It's a buyers' market as the MLB Trade Deadline approaches at the end of this month and the Indians are going to have a tough time drastically improving the ballclub. With a depleted prospect pool, an unknown amount of financial resources available, and a lot of competition and bidding wars from other teams in the hunt, the answer to what ails the Indians may not be attainable. However, the Indians have a trade deadline acquisition right in their midst and one that could definitely impact the race.

Players are traded for any number of reasons. They can include impending free agency, a falling out with the manager or teammates, ineffectiveness, a new direction from the front office, or simply, a change of scenery. With a limited number of teams who are going to be sellers, the number of available players is very small. Six teams are within 2.5 games of a wild card spot in the American League with five teams who would be in if the playoffs started today. That leaves three potential sellers in the A.L. In the senior circuit, three teams are a half-game out and three more are within six games. Couple that with the five teams already in line for a playoff spot and there are just eight of the 30 MLB teams who may be sellers.

Of those teams, there are some interesting names. The Cubs are shopping starters Matt Garza and Ryan Dempster. The Padres are constantly talking with other execs about Carlos Quentin. The Phillies have some desirable players, including Shane Victorino. The Astros already traded Carlos Lee to the Marlins, who may eventually be selling off parts depending on how the rest of their month goes.

In the American League, the Royals don't have much to sell, except maybe Jonathan Broxton or Jeff Francoeur. The majority of their roster is made up of young, core players or guys with no value. The Twins don't have a ton to sell, except for maybe a washed-up Carl Pavano or a reliever. The Mariners are extremely young and may only contribute left handed starter Jason

Vargas or a bullpen arm or two to the shopping center.

That leaves an extremely small group of teams who are in the driver's seat with trade talks. When supply is low and demand is high, prices go through the roof. The Indians cannot compete with some of the teams who are also in the market. They may be able to pick up a second or third-tier player who is sure to be an upgrade over the Aaron Cunninghams/Esmil Rogerses of the world, but impact players simply aren't available.

But, not all hope is lost, Indians fans. There's a player on our 25-man roster that would be the best trade acquisition of them all and we don't even have to give up anything to get him. That player is Carlos Santana. Santana has had very little to do with the Indians 44-41 start, except for some of his defense early in the season. Santana's highest OPS for a month is .863 in April, which was aided by 18 walks in 18 games and three of his five (!) home runs for the season. From April 18-April 29, Santana had two extra base hits. Since then, Santana's OPS by month has been .659, .505, and .693 for the six games he's played in July.

Admittedly, by all accounts, overall, according to everyone, etc, etc., it's been a terrible year for Santana. That's very clear from all of his stats. When he does produce, though, he's been a major help to the Indians. In games that the Indians have won, Santana has a slash line of .273/.377/.462/.839, which is about on par with the player that we all hoped Santana would become. In the 37 Indians wins he has played in, he has 22 of his 30 RBI, 36 of his 54 hits, and has all five of his sacrifice flies. In Indians losses, Santana's slash line is a painfully brutal .161/.239/.188/.481, which translates to Mike Rouse-ian numbers.

In the four games Santana has homered in, the Indians are 4-0. In the 21 games Santana has an RBI, the Indians are 15-6. Even just getting on base, Santana is an asset to the Indians. In the 26 games Santana has scored a run in, the Indians are 19-7. Some of these may be coincidental due to the small sample sizes, but it's clear that the Indians are a better team when Santana is doing something offensively. It's a "Captain Obvious" point to make, but when you consider what the Indians, and their offense, have done without Santana contributing on a consistent basis, getting Carlos Santana to produce would be a tremendous addition to the team.

There is hope for Santana. In 2011, his first full season after the horrific knee injury he suffered in Boston in 2010, Santana produced better in the second half than he did in the first half. At .230/.363/.418/.781, his struggles weren't nearly as pronounced as this year's numbers. When

you consider that Santana hit just .181 in the first month of the season, where he ended up by the break wasn't so bad.

But, Tribe fans, herein lies the hope. Over the first 84 games he played in 2011, Santana had 28 extra base hits. Over the final 71 games, he had 36 extra base hits. His slash line improved to .249/.337/.498/.835. While the walks went down, the power and batting average increased. Santana hit 14 home runs in 265 at bats in the second half.

There were some negative trends too, including an increase in strikeout totals and a decrease in walks. These aren't surprising trends because Santana has a tendency to get pull happy and long with his swing when he's hitting for power, which is what he did in the second half.

As the Indians continue to struggle with lefties, consider this. In 2011, Santana, a switch hitter, hit .315/.428/.536/.964 against left handed pitchers. In 2012, Santana's hitting a paltry .216/.348/.257/.605 against southpaws. One on hand, you could look glass half full and say that Santana should hit better against them in the second half. On another hand, you could consider 2011 an aberration. Either way, for the Indians to have more success against LHP, Santana, as one of the few right handed hitters they have, needs to be more productive.

Because Santana is still a young player at 26 years old, it's impossible to project or speculate on what numbers we can expect from him or use terms like "regression to the mean". What we assume, and rightfully so, is that Santana's a better hitter than what he showed in the first half of 2012.

The five-year, $21M contract extension the Indians gave him last offseason was a vote of confidence in Santana and his ability to get better, make adjustments, and keep progressing. Now is the time to prove it.

As the trade market continues to take shape, likely leaving the Indians on the outside looking in, correcting Carlos Santana could be the most beneficial move made by the Indians at the trade deadline.