

Tomahawks Flying Into The Future

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
Friday, August 15 2008 7:00 PM -

As we admire the glory that is the last couple of days of Olympic Baseball that have included Matt LaPorta hitting a 3-run HR in a USA win against the Netherlands and Nick Weglarz (shown to the right) going 5 for 7 in his first two games for Canada with 2 HR in his 4 for 4 effort in the opener against Cuba, Paulie gets some Tomahawks flying for us on the front page, with an encouraging look towards the future for our readers.



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While I did [an update already](#) pertaining to the principal horses that figure to be ["Jockeying for Position"](#); as the season marches on, I thought that this update would provide more pertinent timeframes and splits as opposed to just examining numbers from strictly July or August.

What I mean by that is picking the specific day when these players started playing every day (or other relevant information) is much more relevant than just picking a random date like July 1 or the All-Star Break that is simply easier to find statistics for.

With that in mind, here are the numbers for the players attempting to work themselves into the 2009 mix with the date that the statistics start indicated:

Kelly Shoppach - Since June 7th (50 games)

.282 BA / .356 OBP / .576 SLG / .932 OPS with 11 HR and 32 RBI in 170 AB

The early June date is used as it marks the beginning of ShopVac behind the dish on an everyday basis and made the dynamite go boom.

Ryan Garko - Since June 1st (56 games)

.258 BA / .307 OBP / .344 SLG / .651 OPS with 4 HR and 36 RBI in 209 AB

OK, so here I'm picking kind of a random day as Garko has really played all season. June 1st was the beginning of Garko filling the #4 spot in the order, a stretch that lasted for about 20 games until he was dropped in the lineup. While random, it does put into perspective how Garko has fared against his "competition"; for the C/1B "battle"; for 2009 in a relatively comparable timeframe.

Asdrubal Cabrera - Since July 18th (23 games)

.289 BA / .386 OBP / .474 SLG / .860 OPS with 3 HR and 7 RBI in 76 AB

Obviously, the date indicates when he returned from Buffalo and was re-inserted into the lineup. Small sample size to be sure, but so is his first stint this year with the Tribe when he put up a .184 BA / .282 OBP / .247 SLG / .529 OPS line over 52 games.

Andy Marte - Since July 5th (28 games)

.221 BA / .270 OBP / .365 SLG / .635 OPS with 3 HR and 10 RBI in 104 AB

This 28 game stretch that has finally seen Marte get regular playing time has allowed his OPS raise from .373 on July 5th to where it currently sits...at .522. Certainly not enough AB and too small of a timeframe to properly evaluate Marte, but his attempts to kick down the door finally put ahead of him aren't making much of an impact.

The BLC Splits

Vs. RHP

.271 BA / .372 OBP / .458 SLG / .830 OPS with 3 HR and 24 RBI in 144 AB

Vs. LHP

.220 BA / .289 OBP / .341 SLG / .630 OPS with 1 HR and 5 RBI in 41 AB

Since Choo has played pretty regularly since returning from TJ surgery, the more relevant numbers to examine would be his numbers against LHP and RHP as Choo has long posted significantly better numbers versus RHP than he has against LHP, lending credence to the idea that he is a platoon OF or a 4th OF, capable of hitting RHP well. Despite seeing most of his action against said RHP, his 2008 numbers haven't done much to dispel the thinking in place when the season started.

Franklin Delano Gutierrez Splits

Vs. RHP

.226 BA / .262 OBP / .323 SLG / .585 OPS with 1 HR and 9 RBI in 195 AB

Vs. LHP

.217 BA / .273 OBP / .424 SLG / .697 OPS with 4 HR and 15 RBI in 92 AB

Like The BLC, Frank the Tank has often been cast as a player who finds success against one side of the mound...just the opposite of the LH Choo. In his minor league career, he struggled against RHP and hit LHP well, allowing some to cast him (again, like Choo) as little more than a complementary 4th OF despite his tremendous defensive skills. While the hope was that his 2007 was his break-out, the 2008 numbers indicate that his platoon splits may have been minimized...just not in a good way as his numbers are down across the board.

