

Minor Happenings: Controversy Brewing With Goleski

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, December 20 2006 7:00 PM -

The best Tribe minor league column in existence is back, and recaps the recent controversy in the Rule 5 Draft that saw the Indians lose upper tier prospect Ryan Goleski. Tony also reports on some coaching changes down on the farm, and delivers stats for all the Indians top prospects from the various fall and winter leagues they played in. Lastly, also included are links to Tony's Top 35 Indian Prospect write-ups ... a must read for any diehard Tribe fans.



"Minor Happenings" covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system. Information in this report is collected from the various news outlets that cover each team, some national news, and in some cases from private sources connected to the Indians organization.

Indians Lose Two in Rule 5 Draft

In what was supposed to be a quiet draft due to the perceived lack of talent available because of the new roster rules, the 2006 Rule 5 Draft actually ended up as one of the most active drafts in a long time. In all, 19 players were chosen in the major league phase, and Indians outfielder Ryan Goleski actually ended up being the 1st player taken. Tampa Bay owned the top pick, but Oakland traded up and made a cash deal of \$100,000 with Tampa Bay to get the drafting rights to Goleski. The Indians also lost right-handed reliever Jim Ed Warden to the Philadelphia Phillies.

Goleski hit .306 with 27 HRs and 106 RBIs in 125 combined games at Kinston and Akron, and Warden was 5-2 with 11 saves, a 2.90 ERA and .172 BAA in 55 appearances at Akron last year.

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Rule 5 Draft 101

For those unfamiliar with the Rule 5 Draft, here is a brief explanation of how the Rule 5 Draft works:

Basically, any player not on a major league team's 40-man roster can be selected in the Rule 5 Draft if the player was 18 or younger when he first signed a pro contract and this is the fifth Rule 5 Draft since the player signed, or if the player was 19 or older when he first signed a pro contract and this is the fourth Rule 5 Draft since the player signed. If selected, the drafting team pays \$50,000 to the team that lost the player, and the player is placed on the drafting team's major league roster and must remain on that team's 25-man active roster or on the disabled list for all of the subsequent season. If not, the team that drafted the player must return the player to his original team and gets \$25,000 of the \$50,000 back.

No Protection For Goleski

The Indians left Goleski unprotected, which was a big surprise in this corner and to a lot of fans. Indians Scouting Director John Mirabelli recently commented that a roster spot on the 40-man roster came down to Ben Francisco and Ryan Goleski, and they chose Francisco because they believe he can help the club sooner and because he is more versatile.

The fact that Mirabelli commented about the roster spot coming down to Francisco and Goleski speaks volumes to how the Indians slot positions on the 40-man roster. The Indians already had eight outfielders listed on the 40-man roster, and adding a ninth outfielder (Goleski) would have left very little wiggle-room to fill out other positions. While people are correct in that Goleski has more worth than infielder Mike Rouse and reliever Brian Sikorski, those players are slotted for those spots on the 40-man roster, so when/if the Indians drop either one of Rouse or Sikorski, they will replace them with a like player (infielder or reliever). When looking at who the Indians kept on the 40-man, you have to look at the other eight outfielders, and there is no one

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that Goleski could have trumped other than the aforementioned Francisco or Top 10 rated prospect Brad Snyder.

Still, given that rationale, I still would have protected him and dumped Sikorski and dealt with the roster issues later.

Goleski Gone, But Controversy Remains

While a lot of fans continue to question the decision to not roster Goleski, the news that broke late last week could end up a disaster for the Indians. Apparently, Goleski had surgery on November 9th to remove bone chips from his wrist. The injury was the result of him being hit by a pitch in the Eastern League playoffs back in early September, of which he was originally just shutdown and sent home. But, a few weeks after the season, Goleski starting working out and pain in his wrist flared up to the point where he required the surgery.

The reason this could end up a disaster for the Indians is because there was no injury report filed by the Indians after the surgery was completed. Prior to the Rule 5 Draft, all clubs are required to provide injury reports on players that have had or will have surgery in the off-season. Goleski was not on the injury list, and there is currently an investigation underway looking into whether the Indians knowingly did not put Goleski on the injury list.

