Written by Jim Metcalfe Sunday, October 06, 2013 12:00 AM -

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Obviously, us Cincinnati Reds' fans are severely disappointed with the team's loss to the Pittsburgh Pirates in Tuesday night's National League wild card game.
They had a chance to play the contest at home but lost their last five games of the regular season, including two to the lowly New York Mets.
I think Brandon Phillips' comments after the game spoke volumes for all of us when he was quoted as saying the team choked and he didn't care what his teammates thought, that any criticism fans leveled at the team now was deserved.
It just seemed that they were playing their worst ball of the season — period — at THE worst time possible. When they needed to finish strong, they finished weakly and mildly, on offense pitching and even defense in Tuesday night's game.

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It was clear that the Pirates' fans got to Johnny Cueto because he never even came close to settling down, just when he needed to be the shutdown starter the Reds required to silence the home crowd and give his crew a chance.

It seemed that no one really got comfortable in that game, the wrong place at the wrong time for that to happen collectively.

They have made the playoffs three of the last four seasons but making the playoffs has never really been enough for Reds' fans — it was triply-painful during the Marge Schott era when the team wasn't making them at all — who got used to winning NL pennants and World Series regularly.

I will not write it's time to break up the team and rebuild, that Reds' management has to blow this team up because they have gone as far as they can.

I also won't write that it's time to get rid of Dusty Baker as manager. We can argue about whether or not he should have started Cueto with only two starts after coming back from three months off but I don't have access to scouting reports, to where he is physically and mentally after rehab, etc.

Baker made what is a reasonable decision that simply didn't work out, plain and simple. There will be fodder for forums and talk shows until spring training but that is the nature of the new beast.

I was basically happy with their strategy during the last off-season, staying put and figuring that most of the players would improve.

I do think there have to be a couple of changes, mostly getting players to live up to the high standards they have set, such as Joey Votto. He had a pretty good year but not what we fans had become accustomed to.

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What about the two biggest free agents-to-be: Shin-Soo Choo and Bronson Arroyo, an innings-eater that generally gives you 6-7 innings and keeps you in the game?

I remember the old Baltimore Orioles when Earl Weaver was managing and how they sometimes let stars go when the price got to high: Doug DeCinces and Bobby Grich leap to mind (I AM showing my age!); trusting that the replacements were ready to go, like Rich Dauer. They generally were correct and they were playoff contenders every year.

Understanding that the Reds have a few stars locked up but they do not have the resources of, say, the Yankees or Dodgers, I believe they will make a reasonable effort to sign both of them; however, when the aforementioned Evil Empire East, Evil Empire West, Angels, etc., come calling, they will have to hope those two guys are willing to take less.

If not, then they have to trust that super-speedster Billy Hamilton and Tony Cingrani are ready for full-time, primetime work; or else look for a free agent that fits their salary limitations.

Personally, promote from within.

As "they" say, we shall see.

Think that the University of Southern California will inevitably hire their new football coach from within?

When a coach gets fired as soon as the team plane lands, even after the coach begs for his job, you know they were unhappy for a long time and the boiling point was reached after only five games.

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I won't presume to know who will eventually be hired but USC is one of the prime jobs in college football, with its resources, weather, recruiting base and tradition.

Will another current occupant of perhaps THE job in college football, Mack Brown of Texas, be next?

Talk about a team with incredible resources, etc.?

Neither of these school's fans are patient — you are paid handsomely to win, win big and win all the time — and after last year's debacle at USC — they were the preseason No. 1 — and the Longhorns' struggles the last couple of seasons, including this year's misery, one has to wonder when the chorus to fire becomes an avalanche!