

Minor Happenings: So Long J.D.

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Monday, December 08 2008 7:00 PM -

Man is it good to see Paulie and Tony creeping back on to the front page as Hot Stove season gets underway, and we all start to get fired up for the 2009 Indians season. In Tony's latest Minor Happenings, he runs down a slew of notable things happening with the Indians prospects and farm system. J.D. Martin is a Washington National, the top prospect rankings are all starting to come out, and the Indians signed Tomo Ohka to a minor league deal. T hits on all this and more in his latest.



Time for another quick rundown of all the happenings in the Indians minor league system this past week:

- Right-handed minor league free agent pitcher **J.D. Martin** has signed a minor league deal with the Washington Nationals. The signing ends his eight year career in Cleveland that started with so much promise when he was taken in the first round of the 2001 Draft, but was often sidetracked with injuries throughout his time with the Indians. In those eight seasons, Martin compiled a career record of 53-28 with a 3.50 ERA in 147 games (119 starts) and in 656 innings allowed 603 hits, 180 walks and had 565 strikeouts.

Martin was rostered after the 2006 season, but the writing was on the wall after he was removed from the 40-man roster last December. He re-signed and stayed on for one more season and had an excellent year in 2008 going a combined 12-3 with a 2.41 ERA in 35 games (9 starts) at Akron and Buffalo. With the depth in the Indians upper levels with starting pitching and particularly right-handed relievers, Martin moved on to an organization where he has a better chance of getting to the big leagues and he should get that opportunity in Washington. He joins first

Minor Happenings: So Long J.D.

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Monday, December 08 2008 7:00 PM -

baseman Matt Whitney who also signed with Washington about two weeks ago. I hate to see him go, but I wish J.D. well and lots of luck with his new team and look forward to him making his major league debut soon.

- Catcher **Chris Gimenez** appeared on my [weekly radio show "Smoke Signals"](#) [this past Wednesday](#)

. As usual, Gimenez was laid back and very upfront and honest and we talked for about 45 minutes covering everything from being rostered, his approach at the plate, his recent transition to catching, some serious injuries he has gone through in the past, and so on.

One of the more interesting things we talked about was his versatility. He projects as a super utility guy who can play anywhere on the corners in the infield and outfield as well as at catcher. But, he considers third base to be his best position and the one he is the most comfortable playing. In case you did not notice the Indians need a third baseman for 2009, so depending on what they do the rest of this offseason, Gimenez could be a serious option at the position sometime in 2009 and be a placeholder there until Wes Hodges is ready to take the position full-time by the end of the season or at the start of 2010. Of course, if Gimenez gets a chance to play third base and plays well there he could make it hard for the Indians to give the job to Hodges.

- This week, "Smoke Signals" will be back in its normal Thursday night timeslot from 9:30-10:30pm. The show may be extended by a half hour depending on what happens in the next week as there should be a flurry of activity in the Winter Meetings, some (hopefully) involving the Indians which could provide a bevy of topics for us to talk about. Also, with the Rule 5 Draft on Thursday morning/afternoon, we'll know who - if any - of the Indians minor leaguers were taken. If someone from the Indians is taken, there is a good chance that they will be on the show later that night to talk about it for a few minutes. Also, while not confirmed and really depending on what happens at the Winter Meetings with Indians activity, whether he is selected or not right-hander

Randy Newsom

will likely be a guest on the show this week.

- On Friday, the Indians signed right-hander **Tomo Ohka** to a minor league deal with a non-roster invite (NRI) to major league camp in spring training. Ohka, 32, owns a career Major League record of 50-63 with a 4.14 ERA in 184 games

Minor Happenings: So Long J.D.

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Monday, December 08 2008 7:00 PM -

(172 starts) over nine big league seasons from 1999-2007 with Boston, Montreal, Washington, Milwaukee and most recently Toronto (999.0 IP, 1105 H, 459 ER, 283 BB, 559 K). His best season came in 2002 with Montreal, going a career-best 13-8 with a 3.18 ERA in 31 starts. O

Ohka last appeared in the big leagues in 2007 with Toronto going 2-5 with a 5.79 ERA in ten starts after opening the season as the Blue Jays fifth starter. He also pitched professionally in Japan for the Yokohama Bay Stars from 1994-1998. Ohka spent the 2008 season at Triple-A Charlotte after signing with the White Sox organization and was 5-11 with a 4.18 ERA in 28 games (20 starts), and in 135.2 innings allowed 146 hits, 35 walks and had 112 strikeouts. This is a depth signing and really has no bearing on the major league roster, and is more to fill the void needed for a veteran starter to round out the rotation in Triple-A.

- The Indians did not have anyone ranked in [Baseball America's Arizona Fall League Top 20 ranking](#)

(premium), which may come as a surprise to some. But while

Wes Hodges

hit a nice .349 with 6 HR, 26 RBI and a .956 OPS in 25 games, the batting average and OPS were not even in the top ten in the league which goes to show how many good hitters were out in the AFL.

That said, the

[AFL released their top prospects team](#)

and as expected Hodges was included. Baseball America's listing is a Top 20 overall grouping of pitchers and position players, where the AFL's is by position where Hodges and Brett Wallace (Cardinals) were clearly the top third baseman in the league.

- MiLB.com recently completed their [Top 50 Prospect listing](#), and the Indians placed two players on the listing with outfielder

Matt LaPorta

at #14 and right-handed pitcher

Adam Miller

at #41. LaPorta came in where he was expected to be, but Miller was a surprise at #41. When healthy, Miller is no doubt the top pitching prospect in the Indians system and one of the top 10-15 in all of baseball, but at some point the injuries have to be considered. Not to mention with the likes of catcher Carlos Santana and outfielder Nick Weglarz in the system, they were more deserving of being

Minor Happenings: So Long J.D.

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Monday, December 08 2008 7:00 PM -

ahead of Miller. But that is just my opinion.

- Earlier in the week, first baseman **Jordan Brown** talked about [not being rostered in an article on MLB.com](#)

. Nothing new here as we talked with him about this on "Smoke Signals" on Tuesday November 25

th where he actually went into greater detail about the roster situation, but it is still nice to see it in print.

Also, I have some news on my 2009 Indians Prospect Book which I will share in more detail on Monday, but the 2009 scouting reports should be showing up on this site very soon and the book should be available soon as well.