For most of us, David Dellucci is that guy who we forgot about a long time ago, unless it's topically relevant to use him to take a shot at Mark Shapiro. But, for the Indians front office, David Dellucci is the guy who creeps into their dreams about hooking up with supermodels and turns them into nightmares.

How do I know this to be true? Because since the David Dellucci signing on December 6, 2006, where the Indians inked the left fielder to a three-year, $11.5M contract, the Indians have made what could generously be called a pint-sized splash in the free agent pool.

For the purposes of this exercise, I will leave the 2006-2007 offseason signings out of this, as the Indians, at that time, did not know what Dellucci would bring to the table. After tearing his hamstring off the bone in June of 2007, it became clear that the Indians had made a misstep. A misstep that apparently still haunts them to this day.

The following is the list of free agents signed from after the 2007 season to the present: Rick Bauer, Masahide Kobayashi, Matt Ginter, Danny Sandoval, Jorge Julio, Andy Gonzalez, Brendan Donnelly, Scott Elarton, Jason Tyner, Jason Stanford, Branson Sardinha, Todd Linden, Jorge Velandia, John Halama, Dan Reichart, (are you in physical pain yet?), Morgan Ensberg, Tony Graffanino, Juan Rincon, Jeff Weaver, Greg Aquino, Wilson Valdez, Tomo Ohka, Kerry Wood, Carl Pavano, Jack Cassel, Kirk Saarloos, Matt Herges, George Lombard, Vinnie Chulk, Tony Graffanino part deux, Juan Lara, Blaine Neal, Luis Vizcaino, Juan Salas, Ken Ray, Mike Gosling, Rob Mackowiak, Bobby Livingston, Michael Tejera, Jason Grilli, Mike Gosling part deux, Brian Buscher, Saul Rivera, Anthony Reyes, (oh, God, this is brutal), Shelley Duncan, Austin Kearns, Mike Redmond, Mark Grudzielanek, Jamey Wright, Russell Branyan, Tom Mastny, Miguel Perez, Justin Germano, Josh Phelps, Saul Rivera part deux, Anthony Reyes part deux, Luke Carlin, Jack Hannahan, Paul Phillips, Adam Everett, Austin Kearns part deux, Travis Buck, Doug Mathis, Orlando Cabrera, Chad Durbin, Nick Johnson, Jesse English, Michel Hernandez, Argenis Reyes, Michel Hernandez part deux, and mercifully, er, I mean,

finally, Grady Sizemore.

Never before has more unequivocal suck been combined into one paragraph. I get it. The Indians were in a rebuilding mode for basically two-and-a-half seasons during this time period. That would encompass mid-2008 through the end of the 2010 season. I also realize that a majority of those guys are organizational filler and veterans sent to the minor leagues as depth.

But, buried amongst that collection of has-beens and never was-es, are guys who the front office legitimately thought could be helpful pieces to this puzzle. Guys like Brendan Donnelly. Guys like Russell Branyan. Guys like Jorge Julio. Guys like Kerry Wood. You know what all of those guys have in common? As far as I can see, with the exception of Kerry Wood and Masa Kobayashi, not a single one of them received a multi-year deal. To add insult to injury, Kerry Wood was traded and Masa Kobayashi was released before their contracts even ended.

For this, I blame David Dellucci. For three years and $11.5M, Dellucci played the equivalent of one season for the Cleveland Indians. He had 554 at bats, hit .238, and struck out just shy of four times for every one walk he drew. Not that I'm a statistician or anything, but he was worth negative 1.3 wins above replacement player. In other words, there's a good chance that the names in that big section that you probably stopped reading about 10 names in would have been of more use than David Dellucci. And that would have been at literally a fraction of the cost.

To this day, the Dellucci contract haunts the Indians front office. The lack of production. The long-term injury. The sunken cost for a team with little disposable income allotted for free agent signings.

The list of names above, along with Major League Baseball's absurd open market salaries, have given us numerous situations like the one we just endured this past week. A professional hitter by the name of Josh Willingham was out of our price range at seven million dollars per season because he wanted a three-year contract.

Josh Willingham would have come with as many warts as your average toad. He is a defensive liability, strikes out in 21% of his at bats, and hasn't played more than 140 games in a season since 2007. Perhaps part of the problem in negotiations was that Willingham did not want to

play first base or the Indians felt he could not handle being an everyday first baseman on a team whose success may hinge on fielding competence at the position. Even with that in mind, Willingham is a solid hitter with a career .360 OBP and legitimate power.

Small market baseball economics are all about maximizing value and improving a team by whatever means necessary. It's why the Indians took a chance on Orlando Cabrera late in the 2010-11 offseason. It's why they milked everything they could out of guys like Scott Elarton and Matt Herges. Small market economics are about calculated gambles.

Josh Willingham was a calculated gamble that needed to be taken. Consider Jayson Werth. Jayson Werth signed a seven-year $126M contract with the Washington Nationals last offseason. That's an average of $18M per year. He makes $21M per year in the contract's final three seasons.

Jayson Werth's career slash line is .264/.360/.464/.824 in 3,588 plate appearances.

Josh Willingham's career slash line is .262/.361/.475/.836 in 3,165 plate appearances.

Josh Willingham will make $21M over the next three years. Jayson Werth will make $49M over the next three years. With no discernable difference in the stats, Werth, a better defensive outfielder, will make $28M more from 2012-2014.

As far as I can tell, the market value for a .260/.360/.470/.830 right handed hitting outfielder is somewhere between these two players. With the Indians announcing that their competitive window is right now with Ubaldo Jimenez trade, these are moves that the Indians absolutely must make. However, their free agency demeanor could best be described as "gun-shy".

Josh Willingham will be a Minnesota Twin for the next three years. Having seen a fair share of Indians road games at Target Field, I can say with complete certainty that their left field is harder to play than the one at our ballpark. The gaps are very spacious whereas our left field has a short porch with a high wall. The Twins may opt to play Willingham in right field with the help of their limestone wall that ricochets anything hit off of it back toward the fielder.

The Indians are, again, left on the sidelines during free agency. Their unwillingness to commit to multi-year contracts will be a hindrance during the team's period of competitiveness. This isn't to say that the team will be completely quiet or not upgrade the 1B/LF position that desperately needs a right handed overhaul, but losing out on Willingham marks the continuance of a disappointing trend. And, in my humble opinion, we have David Dellucci to thank.