

Spring Training Rundown: McAllister In Rotation, Tribe Contemplate Bench

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Monday, March 11 2013 7:00 AM - Last Updated Monday, March 11 2013 6:33 AM



So the bands that are doing these songs that just happen to involve sports themes are geniuses.

The Script with their Hall of Fame song, don't tell me that won't get overused for Hall of Fame related things the next five years in every sport that has a Hall of Fame.

This new Muse song, "Madness" is the theme for this year's NCAA Tournament.

So it got me thinking. I need to just make up a song that strategically involves the World Baseball Classic.

It'll be brilliant.

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It's the... CLASSIC!

Because there's not one like it. It's the classic!

The best and the unforgettable. Its the classic!

Scoobadoodoodoot Badababow!

I'm going to make millions people...

[ROSTER TAKING SHAPE?]

We are only into our second full week of March, but that isn't stopping the Indians from shaping up what their roster is going to look like on Opening Day. We may have found out more than we thought we'd know at this point in spring after a few announcements Sunday afternoon.

The first big domino to fall is that the Indians have settled the fourth spot in their rotation and it will belong to **Zach McAllister**. No, not fifth, fourth. McAllister was considered a favorite to nab one of the last two spots up for grabs and he solidifies that before March even got a chance to progress.

Around these parts, it seemed like he was going to compete for the fifth spot, with a likely upper hand on that job, but as the early weeks of spring wore on, it was quite apparent that the Indians pretty much had him locked in, but it was more of a matter of where he would get locked into. Heck, Francona [makes it sound like Z-Mac is THE guy](#) .

"He'll be a leader here in the not-too-distant future," Francona said. "I know you have to put your time in and do things, but if guys like him are paving the way, we're going to be in good shape."

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So now that McAllister is the four, the next question becomes, who is the fifth starter?

Again, going back to my pre-camp look, I thought Carlos Carrasco would get a job if he was healthy and ready to go, however I thought it was just as likely that the Indians could DL him regardless so he can come in and be managed at the front end, innings wise, rather than the back end.

The one sticking point to Carrasco is that he's got himself a suspension that he still needs to serve, so that means the Indians have to figure that out if they're going to go with Car-Squared to start the season. It wouldn't be hard to manage the rotation as there is always flexibility with the fifth starter being able to be skipped, so that's not the issue.

But it's rather the people you carry. That is seemingly coming into play with this new idea that the Indians [may go with a three man bench](#) .

"It's something we need to think about," Francona said on Sunday. "It's definitely something we've talked about a number of times. A lot of times you start the season out, you're either in cold weather and you have days off. We're in domes and we don't have days off. So it's something to think about."

So much for any chance guys like Jason Giambi or Yan Gomes had, especially Giambi considering his lack of versatility. With a three man bench, all of your players need to be versatile, and if one (Marson) can only catch, then those other two need to be able to cover EVERY other spot on the infield.

Lemme squash this right here... If the Indians do go with 13 pitchers and a 3 man bench, it will be for a very short amount of time, probably no more than a week. So if that's the case, it won't be long with the Indians using just those three guys.

The thing is you need to have guys like Giambi on the bench from the outset, as I'm guessing

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there is no minor league time for a guy like him, unless it is something he agrees to and both sides know he's going up in a week.

Either way, this is an interesting and new aspect to the roster shakeup that is worth watching.

Good news for **David Huff** if the Indians carry an extra pitcher. He was ruled out of the rotation equation and will now focus on winning a bullpen spot. The obvious aside, David's [quote about it was really interesting](#)

"I was going to go in and talk to him eventually," Huff said. "Him and I are on the same page. He came in, he clarified and he kept me in the loop. He was honest, which we haven't had that. That's big, especially to us. It's awesome."

Haven't had honesty? Oooh boy, if that's not a pot-shot at Manny Acta, I don't know what is. And Huff was probably THEE guy in Acta's doghouse throughout that tenure.

And again, that's the type of attitude that has made Huff a bit of a problem too. So I'm not really shocked.

[DOLAN SPEAKS]

Paul Dolan took [some time to talk to Terry Pluto](#) , as he did last year, and boy was this an interview well worth the wait.

Since the huge offseason in which the Indians uncharacteristically spent a lot of money on big time free agents, we have all wondered the same thing.

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What the heck is going on here?

The Indians, actually taking accountability? I'll be damned. You can call, but the other end doesn't always pick up.

Dolan is picking up though and he had quite a few telling words to Pluto. Where should we start? Perhaps with what prompted this...

