

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Monday, March 17 2008 7:00 PM -

Tony checks back in this morning with his latest installment of his Winter Haven Notebook, and has all kinds of juicy info in today's piece. He starts out with a downer, talking about one of the Indians' top prospects' recent decisions to have surgery that will put him out till July. But then comes back with some great news on the Tribe's pursuit of Dominican phenom Edward Salcedo, and also a nice update on young slugger Nick Weglarz.



McBride Likely Out Until July

In two years, catcher Matt McBride has established himself as one of the top catching prospects not only with the Indians, but in all of baseball. Last year, *Baseball America* tabbed McBride as the fifth best catching prospect in the minors, and he had been an All Star at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley in 2006 and at Single-A Lake County last year.

It appeared that his career was blossoming quickly.

Unfortunately, a nagging shoulder injury has slowed him down some since he was drafted by the Indians in the second round of the 2006 Draft out of Lehigh University. While he admits the shoulder had only bothered him when he threw, he would never admit his shoulder issue was a big reason that he struggled behind the plate with controlling the running game last season.

Throughout last season he worked a lot on the side with his throwing by becoming more fundamentally sound with his feet and being quicker with his release and not standing straight on his throws. But, while he showed signs of improvement, his real problem stemmed from that lingering shoulder injury since the Indians drafted him.

The shoulder issue had forced him to start his Indians career at Mahoning Valley in 2006 as a

designated hitter because he was still rehabbing from it, and this past fall he was limited in his throwing during the Instructional League because of his sore shoulder. He finally had enough, and ended up having shoulder surgery in November to correct the issue.

"It bothered me a little bit," said McBride after working out yesterday. "It was just a good move to get it done to put it behind me.

The shoulder is feeling really good, and now it is just about rehab and working with all the trainers down here."

The surgery will likely cost McBride at least half a year in development as he will begin the year in extended spring training to continue with the rehab on his shoulder, and then likely go on a rehab assignment sometime in June or July to ramp himself up into game shape where he plays a few games in the Gulf Coast League before being deemed game ready and being shipped off to advanced Single-A Kinston.

For now, McBride is still not practicing or even throwing yet, and is only rehabbing his shoulder and getting his range of motion and strength back so he can resume normal baseball activities.

The Indians have not set a specific timetable for him to get back on the field so he is not discouraged if there are any setbacks, but the general feeling is he will definitely get some time in at some point this season.

"I am limited," said McBride. "Just doing a lot of the rehab stuff, strengthening the shoulder, range of motion stuff. My range of motion is getting a lot better, but I am still working on it.

I am not throwing yet, but I'll probably be throwing some time after spring training.

They did not give any specific date, and they want to make sure my range of motion is close to a 100% before I start doing that."

Still, even though McBride was limited in the offseason with what he could do because of the shoulder injury, he came to camp this year noticeably bigger and stronger.

"We had a physical therapist back home that worked with me," said McBride. "He was really good.

I was definitely limited with what I could do, but I could still do some different things with the legs and some pulling exercises.

I am pretty much doing the same thing down here trying to improve my strength and getting my shoulder back to 100%."

Right now, McBride's main focus is getting his shoulder completely healthy, and then using what little time is left in the season to improve his game both offensively and defensively.

"My main priority is getting my shoulder back completely healthy," said McBride. "But, I feel there are a lot of different areas I can use work on like hitting the ball to all fields a little more, or with catching getting quicker with my hands and feet.

But yeah, I feel I have a lot of stuff I need to work on once I get healthy down here and get into the season."

Notebook

- Triple-A Buffalo defeated the Richmond Braves by a score of 11-1 Monday afternoon. Outfielder Trevor Crowe had a booming opposite field home run to right center and finished the day 1-for-2 with a HR, two RBI, two walks, and a stolen base.

First baseman Ryan Mulhern went 2-for-3 with a double and is now hitting .700 (7-for-10) with five doubles and four RBI this spring.

First baseman Michael Aubrey had three hits, and would have had a grand slam had a laser shot by him to right not been knocked down by a stiff breeze of about 20-25 MPH blowing straight in from right field.

Right-hander Eddie Mujica pitched two shutout innings and got the win, while left-hander Ryan Edell got the start and pitched well throwing three innings and allowing one hit while striking out two.

- Those that played in the Triple-A game yesterday: Wes Hodges (3B), Abner Abreu (3B), Josh Rodriguez (SS), Brandon Pinckney (SS), Brandon Chaves (2B), Ryan Mulhern (1B), Michael Aubrey (1B), Trevor Crowe (OF), Nathan Panther (OF), Jose Constanza (OF), Ryan Goleski (OF), Ryan Edell (LHP), Eddie Mujica (RHP), Rick Bauer (RHP), Matt Meyer (LHP), and Randy Newsom (RHP).

- While the Indians have denied rumors that they signed Edward Salcedo, I have been told by someone close to the situation that he is signed and that the Indians have not officially announced the signing most likely because they are waiting for several things to be completed (his physical, verification of his vital statistics, etc). According to the source, the \$2.9 million amount he signed for as reported in *EI Caribe* is correct.

- According to the same source, apparently the visa issues that have plagued top Dominican Republic prospect Kelvin Diaz have finally been cleared up. If true, fans of this internet legend should finally get a chance to see him sometime this year in Lake County, Mahoning Valley or the GCL.

- Outfielder Nick Weglarz finally arrived in camp late Sunday night. Weglarz had been playing for Team Canada in the Olympic qualifiers in Australia and Taiwan.

The Winter Haven Notebook: 3/17

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As one of the youngest players in the entire tournament, from what I have been told he led all players in home runs and slugging percentage, and hit near .500 for the tournament.

And, if I did not mention it already, he is huge now at 245 pounds and all muscle.

- Left-hander James Brettl and right-hander Cody Bunkelman were released yesterday. Others have possibly been released, and more cuts are coming, but these are the two names that are known at this time.

- I'll have a bunch of pictures to share in a later report, but for now here are three videos from Monday's game action of [Luis Perdomo](#) , [T.J. McFarland](#) , and [Sandy Mendez](#) (click on the hyperlinks to view their videos).

- Today, the Buffalo and Akron squads go on the road for the first time, while the Kinston and Lake County teams enjoy some home cooking in Winter Haven. I'll be watching the Kinston or Lake County game, as well as keeping tabs on the short-season league guys scrimmaging each other on the other fields. Also
, I'll likely be interviewing left-hander Dan Cevette in the afternoon as well as talking to several other people, so check back again tomorrow for more.