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

In this special Opening Weekend edition of the Cycle, we're doing things a little differently and focusing on one news item from a variety of different sources. We're looking at season predictions from around the web. Everyone has an opinion and now in this era of media where any jerk has a blog to voice it, opinions are not hard to find.

We'll take a trip through the AL Central, finding the powerhouses to the lesser known and see if there really is anyone out there that has a little faith in our Tribe.

And at the end, I promise to answer the question. Can the Indians shock the world?

[GOING MAINSTREAM]

Just about every mainstream source out there has the Indians finishing fourth with around 70 wins. In fact, Sports Illustrated's Tom Verducci sets that standard, picking them to win 70 games and place fourth in the Central. ESPN follows that with one more win and the same finish while Yahoo! Sports experts go the same route two out of three times, with only Tim Brown straying from the pack, picking them to win 75 games.

Can you really blame any of them for following that line though? Baseball predictions have no science, everyone is always wrong. There's always some team out there that does something no one expected them to, but no one ever picks them, so you just plod along and pick the perceivably bad teams to be, well, bad.

One mainstreamer going off the beaten path in a different way is USA Today and their columnist Paul White, who has the Indians dead last in the Central . He mainly questions anyone outside of Shin-Soo Choo, saying Santana is just "OK" and that Jack Hannahan making the roster isn't fielding the best 25-man team.

Although I've never heard of Paul White before, I have heard of Anthony Castrovince and the MLB.com beat writers and I respect and value their opinions more than I would White's. The guys who know the AL Central the best collectively picked the Indians last. So while White and the beat guys had the same result, I choose to take the beat guys more seriously.

The vast majority of the mainstream media has the Indians as an afterthought, because that is exactly what they are. No one focuses on the bad teams like Cleveland and Pittsburgh come prediction time because none of them are relevant. If they become relevant than they have truly shocked the world.

[BLOGGERS DELIGHT]

Where you might see some innovation and quirky picks is within the blogging universe. And I

may use the terms "blogger" and "blogging universe" to loosely categorize a lot of writers and websites that aren't exactly blogs, but aren't exactly coined as "experts" writing for a traditional powerhouse.

One of the standards in terms of a blog, would be the fine folks over at SBNation, who add a tremendous feather in their credibility cap with the addition of beloved (and generally underrated in large exposure circles) former ESPN writer, Rob Neyer. But it isn't Neyer's prediction that we have, it's rather one of their editors, Jeff Sullivan. A Seattle guy, Sullivan is pretty much started as a blogger and he has the Indians winning 75 games and finishing fourth in the Central.

While the mainstream predictions and media outlet predictions may be hard to find, the blogging and Internet type ones are in abundance and the challenge isn't finding them, but finding credible ones and sorting which ones to take seriously.

One respectable source would be Craig Calcaterra of NBCSports' HardballTalk blog. He takes a different approach and releases his inaugural power rankings of the 2011 season, so maybe we can deduct from that what he thinks about the Tribe's placement.

Calcaterra has the Indians at 26th , ahead of the Royals, and doesn't really give us any baseball reasoning, but makes a plea to the people who disparage Cleveland by equating their professional sports teams' failure to the city's failure.

Yeah that might have something to do with his connection to Ohio, but nonetheless, Calcaterra is always one to say it like it is and he follows our common line so far.

One source that I would visit cautiously is a place I used to frequent and up until last summer, contribute heavily to before my arrival here at The Cleveland Fan. I have nothing bad to say about Bleacher Report and the opportunity I gained there, but let me just say that you need to have fair warning before entering that site at this certain period of their existence.

Granted, nut-jobs like me ran around (and probably still do) making MLB predictions and cranking out season previews for every single team (I did that, labor of love!). If you are going to

do that, at least do your research, that's something I always did. And if I made a mistake and someone brought it up, I would own it.

So take Bleacher Report predictions for what they are worth, just another person's opinion, but also realize some take on a large labor of previewing every team, but very few do the research necessary to put on that labor. Some are passionate, some are attention seekers.

But for the sake of fun, let's see what their combined effort produces and take a look at their "Featured Columnist" power rankings. Again the Indians place fourth in the Central , but a few spots lower than Calcaterra's ranking, placing 28th, just one spot ahead of the Royals.

