

Tommy's From 'Sconnie

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
Thursday, June 18 2009 7:00 PM -

Big week for Paulie C. He's spent the last three days up in the Milwaukee area, watching the Tribe get swept with his in-laws, and observing a different perspective on our Indians from the Milwaukee media. And this weekend? Off to the Windy City, where he will watch the Erie Warriors take on the Cubs at historic Wrigley Field. In between the legs of his tour of the midwest, Paulie takes some time out to fire some tomahawks at our readers.



Coming to you LIVE from the satellite office in Shorewood (always up to no good), Wisconsin in anticipation of a weekend spent watching the Erie Warriors compete in the friendly confines of Wrigley Field, let's get off some Tomahawks before getting off down I-94 towards Illinois:



After struggling through a couple of ESPN broadcasts of games on Sunday and Monday, in which the production value was unbelievable (OPS listed for each player, relevant stats by count for each hitter listed as pitching count evolves, etc.) but is ultimately undermined by the wet blanket of idiocy provided by Steve Phillips, I've now been in the 'Waukeer for the final two Tribe games here and caught them both on FS Wisconsin. Out-of-towners are very aware of the difference in watching an Indians broadcast emanating from the North Coast versus one coming from the Tribe's opposing team, but if you're not used to it (and I am not), it's fascinating to listen to opposing broadcasters talk about the team.

Some of their insight is nonsensical (at one point Ben Francisco was referred to as 'Cleveland's speedy CF') while other tidbits are downright depressing, if only because of the truth involved (at one point, the Brewers'

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broadcast team stated that "with this Indians' bullpen, you never really feel out of the game", and even others make you question what in the world the Indians are doing (they couldn't stop talking about how Brewers' hitters couldn't wait to face Huff because they had JUST seen Sowers the night before with a similar repertoire).

All told, it certainly provides a different perspective in terms of how the Indians are viewed from afar and what the perception about the team is outside of Northeast Ohio, even if it means that everyone else in the room is cheering while you're dying a little on the inside.



Staying in the realm of the Milwaukee media, there was a blurb in the Journal-Sentinel on Wednesday that caught my attention. It went like this:

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For the first time since left-handed-hitting Mat Gamel was called up from Class AAA Nashville in mid-May, manager Ken Macha started him against a left-handed pitcher (Jeremy Sowers). "Doug told me he hit left-handed hitters very well in Triple-A," Macha explained, referring to general manager Doug Melvin. Yes, he did. Gamel hit .425 against lefties at Nashville (17 for 40) with a 1.465 OPS. He batted .291 against right-handers.

You may remember Gamel's name as his was a name that was bandied about when the Brewers began their interest in CC Sabathia, not to mention him being one of the best hitting prospects in baseball, whose deficiency to this point has been his defense and where he will eventually end up in the field. But all of that aside, look again at the amount of time that Gamel has been up in MLB before getting a start against a LHP, and read again how it took some urging from the GM for Gamel to get a start against a LHP.

Is this even possible?

Could a big-league manager really not be privy to this information as to how a

particular player performed in AAA?

A quick search online yielded these numbers for Gamel in AAA this year:

Gamel vs. LHP

.425 BA / .490 OBP / .975 SLG / 1.465 OPS

Gamel vs. RHP

.291 BA / .404 OBP / .494 SLG / .898 OPS

Obviously, sample size plays a role here (the numbers against LHP are in 40 AB), but Gamel's had 68 AB since his call-up in mid-May and 12 (!) of them have come against LHP...why, because he's a LH hitter and Macha is too "old-school" to think that a young LH hitter could hit LHP at the MLB level?

Why is this relevant to the Indians?

Remember when Matt LaPorta was called up and the Indians stated that he would face LHP in some sort of platoon, with the only plausible reason for this arrangement being LaPorta being RH? While the platoon didn't exactly happen (LaPorta was ignored against both LHP and RHP and left to rot on the bench for games at a time for probably the first time in his baseball career while Dellucci and Garko continued to see AB at his expense), this idea seems to be prevalent for young players, logic be damned.

