

A Lazy Sunday Spent Looking Around

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
Saturday, January 31 2009 7:00 PM -

With pitchers and catchers set to report to Goodyear, AZ in less than two weeks ... the news about the Indians has been slow and non-existent over the past week. Unfettered, Paulie C soldiers on with another Lazy Sunday, and uses the occasion to take a close look at the moves made by our Central division rivals this off-season. Paul also hits on Peralta remaining at SS, and works in some good tidbits from Terry Pluto on the matter.



In the midst of being consumed with ice dams and what a 40-degree day is going to do to the ice that blankets my house, let's get rolling on a Lazy Sunday in which very little has been happening, other than [the equipment trucks \(thankfully\) leaving for Goodyear](#) :

While Pitchers and Catchers report less than two weeks from now, the news about the Indians has been slow and non-existent over the past week. Nevertheless, [Terry Pluto takes the opportunity in a slow news cycle to remind everyone about the player that is often taken for granted on the Indians](#) , perhaps because of his steady production and silent demeanor. Pluto has some great tidbits about Peralta's numbers over the past few years and how he compares with the rest of the SS offensively, which is favorably. Obviously, Pluto throws in the obligatory "the move is coming sooner or later"; when discussing whether Peralta will head to his right to 3B eventually...mainly because he's been the conductor of the "Move Jhonny to 3B"; Train for more than a few years now.

With Peralta (whose production and consistency is egregiously overlooked), it's going to be interesting this year to see how The Atomic Wedgie moves the pieces and parts around the infield because of the flexibility of DeRosa and Cabrera, as well as Jamey Carroll. That is, I wouldn't be surprised if Peralta sees a few games at 3B this year, if only because the Indians have two players that can play 2B or 3B (DeRosa and Carroll), Cabrera who can play SS, and look to be taking Barfield (who can only play 2B, talk of him getting time in the OF considered) north with the team from Goodyear. Why wouldn't the Indians, then, give Peralta an

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occasional start at 3B to see how he fares if the flexibility is there to move the principals around him without getting anyone out of their comfort zone. Peralta played 3B all winter in the Dominican League, so the idea is not as crazy as...I don't know...Garko in the OF.

One thing that a lot of Indians fans like to do is to put the Indians' lineup in permanent marker, that DeRosa is the 3B, Peralta is the SS, Cabrera is the 2B, etc. and don't take into account that a 162-game season is quite a grind where these guys are going to need days off and the flexibility of those three aforementioned players (as well as Jamey Carroll, who can slot in at a number of positions, and Barfield to a lesser extent) give the Indians some options to give guys opportunities at a number of positions. It was as if, when DeRosa was acquired, people took that to mean that Cabrera would NEVER play SS this year or that Peralta would NEVER play 3B...but why wouldn't they be able to if both of them (and the guys who figure to slide around them) have the versatility to allow the Indians to move some different parts around.

Obviously, the most prevalent alignment figures to be (from left to right) DeRosa, Peralta, Cabrera, but I wouldn't be surprised at all if those guys get moved around (with Carroll and Barfield) to have the infield looking pretty fluid this season.

The other topic that Pluto hits on is the lack of activity in the rest of the AL Central, a topic that Tony Lastoria and I discussed on [this week's "Smoke Signals"](#) (during which we also welcomed minor-leaguer Matt McBride, who told us that the organization is making him a full-time OF after being a C up to this point in his career). While it deserves a much larger discussion (and it's one that I'll surely get to), here are the subtractions and additions that the rest of the AL Central teams have made, with the team name linked to a recent article from Yahoo detailing the off-seasons for each organization:

[Royals](#)

Lost: Joey Gathright, Mark Grudzalinek, Ramon Ramirez

Added: Kyle Farnsworth, Horacio Ramirez, Coco Crisp, Mike Jacobs

[Tigers](#)

Lost: Kyle Farnsworth, Todd Jones, Freddy Garcia, Edgar Renteria, Kenny

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Rogers (still FA), Matt Joyce

Added: Adam Everett, Ramon Santiago, Edwin Jackson, Gerald Laird, Brandon Lyon

Twins

Lost: Eddie Guardao and Dennys Reyes (both still FA)

Added: None

White Sox

Lost: Orlando Cabrera, Ken Griffey Jr., Juan Uribe, and Joe Crede (all still FA), Horacio Ramirez, Javier Vazquez, Boone Logan, Nick Swisher

Added: Dayan Viciedo, Tyler Flowers, Jonathan Gilmore, Brent Lillibridge, Santos Rodriguez, Wilson Betemit, Jeff Marquez, Jhonny Nunez, Bartoloo Colon

Somebody want to tell me what team in the AL Central looks to be head and shoulders above the rest of the division or the team that looks like the one to beat going into Spring Training? Obviously that caveat of "going into Spring Training" carries some weight, but if you think the Indians have issues in their rotation, know that the White Sox are likely to go with Bartolo Colon in their rotation out of Spring Training and the Twins haven't added anyone to a bullpen that may or may not get Pat Neshek back to get the ball to Joe Nathan.

Like I said, this is a broader topic of discussion for another day, but if the Indians are hoping that Carmona, Hafner, and Martinez are going to bounce back, that Westbrook will come back to help, and that their young players continue to develop (which all look like HUGE question marks), aren't the Twins in the same boat, hoping to get Liriano and Cuddyer back healthy, with an effective Delmon Young, with the hope that Neshek returns from injury, AND with the hope that their young pitchers (which I think is what makes them the most obvious contender in the division, outside of the Indians) continue to develop and don't collectively experience a "sophomore slump"?

And that's just the Twins!

Chicago looks to be taking major chances with adding middling young talent to their aging core and Detroit's lineup is embarrassingly old and bloated with their rotation and bullpen still looking shaky, additions of Edwin Jackson Brandon Lyon

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considered.

As for the Royals...well, the Royals have two promising young 1B in their organization and traded for Mike Jacobs, mediocrity defined at 1B. So its business as usual there, only the names change.

There's still time for some of [these remaining blue-chip FA](#) to maybe find a place in the AL Central (though

[don't expect any of them to end up on the South Side](#)

) to further affect the balance of power. But at this point, I'm not expecting too much news to come from Minnesota or Detroit in terms of augmenting their current teams, unless either takes a shot on one of the remaining FA starting pitchers to fortify their rotation at a bargain-basement price.

The other variable in all of this is that with many teams look to be going with young players instead of getting into Free Agency at this point, but with the idea that these 90 remaining FA have to find a team (don't they?), even on a one-year deal before the season starts. Think, then, if some of these FA find traction in Spring Training, some of these young players ([some of whom are out of options](#)) could be shuffled around as Spring Training rolls forward. Unlike Spring Trainings of the past, there still look to be a number of questions facing every team and the roster movement that takes place before Opening Day may be more active than in years past.

What I'm getting at is that the Indians, warts and all, look to have a strong team in 2009 even with the knowledge that the questions that need to be answered are not all going to be resolved with a best-case scenario. With the division that they play in, 86 to 88 wins may put them in the playoffs, which is all it takes to get hot at the right time and get on a run.

OK, enough delusion of talking about a WS run as the calendar flips to February, let's get some video of the equipment trucks that left Cleveland this week arriving in sunny Arizona.