[IN THE TRIBE]

How about some of our characters we know the best? If you are reading this, you most definitely read Paulie C's always innovative season preview where he pegged the Indians to finish fourth, but with 79 wins behind the Chicago White Sox. That's a respectable fourth place if I would say so myself.

Jordan Bastian took part of the AL Central beat writers predictions, but he offered up his own order , which places the Tribe where everyone else pretty much does, fourth place.

You'll be hard pressed to find some solid, set in stone predictions from Tribe bloggers out there, but rather more complete approaches to breaking down the Indians season. Most likely because I think we all realize the end result is too depressing to think about, but maybe what goes into it will bring a little light out.

Fellow blogger Mr. Negative over at Indians Chatter broke down the Indians levels of success (or as he put it, failure depending on your view) into three categories. They could surprise everyone and win 86 games and do everything right. They could turn into a complete disaster with injuries and poor performance and little support from the farm system. Or they could just do what is expected of them and have everything even out and up around 78 wins.

So far, it would seems as if the 79 wins by our own Paul Cousineau is the most credit anyone out there is giving Cleveland, but he is a Cleveland guy, so how much is that really worth in the grand scheme of things?

Well if you ask me, a whole lot because we all know Paulie C knows what he's talking about, but I have to ask the question anyway to set up the next section, so... I ask.... Is there anyone out there who's giving Chief Wahoo a chance?

[THE ONE]

I left out one mainstream piece in the first section because they are the one place, aside from this jerk blogger himself, to pick the Indians higher than fourth in the AL Central. In all reality, the entire site is down on the Indians, with several CBSSports experts picking them dead last.

However they have the one person on the entire Internet who is likely getting paid to make such a prediction to pick the Cleveland Indians to place third in the AL Central.

Ladies and gentleman of Cleveland, let's all give a round of applause to Al Melchior...

Wait, who? What?

Yes! That Al Melchior! One of the fantasy baseball writers for CBSSports. I'm not sure there are many people who live and die by what Al Melchior says (I have more Twitter followers than he does) but maybe we should. Does he have Cleveland ties? None that I can find, but who cares, he goes on a limb for us.

This brings me to the shaky tree limb I'm standing on with my claim of a third place finish for the Cleveland Indians in the AL Central. Although I take the role of Cleveland enthusiast and

Indians blogger, so my prediction carries much less pull.

But maybe it is the hope inside of me with this team that forces me to make such a pick. I realize things look bad to a lot of people and perhaps an overactive sense of hope combined with constant and daily musings is an equation for insanity. But third place isn't that insane, is it?

The San Diego Padres ALMOST won the NL West last year...If someone out there, even a Padres fan, picked them to win 90 games, they would have been called a crazy person on some sort of hallucinogen, or a Padres fan, or perhaps both.

Until October, when they were called a genius, but likely still on a hallucinogen.

So if there is anyone out there willing to pick the Indians to win the Central (or past fourth place even), I got your back, or at least, some reasons to have your back.

[THE INDIANS CAN SHOCK THE WORLD AND WIN THE CENTRAL IF...]

Remember what I said earlier about the norm? About how everyone is following the line with the Indians and they have no reason not to?

If you take a look closer at the expert predictions on ESPN, they have 46 people (I guess everyone's an expert, even Steve Berthiaume?) make a World Series prediction. Of those 46, 33 of them pick the Red Sox to win and 23 of those experts have a Red Sox/Phillies World Series matchup.

To further that, not a single expert picked the AL East different, with all 46 of them leaning Boston. An even 30 picked the Yankees to win the AL Wild Card and only one picked an AL Central team, Gordon Edes, a Boston writer, picked the Tigers. Another ESPN Boston writer, Joe McDonald picked the Blue Jays as the wild card. In the NL it is a bit of a mixed bag, as

evidenced by everyone but Pittsburgh was represented in the NL Central.

Unpicked by the experts to win a division or wild card were: Baltimore, Cleveland, Kansas City, Seattle, Washington, New York Mets, Florida, Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Arizona. A solid 10 out of 30 teams in the major leagues.

So what is the point of stating all this information and giving you all these statistics about what ESPN's incredibly long list of "experts" say about division winners, especially when the Tribe isn't involved?

