Welcome to The Cycle, where we take a look at the most recent news items concerning Cleveland Indians baseball and do a happy dance coming back from the west coast.

I, like many others on the day we use to celebrate the presence of our wonderful mothers, was incredibly angry the way the Angels "won" the finale against Cleveland. I may be reusing this joke once again, almost to a point where it may not even be a joke, but a belief, but did the Angels ground crew put cement down in front of home plate? Have you ever seen that kind of rinky-dink circus action to score a series of runs in a baseball game?

Maybe you have, but like that? With multiple Baltimore Chops off the infield that you can do nothing but fume at?

This isn't Baltimore! Get that stuff out of here. I know the Angels manufacture runs in an unconventional way for an American League team, as they always have, but that was a little ridiculous. It soured what ultimately was a very impressive road trip that the Indians went on, going 3-3 on a West Coast swing that featured some of the best of the best in the AL this year,

pitching wise.

You beat Jered Weaver, should have beaten Dan Haren, almost had a win with your ace, Justin Masterson, and went toe-to-toe with Trevor Cahill with little old Josh Tomlin? That's good stuff there.

But it doesn't get any easier with another hot team coming into Progressive Field after the off day. If you thought Weaver and Haren would be a issue, how about David Price and James Shields? Price can go out on any given day and be unhittable and Shields is having a comeback season worth mentioning. If Weaver, Haren, Masterson, Tomlin, and Cahill are all in the top 10 this year as far as best pitchers in the American League, James Shields is there too.

You say you want the Indians to be tested, world? Well, here you go. They're being tested and so far, they're still on top and they've yet to put in a bad showing. They've been in every game, should have and could have won more. People who keep waiting for them to fail may just have to keep waiting, because this team doesn't look like they're going to do so anytime soon.

In this version of The Cycle, we take a look at the sudden "buyers" mentality that the Tribe could be taking on in the coming weeks and present look at the current stretch the Tribe is in.

[BUY NOW, SELL...LATER]

Oh boy, are we really getting into this in May?

You betcha.

This is Cleveland though. Things are either really good or really bad. If it's doom and gloom, this team is selling. If things are going slightly good, all the happy thoughts in the world are taking over. The hot start has already ignited some summer trade deadline questions . Can this team be a buyer at the trading deadline if need be?

Perhaps the question should be: What part of this team needs to be added to? There are very few weak links right now and the ones that are playing like it are the ones we expect to turn it on at some point. If anything, the Indians can get free fresh runs from Shin-Soo Choo and Carlos Santana. That's better than any trade acquistion.

But back to the first question. Can this team be a buyer? First off, we have to play off the assumption they'll be in a position to buy. That means they need to be in contention. This doesn't mean they'll pull a trigger just because they are, but they are in a position to do so. Would they? Well, let's look at one recent move that may give you a clue to the mentality the Indians have right now.

Manny Acta and Chris Antonetti can say "they're in it to win it this year" all they want. That's the hard line stance any team needs to take at the beginning of the year. Where you prove it is the actions you take and the moves you plan for throughout the course of the season and offseason. The Indians made calculated moves that showed they were serious about winning, but also mindful of their future. It just so happens that some of those moves they made to get themselves into a winning position and protect the future are working out better than anyone could have expected.

So yeah, Acta, Antonetti, you are now easier to believe when you say, "We want to win now."

The Indians are picking the present by picking the future. Instead of sending down Alex White after two starts, they have decided with **Carlos Carrasco**'s return from the disabled list week, **J eanmar Gomez**
would be getting sent back to Columbus
, meaning
Alex White
will continue to occupy a spot in the rotation while Mitch Talbot is out. Now, not only does this clue us into the mentality the Indians have right now, it adds to the madness with questions about Talbot, but more on that later.