However, assuming that the RH hitting LaPorta makes his way topside soon enough (the Super-2 thing, which was mishandled by the Front Office and the field manager, should be cleared soon), if the inclination that he'll only face LHP again arises, let me take the opportunity to preemptively illustrate how absurd that notion is for LaPorta, based on what he's doing in Columbus:

LaPorta vs. LHP

.269 BA / .387 OBP / .538 SLG / .925 OPS

LaPorta vs. RHP

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.325 BA / .383 OBP / .550 SLG / .933 OPS

With numbers that are nearly identical across the board facing both LHP and RHP, if LaPorta (again, assuming he's back topside soon) is "protected" against playing against any type of pitcher while a player like a Garko continues to face the RHP that his "track record" (upon which the justification of him playing at all is based upon) is horrific against...well, I just don't know what I'll do.

The logic of not exposing players like Gamel and LaPorta to a particular kind of pitcher to "protect" them more than likely, in fact, stunts their development as it prevents them from being exposed to all types of MLB pitchers and, in the process, runs the chance of throwing them off of the fast-track that they've rightfully found themselves on.



In terms of who will be filling out the lineup card once LaPorta makes his return (and he has played 7 of his last 10 games in Columbus at 1B...so, um...it's time to make sure your affairs are in order Kelly, or at least stop thinking you're going to catch anyone but Clifton Phifer), the answer is getting a little murkier with each passing day as now always [even-handed Terry Pluto has cast his lot with the growing "time for a new voice" crowd](#).

What's different about Pluto's indictment of Wedge is that it doesn't come with the baggage of anti-Wedgisms that are prevalent in many of the other things that you read about why Wedge may no longer be the man for the job. There is no mention of "The Franchise"; Brandon Phillips or Dellichannels or even a man-crush on Lacey Cake; rather what makes Pluto's piece compelling is that it deals only in the here and now and points out the major changes that Wedge has made recently in terms of how he deals with his players in the media and his sudden propensity to throw one player after another under the bus when in the past a harsh word was rarely uttered with the caveat that "this stuff doesn't need to be aired in the public";.

Now, it's being aired very publicly as The Atomic Wedgie has now called out

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Peralta, Shoppach, and Carmona (not mentioned in the Pluto piece, but condemned by Wedge for reporting to camp out of shape the last two years) with his comments cutting a lot deeper than the normal "these guys are pros, they know what they need to do"; Wedge-speak that have laced his comments to the media for years now.

That change, and not anything that's happening on the field (as ugly as it may be) to me is the reason that a change may be coming. Wedge's comments about his players are suddenly sounding like a guy who feels like he's backed into a corner and is deflecting blame away from himself on onto the players that he's charged to manage. Obviously, there's plenty of blame to go around, and certainly the players bear some responsibility for the mess of the season, as do injuries and questionable player management (both during games and in lineup cards) throughout the season.

Generally, a managerial change in MLB will occur on an off day, today of which is the 3rd for the Indians since April 20th. There's an off day scheduled once a week for the next three weeks, so if the struggles continue, those storm clouds that seem to be gathering may be finding their mark soon enough.



Back to more concrete (and frankly more pressing) matters, a while back I mentioned that there will be a group of us getting together at a bar called Sheffield's (which is a few short blocks away from Wrigley) after Saturday afternoon's game to hang out and hopefully celebrate a Tribe victory triggered by a DeRosa HR and sealed by a Kerry Wood save.

I know that a number of Chicagoans or people visiting the Windy One for the series have e-mailed me or contacted me to let me know that they'll be there, so it should be a great time to just meet up and talk some Tribe over some tasty adult beverages.

I'll be there in my vintage Sizemore jersey (with The DiaBride, who will be observing from a safe distance), so be sure to say hello to me and dissect the vagaries of our beloved Indians over a drink or two at [Sheffield's](#) (named by

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Esquire Magazine as one of the best bars in America) or just come to hang out with other Tribe fans and enjoy what should be a beautiful afternoon in Wrigleyville.

Time to get down there and let your Indians' flag fly over Chicago.

