Welcome to The Cycle, where we take a look at the most recent news items concerning Cleveland Indians baseball and just talk about them.

I'm going to spare you the jokes about Kansas City and Cleveland battling it out for first place in the AL Central this week. This is serious business we're talking about here. This is a huge test for Cleveland, as they begin a swing in-division that will last 13 games, seven of which are against the Royals.

If you want to win a division, you need to win within your division. Just ask any division winner in the history of division winners. With a little under half of your games against the same four opponents, it really pays to win most of those. So while the past two weeks have been fun, the Indians can really instill some confidence if they put forth a good showing within the AL Central.

In this version of the Cycle we examine the return of Grady Sizemore and ask ourselves a few good questions about his placement. Plus Mitch Talbot's injury

[AND LEADING OFF...]

We all know by now that **Grady Sizemore** has returned to the everyday lineup in Cleveland. He returned with a bang, hitting a solo home run in his second at-bat and doubling in his third. Sizemore returned to the leadoff spot, a place he didn't occupy in 2010.

When Manny Acta arrived in Cleveland, he decided he'd give in to moving Sizemore down in the order; however he didn't move him as far down as many would have expected. Instead, he moved Sizemore to the two-hole and Asdrubal Cabrera to the leadoff position.

What makes the return of Sizemore to the leadoff spot curious is the fact that the occupant while he was out, **Michael Brantley**, has a more suitable skill-set for the leadoff spot than Cabrera did. Acta had every reason to make the permanent move of Sizemore down in the order, or even valid reason to ease him into the lineup.

But he chose not to. And time will tell if he's ultimately rewarded, but it was a risky gamble given the state of the Indians offense. After two games though, I think everyone is ready to truck forward.

Brantley will occupy the leadoff spot when Grady Sizemore doesn't play, but the intrigue comes when they both are in the lineup. Acta has decided to play Brantley not in the nine-hole, but rather seventh, right behind Orlando Cabrera and ahead of Matt LaPorta.

We can argue about the combination and discuss how we want things to look, but what you have to respect about Acta is the reasoning and specific logic he is using. You would think Brantley, if not in the leadoff spot, would be a nice fit in the nine spot. He will lose at-bats, but he creates almost a second leadoff hitter when the order comes back around, not to mention giving more opportunities for Sizemore to hit with runners on.

But Acta's thinking is that Brantley will create more opportunities for LaPorta. Almost as if Brantley is leading off earlier in the lineup and Sizemore is a second cleanup hitter, rather than a second two-hitter. It's an interesting point to take and has some logic to it.

So really what's the right choice? Do you keep Brantley and move Sizemore down? If so where do you move him? **Travis Hafner** is hitting way too well to be moved down and even if you put him after Hafner and that creates three left-handers in a row. Acta wasn't shy about that last year, but I think he may be against doing that again. You could even make an argument that Hafner should be ahead of **Carlos Santana**.

Even if Santana is showing signs of coming to life, you have to wonder if swapping him and Hafner may benefit Santana a little more. Perhaps it would take some pressure off, as well as create more of an opportunity to give Travis Hafner some better protection. Orlando Cabrera may not hit like this forever and eventually, the Indians may benefit by having someone more feared behind him.

So let me throw a couple of proposed lineups towards you.

Brantley, A. Cabrera, Choo, Hafner, Santana, Sizemore, O. Cabrera, LaPorta, Hannahan

Sizemore, A. Cabrera, Choo, Hafner, Santana, O. Cabrera, LaPorta, Hannahan, Brantley

Sizemore, Brantley, A. Cabrera, Choo, Santana, Hafner, O. Cabrera, LaPorta, Hannahan

Sizemore A. Cabrera, Choo, Santana, Hafner, O. Cabrera, Brantley, LaPorta, Hannahan

The final one is the one currently being used. I think the more unique one is the third listed lineup. It slides everyone down, keeps Brantley at the top, and plays off the hot-hitting Asdrubal Cabrera. You could also switch Hafner/Santana if you wish. It seems inefficient to have two of your best hitters overall to be fifth and sixth though.

Then you have the top two in which you either put Sizemore sixth and Brantley leading off or

Sizemore leading off and Brantley ninth. Do you want to give Sizemore someone like Brantley to hit in front of three-to-four times a game? Or do you want Sizemore to hit behind some heavy hitters, but ultimately get less at-bats.

I could go on and on about this topic and everyone has their own opinion of what an ideal lineup looks like. Here's the bottom line though. This lineup has some potent parts and whatever way Acta wants to arrange them; they're going to score runs if all the parts are in-tact. Hopefully, Acta has a fit right now as is, but if not, he has plenty of time to mix and match parts and let those different mixes have a genuine amount of time.