Sources close to the team also have told TheClevelandFan.com that it is not even certain the Indians even knew of the injury, which is amazing since the Indians medical staff completed the surgery. It is unlikely the Indians tried to cover up the injury since reporting the injury would have only helped the Indians retain Goleski, so at this point it looks like there might have been a clerical error or oversight by the Indians in putting Goleski on the injury report. Given that some in the organization may not have even known of the injury and surgery, this seems plausible.

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It is not known at this time what repercussions (if any) the Indians could face. Worst case, the Indians could just lose the rights to Goleski, thereby giving Oakland full player control to send him to the minors if they choose. It is more likely a trade could be completed, or Oakland could return Goleski if the Indians agree to pay \$150,000 for the \$100,000 Oakland paid to Tampa Bay to select Goleski and for the \$50,000 Oakland used to select a player for Tampa Bay later in the draft. Right now, Goleski is not expected to be full strength when spring training opens for Oakland, and with Oakland required to keep Goleski on the 25-man roster all year this situation should be resolved soon.

Oh, the Indians Also Lose Jim Ed

The Indians also lost right-handed relief pitcher Jim Ed Warden in the Rule 5 Draft. Warden is sort of a project still, but the Philadelphia Phillies still selected him to see if his unique sidearm delivery and towering frame (6'7") could fit into their bullpen. The Indians liked Warden's potential, so much so, that Indians Scouting Director John Mirabelli commented that Warden was truly 40A on the roster in that he was the top guy on their list left off. It came down to JD Martin or Warden, and they choose to go with Martin for the final roster spot on the 40-man roster because of his ability as a starting pitcher. Even still, Mirabelli commented that they expect Warden will be returned.

Diaz Promoted

Lino Diaz, the brother of former Indians catcher Einar Diaz, was promoted and named the Director of Latin Operations last month. Diaz fills the spot left vacated when Ross Atkins was promoted and took over John Farrell's responsibilities as the Indians Director of Player Development. As the Director of Latin American Operations, Diaz will oversee all operations of the organization's operations in Latin America including amateur scouting, player development, and overseeing the organization's academies in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela.

This will be Diaz's 6th season in the organization. Before the promotion, Diaz was an Assistant Director of Player Development and Latin American Operations, and he worked

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closely with Ross Atkins in assisting him with all aspects of the Indians Latin American operations. Diaz, 35, also assisted foreign players with their transition from life in the Latin American countries to the American culture.

Pitching Coach Swap

While Buffalo manager Torey Lovullo and Akron manager Tim Bogar will each return to their respective clubs for a second season, there were some changes to their coaching staffs for 2007. Akron and Buffalo flip-flopped pitching coaches, with Buffalo's Greg Hibbard now serving as the pitching coach at Akron, and Akron's Scott Radinsky now serving as the pitching coach at Buffalo next year.

The swapping of pitching coaches is not really performance based, but instead mostly related to the prospects that will be in Akron and Buffalo next year. Hibbard is a former left-handed major leaguer known for working well with young left-handed prospects, so it was no surprise he was moved down to Akron where the Indians top two left-handed prospects Chuck Lofgren and Scott Lewis will anchor the Aeros rotation. Also, Radinsky worked closely with Indians top prospect Adam Miller at Akron last year, and the results were outstanding. So, it is no surprise that with Miller moving up to Buffalo next year, the Indians moved Radinsky up to continue his work with Miller.

More Coaching Changes

Lee May Jr., who managed at Lake County last year, was promoted to Akron and will serve as the hitting coach. Also, Dave Meyers joined the Indians organization after 18 years in the Seattle Mariners organization, and will be the Buffalo hitting coach next year. At this time, the status of former hitting coaches Felix Fermin (Akron) and Bruce Fields (Buffalo) remain unknown, nor who will replace May Jr. as the manager at Lake County.

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Hawaii and Arizona Winter Leagues Wrap-up

Both the Hawaii Winter League and the Arizona Fall League wrapped up a few weeks ago. The Indians only sent two players to the Hawaii Winter League. Rodney Choy Foo (2B) finished hitting .286/.383/.487/.870 with 4 HRs, 18 RBIs, and 5 stolen bases in 118 at bats, and Scott Roehl (RP) finished with a record of 1-1 with a 5.24 ERA in 16 appearances out of the bullpen.

