarantees he'll start the season on the disabled list and likely get his legs under him during extended spring training.

Which means Austin Kearns can slide into left field, with Michael Brantley manning center and the fourth outfield spot is wide open. Both Chad Huffman and Buck have played very well, but the Indians are high on the signing of Buck, he can play all three outfield spots, and he's played extremely well this spring.

Oh and apparently, he can also man first base .

Buck is really one of the redemption stories this spring for the Tribe. Last year a guy like Austin Kearns was able to come in and win a roster spot and he ended up sticking, making an impact, bringing the Tribe some value in a trade, and even ended up returning. Buck could do the same in terms of make an impact as he is still young and just has some trying injury times from his days in Oakland to put in the past.

It's never a bad thing to have too many options and Buck gives the Indians just one more.

[WAIVE TO JENSEN]

With Opening Day looming and likely two spots needed for the active roster, the Indians are beginning to make decisions. One of them was to clear up a 40-man spot and end one competitor's chance to make the bullpen. Reports say that **Jensen Lewis** was waived and it would appear that he has cleared waivers as he was outrighted to Columbus on Tuesday
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The spot opens up the ability to add non-roster invitees Jack Hannahan or Travis Buck. More importantly Lewis' time with the Indians may be coming to an end if not now, then possibly soon after now. I always thought Lewis had closer potential, even though he didn't have a fastball with high velocity. He has the ability to turn it up a notch in pressure situations and proved he knew how to at least close in a small audition a few years ago.

Like Aaron Laffey, I think Lewis got mishandled at times by both Eric Wedge and now Manny Acta, especially last year. Although last year it wasn't really on Acta due to the fact that Lewis was on his last option year and in a sense, became the abused reliever that was sent up and down due to no fault of his own. He wasn't pitching lights out, so he didn't make it hard on the Indians to place him on the road to and from Columbus.

Clearly there was no demand for Lewis even with teams out there deciding on roster spots and injuries happening on a daily basis. Maybe a fresh start will do him a lot of good, but the Ohio-native and born Cleveland fan certainly is one of my favorites.

This opens the door for the likes of Vinnie Pestano and Frank Herrmann, who both have 40-man status, and even the likes of non-roster invitees like Justin Germano, who has quietly put together a solid spring.

Add in the recent news that Joe Smith may not be ready for Opening Day, and the opportunity for all of these names has never been richer.

[DONALD OUT, HANNAHAN IN]

Injuries that get re-aggravated are kind of put into perspective when you have a situation like the one that unfolded
with
Jason Donald
and his cracked finger. Donald was presumably okay, even played in six games, after giving it a little bit of a rest.

It becomes 100 percent up to the player to say something in regards to an injury. Medical staff can evaluate all they want and if something is seriously wrong then they could probably tell. You also have instances when they can properly diagnose an injury and estimate a time table.

With a cracked bone in a finger that isn't apparent on an MRI, it becomes increasingly difficult for a medical staff to know and it now becomes the player's responsibility to say something. Now I'm not going to blame Jason Donald for playing hurt because he probably knew that he had a firm grasp (not with a broken finger!) on the third base job and who knows, he sits out a long time, he may never get that job back.

But if something isn't right, you need to say something. Donald went six games without saying anything and it turns out the damage was enough to warrant him being sidelined. What if he did further damage by playing after his initial rest? Now if this was one game, I would understand, but he went six games like this? He should have been able to tell and he should have known something wasn't right and sat down at a far earlier point.

Donald being shelved now opens up the door for...**Jack Hannahan**? Your first instinct is probably just like mine, Jack Hanna the wildlife expert. Hits just as well as a koala bear too.

The silver lining in Jack Hannahan being the guy is that he has great glove for third base,

something that Jayson Nix most definitely does not have, or else he'd probably be there right now full-time. Further that silver lining in looking at what happened to him last year, he was hurt and even admitted he probably shouldn't have been playing at all.

This is going to be a real nice plus for all these ground ball pitchers who rely on defenders behind them to make plays. Between having a capable shortstop and a few veteran savvy infielders like Hannahan and Orlando Cabrera, things might go a lot smoother, which may lead to an early confidence booster.