Gomez can get out major league hitters, painfully, but he can do it. If you were not in the middle of a run that has you on top of the AL Central, do you really send Gomez down over Alex White? Do you even call up White in the first place? No, you play it safe, keep Gomez around

and send White back down to Columbus to continue his "development" that he very much may need. But it's funny that how a winning attitude can change the perception of developing at Columbus and developing in Cleveland. Acta said it before they called White up and Carrasco went on the disabled list. White can continue developing in Cleveland if he has to. Bottom line, the guy can get out major league hitters and so far, so good.

So there's your mentality of the Cleveland Indians right now. They're thinking big. They're thinking of winning the division and are doing everything possible right now to pad their lead. This almost guarantees you that when July rolls around; they'll be open to adding to the club via trade. But the question we now have to answer is this: Do they need to add via trade?

Every team will have to add. No team stays in tact all season, especially when it lasts months and 162 games. The Indians have been fortunate up to this point to only have some dings and bruises. They've been fortunate that they've been able to replace two members of their rotation at once, albeit a short stint, not many teams can do that.

But if you haven't noticed beyond Cleveland, there is something special going on in the state's capital. The Columbus Clippers are off to an even better start than Cleveland, winning 24 of their first 31 games. They don't have a major league team, but they have a bunch of major league pieces playing very well right now.

If you were to replace **Austin Kearns**, who has just two RBI up to this point and is hitting .050 (okay its .159, but it feels worse), you would replace him with Travis Buck (.326 AVG in 12 games), Chad Huffman (team leading 20 RBI), or even Zeke Carrera (IL steal leader with 14). You wouldn't bother wasting a trade for...Well, Austin Kearns. Just look what the Indians got for him last year. 6-0 Zach McAllister, who won yet again on Monday and is looking like he may deserve the next opportunity in Cleveland if the need arises.

If you want to replace **Adam Everett**, who I for the record, would not replace quite yet, you would go with Cord Phelps (.306 AVG, .444 OBP) or Jason Donald (third baseman before injury).

Want to replace **Justin Germano**? **Chad Durbin**? Why not Zach Putnam (2.41 ERA, 16 K in 18 IP) or breakout candidate Carlton Smith (0 ER in 14 IP)?

Remember what happened in 2007? It was Jensen Lewis, Rafael Perez, Asdrubal Cabrera who were added at some point to make this team take off. They had reinforcements from Buffalo come up and make waves that helped lead to an AL Central title. Yes, they added Kenny Lofton and he was a big emotional boost, but it was Asdrubal Cabrera hitting second, and Lofton hitting seventh when the games mattered the most and the Indians were winning and producing.

Now, this isn't to say you don't make a move if the team continues to remain in contention. First off, there has to be certain parameters. First and foremost, you can't add anyone that will be on his team beyond next year. Why not? Well, for one, those previously mentioned players in Columbus. You can add a third baseman if you want (I'm not saying I would), but if he has a contract beyond this year, he impedes Lonnie Chisenhall, who is just about ready to come up after a certain number of days pass in the major league season.

Yhis also isn't to say I would be against adding a player at the deadline. But the situation has to be perfect and it has to be at a position of need. The Indians have starters and seem to have options beyond options the way both Cleveland and Columbus looks. Around the diamond, can you say you'd honestly replace anyone? **Jack Hannahan** is playing such good defense and been such a pleasant surprise at the plate, this may be a season-long thing. Chisenhall may have to wait.

If there is one area I'd add to, it would be the bullpen. You can never have too many bullpen arms and if this team is to get into the postseason, you need as many experienced arms as possible. One thing that I think the Indians could use is someone stable in the eighth inning. As locked down as the closer spot is with Chris Perez and how set-up he makes the rest of the bullpen, there is still no defined eighth inning guy. It has been a collective effort, and that is great. But wouldn't it be so much easier if you could constantly tote out one guy who knows he's coming into the eighth?

And that brings me to the perfect candidate, mentioned by MLBTradeRumors recently . You want to talk about a perfect fit? How about current San Diego closer Heath Bell?

