Let's see. A slow start for the Indians in April, May and June? Check. Out of playoff contention by the All-Star break? Check. A four game winning streak that includes a sweep of the Seattle Mariners? Hell, it must be late July. In this Monday's Weekend Wrap, Peeks talks about the resurgent Tribe, the player to be named later in the DeRosa deal, the prospect acquired for Raffy Betancourt, Andy Marte, and Buckeye football.

Ahhh.... The Indians are Hot- It Must Be Late July

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The Tribe is following a pattern familiar to those that follow them relatively closely by starting to play decent baseball when all is already lost. They outscored the Mariners 32-6 this weekend and also got very good starting pitching from Aaron Laffey, Jeremy Sowers and Cliff Lee.

This stretch of solid baseball scares the hell out of many people. It's a strong second half that often seems to justify Tribe skipper Eric Wedge being invited back the next season to try it all again. And usually he does so armed with a pitcher or two fresh off of injuries that came cheaply during the free agent signing period and he often comes back with position players who have question marks attached to them as well. You know; is Travis Hafner fully recovered from his shoulder injury and capable of providing that middle of the order pop that is critical to a lineup? Those kinds of irritating little problems.

I'll be relatively shocked if Wedge survives this campaign's early season swoon for reasons already addressed in the past. But if the Indians play .550 baseball for the remainder of the season (still no small feat with this pitching staff) then Wedge may build himself another bridge to at least the 2010 season.

Doesn't that sound great?

DeRosa Deal Done

The Indians completed their trade with the St. Louis Cardinals on Sunday when they tabbed 23 year-old pitcher Jess Todd as the Player to be Named Later. The trade was made weeks ago when Cleveland sent Mark DeRosa to the Cards for Chris Perez and the PTBNL.

Truthfully, Todd was likely the key to the deal. The 5'11", 210lb Todd is a power right handed arm that could start but may have a higher ceiling as a back-of-the-bullpen reliever. Here are some numbers and some information on Todd from Marc Hulet of Fangraphs.com (http://www.fangraphs.com/fantasy/index.php/more-rookies-in-the-bullpen):

The 23-year-old hurler was the club's second round draft pick out of the University of Arkansas in 2007. Todd flew through the minors and posted an overall ERA of just 2.87 in 235.2 innings of work. He spent time in college - as well as the low minors - as both a reliever and starter, but his approach and stuff is best-suited to relief work, which is the role he fulfilled at Triple-A in 2009.

Todd allowed just 18 hits and seven walks (2.59 BB/9) in 24.1 innings of work this year. Opponents mustered just one home run (0.37 HR/9) against the hard-throwing reliever and struck out 32 times (11.84 K/9). Right-handed batters were hitting just .130 against Todd at triple-A, although lefties were hitting .297. His career splits are similar: .190 vs. right-handed batters, .250 vs. left-handed batters.

Todd is a sinker/slider pitcher, who can reach back and touch 94 mph with his fastball when he needs a little extra juice. His

best pitch is his cutter, which is also the newest pitch in his arsenal. He's done a good job of inducing ground balls with his sinker (career 50 GB %), and he has also limited the number of line drives hit against him (14%). Although he does not touch the mid-to-high 90s with has fastball like a lot of closers, Todd has the potential to be a dominating late-game reliever because of his combination of command/control, the movement on the cutter, and his ground-ball tendencies.

And from Baseball America:

Scouts envision (Todd) as a late-inning reliever in pro ball. Todd's size (6 feet, 213 pounds) and violent delivery lend themselves more to that role, though he has shown a deep repertoire, command and durability as a college starter. His competitive nature will help succeed in either capacity.

After the bullpen imploded early in the season the Indians have focused on bringing in younger, harder throwing pitchers that they hope will form the foundation of a solid bullpen for years to come. A big part of that has been raiding the Cardinals of their 3rd and 5th rated prospects in Perez and Todd. I'm always leery when the Cardinals give up pitching because they generally do a terrific job of developing pitchers and they aren't prone to giving up the good ones. But they are ramping up for a pennant drive and hopefully the Indians are taking advantage of that

situation.

