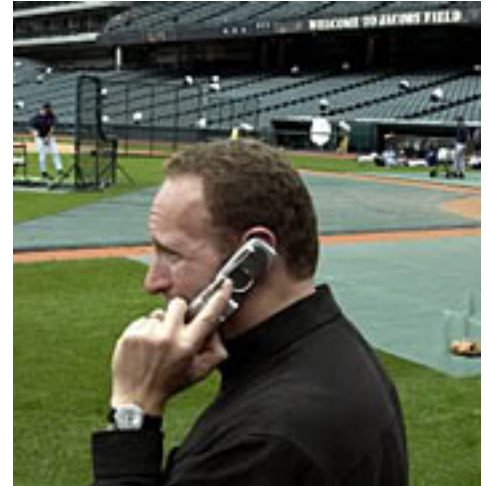


Shapiro Radio Interview Recap

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, December 13 2006 7:00 PM -

Indians General Manager Mark Shapiro appeared in studio on



Indians General Manager Mark Shapiro appeared in studio on “The Mike Trivisonno Show” Wednesday afternoon on the Indians flagship station WTAM 1100. For just under an hour and a half, Shapiro discussed several topics relating to the Indians 2006 season, the off-season and what lies ahead in 2007. While this interview most certainly can probably be downloaded at WTAM.com, here is a quick recap of everything Shapiro talked about on the show:**

On acquiring Manny Ramirez: While he didn’t state specifically what we had to give up for Manny in a trade, he did not shoot down the rumor that Trivisonno mentioned where we supposedly had to give up our top three prospects for him. In fact, Shapiro may have slipped some, as a few moments later mentioned that the three players in question are impact prospects for the Indians down the road, and could all possibly be in the mix at some point in Cleveland next year. (Note: while not mentioned, the three prospects are Adam Miller, Trevor Crowe, and Fausto Carmona).

On trades: In working with the other 29 GMs in baseball, Shapiro finds he works better with the GMs he has a better working relationship with and knows well. While the goal is to acquire players to help the Indians, he also hopes for win-win deals for both teams as he feels it helps build good rapport for future trades. If he flat out “stole” a player, it may make the GM he dealt with less likely to deal with him in the future. We have talked to numerous teams about possible trades for backend bully guys. The Indians have contacted the Pirates about Mike Gonzalez, but their requests were unreasonable. Trivisonno mentioned the rumor was Westbrook for Gonzalez, of which Shapiro did not shoot down and hinted that it would have taken more than just Westbrook. He was also asked about Lidge, and he said they talked to the Astros and explored deals for him and other relievers in Houston. Again, Shapiro felt the demands were unreasonable as we would be creating two holes to fix one. Shapiro also mentioned the Indians came very close to a deal for Gary Sheffield. Shapiro stated that “the rumors on who is

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available are usually correct, but the price to pay for the player usually is not correct."

On platoons: Shapiro firmly stated that David Dellucci and Jason Michaels will be a platoon in LF (Dellucci starts vs. right-handers and Michaels starts vs. left-handers). Those two combined should put up numbers comparable to the good outfielders in the game. Also, Blake will be an everyday player, but will bounce around between RF and 1B depending on the matchup. Choo and Garko are more of an offensive platoon, with Choo starting against right-handers and Garko possibly against left-handers. Garko isn't a sure-thing against lefties as the Indians plan on playing Victor at 1B a lot against left-handed pitching (Blake in RF in place of Choo against lefties). Choo has proven to be a very good hitter against right-handed pitching, as he never has had an OPS under .850 against right-handers.

On Jhonny Peralta: Peralta's problems last year were not physical at all. With Peralta, the problems are all mental as he lacked focus and toughness in 2006. Currently, he is on a program this off-season that the Indians are constantly checking in on, and he has followed it (no word exactly what the program is or what it involves). Because of the importance of the position Peralta plays on defense and the impact he can have with his bat, Shapiro believes Peralta can have a dramatic effect on the team defensively and offensively in 2007. This is why Shapiro believes Peralta is the most important player to the Indians success in 2007. If Peralta bounces back to a level close to 2005 offensively and defensively, the Indians should be in a good spot in 2007.