[OUCH MITCH]

The return of Sizemore was initiated by **Mitch Talbot** being placed on the disabled list with a right elbow strain. First off, elbow strains are never good, and I would be extremely careful in monitoring him going forward. I think the four week time table is a solid one at this point. You'd rather him miss four weeks and an entire year because he rushed back.

At first the Indians didn't make any bones of Talbot's soreness, because it was just that soreness. It was more of a common soreness after his start last week. But an MRI on Friday and more soreness led to more than just pushing back his start from Sunday to Tuesday. It really is unfortunate the way Talbot had been pitching.

It was a little curious as to how they went about the situation, but in hindsight, it all makes sense now. It may seem shady the way it went down and how it initiated the Sizemore activation, but the Indians are just getting a few extra days out of an extra outfielder and Talbot is out four weeks, there's no funny business going on.

Now you can only hope that Talbot's hope hasn't been crushed. He's been pitching with confidence and he even said it himself, this is a tough road block in his 2011 season. He had goals of pitching 200 innings, how will he handle not being able to reach that goal? Time will have to tell when he comes back.

Replacing Talbot though, at least for the next month, will be **Jeanmar Gomez**. The Indians had either Gomez or David Huff to select from, but went with the younger right-hander. You have to wonder what the basis of the decision was though. Was it performance based? Spring Training based? Spot in the rotation based?

For one, this is a spot that is going to be occupied for at least four weeks, so multiple starts. The decision was likely based off starting someone for the long run and Gomez was the choice. Jeanmar had won both contests in Columbus, and was carrying a 1.42 ERA. He'd given up a lot of hits in both starts, but I think the thing that won the Indians over more was the lack of walks.

Compared to Huff, Gomez had not walked as many hitters in his first few outings. Huff has walked three hitters in at least every game he's pitched.

And when you think about it, neither made much of a case for the fifth starter role in spring, so there was little to go off of there. Did the Indians make the right choice? Time will tell, but I'm pretty sure David Huff will get an opportunity at some time this year.

But if Gomez takes this spot and runs with it. Not only will it create some intrigue with Huff, but Talbot returning as well. No one in the rotation is letting up.

[OUT OF THE PEN]

With Jeanmar Gomez getting promoted, the Indians will have to make a move in regards to one of their extra outfielders. Grady Sizemore's return makes having Austin Kearns and **Travis Buck** unnecessary. Kearns has already earned his spot according to Acta, so that means Buck or **Shelley Duncan** must get tossed. Luckily both have options, so the decision isn't all that hard.

But it has the Indians contemplating. Buck started out the season in a bad way, and went as far as blaming the bat he had been using

. Travis had made the decision tougher over the weekend with a few good games, but Shelley Duncan may have sealed his fate on Monday.

The Hawkman reminded everyone why he has a place on the roster. He's a lightning rod in the clubhouse and an expert pinch-hitter that has proved he deserves a spot on this roster time and time again. I'd be shocked if the Indians sent him to Columbus in favor of Buck.

I seem to remember way back when the spring season intially started, seems like years ago, I talked about the signing of **Orlando Cabrera**. I focused heavily on the whole leadership thing, pointing out what he did
in places like Cincinnati, and the impact he had on a ballclub.

"There's something to be said about a player who can energize a ballclub and command respect from his teammates before he walks into the clubhouse. Cabrera was with the Reds for a few weeks and he had already been pegged as a leader. He came in and was a leader, not by saying he was a leader, but by saying he would hold teammates accountable.

You can bet the same thing will happen when he walks into Goodyear. There is now another person other than Manny Acta to hold players on this squad accountable. And this one is a peer. Let's assume he's starting at second base everyday as well. If he's playing everyday, he's likely to have the attention of his teammates. They'll respect him and listen to him."

The world is starting to take notice of the Indians and with that, Cabrera is getting attention as one of the driving forces behind the success. I said the signing wasn't so much about offensive, but I think we've all been pleasantly surprised at the offensive production thus far. He's been superb defensively and him and nephew Asdrubal up the center have been pretty damn near perfect.

Finally, just to show you how everything seems to be falling in place for Cleveland this year.
Asdrubal Cabrera
and his wife
celebrated the birth of a new baby daughter
last Thursday. This was dead set on the day off, right before the Indians home series with Baltimore. So not only did Cabrera get back from the West Coast in time, he didn't have to miss

a game.

With permission from the wife, Cabrera was in the lineup Friday, not skipping a beat. It's almost as if it was planned that way, so Cabrera wouldn't be removed from the lineup, and he hasn't missed a game all year. Shin-Soo Choo and Asdrubal Cabrera have started all 16 games thus far.

If things keep falling the way of the Tribe, then there's something more than a hot-streak going on here.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he tweets about Manny Acta's button pressing. You should also like his blog on Facebook because it saves puppies.