Bad News for Vendors

The Indians also said so long and farewell to Rafael Betancourt late this week. They dealt the ummm... ‘methodical' right hander to Colorado for, wait for it...., 6'7", 235lb hard throwing (95mph fastball) Single-A prospect, Connor Graham.

Graham throws hard but is erratic. While he strikes out a hitter per inning in A ball he also averages about five walks per nine innings. He was a starter in the Rockies system but most scouts believe his stuff sets up better for, yep,....a back-of-the-bullpen role.

Betancourt has had an up and down career in Cleveland. He was miserable last season but

untouchable in 2007. This season was a microcosm of his tenure here: terrifying in April and unhittable in May and then shut down in June when he injured his groin.

Now What?

The Indians have gone really young in the last couple months. And with the fate of the club seemingly hinging every year on the results produced by the bullpen they are also clearly playing a numbers game. They've collected some late game prospects that are still in need of some development and some fine tuning in their games. How fast these kids figure it out and to what extent will be the key to whether the Indians won or lost in the DeRosa and Betancourt deals.

By this time next week you'll have a much better idea just what the Tribe front office thinks of their chances in 2010. By that I mean that if Cliff Lee is still receiving checks with the Indians logo on them next week then the Indians believe that they can compete for a division title in 2010. If Lee is dealt then you're likely looking at some sort of modified rebuilding plan.

Let's face it: without Lee anchoring the front end of the Indians rotation next season this team is in some trouble. I see no way in hell the Indians retain him after next season and, as I stated last week, his trade value is as high now as it will ever be because the team dealing for him has his services next season as well.

The Tribe will still have to be overwhelmed by a

proposal to pull the trigger on a Lee deal this year. He'll still be extremely valuable next season first of all because he wins and has become a dominant, front-of-the-rotation performer. Secondly, if the 2010 season craps out early, Lee will be one of the hottest commodities on the market again a year from now.

It wouldn't be a shock to see the Indians hedge their bets, keep Lee, hope for Fausto Carmona to return to form, hope for Jake Westbrook's return to late '07 form, hope for David Huff and Aaron Laffey to continue to develop, and then see what the early part of 2010 brings.

That's a lot of hoping. Stay tuned.

Etcetera

- Lined up a ticket for the Buckeyes September 19th 'away game' against Toledo. That one's being played at Cleveland Browns Stadium and rumors are that there is likely going to be a Cleveland Fan tailgate party in the Muni Lot to commemorate Ohio State's visit to the north coast.

That game will sure be a lot more fun and a lot more meaningful if OSU can take care of business the week before against Southern Cal at 'The Shoe'. This time last year we were already talking about a September match up with the Trojans. I have to admit, I like it better this summer when the Buckeyes seem

to be lying in the weeds and not drawing a ton of attention to themselves. Let Tim Tebow and the Florida's, USC's and Texas's bear the weight of huge expectations and the pressure that goes with it. I'll be fine if the 6th ranked Buckeyes aren't mentioned until the season starts.

But they do need to beat USC at home to entertain championship dreams. The luster has worn off the Buckeyes nationally and a loss early to USC won't be overlooked when BCS rankings are computed.

- Time to bring up Andy Marte from Triple-A Columbus. Not because of his long standing as a prized prospect, not because of the up and down performance of current 3b Jhonny Peralta (well, maybe a little bit because of that). It's time to bring Marte up because he's earned it with his performance.

The kid has hit everything thrown toward the plate in the last two months. You simply have to reward that kind of production with a call-up. And once that's out of the way, give him the opportunity to play five times per week so you can once and for all make a call on the guy.

I'm steadfast in my belief that Marte has too many holes in his swing and a flawed approach against the best pitchers in the world, but he's earned the right in this lost season to prove it once and for all.

Let's not forget, this is a kid who every single team in the majors passed on earlier this year when he was available. He is flawed. But his work in Columbus requires he be given his final shot. If for no other reason than it sends a really rotten message to every other player on that Columbus roster that regardless of how much

work you do or how much success you experience that it may not matter.

Get him up here and get it over with.