"Especially how it ended," said Indians CEO Paul Dolan. "It was miserable...It made it clear that we had to make changes."

Oh right, the horrific ending to that season. They're paying attention. So you can stop the "they don't care" line, they clearly care. Dolan said that the collapse "made it clear" that things were going the wrong way. And despite what you might have thought and what a lot of people would have said about the Dolans, they heard.

"We heard it, we felt it," said Dolan. "We knew we had to do something. The cycle was heading to the bottom and going to be at the bottom for some time. We couldn't wait another five years for the next wave of minor leaguers to come."

I'm not even going to begin to say how huge that statement is... "We couldn't wait." Look, I'm the last one to jump on the hate train, but I was getting a little grumpy at the end of last year myself and perhaps that was the straw that broke the camels back, a lot of really passionate fans were beginning to get disgruntled to the point of losing hope.

Would we have lost all hope if the Indians unloaded again? Perhaps. But Dolan says that trading everyone for prospects was not an option and that winning the World Series was. Of course Choo was traded, but for players that can very much help now and down the road. Throw in some cash and we're cooking with something more than some twigs.

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Oh yeah, that cash, was that it? Was that the reason we got some nice things?

"The television money wasn't the only reason we made these moves, but it helped," said Dolan.

The thing is, I believe him when he says it. I think if anything the television money ALLOWED them to make these moves. If they could, they probably would have let the management make these types of moves in the past. They've opened up in the past for a guy like Kerry Wood because they believed that was a key piece needed to get the job done.

I think the Dolan family is committed to winning and will do what they can in a smart businesses sense to do so. The windfall of money from the television deal let them follow up on that commitment in a big way.

"But at some point, you have to be engaged enough to take some chances," he said. "I hope I feel great about these (new) deals in a few years. If not, it will be painful. But we had to try."

Dolan admitted that he thought the Indians were done adding after Swisher, but noted that the lowering of Bourn's price very much made them a contender. He seems kind of nervous that the Indians handed out some long deals and you can't really blame him in that regard. The last time that happened, it failed miserably, twice.

Mr. Dolan went on to say that he didn't interview Terry Francona, but rather was sold on the hire based off what he knew from 2001 and Shapiro and Antonetti's relationship with him. Speaking of, those two gentlemen was not an option for the Dolan's and that they have a high confidence level in them.

Overall, Paul Dolan comes off very well in this interview with Pluto. It was something he needed to do and something we needed to hear. I think it reassures a lot of fans and perhaps helps open the eyes of others that the Dolan family cares very much about winning and that they are not just in the business of seeing a profit (considering they probably really haven't been profiting in a big way over the past few years), but having the best team.

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[WBC - INDIANS UPDATE]

Here is your quick WBC update for each Indians player.

Asdrubal Cabrera - In the three games for Venezuela, Cabrera went 1-for-8 with a double and two walks. The absolutely stacked Venezuela lineup is headed home early though thanks to some troublesome pitching, which means Cabrera is on his way back to Goodyear.

Carlos Santana - The loaded and undefeated Dominican Republic team was helped in large part by Carlos' lack of a bat. The Indians catcher went 3-for-8 with three runs scored, a homer and two RBI, but he walked five times in three games.

Mike Aviles - Quite the surge for the Indians utility man in the last two games to help Puerto Rico into the second round. Aviles went off with a 3-for-9 series line with a team high six RBI.

Vinnie Pestano - The Indians set-up man threw a scoreless frame with a strikeout against Mexico on Friday night in Team USA's loss. The Stars and Stripes are onto the second round though, meaning Pestano will continue.

Gio Soto - Quite the outing for the young Indians prospect for his native Puerto Rico on Saturday. Soto went three scoreless with no hits, two walks, and a pair of strikeouts.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Yan Gomes missed out on the WBC with his Brazil team, which has already been eliminated after Pool A completed play and both Japan and Cuba advanced and Brazil was 0-3. No regrets for Gomes though as he has been [quite impressive to his new squad](#) .

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Not just with the bat though.

"Very impressed," Francona said. "I think we've all been impressed with his ability to run a game, throw and swing the bat. We've all been pleased."

It sounds a lot like the Indians are focused on Gomes being a catcher more than anything. And let's face it. If he's going to be on this squad, it's because he will do some catching here and there, but in that he could very well end up the reason the Indians can feel comfortable DHing Carlos Santana a lot more.

"[My goal for now is to] keep doing what I'm doing now, getting to know a lot of the pitchers, seeing how they work, attack guys and what they like to do," Gomes said.