Cookie cutter, everything is cookie cutter. Look at last year's final standings. I know I brought up the Padres already but they won 90 games when no one thought they would. Very few had the Cincinnati Reds winning the NL Central. They might have been a trendy sleeper pick, but even I had them second because I didn't have guts to put them in.

Texas was a bit of a surprise, on the brink of firing their manager for drug usage and some people might have picked the Rays, but how many people had the Red Sox and Yankees in the playoffs as 1 and 1A? I know I did. To be fair, I did pick Texas to win the AL West but it was more of a hunch than it was a logical pick.

The point of this is that there are always teams that do something they aren't expected to do, both ways. There are teams that end up worse than we thought and better than we thought.

The Indians are in the category that they could be better than we thought. They are one of the 10-13 teams out there that stand a chance of surprising if everything goes right. And that everything includes...

If Grady Sizemore comes back healthy: He doesn't even need to be the Grady Sizemore of old, but if he can be healthy and be a regular part of a productive lineup, surrounding and surrounded by the likes of Shin-Soo Choo, Carlos Santana, Asdrubal Cabrera, and even Travis Hafner. The lineup becomes that much better at the top with Sizemore productive, in any fashion.

If Matt LaPorta and Michael Brantley both get it: Seriously if these two can make it click, the power and speed elements are finally in this lineup. LaPorta brings the muscle and Brantley can create the havoc on the basepaths, giving the Indians a bonafied leadoff hitter. They would pretty much complete a formidable lineup if everything else falls into place.

If Carlos Carrasco is a second ace: Along with Fausto Carmona, if Carlos Carrasco can be the second gun in that rotation, that's all they really need with a good lineup. You can start piecing together stuff at the back end if you have two legit guys at the top and a capable bullpen, which I think the Indians have (fingers crossed). I won't go as far as saying it's top notch, because that's asking for trouble and they've already had their depth tested.

If someone comes from out of nowhere: They can come from the minor leagues at some point, but it could also be someone like Travis Buck. At some point someone will get injured, it always happens, and if the Indians can have someone step up, ala Austin Kearns last year, for a long period of time, it will mean all the more. Every surprising team has one.

If the defense is everything we think it can be: I bring up the Padres, they did it with pitching and defense last year and if the defense that the Indians are carrying turns out to be everything we think it can be, then that will carry them a good amount of the way.

If one of the AL Central horses takes a tumble: And you know one will. I don't know which one, but there will be one out there that falls flat on their face. I wouldn't put my money on Minnesota, but they certainly aren't immune, especially if Morneau can't come back or if someone like Mauer goes down. Now things would have to fall right for the Indians to take advantage, so this is almost a "product" of the outcome.

[OUT OF THE BULLPEN - PICKS FROM THIS JERK]

I wouldn't be properly writing this entire article, where I sometimes take apart others predictions if I didn't give my own. And yeah, I'm going to cookie cutter the AL East, what else can I do?

AL East: Boston, Toronto*, New York, Tampa Bay, Baltimore

AL Central: Minnesota, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City

AL West: Oakland, Los Angeles, Texas, Seattle

Boston just has way too much and I do not like the rotation in New York what so ever. I like Oakland's young pitching and I'll just stop betting against Minnesota, which probably means they won't win.

NL East: Philadelphia, Atlanta, Florida, Washington, New York

NL Central: Milwaukee, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Houston

NL West: Colorado, San Francisco*, San Diego, Los Angeles, Arizona

Everyone is going with Philadelphia or Atlanta, how could they not? I really love the Milwaukee pitching staff over the Cincinnati offense and Colorado is just another hunch, but San Francisco's pitching gets them back to the playoffs. I've been on the Marlins bandwagon the past two years, so this will be the year they probably do something.

World Series: Colorado Rockies over Minnesota Twins

AL MVP: Adrian Gonzalez, Red Sox

NL MVP: Troy Tulowitzki, SS Rockies

AL Cy Young: John Danks, SP White Sox

NL Cy Young: Yovani Gallardo, SP Brewers

AL Rookie: Mike Moustakas, 3B Royals

NL Rookie: Domonic Brown, OF Phillies

AL Comeback: Justin Morneau, 1B Twins

NL Comeback: Jose Reyes, SS Mets

Now, watch it all unfold to see exactly how wrong I will be.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he tweets about how wrong he'll be about his picks. You should also follow his blog on Facebook because he's just another jerk blogger.