At Arizona, several Indians prospects were present. Here is how they finished:

Joe Inglett (2B): .417/.491/.438/.929 with 0 HRs and 6 RBIs (48 ABs)

Trevor Crowe (OF): .329/.449/.405/.854 with 0 HRs and 14 RBIs (79 ABs)

Javi Herrera (C): .296/.500/.333/.833 with 0 HRs and 3 RBIs (27 ABs)

Ryan Edell (SP): 0-1, 3.78 ERA, 16.2 IP, 9 Ks, 1.38 WHIP

Reid Santos (RP): 0-1, 1 SV, 2.53 ERA, 10.2 IP, 7 Ks, 1.41 WHIP

Kyle Collins (RP): 1-1, 1 SV, 7.84 ERA, 10.1 IP, 8 Ks, 2.03 WHIP

Tony Sipp (RP): 0-0, 1 SV, 4.35 ERA, 10.1 IP, 16 Ks, 1.26 WHIP

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Jake Dittler (SP): 0-1, 11.25 ERA, 4 IP, 4 Ks, 2.25 WHIP

Latin Winter Leagues About Wrapped-up

While play in Arizona and Hawaii has wrapped up many weeks ago, play in the Venezuela, Dominican and Mexican Winter Leagues wraps up this week. With only a handful of games remaining, here is how the noteworthy Indians prospects in all those leagues are doing:

Dominican Winter League (through 12/20):

Ryan Garko (1B): .244 avg, 3 HRs and 6 RBIs in 86 at bats

Wyatt Toregas (C): .232 avg, 1 HR and 13 RBIs in 112 at bats

Jose Constanza (OF): .240 avg, 0 HRs and 3 RBIs in 50 at bats

Fausto Carmona (SP): 1-1, 3.34 ERA, 35 IP, 41 hits, 8 BBs, 40 Ks

Jeremy Guthrie (SP): 0-1, 2.63 ERA, 27.1 IP, 19 hits, 10 BBs, 16 Ks

Rafael Perez (SP): 3-0, 1.41 ERA, 32 IP, 20 hits, 6 BBs, 24 Ks

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Argenis Reyes (IF): .321 avg, 0 HR, and 8 RBIs in 137 at bats

Venezuelan Winter League (through 12/20):

Albert Vargas (SP): 0-3, 10.57 ERA, 15.1 IP, 26 hits, 6 BBs, 10 Ks

Asdrubal Cabrera (SS): .245 avg, 0 HRs and 4 RBIs in 94 at bats

Ivan Ochoa (SS): .250 avg, 0 HRs and 6 RBIs in 68 at bats

Eddie Mujica (RP): 1-2, 6.46 ERA, 15.1 IP, 21 hits, 5 BBs, 15 Ks

Franklin Gutierrez (CF): .270 avg, 1 HR and 11 RBIs in 111 at bats

Jeff Harris (SP): 4-2, 2.08 ERA, 56.1 IP, 39 hits, 8 BBs, 25 Ks

Mexican Pacific League (through 12/19):

Ben Francisco (OF): .284/.367/.467/.835, 9 HRs and 34 RBIs in 229 at bats

Indians Top 35 Prospects

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If you missed the Top 35 Prospect articles posted on this site a few weeks back, go here to check them out:

Prospects 26-35: http://www.swerbsblurbs.com/article_detail.php?id=1055

Prospects 11-25: http://www.swerbsblurbs.com/article_detail.php?id=1058

Prospects 6-10: http://www.swerbsblurbs.com/article_detail.php?id=1063

Prospects 1-5: http://www.swerbsblurbs.com/article_detail.php?id=1067

Parting Shots

The Indians signed pitcher Jeff Harris (formerly with the Mariners) to a minor league deal with an invite to spring training. The Indians may have been intrigued by his performance to date in the Venezuelan Winter League (numbers listed above) to take a flier on him as pitching depth in Buffalo/Cleveland.....Indians minor league middle-infield prospect Eider Torres signed with the Baltimore Orioles as a six-year minor league free agent....Former Indians prospect Kevin Kouzmanoff was named as the Minor League Offensive Player of the Year by MiLB.com.

And Last...Happy Holidays!

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From all of us here at TheClevelandFan.com, enjoy a safe and happy holiday season. Thanks for reading, and some big things are in store for 2007 that will make our Indians coverage with the major league and minor league team even better. Stay tuned.