

## Back Home With Lots Of Indians Updates

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Saturday, August 01 2009 7:00 PM -

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Tony checks in today with all sorts of random news and nuggets in the wake of the Cliff Lee and Victor Martinez deals and his trip south to see Kinston over the past 10 days. He's back home finally and gives some insight into the Red Sox turning down the Indians offers of Cliff Lee or Victor Martinez straight up for Clay Buchholz as well as some comments from a scout on players in the Indians system, the future of Eric Wedge and Mark Shapiro, and more. Welcome back T!



Whew, I finally made it home late last night from a longer than usual trip home due to traffic jams getting out of Myrtle Beach on SC-501 and accidents galore on I-77. It's good to be back.

In any case, when I think back on it what a crazy week and a half trip in regard to the Indians. I mean, I leave last Thursday afternoon July 23rd and later that night receive word that we traded Rafael Betancourt for right-hander Connor Graham. Then on Sunday July 26th we acquired Jess Todd to complete the Mark DeRosa deal with St. Louis, and then the next night on Monday the 27th Ryan Garko was traded to San Francisco for left-hander Scott Barnes. On Tuesday July 28th the long awaited return of Andy Marte finally came as he was called up. On Wednesday July 29th the big Cliff Lee trade went down for four prospects, and then on Friday July 31st another big trade with Victor Martinez going to Boston for three players was completed. Note to self: don't go on vacation the last week of July.

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Anyway, I finally had a chance to read through some e-mails and message board posts on the Victor Martinez trade. I will say there was a lot of wishful thinking to

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get Red Sox right-hander Clay Buchholz for Martinez. I will reiterate what I said the other day from a reliable club source, and that is we offered up Cliff Lee STRAIGHT UP for Buchholz and the Red Sox turned us down, and they countered and asked for catcher Carlos Santana for Buchholz. We of course turned them down. Going with this, it is a clear sign that teams value their high end prospects now more than ever, which is an amazing change of thinking in the game than what it was 5-10 years ago. I mean, in this case, Buchholz and Santana had more VALUE to the Indians and Red Sox than Lee or Martinez.

In any case, the Indians tried really hard to get Buchholz from the Red Sox, just were not able to do it. Which begs the question, would you rather of had Buchholz for Lee straight up or the four players we got from Philly (Carrasco, Donald, Marson, Knapp)? Would you have rather had Buchholz for Victor straight up, or the three players we got from the Red Sox (Masterson, Hagedone, Price)?

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As I mentioned before I was at the Kinston game in Myrtle Beach on Friday night, and had a chance to speak at length to new pickup Scott Barnes. I plan to have a piece on him up late tonight or sometime tomorrow. He made a big impression on the Indians in his first start and is someone they really like a lot going forward.

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During a long rain delay on Friday night I also had the chance to talk to a professional scout for an AL team for about 15 minutes about a lot of various players on the Kinston roster and in the organization. It was not a formal interview as nothing was written down or recorded while we spoke, though afterwards I frantically wrote down a bunch of things on the players we talked about. Here is a quick rundown on some of the players we talked about with his comments summarized:

**Lonnie Chisenhall:** A baseball player, best swing he has seen all year, and defense at third is coming along. Uses entire field well when hitting, and is the top hitting prospect in Indians system outside of Santana.

**Carlos Santana:** An electric bat and arm with an unbelievable ability to square up the ball and hit it hard. Rifle arm, though still working on nuances of game behind the plate. Clearly a top ten prospect in all of baseball.

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**Cord Phelps:** Good on-base ability and a very good defender at second base. With his versatility, he mostly projects as a good utility type player in bigs, though there is some room to grow to become an everyday player.

**Tim Fedroff:** Not impressed with his play in the outfield and doesn't think he can stay in center. Too small and too light of a bat for the corners. Fourth outfielder at best. Given the signing bonus the Indians paid him, he'll get every chance to prove scouts wrong.

**Eric Berger:** Kind of a funky delivery which creates a little deception. Not too high on him and feels he at best is a backend rotation starter in bigs.

**Nick Weglarz:** Unbelievable size for his age. Light tower power and an advanced approach at plate. So-so in the outfield, but with the bat he has a team could live with that. Needs to be more aggressive attacking pitches in the zone.

**Hector Rondon:** Huge leap this year, and has been great in the outings he has seen him. Feels the Indians may have really found something with him and called him the best pitcher in the organization.

**Carlos Carrasco:** Great stuff, but very inconsistent. Loads of potential but has a hard time maintaining focus entire game, especially when he gets into jams.

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With Victor gone, it looks like Kelly Shoppach will take over the everyday catching duties and recently called up Wyatt Toregas will be the regular backup. Chris Gimenez could also start to get some time behind the plate. Shoppach's days in Cleveland are numbered though, and he could be an August waiver deal or will surely be dealt in the offseason. What that means is to start the 2010 season the Indians will likely have Lou Marson, Toregas, and Gimenez all on the 25-man roster to catch and be stop gap options while the Indians await Carlos Santana to be ready for regular catching duties in the big leagues. Marson and Toregas would split time at catcher, with Gimenez more a third catcher and utility type player.

Santana could win the job in spring training, but the most likely course of action will be him starting the 2010 season in Triple-A Columbus and get a callup in June or July. This is much how they handled Victor Martinez in 2003 where he was

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coming off a Double-A MVP season in 2002, and while 2003 was a rebuilding year they went with Josh Bard and Tim Laker from the outset and had Martinez open in Triple-A Buffalo before calling him up midseason. Still, expect to see Santana in Cleveland this year for a cup of coffee as a September callup.

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Nothing new on the Alex White front. Both sides are still talking, but in no hurry to get a deal done mostly because the Indians wouldn't pitch him much if at all once signed because of how much UNC used him this year. He's been off awhile too so would have to go on some type of return to throw program. He could sign any day, but I bet he signs a day or two before or on the August 17th signing deadline. The feeling I get from the Indians and also in talking to White a month back is he is very likely to sign as both sides want to get a deal done. He was actually in Kinston the other night to watch them and former UNC teammate Tim Fedroff play.

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In regard to the big league team, this dramatic shift to loading up on more prospects pretty much ensures that GM Mark Shapiro is going nowhere anytime soon. It also means with all the young players coming into the system and who will be playing with the big club this year and next that Eric Wedge may in fact be retained. If he is fired at the end of the season, it is a slam dunk that Triple-A Columbus manager Torey Lovullo would take over. There is no way we bring in a veteran manager now with all the young players, especially since they want someone leading the team who understands the organizational philosophy. So, the future of the Cleveland Indians is pretty much in the hands of Wedge or Lovullo. John Farrell is the only guy with a sliver of a chance outside the organization to get consideration as the manager given his experience working in the Indians organization prior to joining the Red Sox over two years ago.

That said, it is possible we could see Shapiro move to a President role in the near future - maybe even this offseason - and assistant GM Chris Antonetti move into the GM role. Also, they may (finally) look to bring an outsider into the front office mix to bring some much needed alternative viewpoints and challenge their ways of thinking.

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As I noted in [my Twitter update last night](#) , right-hander Alex Perez left his start last night in the first innings with an undisclosed injury. More on this when it comes available.