I know it's been a long time since the Indians were in position to win a division. I also know it's been a long time since the Indians were able to pluck some premium players out of their minor league system that actually excited Indians fans.

But you know what I also know? That in the overwhelming majority of times prospects and pennant races mix like poop in a punch bowl.

You can be happy about the division race for sure. Likewise, you can be thrilled that highly regarded kids like Jason Kipnis, Lonnie Chisenhall, Cord Phelps, Drew Pomeranz and Alex White have come along and become legitimate major league prospects.

But you can't…. check that…. you shouldn't be crazy enough or impatient enough to truly believe any of those kids are going to come up for their first taste of the major leagues and produce like savvy, three-year veterans.

I'm not saying it never happens because I saw the value Jaret Wright added in '97 and I saw the value Asdrubal Cabrera added in 2007. *I'm saying it rarely happens*. Once a decade sounds

about right. I know many wearing blue and red colored glasses think the Kipnis call-up is going to make the Indians a better team. Much like they thought the Phelps call-up would and the Chisenhall call-up would.

But Phelps bombed on both sides of the ball and Chisenhall is offensively barely more productive than the terrible offensive player he replaced (Jack Hannahan) right now and is defensively far inferior to Hannahan. The likelihood that Kipnis turns out to be a precocious second half shot in the arm that leads the Tribe to glory is really far-fetched.

But that's fine if we as fans understand that and temper our excitement.

It's great that these kids have each gotten a taste of what it's all about. That will benefit them in the long run. It will also benefit the organization in the long run. And if it benefits the organization long term that means we as fans also will reap the bounty.

But the long run isn't August and September of 2011.

And the situation for this group of kids is different than what Wright walked into in ’97 and even much different than what Asdrubal walked into four years ago. Wright was a one trick pony whose one trick happened to be a fastball that hit 97mph and that he elevated and through by guys who hadn’t seen it before. That played well one time through the league and again the playoffs when Wright was dominant. He was so dominant that he became untouchable and the Indians wouldn’t include him in potential deals for guys like Pedro Martinez and Randy Johnson.

But Wright never developed a secondary pitch, teams learned to lay off that high fastball and Jaret Wright became a mediocre pitcher who got hurt and never stood up to the lofty standards people had for him when he dominated the second half of 1997.

Asdrubal Cabrera was a wide-eyed rookie who played really well in 2007. No disputing that and I wouldn’t want to. But Cabrera walked into a clubhouse and onto a field where there were many productive, if not spectacular, veteran players. Casey Blake, Jhonny Peralta, Grady Sizemore, Travis Hafner and Ryan Garko all had solid years. Victor Martinez was an MVP candidate with his 25 HRs and 114 RBI. In fact, five Indians hit 20+ HRs in 2007 and Blake added 18.

That was a solid offensive team built upon a number of veteran hitters in the prime years of their career. Asdrubal didn’t have to come in and lead that lineup. He had to come in and fit in, play some decent defense and get a couple knocks at the 8th or 9th spot in the order.

Compare that team with the 2011 Tribe. This year’s club is simply bad offensively. Not only do you have guys like Shelley Duncan and Austin Kearns getting regular ABs but they’re also coming (often times) in the middle of the Indians order. Matt LaPorta has been disappointing, Orlando Cabrera looks about done, Michael Brantley has been uneven at best, Carlos Santana hasn’t lived up to his advance billing and Sizemore and Shin Soo Choo have either struggled all season or been injured. Only Hafner has put together a decent effort offensively.

So given that, you’re not looking to just fit in a young kid, hit him 8th and let him learn from good veteran hitters in front of him. The Indians need production. They need the production of a veteran, legitimate major league hitter. They can’t hope that Phelps or Kipnis is that guy. They need to get a guy in the lineup that’s proven he's able to hit major league pitching if they are serious about a playoff run.

You’re not going to win the division with unproven, untested kids in the lineup every day who barely know where the players parking lot is much less what Gavin Floyd is likely to throw when he’s ahead in the count.

Again, that’s fine if you’re willing to make the concession that while this year is great and has been an unexpected treat, it’s not a year the Indians were going to contend in anyway and that you’re fine with developing kids up here now despite it being probably detrimental to the chances of winning a division.

Everything going on is good. The kids the Indians are drafting and developing are arriving when for years of the Michael Aubrey’s and John Drennen’s they simply never did. Position players who can hit and power arms that can put zeroes up are in the system and getting chances to play.

That’s all good. That makes the organization much stronger going forward. But it’s not how you win a division. You do that with proven major league players who maybe surround one precocious kid that can handle a race.

Recognize.

Swingin’ in the Rain

I took my oldest all over northeast Ohio Saturday in search of quality baseball. We went first in search of CABA High School World Series games in Willoughby and then Euclid but Willoughby was dark and the games in Euclid were both run rules that ended nearly when we walked up.

So we left and headed downtown where it was 164 degrees in the shade. We hit a couple local places to get out of the heat and grab a drink and then headed to Progressive Field and watched batting practice from the Home Run Porch.

We never left the porch and we never saw an actual pitch.

30 minutes before the game the grounds crew put the tarp on the field and waited out storms in the area. There was no baseball but there were a ton of young White Sox and Indians fans on the porch with us.

And there was plenty of alcohol being served.

Any guesses what ultimately went down? Yeah, there was a 'fight' if you can call it that. I mean, I've been a Browns season ticket holder in the bleachers for years so I've seen fights at athletic events and this one was easily the strangest I've ever seen.

Ever.

Because before any punches (or actually, in this case, slaps) were thrown the two combatants faced off in a dance off.

Yep.

There was a bunch of crap-talk about the Tribe and the White Sox and a group of 5-10 Indians fans didn't like the 25 or so White Sox fans haunting the left field porch and claiming it as their own. So in a scene from West Side Story a couple of guys step to the forefront of the scrum in the middle of a thunderstorm with rain coming down and, I thought, were about square up and go at it.

But instead they Dougied.

I kid you not. The insults went from team vs. team and personally insulting Michael Brantley and Paul Konerko to who could out-Dougie the other .

I almost fell over.

My faith in the generation was ultimately restored when the Indians fan, at the end of his Dougie, slapped the beer out of the White Sox fan's hand and called him some derogatory name. They waltzed and preened and shouted threats of great bodily harm at each other until a police officer bounced the Tribe fan out of the park (and rightfully so).

But, um…. Yeah. There was a dance off on the Home Run Porch during a rain delay. It ended with a slap and an ejection. Not exactly what Danielle and I figured we'd be seeing when we left the house but it was funny, it was entertaining and in all likelihood will be talked about for much longer than that game ever would have been.

Accidental Hero

The NCAA has found nothing in addition to what the Buckeyes self-reported and self-punished for in the wake of the Jim Tressel scandal over tattoos and e-mails.

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