It was a season filled with disappointment for the Indians and their fans alike. Mark Shapiro is in the last year of his deal, and manager Eric Wedge is on tenuous footing with the fan base. In his latest, Papa Cass tells you what Mark Shapiro would tell you if he were totally candid about himself and the state of the Indians.

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What **Mark Shapiro** would tell you if he were totally candid about himself and the state of the Indians:

1. The 2006 season disillusioned him about winning in Cleveland, at least temporarily.

Maybe it was the the bitterness of his first real taste of defeat as a GM, but Shapiro appears to be sulking his way into the offseason. The can-do attitude of offseasons past has been replaced with an attitude of "We're going to do what we can, but there's only so much we can do."

His quote in last week's Plain Dealer, "Had we not traded (Bob Wickman), we're looking at [an] 82-, 84- or 85-win season. That would have been a positive outcome for this market." is a dead giveaway that Shapiro is starting to view the Indians as a low-ceiling team.

You'd hate to think the Indians are going to get a half-hearted effort from Shapiro this winter, but all the offseasons of fighting the financial current with little to show for it might be taking their toll.

2. If the Indians are to get to the playoffs, it will be an overachievement.

Shapiro has come to the conclusion that he cannot put a playoff team on the field per se. The best he can do is put an 80-85 win team on the field and hope that the stars align better than they did in 2005.

Every year is a roll of the dice. While the White Sox, Twins and Tigers will be regular playoff (or at the very least pennant race) participants, the Indians will strike far less regularly, forced to patch new holes in the roster every year on a shoestring.

3. He's not chasing after big bats because he's been burned in free agency before.

Any major improvements Shapiro makes to this team will almost certainly come through a trade. Last offseason's free agency futility showed Shapiro that not only are the Indians financially overmatched, they're gaining a tightwad reputation among players and agents.

Usually, a visit to Cleveland serves only as a means for a free agent to up the ante with the team he really wants to sign with. B.J Ryan and Trevor Hoffman did that, playing the Indians to perfection last winter to squeeze huge deals from the Blue Jays and Padres.

Shapiro is probably sick of playing the pawn, so he's not even going to touch the upper -- or middle -- tiers of the free agent market this winter.

4. He's not satisfied with the job Eric Wedge did as manager this year, but ...

... firing him now would make him look like the fall guy for Shapiro's bad moves this past winter.

Wedge was Shapiro's hand-picked manager. Both have expiring contracts next fall. They have one shot to make this work next year, or the Dolans reserve the right to perform an organizational reset.

5. If a bigger market team needs a GM in 2008, Shapiro is listening.

It's easy to be the GM of a small-market baseball team if you resign yourself to the fact that winning will be somewhere between extremely difficult and virtually impossible depending on the previous season's gate revenue.

If you don't accept that fact, being the GM of a small market team will inevitably wear you out. It takes so much more work just to keep pace with higher-payroll teams, and there is so much failure involved, that even the best small-market GMs reach their breaking point. After five seasons trying to spin straw into gold, Shapiro might be reaching that point.

Like any small-market GM, he is starting to see how ridiculous the market fight really is in baseball. He's human, he covets what he doesn't have. What GMs like the White Sox's Ken Williams do have: the safety net of a competitive payroll.