Bell has experience in setting games up, being the lead-in to Trevor Hoffman before taking over the reigns as Padres closer. The best part? Bell is a free agent, so you can acquire him at

a lower price than what you could have last year or the year before, not have to pay him an incredibly high amount (because he is on the third year of arbitration, making $7.5M this season), and get draft picks when he leaves the team in free agency. Bell would almost likely be a Type-A free agent and the Indians would be able to nab two draft picks to replace whatever prospect or prospects they give up for him.

Because it would take prospects, don't you think for a second the Indians wouldn't have to at least give SOMETHING of young value up for Bell's services.

And the Indians have options. If the Padres want offense, the Indians have a glut of infielders at Columbus that they can't find playing time for. You gotta love Jason Donald, but if it takes him and another minor prospect to get a deal done for Bell, don't tell me you wouldn't do it. I'm not going to throw out names, specifically, because that's dicey in terms of determining what teams want and what the Indians want to deal.

But one name that is going to start coming up with Alex White's emergence is the man on the disabled list, **Mitch Talbot**. It already came up in the Jordan Bastian Indians.com Inbox. Is Mitch Talbot done in Cleveland? Let me answer that. No he's not, he'll get better and when he is, he'll be back in the rotation and White will probably be sent down, baring further injury to

anyone else, fingers crossed.

But I don't think that will be the end of Alex White on this team in 2011 and I don't think it means Talbot will be safe. For one he has to prove he's healthy, but beyond that, with all the options this team has in the rotation, does Talbot fit into this team's long term plans? Come later, when he gets more starts than just a few under his belt and shows he is healthy, and he isn't producing, Talbot could be on the chopping block, especially if the team is in contention. But don't forget if they were to remove Talbot from the roster, it would likely be for good as he is out of options.

What if he is pitching well? How about a trade?

Again, names, dicey situations. But I'd have to venture to guess the Indians wouldn't trade Talbot if he is pitching well during the season. That's more of an offseason type of a move.

The point in all this convoluted chatter is this. The Indians are certainly in a position to add through the farm, or by using the farm at some point later in the season. But they need to focus on winning now to get to that point. A lot can happen between now and then.

But it's nice to talk about the option.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

I wasn't exaggerating earlier when I was talking about the best pitchers in the AL. Take a look at the current top pitchers in the American League for ERA. The only name in the top five the Indians will not have seen in this two week stretch is Josh Beckett. And as luck would have it. They'll get to face Michael Pineda on Sunday when the Mariners come to Cleveland.

So when all is said in done, in two weeks the Indians will have faced six of the top ERAs in the AL and they will have missed out on three of them (Wade Davis, Felix Hernandez, and Gio

Gonzalez all play for teams the Indians have faced last week or will face this week). They own two of them in **Josh Tomlin** and **Justin Masterson**.

If they can split the next six games too, I'd be really happy with a 6-6 stretch, facing some of the best in the AL right now. Of course it would be nice to go 8-4 through that stretch, but I'm not greedy.

If I could throw on my analyst cap for a second and talk about the Rays, I think I know what the Indians need to do to beat them. The patient approach they took to facing Haren and Weaver will need to be applied. The Rays bullpen has thrown the least amount of innings out of any pen in the majors. They are highly successful because they've pitched very little. Their starters are good about going deep into games. I think the Indians need to be put the Rays pen to the test and get them into the game early.

Yeah, they have good numbers, but those numbers are skewed by how little they've pitched. Let's see how good that pen really is when they're tested.

Additionally, I think the Indians offense is happy to be home away from parks like Oakland's. The Indians have scored a majority (56 percent) of their runs at home in three less games than they've played on the road.

Did anyone forget about that 13-game home streak? If you think the Indians did, you'd be crazy . They're probably as happy as anyone to get back to the place they've been unbeatable at.

-

You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he tweets anger towards the parks in Anaheim and Oakland. You should also like his blog on Facebook because only good things happen there.