

Barnes Could Be Another Shapiro Gem

Written by {ga=consigliere}

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Barnes, 21, made his debut in the Indians organization in late July at High-A Kinston and after three starts there (0-0, 2.13 ERA) he was quickly promoted to Double-A Akron earlier this week. In his Double-A debut last night he was sharp and showed the promise he has as a big league starting pitching option down the road going five innings and allowing two runs on four hits, no walks, and had six strikeouts.

Barnes was actually on the verge of a well deserved callup to Double-A just before being acquired by the Indians. In 18 starts for the Giants High-A San Jose

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team he was 12-3 with a 2.85 ERA, and in his last seven starts before being traded was 7-0 with a 1.50 ERA (48.0 IP, 36 H, 8 ER, 58 K). At the time of the trade he was leading the California League in wins, was 2nd in ERA, and was 9th with 99 strikeouts. The Indians decided to make a lateral move and initially assign him to High-A Kinston in order to let him get his feet wet and settled into the organization before moving him to Double-A for the first time in his career.

It has only been four appearances so far in the Indians organization, but he has impressed with what he has shown.

“He has got feel, he has three pitches, he is an athletic kid, and we have every reason to believe he has a chance to be a left-handed starter in the big leagues,” said Indians Assistant GM and Scouting Director John Mirabelli in a recent interview.

Barnes is 6'4" 185-pounds and extremely athletic. He uses that size and athleticism to attack hitters with all three of his offerings, a fastball that sits 88-91 MPH, an above average changeup, and a good curveball. His velocity has crept up a little this season, as in his last outing at Kinston he sat at 90-92 MPH and in his last start at San Jose before being traded Barnes said he touched 94 MPH a few times.

“I just attack the zone and fill it up with strikes,” said Barnes in a recent interview while out in Myrtle Beach. “I am pretty aggressive and like to work off my fastball. I try to go as deep into games as possible to put my team in the best position possible to win the game. I like to work fast and keep a good pace to the game so the guys behind me can keep their focus out there. Just throw a lot of strikes, go deep into games, and get that quick inning every time out there.”

While the changeup is considered his best pitch, Barnes commands all three of his pitches well and has confidence using them all in any count.

“I have a lot of faith in all my pitches so I like throwing them whenever the count calls for it,” said Barnes. “Just keep the hitters off balance and doing the best I can with that.”

Barnes was an 8th round pick in the 2008 Draft by the Giants, and having only been in professional baseball for about a year he is still growing and coming into his own as a pitcher. The Indians scouted him last year before the draft so they

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already had a book on Barnes, but they were impressed with his advancement and how quickly he transitioned to the professional game and harnessed the ability to become a good, consistent strike thrower.

"The one thing that he has improved since last year - and I have to give San Francisco credit here - is they developed his strike throwing ability," said Mirabelli. "They [did] a good job of improving that, and I think they [got] him to be more aggressive and attack the strike zone and consequently his strike throwing numbers have really improved since college."



As one of the new guys in the system and with a few weeks left in the minor league regular season, the Indians don't plan to push Barnes too hard and tinker with anything until they have time to properly evaluate him. Any changes - if any are even needed - won't occur until the offseason or during spring training next year. One thing is certain, and that is he is staying in the rotation for the foreseeable future.

"Yeah, [when I got here they] said since I am still young they just want me to get my feet wet," said Barnes. "Just have a good end of the season by ending on a positive note with a few successful outings before the season ends. They said it is tough switching teams, especially since this is my first year [playing professionally], and to just focus on what is at hand."

While Barnes is happy to be an Indian, he was sort of shocked to get the news he had been traded. He was barely in the Giants organization for a year before having to pack up and begin life anew in another organization.

"I just got called into my manager's office in San Jose and he told me there was good news and bad news," recalled Barnes. "The good news is I

was getting out of there, but the bad news was that it was with another team. He told me I got traded and it was for Ryan Garko, which obviously was an honor as a 21-year old minor leaguer [to be traded for him]. He wished me good luck and I was off on the plane the next day."

Barnes remained with the team and watched them play that night in San Jose. After the game he packed up his stuff and was on his way to Cleveland the next morning. In between there was a mad rush of cell phone calls and text messages letting family and friends know what happened.

"It was definitely a shock because I was not really expecting it," said Barnes. "At the same time I was really excited. After it came across the TV my phone was going off every second. I called my family first, but my friends had found out through that and they were all excited for me."

Upon arriving in Kinston, Barnes was like the new kid at school. He didn't really know anyone on the team, but baseball being the fraternal sport it is, his new teammates welcomed him with open arms and he was quickly just another one of the guys.

"You get to know your guys, and when you leave them it sucks but at the same time a baseball team is a baseball team," said Barnes. "I met a lot of the guys on the first day welcoming me saying hi and introducing themselves. The only guy I knew was Kyle Landis. I pitched against him when he went to Pittsburgh as I went to St. Johns University in New York, so we were in the same conference for a few years. I never got to meet him before, so I introduced myself when I got there and we [talked] a little bit here and there."

Barnes had minimal contact with the Indians while he was at St. Johns University. They had scouted him, and like with all the non-drafted players that they scouted heavily they kept the information for future trade reference.

"I had a little contact with the Indians, but it was never serious to the point where they would have drafted me," said Barnes. "They might have had interest, but I never really found out about it because they didn't pick me up."

Until now that is.