The Ben Francisco Treat - A Tale of Two Bens

From Call-Up to June 4th

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.346 BA / .385 OBP / .551 SLG / .936 OPS with 3 HR and 17 RBI in 107 AB

From June 5th to present

.247 BA / .320 OBP / .423 SLG / .743 OPS with 9 HR and 28 RBI in 215 AB

Since The Frisco Kid has essentially played every day since being recalled from Buffalo, it's better to look at his numbers from the time he joined the parent club in a blaze of glory to what he's done since. June 4th/5th is a rather arbitrary time to pick, in that the only point of reference is that June 4th represented his high-water mark for OPS on the season (.927). That being said, after his quick emergence, Francisco has settled into average to below average numbers in the 58 games since he crested in early June.

We're talking about a lot of small sample sizes with most of these players, but most of the numbers speak for themselves when it comes to who figures to play more prominent roles in 2009 and who may find themselves receiving their mail at an address outside of Cleveland, be it in Columbus (next year's AAA affiliate) or another MLB city.



Not a lot of people remember this, but former Tribe 3B and current Mahoning Valley Scrappers coach Travis Fryman broke into the big leagues as a SS in Detroit. Baseball Prospectus' David Laurila asked him about that transition in a recent Q & A he conducted with the manager of the Tribe's Rookie League affiliate.

It's not a premium article, so [here's the link](#) and Fryman's thoughts on the transition he made from SS to 3B as a member of the Tigers:

David Laurila: *What was your transition like for you going from shortstop to third base?*

Travis Fryman: *Well, mine took place in the big leagues. I never played a day at any position other than shortstop until my second day in the big leagues. That's when they asked me to play third, so I learned on the job. Again, I think you learn patience from your coaching staff, and looking back now, I made a lot of mistakes as a young player. But I was allowed to make them, and I was expected to learn*

from them. I don't ever remember a time when a coach expressed negative feelings toward me because of my mistakes; I just think they were very patient with me. But third base is a pretty difficult position to learn, and it's a position that's unique. There are things that everyone needs to do, and do well, to play third, but I don't think there's just one way to play third in order to do it successfully. You need to give people time to get a feel for the position.

David Laurila: *A lot of people probably don't realize that you played more games at shortstop than at third base your first four seasons in Detroit. Do you feel that you could have remained at the shortstop position?*

Travis Fryman: *You know, I could have. In my mind, when I think about the game, and positioning, and where you go, it's always from the perspective of a shortstop. When Sparky moved me the last time it was because I had intentionally put on a little bit of weight to get a little stronger and try to hit for more power. That affected my defense a little bit, and I had made more errors than you'd like to see a shortstop make in the first half of that particular year, which was 1993. He moved me after the All-Star break, but I could have leaned out a bit more and picked up the foot speed that I would have needed to be more than adequate at short.*

Fantastic insight from Fryman...and that's only answering a few simple questions from a writer.

Wait a minute - a coach in the Indians' organization with experience moving from SS to 3B at the big-league level, with little to no experience at the hot corner...having to learn on the fly?

Really?

Where does Fryman live in the offseason?

What about Jhonny?



Back to the Land of Small Sample Sizes, Anthony Reyes has put up a nice line in his first two quality starts for the Indians:

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2.19 ERA, 1.29 WHIP, 4 K, 3 BB in 12 1/3 IP

Two starts certainly doesn't guarantee anything more than a slap on the back and by no means should be taken as any sort of indication that Reyes definitely will be a part of the 2009 rotation...but it's a nice start.

Rey-Rey, at first glance, looks like a decent back-of-the-rotation option for next year if he's able to continue his current rate (though missing more bats would be nice) of success as a Tribesman. It would appear that in addition to sorting out the arms in the bullpen, the race for the middle-to-back of the rotation, where Reyes figures to be in the mix with a whole slew of LHP, should have no shortage of contenders with hopefully enough emerging for the Indians to go 7 or 8 starters deep next year.



Since now the virus that has infected the bullpen seems to have extended to The Scarecrow (3 H, 4 R, 3 ER in 0 IP) on Thursday, let's go back to a place in world where the sun is shining for Tribesman - the Beijing Olympics.

To end on a happy note, here's LaPorta rounding 3B after his bomb in China:

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Somebody get me to 2009 already...



Finally, I did a radio show with Tribe minor league guru Tony Lastoria on Thursday night, a podcast of which can be found [here](#) . We hit the high points and Tony had some nice insights on some youngsters, including his relaying that Weglarz's HR in China hit the top of some light pole and was estimated to travel some 470 feet.