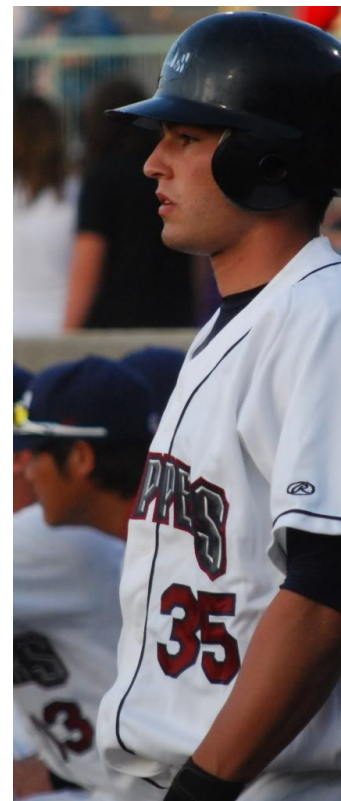


Family Ties Strong For Greenwell

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, September 16 2009 7:00 PM -

The minor league season is all about progress. The hope is a player when he goes to camp in early March is a much better, different player by the time the season ends six months later in early September. One player who showed vast improvement this year in sort of a breakout season is Low-A Lake County outfielder Bo Greenwell. Our Tony Lastoria has a chance to talk to Bo about this season in a recent trip out to Eastlake to see the Captains play.



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One player who showed vast improvement this year in sort of a breakout season is Low-A Lake County outfielder Bo Greenwell.

Greenwell, 20, just put the finishing touches on a solid season where he hit .296 with 2 HR, 30 RBI and .766 OPS in 67 combined games at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley and Lake County this year.

Greenwell opened the season in extended spring training where he continued his education as a baseball player. Because he spent so much time working out for football in high school, he is very raw as a baseball player. When the Indians drafted him in the 6th round of the 2007 Draft out of high school it was the first time he was actually able to develop and refine his baseball skills. As a result, he spent a lot of time the past three seasons in extended spring training before finally getting a chance to play with an affiliate in Mahoning Valley and Lake County this year.

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Having logged so many extended spring training games on the backfields of the Indians player development complex or in empty stadiums, having the chance to play in front of thousands of fans in Niles, OH and Eastlake, OH was a thrill for Greenwell this year. In extended spring training or even the rookie leagues he had to really motivate himself to make it feel like a real game since the games had no fans, but in Mahoning Valley and Eastlake it was natural as there was a scoreboard, fans, and he even got to walk to the plate to a song.

“When I played in high school, we played in front of 50 or maybe a 100 people, so it was never a really big atmosphere,” said Greenwell in a recent interview. “This was the first time I have ever played in front of a couple thousand people. I felt that I was ready for that kind of adjustment. It was so much fun, and every time you heard the crack of the bat you hear the fans and everything tense up and it made it fun. I definitely [thrived] off of it.”

Greenwell's first real minor league experience was a short one in Mahoning Valley. After hitting .346 in seven games to start the season there in June, he was quickly moved up to Lake County when an outfield spot opened up after outfielder Abner Abreu went down for the season with a shoulder injury. He struggled initially at Lake County hitting just .156 in his first nine games, but he hit .313 in his final 50 games.

With another season in the books, Greenwell learned a lot this year.

“Every day I [learned] something,” said Greenwell. “I was so raw coming out of high school. What's always helped me is I have always played the game hard and kept an open mind with everything that has been thrown at me learning-wise. I am just taking it and developing it into something that can help me. I [have been] going through a lot of stuff. Learning how to back up and learning to throw from the outfield as that is a big adjustment for me. Offensively I [have been] learning how to keep my body back and keep my hands through the ball. It is a bunch of constant adjustments that's for sure.”

By now even the casual observer of the Indians minor league system knows that Bo is the son of former big league All-Star outfielder Mike Greenwell. The elder Greenwell hit .303 with 130 HR, 726 RBI and an .831 OPS over 12 seasons, all with the Boston Red Sox. Having that pedigree is what makes Bo so exciting.

Greenwell's father was out to see him several times over the course of the

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season, and obviously in the offseason he spends a lot of time with his father. Having such an accomplished major league hitter as sort of an in-home hitting instructor would seem to present a possible conflict with what Indians hitting instructors are teaching him, but the younger Greenwell says that is not the case.

"I am unique in that way I guess you could say," said Greenwell. "But everybody is on the same page. My dad has obviously talked to Bruce Fields, the Indians Minor League Hitting Coordinator, and my dad knows some of the adjustments even some of the other guys [on my team] have to make. He has always loved the game and is always watching. When he [is around] he might of had some stuff to say, but it is all within the winds of what Bruce Fields wants. Fields is the hitting coordinator here, and what he says goes. But yeah, it does help to have a .303 lifetime hitter on the phone when I need him."

Given his love for baseball and passion for hitting, one has to wonder if the elder Greenwell may get that bug to get back into the game and into coaching. Former players often find it hard to stay away from the game, and as their children get older they often find their way back into it. This is what happened with former big leaguer Travis Fryman who came back to baseball in the coaching ranks in the minor leagues last year, and is what could happen to Mike Greenwell in the future.



"I know when I was in high school he was [a guest instructor] all the time for the fantasy baseball camps and stuff," said Greenwell. "[As far as being a coach] for the actual teams, no not so much. He was a hitting instructor for the Reds back in early 2000 just to get a feel if that was something he wanted to do later in life when he is just sitting around and my brother and I are out of the nest. My brother is a senior in high school and I think when he is gone my mom and dad are going to be sitting around saying 'now what'. He has thought about that kind of stuff. He knows a lot about the game and a lot about hitting, and I could definitely see him getting back into the game in the next couple of years."

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Mike and his son Bo are not the only talented Greenwell's in the household. Bo's younger brother Garrett is a two-sport star in high school for both football and baseball. Now a senior, he has a lot of colleges looking at him to play football, and many baseball scouts watched him last year as a junior and most definitely will this spring.

"I had the easy decision because I was 6'0" 185 coming out of high school," said Greenwell. "I was All State in both sports, but I was only 6'0" 185 so I was not going to be a big time college prospect in football, so it was obvious for me to go play baseball. My brother is 6'1" 235 pounds. My mom's side of the family they have some big boys there, and then when you mold that with my dad, my brother is quite an athlete."

Garrett Greenwell plays both fullback and linebacker in football, and is a first baseman in baseball. His athleticism and size make him quite a prospect as a hitter, be it on the gridiron or diamond.

"When you think of somebody that big you think of a lineman type of guy, but he is one the best fullbacks in the country," said Greenwell about his brother. "He is a little slow but I think got his 40 down to a 4.8 last year. He can run a little bit, has good feet around the bag at first base, is a #4 type hitter, a lefty, and has some big time pop. He has a big time opportunity to play college football or baseball. Mike Soper, the guy who scouted and drafted me with the Indians was at one of his games the other day. I don't know if he was looking at him, but my dad saw him and talked to him about me."

It wouldn't be the first time the Indians have drafted the brother of a player already in the system. This happened recently when they drafted right-hander Carlton Smith in 2004 after just drafting his older brother third baseman Corey Smith in 2000, and also when they drafted outfielder Jason Denham in 2004 after just drafting his older brother right-hander Dan Denham in 2001.

While it would be kind of cool for Greenwell to have his younger brother in the same system and potentially living together playing for the same team, he said his younger brother won't get any special treatment.

"I'll have the rook sleep on the floor because he is younger," laughed Greenwell.

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Such is the ties that bind. The family ones that is.