Mark Shapiro gave a lengthy and detailed interview to WKNR on Friday afternoon, hitting on a wide range of topics. Tony Lastoria was studiously taking notes, and was kind enough to type up his review of what was said for us here at the Blurbs. This is well worth the read, as Shapiro lays out the plan for the off-season, and says some things that are somewhat surprising.

Mark Shapiro was on WKNR AM 850 on Friday, and provided some insight into what the Indians plan of attack will be this offseason. While he mentioned a lot of the same old same old in regards to what went wrong (infield defense and bullpen) with the 2006 season, etc, he did make a few interesting comments not really shared before.

Here is a rundown and summary of what Shapiro talked about with WKNR host Kenny Roda:

On Eric Wedge: Shapiro feels there is a limit to how much a manager can impact the talent on the field. Feels that in addition to the manager, the front office and players all have to do better. Looking at the bigger picture, Shapiro feels Wedge is the same guy who was the runner-up for AL Manager of the year in 2005. Also mentioned how fans in Minnesota were calling for Gardenhire's head last year, and this year many (including the fans) felt Gardenhire did his best ever job as a manager. Shapiro liked how the team responded the last two months of the season. The team never gave up, fought hard, battled, and stayed together, which Shapiro feels a lot of that was a result of Wedge's leadership.

On needs for 2007: The focus on the offseason will be to attack every limitation the club has, and try and address the weaknesses of the club as best as he can. Primarily, Shapiro will be focusing on the backend of the bullpen and second base. He feels that the organization does not have an internal candidate to fill any of those needs. As far as other positions like 1B, 3B, and LF go, Shapiro feels they have qualified internal candidates to fill those positions, but cautioned that there is always a possibility they could sign or trade for a player to fill these spots.

On the bullpen: Shapiro will have to be very creative in what he does to fill the backend bullpen void this offseason. Being that the free agent class is very weak with backend bullpen help, he will need to be very creative in looking at every possible market to fill the bullpen void. Whether by trade, free agency, or through an international signing, the Indians have made it a high priority. He also hinted that they already have definitively targeted certain guys in the pen to go after.

On veteran leadership: Shapiro is very confident with the talent level of his star players,

namely CC Sabathia, Grady Sizemore and Travis Hafner. He feels that these players as well as other players on the roster now provide excellent leadership and experience, and because of this he no longer feels that it is necessary to go out in free agency to sign a veteran role player like he has in the past to provide leadership and experience.

On payroll for 2007: No rock solid number yet on what the target payroll is for 2007, but Shapiro did state once again that it will significantly increase. The Indians will go into the 2007 season with a payroll that will be above expected revenues. He once again did caution that they are not going to just spend the money to spend it, but do their best to put every available dollar to good use. Also, for the first time, in just about any case money will not be an issue this year when going after a player. There is a greater sense of urgency to take advantage of the current window of opportunity.

On what young players impressed him the most: Shapiro feels that both Sowers and Garko will be factors on this team in 2007. Garko's performance the last two months has put him on the map, and he will be strongly considered for the 1B job next year. Choo really impressed Shapiro, especially how he handled his struggles after a hot start. He feels Choo's abilities compliment this team well with his defense, cannon for an arm, base-running ability, and hitting. Marte made a good impression with his defense, and Shapiro felt as he played more and got more comfortable he played better. Inglett showed he can handle a utility role, and will get strong consideration for such a job for next season. Mastny and Mujica also impressed in the pen.

On players out of options: Shapiro notes that all GMs make mistakes at times on not keeping the right player (i.e. Brandon Phillips) when faced with the options issue. The important thing is to limit those mistakes and make many more good decisions than bad ones. Going forward, Shapiro will rely on his staff and scouts to slot guys. However, with the dynamics of the bullpen changing in that only four relievers are retained since three outsiders are expected to be brought in, Shapiro expects only one player at most in the options crunch will stick with the team.

On trades: Shapiro mentioned that every player on the current roster is tradeable, and no one is an untouchable. Of course, he did make special note that the price for Sizemore probably could never be met. Shapiro did say that he hates trading established big league players for another established big league player. He feels by doing this, you fill one hole, but create another. For example, he is not interested in trading a starting pitcher to fill the 2B void. Any trades that involve the Indians own big league players will have to fill multiple holes. In addition, the gloves are off when it comes to dealing prospects this offseason.

On Jhonny Peralta: Wedge did ride him hard all year, but that’s because the organization expects more from Peralta than he showed. Point blank, Shapiro stated that Peralta is the most important player in terms of the team’s success in 2007. While he didn’t exactly say this, because Peralta plays a premium defensive position and can impact a game with his bat, Shapiro seems to feel that a bounce back season from Peralta defensively and offensively would have a big impact on the team.