

Spring Training Rundown: The Long Way to the First Day

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Tuesday, February 26 2013 11:44 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, February 27 2013 8:38 AM



It just hit me so quickly. All this spring training madness. I don't think it slowed down once for me to breath it all in.

Maybe it took a crash down to the reality for our spring edition of the Cleveland Indians 2013 squad for me to stop and breathe, but I finally have stopped and started to breathe this team in.

That sounds weird. Phrasing. Okay look at it this way.

Spring began, Bourn signed, there was some hustle and bustle, then games started and the Indians came out on fire. Heck, they still may be on fire for all we know.

So it really has been tough to stop and take a look at this team. I went on a rant the other day about the whole "settling" thing that some free agents had to do, and that was fun, but that's a matter that just irked me to the point where I had to say something and not something

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necessarily pertinent to what's going on right now.

The truth of the matter is. I don't really know what's going on right now. It is still February. The only reason that spring games have even started right now is because of the World Baseball Classic. In a way, we are ahead of the game and there's still one long month left before we can actually get excited about results.

So that's where I am. At the exciting point of knowing this team may really entertain us this year but also coming to the realization that while we get to see them in action and watch results we think are possible come to fruition (at least in an exhibition sense), there's some waiting that we have to do.

Oh well, I guess the few stories and notes that relate to the actual first few days the Indians will be playing real games will have to do for now.

[OPENING MASTY]

For the second year in a row, **Justin Masterson** will be on the bump [for the Indians for their first game](#). It didn't take long for Terry Francona to cut to the chase It's not even March and he let the cat out of the bag, Masterson is the guy.

"I didn't feel like holding it in. I was excited to tell him," Francona said. "I think he's the leader of our staff. We want him to be the leader of the staff, and I think he's taken that responsibility."

There must have been a little extra special to that for Francona considering he had the opportunity to manage Masterson in Boston and is now reunited with him in Cleveland. Masterson said he is happy for the opportunity two years in a row and he's ready to set the tone.

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Really though, it was perhaps the worst kept secret that the Indians were going to go with Masterson to start things off. I mean, really? Would you go with anyone else? When Ubaldo Jimenez is your second best lock of a pitcher, that tells you a lot.

I've said it before and I'll say it one more time. I don't think Justin Masterson is an ace. I think he's a really good pitcher and if he had the opportunity to be behind one other big guy, he'd look a whole heck of a lot better than he does. He can be a top of the line starter on most teams, a one on a team like the Indians who lack that stud up front, but in reality, the fact that he has to be the guy is doing him a disservice.

[SIX MINUTE SPLIT]

Can you believe it? In case you didn't hear, [Opening Day is sold out](#) . Of course, that is never a surprising thing because it has been sold out 20 straight times before this season. Opening Day always sells out because that's when most of the Cleveland fans want to pretend they care.

What's surprising is that it sold out in six minutes. Of course there are still season ticket spots open and eventually if they don't get rid of those, those tickets will be available, but the Indians will surely pack the house.

Here's my ultimate question though.

You may have sold out Opening Day in six minutes, but how much will you sell for the second game? How about the game after that? I suppose it isn't fair considering it is the New York Yankees, but after last year, the attendance got pretty pitiful. Even for Red Sox games they were bad at one point in April.

The way things are going though, I have to imagine the Indians are at a much better pace for the rest of the games. Why wouldn't they be? If they could sell out Opening Day in six minutes, there must be a whole lot of enthusiasm swirling around, a lot more than I even thought. Bastian notes that the ticket sales for single games are up over 40 percent from last year. That's incredible and really really good to hear.

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I'll give the fan base credit. The Indians did their part and now the fans are coming through on their own end.

[FINALLY A SPRING BLEMISH]

Royals - 4 | Indians - 1

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

All good runs must come to an end. And the Indians spring run has ended after several games. Unofficially, the Indians won all six of their exhibition games thus far, until the 3-0 Royals came to Goodyear.

The Royals managed to quiet the Indians bats for one day, and score enough runs to get a win. We really don't care about the wins and losses in spring. Heck, the stats really don't matter in large part, but again, it's fun to talk about.

So with not a lot of offense to recap for once, let's see how long it takes to get through the box score.

Matt Albers started a bullpen day, and he ended up giving up the first run of the game in his inning. The offense was of no help to him, and of course Terry Francona made sure to mention that it is still very early for a lot of these pitchers. Which is also something to keep in mind when you look at the Indians numbers offensively.

This game also didn't feature Yan Gomes, Mike McDade, or 'Rakin' Ryan Raburn, so how could the Indians have expected to score many runs anyway?