That whole thing with the bat though. That's certainly helping his cause though. He has quite the stick and if he comes in and can be that spark from multiple positions, he'll earn his spot.

Bryan did a great job on the blog the other day talking about **Justin Masterson**, and if you missed that post, you should go back and read it. Masterson talked about being the guy for the Indians this year. Francona says that he truly believes in Masterson and that he can lead the staff. Mastey is focused on the games he did well on and [will look to turn around the ones that went bad](#)

"It was usually the first couple innings would be decent, and then we would try to turn it on," Masterson said. "And those would be the points where a couple runs would score and then, after a couple runs scored, now we're trying harder, and it's just getting worse, and it's snowballing and you want to slap yourself in the face when you get done."

Masterson went on to talk about relaxing and how he feels like he is one of the leaders on staff, regardless of where he pitches. And he is. He NEEDS to be the tone setter, he really does. I

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don't think he is an ace and has a long way to go before he can gain that type of title and respect, but there is nothing that says he can't set the tone for the Indians and be a guy who can stop streaks if there is one going on or gives the Indians a consistent chance night-in and night-out.

Francona talked about baserunning last week. He, like any other manager, talked about [how he wants good strong baserunning](#), not necessarily focusing on how many steals the team has.

"However you produce runs, that's the idea," Francona said. "We want to push, and we want to be intelligent. Our job as coaches and managers is to put guys in positions where they can use their tools. If they can run, we will let them run."

Tito mentioned that speed can put pressure on a team and force them to make defensive plays. Hopefully the Indians can play that sort of game and get teams to give them runs. That's playing smart baseball and usually squeezing a few more wins out of a season.

Speaking of pressure and Tito, he talked to **Nick Swisher** about "living up to" his contract. Francona's message was simple.

"That's the one thing I reminded him the day he signed," Francona said. "I just said, 'Be yourself. You don't have to do more. That's why we signed you: we like what you do.'"

Two things: This isn't New York and Swisher isn't Pujols making Pujols money. But on a smaller scale, this is kind of a big deal and fans are going to expect him to produce. If he gets off to a slow start, he may hear it. It would be asinine, but it happens and Cleveland can get a little antsy and vocal about it. Swisher doesn't seem like that type of person to let that type of pressure get to him, but you just can never assume.

The Indians [added Monday's minor league 'B' game](#) against the Mariners to make up for [Friday's rain-shortened contest](#) against the Kansas City Royals. And it was really rain-shortened, having just played three

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innings with the Royals ahead 3-2. Corey Kluber went two innings and then simulated a few indoors.

The Indians fell to the Rangers 7-6 on Sunday, with Brett Myers surrendering five runs (four earned) through less than four complete innings. Myers walked two and was roughed up for seven hits, but also struck out five hitters in the process. Carlos Carrasco pitched four innings and gave up two runs off four hits and two walks. Rich Hill had a scoreless frame.

"He got a little tired, and he left some pitches up," Indians manager Terry Francona said of Myers. "Before that, I thought tempo, command of the strike zone, throwing his breaking ball for strikes -- I thought it was really a positive day."

Myers noted that he hadn't thrown 70 pitches in quite some time. But this is what spring is about, building your pitch count up and getting your feet under you. He'll get there and he'll be fine, no reason to worry.

Providing runs were Mike McDade and Drew Stubbs, but Luis Hernandez was 2-for-3 with three RBI. Zeke Carrera stole his seventh and eighth bases of the spring and was 1-for-3 with a run scored and a walk. Ryan Raburn was 0-for-1 with two walks and a run scored.

The [game marked the return](#) for **Michael Brantley** after missing a small chunk of time to recover from a laceration to his arm. Brantley was DHing and went 0-for-2 and will see time in left field on Monday.

Some Other Injury Notes:

- Mark Reynolds has been missing some time because of back stiffness. He's already back to hitting off a tee though and could be back Wednesday. Doesn't sound the least bit serious.
- Chris Perez is playing catch, which puts him on track to pitch in the final week of spring training. He still has a long way to go though.
- We'll hear word on Frank Herrmann's status for this season by Wednesday as he'll be in

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New York on Tuesday to get a follow-up opinion. If he has Tommy John, it will be done Wednesday.

The Indians have the 'B' game slated as well as as a 4:05 tilt against the Los Angeles Angels. Scott Kazmir and Daisuke Matsuzaka, both looking for that final rotation spot will get work. Joe Smith pitches as well.

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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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