

Offseason Rundown: Winding Down to Wind Back Up

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Friday, February 01 2013 12:00 AM - Last Updated Friday, February 01 2013 7:50 AM



Oh February, how I've awaited you. How we all have awaited you

The best thing about February is that you can start talking about days without the number being too high. It's not triple digits, it doesn't make it easier to say months, you can say, there are a this many days before we can really get excited about baseball and that number of days doesn't make you depressed. The week after next, in a few weeks, in just these few days, we get baseball

Right, P's & C's is just guys showing up to a complex, getting ready for a long season. It's followed by days of people talking about how great shape they are in or what will be different his year after a different offseason, and other early season stuff.

With a new manager, you can expect some fresh stories about what is being done and how it is different than years past, with new relationships forming, a new attitude, and heck, a bunch of new players should make things interesting.

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All of that though... All of that is fun to talk about. Much more fun than some of the fun we've been having. Much more often than once or twice a week. Much more, hopeful than something done on paper.

Man, February is a great month.

[TO HIT OR NOT TO HIT...]

Last week, a fun report came out about the Indians picking between their new DH and their old DH, sort of. Jon Heyman reported that the Indians [were considering bringing back Travis Hafner](#) or **Jimmie** **Thome**

Heyman said the Indians do still have some money left to make something happen, but not too much. I'm sure both would fall in the price range of what the Indians are looking for, if they are looking for something. Heck, this could be the Indians just kicking the tires on the idea. If they do bring in a DH, I think they'd prefer to bring in Thome or Hafner. I don't think they'd sign someone like a Carlos Lee to DH, just because I think that if they do this, it would be more for a guy who wouldn't play very many times during the week.

Hafner and Thome fit that bill, they are both Indians, much loved Indians at that, Thome more than Hafner, and they can hit, which is what the DH is supposed to do. They'd be prime pinch-hit options as well and could get some significant at-bats just doing that.

Will it happen though? For one, it looks like Hafner may be making this decision for the Indians a little easier. Perhaps a "Thome or Nothing" decision for the Indians. The Yankees [appear to be looking at Travis Hafner](#) as an option for them, and especially with Alex Rodriguez's situation very unclear, things could move in a mutual direction. Yesterday there was initial report that the Yankees "might be close", however it ended up being that they are just considering him. Today, the report is that the two signs are close on a deal

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[that appears to be in the \\$1 million dollar range](#)

I must say, I love Travis Hafner, but I would hate to see him hanging around in Pinstripes. That would be gross. I wouldn't hold it against him, but I would have to hit myself a few times.

Anyway, that is now the debate. Do the Indians bring in a DH or not? One that is more full-time? One that plays sparingly? What's the plan? What makes sense? Terry Pluto [seems to be quizzical as to why](#) the Indians would consider Hafner. I wonder how many people would be happy if the Indians grabbed Thome, but upset if they signed Hafner. Really, they are one in the same, Hafner may even be better (if you can guarantee his health). The thing is though, you can't guarantee Thome's either, or even that Thome would be useful as he continues to age.

If anything, Hafner has more upside as an option. To me, you are either on the "Let's not get a full-time DH" bandwagon or you aren't. I know players make a difference, but you can't be excited about getting Thome and not be about getting Hafner. That's at least how I look at it.

What do I think? I think the Indians need to go at it with what they have. I like the idea of rotating the spot and just taking on an extra bench player. Pluto makes the point of Aviles and really, you have someone that is more than just a utility player. He's a guy who can play a whole heck of a lot more than a regular backup, which means you are essentially using him as your ninth guy. You rotate him in, giving guys like Asdrubal more of a break, and that can maximize your lineup, keep guys healthy, and provide you with some versatility.

Yes your DH must be able to hit, but the guy that the Indians put there will not be the same on a day-to-day basis. It's not like having no options and using Vinny Rottino there. There is depth in other spots and it seems that was the plan of attack the Indians took in getting players like Aviles, Gomes, McDade, etc. Speaking of Aviles...

[INDIANS/AVILES STILL TALKING]

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I guess they are? I mean, who knows. [Nothing has been done](#) and heck, with February here, the 4th is when hearings start. This is really going to test the Indians long-running streak of not having gone to arbitration.

Mike

Aviles

has said that all he knows is that his agent has said things are progressing. He's taking a very hands off, "not my job" stance on the matter and really, it isn't his job. The agent is the one negotiating for him, so really, unless he says, "yes give me less money!" then the Indians and his agent are the ones who have to strike the deal.

"As far as I know, [it's progressing]," Aviles said. "I stay out of it, in all honesty. My job is to play baseball; that's my agent's job, that's what they're supposed to do. As far as I know, everything is progressing and I don't see why it wouldn't be settled. But like I said, stay out of it and I just wait to hear when my agent calls me and tells me what we got and what's going on. I just let him do his job, because I don't let him tell me how to do my job. I leave it at that and this way, it's a little less stressful."

Aviles is asking for \$3.4 million with the Indians offering a million less. He made \$1.2 last year with Boston, and two million is quite a raise for a utility player. But I'm sure if Aviles and the Indians go to arbitration, it will be closer to the Indians number than it will be to Aviles'.

So with a few days before hearings start, will Aviles become a trivia answer or get a half million less than he was asking for? Eh, who knows. Who cares? Not many.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

THE TRUCK! BOSS THE TRUCK!

That wasn't very good, but that's how I feel every year when I see these stories. [No not like Tattoo](#). But just someone trying to impersonate him with the word truck instead of plane. Herve!