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Hereeee's Carson: I'll be honest, never heard of **Matt Carson** before he signed with the Indians this offseason. He will not make the team, but he's got two home runs so far after his solo shot in the eighth inning against the Royals. The only offense on this day.

There's the K: As much as it is spring, this may be a little indicative of what you'll see from the Indians this year. They may have a few games like the few they've been having, then have a game like this where no one hits and they strike out eight times. Cedric Hunter accounted for two of those, Reynolds, Stubbs, and Swisher? Accounted for none of them.

Dan Wheeler: Hey guys, Dan Wheeler is playing for the Royals. He got the save. That is all.

Life of 'Pen: **Chris Perez** pitched and gave up one hit and struck out one. Bryan Shaw gave up a run off a hit and a walk and the other two runs were given up by Gio Soto, who continues to have a rough time out there. Scott Barnes went one scoreless but gave up a few hits and a walk.

Next Game:☐ The Indians take on the Mariners from Goodyear at the regular 3:05 start. Brett Myers starts, Corey Kluber, Cody Allen and Nick Hagadone to make appearances.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Michael Brantley was spiked in the arm by Josh Donaldson when Brant tried to leg out an extra base when he noticed no one covering the bag on his double in the third inning of the Tribe's win against Oakland. He [needed 10 stitches for the laceration on his left forearm](#) and will be out for about 10 days. That's quite a bit, but in the grand scheme of this extra long spring, it actually isn't much. If anything, it's good that something happened this early rather than late and luckily it is something that heels and won't run the risk of creeping up later on. He can still keep in shape and stick to some sort of routine.

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"I'm tough," Brantley said with a smile. "I've been stepped on once or twice. Who hasn't? But nothing to this magnitude. The cleat kind of got in there pretty good and left a nice little cut. They haven't really told me too much, just that they want to make sure I rest and make sure it heals."

So, 10 days for 10 stitches. Eh well. He'll be fine, things will work out, and this will be no big deal come April 2nd.

Speed was the focus of the latest [piece posted by Jordan Bastian](#) on MLB.com, which is what Brantley was utilizing on that play. The Indians have several guys that can turn what otherwise may be a routine ground out to the pitcher into an exciting and inning-opening play.

"I'm just as enthusiastic," Francona said, "or hopeful, that we'll go first-to-third, we'll push, we'll run some people into mistakes, as I am just about the number of stolen bases."

Francona recounted the Angels from a few years ago where he said that you would get headaches just entering the series thinking about the speed their aggressive hitters had. The Indians have a trio of outfielders that all have some good speed that can force you into mistakes and as we know, mistakes can start big innings for a lot of offenses.

Bastian also touched up on the factor that someone like Bourn may get others wanting to keep up and even quoted Jason Kipnis as saying that he wants to run a lot and try to keep pace with Bourn as much as possible. That could definitely be fun to watch.

And as they say, speed thrills.

Speaking of speed, because he is out of options, **Ezequiel Carrera** is probably in a more advantageous spot if he were to not have any options left. The Indians are in a position where they'll have to keep Carrera around and give him a roster spot, or risk losing him through the waiver process. They believe with almost all certainty [that they'd lose him](#), at least according to Terry Francona. So that makes it crucial to find out what they have in him

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this spring.

"It's an important answer we have to find out this spring," Francona said. "He's potentially a very good fit on our ballclub, and we need to find out. If not, we'll lose him."

I'm not sure on that part about losing him as I think you can find guys like Carrera anywhere. But he could very well have something more that is just ready to be shown and it would stink to have him show it elsewhere. And it only takes one other team with an open spot to think they see it in him. Carrera definitely has the 40-man and option thing working for him though. However, Ryan Raburn's performance this far is not helping his cause. However the injury to Brantley should give him the opportunity to get more of a look now.

Carlos Santana will probably end up working with Trevor Bauer a lot in the years to come, especially if he sticks behind the plate as it appears the Indians are intent on doing with him. Santana is ready for the uniqueness that the young pitcher brings and knows very well [that every pitcher has his own routine](#)

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Joe Smith threw off a mound on Monday and will throw live batting practice on Thursday. He's nearing a potential Cactus League debut soon.

Finally, how can we not mention two things... 1. [Manny Ramirez is headed to play](#) for a team in Taiwan . Um what the heck. And 2. Johnny Damon [wants the Yankees to call him](#)

. It reminds me, that you all have to take a good [long look at this picture](#)

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If I was a Yankee fan, I'd be calling him... "Pinstriped Pronky"

No, you guys can't call him that. I'm trademarking it. Stay back Yankee fans. Back.

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Nino is in full baseball mode here and on [The Tribe Daily](#), his own Indians blog. Don't miss all the fun, photoshopped Indians players, and LOLTribe ridiculousness.

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