On Eric Gagne: Shapiro mentioned they were interested, and they did the research on his medical situation. But, his comments and tone sounded as if the Indians were not as interested as the fans were led to believe from the Boston Globe reports last week. Shapiro's comments echoed those of Assistant GM Chris Antonetti's comments last week on Kevin Keane's show when he mentioned that the medical didn't exactly check out with them to pursue the risk any further.

On the infield defense: Shapiro is very high on the improvements to the infield defense with Andy Marte at 3B full-time, the newly acquired Josh Barfield at 2B, and Casey Blake now at 1B. Shapiro also mentioned that prior to bringing up Marte last year, the Indians defense at 3B and 1B was the worst in the American League. Once Marte arrived, he was one of the best defensively at 3B. Also, he believes that Blake is an improvement defensively at 1B, and he

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likely is the starter there everyday against right-handed pitching.

On young pitching: As each free agent season comes and goes, Shapiro is convinced more and more that we have to hold onto top level starting pitching prospects and need to continue to draft and develop young pitching every year. Shapiro even went as far as to say that he will not trade any top level pitching prospects except on very rare occasion. Shapiro knows and understands that all these upper-level pitching prospects will not pan out, but feels the risk is better in that one or two of a group will develop into what they are projected to be. With the premium that is placed on starting pitching, it is important to see these players through here first.

On the depth in the starting rotation: Shapiro feels we have a lot of depth in the rotation, and listed the #6-#8 starters as Fausto Carmona, Brian Slocum, and Adam Miller. Shapiro specifically singled out Miller, and said he has the most upside of the three or any pitcher in the system for that matter. Not only does Miller throw 96 MPH+, but Miller made huge strides with his changeup and delivery last year, and his slider is his out pitch. Shapiro feels Miller's slider is among the best sliders he has ever seen in the minors, and he believes we will see Miller at some point this season. Shapiro also mentioned minor league pitcher JD Martin, another starting pitcher on the 40-man roster, will start the year at Akron.

On Victor Martinez: Shapiro feels that the Victor we saw the last half of 2006 is the one from 2005, and is acceptable defensively. Victor made significant improvements in all aspects of his defense, although his throwing showed only minimal improvement. In regard to having trouble throwing out runners, Shapiro still believes the blame is shared with Victor and the pitchers. The pitchers have to do a better job of holding runners, and it is something they have tried to hammer home to their pitching staff.

On "The Plan": One thing Shapiro never anticipated when he undertook "The Plan" in mid-2002 was when we were ready to contend again how good the Central Division would be and the American League as a whole. One of the main strengths when they proposed "The Plan" to ownership back in 2002 was the division we were in, and that the goal was to put together a perennial 88-90 win team. With what has happened the last two years, Shapiro has had to make adjustments to that philosophy.

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On Bob Wickman: Shapiro was asked point blank by Trivisonno if Bob Wickman screwed the Indians. Shapiro said no, and that he feels Wickman was truthful about his intentions to retire but changed his mind after he went to Atlanta. Also, that he felt they needed to see if Carmona could do the job at closer, and we would not have been able to find that out with Wickman still here. Shapiro feels the loss of Wickman cost us about 5-6 games in the win column.

On the health of our starters: Shapiro mentioned that in the last two seasons, we have only missed 7 starts by our starting five-man rotation. A lot of this is due to the medical staff and head athletic trainer Lonnie Soloff, as well as the handling of the pitchers by Carl Willis and Eric Wedge.

Questions from callers: Shapiro also took some phone calls. When asked by a caller why we don't bunt more, Shapiro jokingly offered to send the caller a copy of Earl Weaver's book, but basically said that the team will bunt when it makes sense, and in the past they have done just that. Another caller asked him about his father Ron Shapiro and if it presents a conflict of interest when talking contract with players. Shapiro mentioned that he doesn't discuss deals with his father, and that others in the front office work the deals with his father or Shapiro works with other people associated with his father. He did mention that his father is Jake Westbrook's agent. The caller also asked why his father doesn't have better clients, and Shapiro responded by saying Joe Mauer is a client, and that he'd happily move Victor to 1B if he could put Mauer at catcher.

(**- Everything except Trivisonno's senseless talk of making CC Sabathia a closer. Good Lord.)