Anyway, the trucks are off, as equipment makes he journey from cold Cleveland to gorgeous

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Goodyear. Next week, the clubhouse is officially open for business. And that means, in just a few short weeks, players. Real live players! Not that there aren't already some players down there working out, but P's & C's are coming soon and that's the fun part.

More interesting than all of this is the note that Terry Francona has changed his number several times, going from 47 (his Boston number) to 33 (changed when Swisher signed), to 17 (for who knows why?).

"It's been challenging getting guys' uniform numbers arranged, because we've had some guys change their minds," Amato said. "Francona might be the first manager in baseball history to have three uniform numbers before his first game."

I don't think I ever remember seeing a game where Francona doesn't wear a jacket though, so, big deal, right? Choo had 17 last year.

The trade for **Trevor Bauer** has really boosted the Indians prospect cred, with [MLB.com's Top 100 prospects being released](#)

a few days ago. Of course a big jump for

Francisco Lindor

helped, but the two help the Indians have a strong representation in the actual Top 20. Lindor checked in at 14th, the second best shortstop behind number one overall Jurickson Profar. Bauer is 17th, but you probably will not see him on this list past this year. Bauer and Lindor were in the same draft and of course, Bauer was a few spots ahead of Lindor, but now, Lindor comes in higher.

There's eight right-handed pitchers ahead of Bauer, and a few lefties, so that tells you just how packed the top 20 is with pitching prospects. The Indians Top 20 from MLB.com will be out in early February. Mayo has been releasing position ranks, and has a few notes on his blog about players who just missed his list. He's got **Jesus Aguilar** on [his first base list](#) , **Ronny**

Rodriguez

his

[econd base list](#)

, noting that Rodriguez will have to move to second if Lindor is in town.

on

[s](#)

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Well, **Omar Vizquel** wasn't retired for very long before he decided to get back into the game of baseball. He's signed on [to be the Angels roving infield instructor](#), a job that seems to be well suited for him coming into the coaching ranks. Omar wants to manage and this is a great starting point for him, getting to teach what he does best. I'm a little sad the Indians couldn't get him in that role, but I'm sure the West Coast is something preferable to him.

Since the last rundown, there were a few things that I did not get the chance to include, however I have made my opinion known, in more of a humorous way actually. Ben Francisco and Ryan Raburn were signed to minor league deals, and for more of that, you can check [this](#) and [this](#)

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The Indians [also invited some prospects](#) to camp, including Jesus Aguilar and catcher Roberto Perez. They're also bringing along pitchers Gio Soto, Preston Guilmet (we-we!) and Matt Langwell.

Time to catch you up on some of the small moves made by other teams that involve some names on last year's team. Of course it's always fun seeing who likes the Indians used stuff. Garage sale!

Resident Italian and other cousin, **Vinny Rottino** [is headed to Japan](#). He's actually getting quite a sweet deal for one year. Good for him. Coming back from Japan is

Mitch Talbot

, [who's latched on with Miami](#)

along with the guy that was pretty much set up to be 2012's Mitch Talbot for the Indians, **Kevin Slowey**

. How crazy is that? Actually, it's the Marlins, it isn't that crazy.

Thomas Neal [has found his way over](#) to the Yankees after the Indians basically cut ties with him. He joins **Russ Canzler** with the Bombers, giving the Yanks two of the Tribe's unwanted dudes.

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Speaking of unwanted dudes, turns out the Arizona Diamondbacks didn't really have much of a use for **Lars Anderson**, seeing as they [designated him for assignment](#) last week. We'll see where he ends up or if the D'Backs would like to get him through waivers for their minor league system.

Lots of changes for one of the Indians minor league affiliates. With a new owner, the Akron Aeros are going to be spending the big bucks for changes to their park, and the first step in that was the announcement of the [biggest Class Double-AA scoreboard for Canal Park](#). It will also be in the top five in terms of all of the minor leagues. The video board is 26 feet high and 68 feet wide. It's a legit LED video board, which will be a big upgrade and probably let the Aeros do a little more in the terms of replays and in-game video.

This is great news for the fans of the Aeros, as the park is going to really start looking like a legit place to watch a ball game. Not that it wasn't, but some more modern upgrades will be a nice fresh site in Downtown Akron. I can imagine that this is just one of the first big things the Aeros will be announcing this year.

Among other bits of news, the Indians [have re-upped with WTAM 1100](#) as their radio station with a new five-year deal with Clear Channel. Rosenhaus was also inked to a new deal and of course Hammy is sticking around. Same as usual.

Finally, these offseason rundowns are just about done, soon will be the time to talk about spring training, the actual 2013 season and some fun stuff that doesn't include telling you Vinny Rottino went to Japan and Mitch Talbot signed with the Marlins.

To get your mind thinking though, Jordan Bastian has some interesting posts up on his blog about projecting the numbers and the expectations for the Indians in 2013. I find [his offensive post interesting](#) as he posts numbers for the players and some total offensive numbers. Remarkably the strikeout number he has is not last in the American League (11th actually!) compares to last year. Yes the number goes up, but not drastically. Remember while someone like Reynolds strikes out a lot, Choo has quite a bit himself.

His starting numbers are even more intriguing as he not only covers the pitchers, but [gets to](#)

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[the conclusion that the Indians are an 82-85 win team](#)

. That to me is right around where I thought the Indians would end up. However, despite winning the Tigers winning the Central with just 88 victories, not sure 85 can sniff the division, but it would indicate the Indians are in the mix, which is just exciting in itself

But this is the exciting part of the year for a baseball fan. The build up starts soon, hope you are ready.