[OH MITCH]

Why is **Mitch Talbot** such a hot-topic this spring? I know the first few starts were horrible, like truly bad. I said it then and I'll say it now. There is adjusting during spring training and then there is what happened to Mitch Talbot.

The main subject of one of Terry Pluto's latest is Talbot and the thin ice he rode a few weeks ago. Now there is almost a sense of "relief" around Talbot's status in the rotation considering he's picked himself up and has looked a lot better.

Again, I know the early prognosis was not very bright on him having a rotation spot locked up. But Talbot's "turnaround," if that's what's what you want to call it, is precisely why you let spring play out completely before you jump to a rash decision.

If you go into camp telling someone they have a rotation spot, they're going to prepare like they have a rotation spot. Justin Masterson was the same way. Those two prepared as if they had a spot locked up and they could focus on getting ready to put their A-game out there come April 1st, not March 1st.

Does this mean they pitched badly on purpose? No, it means they worked on some things. It isn't often a pitcher gets live game action to work on their repertoire or hone their skills. They usually have to pitch for results for 30-plus games during a season. If not they lose their rotation spot.

So knowing he had a spot locked down, I'm sure Talbot experimented. Now don't get me wrong, his results were not what you want to see and I'm sure he had a rough patch that he'd like to erase, but it is no reason to give him the boot. One thing to remember is how he pitched last spring when he knew what was on the line. It is a perfect example of a pitcher knowing what his objective is for spring.

Talbot's objective this spring wasn't to win a roster spot, it was to improve in order to keep it throughout all of 2011.

[OUT OF THE BULLPEN]

Adam Everett is none-to-pleased with Erick Aybar's decision to block the base Everett was trying to steal last Saturday. The infielder jammed his thumb and it has disrupted him from what he calls one of the best springs he's had in his career.

Two pronged reaction. The first is the fact that Everett is having the best spring of his career. Offensively, he's hitting .355 in 31 at-bats, which is far better than some of his competitors for one of the utility jobs. Defensively he's made some great plays and we know he can play shortstop. So that claim is actually quite factual. If he doesn't make the roster, it will not be his fault.

The second prong would be Aybar blocking the base and Everett hurting himself. Again if Everett doesn't make it, it won't be his fault and it likely won't be Aybar's. It will likely be Orlando Cabrera's for signing with the club and pushing Jayson Nix out of the starting second base job and into a backup spot. Even with Donald's injury, Everett finds himself on the outside looking in through no fault of his own or Aybar's.

But Everett is 100-percent right about Aybar. Why are you blocking a base in a spring training game? Granted it was the second inning, but seriously man, if the throw is in time the throw is in time. Don't jeopardize someone's hard work in that way.

The cramp that **Asdrubal Cabrera** felt during Sunday's game against Arizona is not considered serious and he will return to game action on Tuesday. However this marks yet another dinged up player for the Indians projected starting lineup. The only players who haven't come into camp with an injury or issue or who haven't had anything flare up: Austin Kearns, Travis Hafner, and Matt LaPorta. Bet you didn't see that one coming.

Here's another one you probably didn't see coming. **Andy Marte** is pretty much winning the backup corner infield spot for Pittsburgh's Opening Day roster. And really, he is winning on his own accord. Granted, recently released Garrett Atkins and still present Josh Fields aren't pressing the issue, but Marte is hitting well. He's 10-for-29 with five extra base hits, five RBI, five walks, and just two strikeouts.

Speaking of Pirates, **Josh Rodriguez** is making some headway in Pirates camp. He's 7-for-25 with a .400 on-base percentage. Nothing flashy, but we'll see if Pittsburgh offers him back up. I can't see the Tribe working out a trade if that is the case, especially with the lack of depth in terms of the middle infield at the Triple-A and Double-A levels.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he tweets about the impending date of April 1st. You should also follow his blog on Facebook so you can prepare to watch him run into a wall for the sake of Chad Durbin.