

Time For Some Acta

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
Sunday, October 25 2009 7:00 PM -

The managerial game of musical chairs found one man standing as Manny Acta, impressive in front of the cameras in Cleveland and lauded by baseball men for his knowledge and passion of the game (despite his difficulties in the situation in Washington), has been named the Indians' new skipper in a surprising turn of events (in terms of timeframe) that ended with Sunday's announcement. Paulie C checks in with some instant analysis in the Indians new manager.



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While the Indians may not have planned on naming Manny Acta as their new manager just yet, news that the Astros offered Acta a two-year deal with an option for a third year forced the Indians to spring into action to trump Houston's offer to land Acta in Cleveland. His three-year deal with an option for a fourth with the Tribe put away any idea that Houston was his preferred landing spot (or "dream job"), regardless of ancillaries involved, because he had grown up in the Astros' organization.

The timeframe seemingly forced upon the Indians essentially removed Don Mattingly from consideration (if everything written about him in the past two weeks as the heir apparent in LA didn't already) and one would have to think that Bobby Valentine either confessed a lack of interest, or such a lack of interest was picked

up from his press conference, that his candidacy was no longer considered serious.

Acta brings an interesting resume to Cleveland with his strengths as a bilingual communicator known for developing young players being balanced against his unquestionably poor record in the nation's capital (one that got worse in each of his 2 ½ seasons) and the fact that the Nationals improved after he was fired at the All-Star break of the 2009 season.

He brings a new energy to a team in need of it and, more importantly, a fresh perspective as he comes from outside the status quo of the Indians' uniformly uniform organization. While he subscribes to some of the same basic philosophies as the Front Office, the application of those philosophies on the specific set of players he's been hired to manage will ultimately determine if his record in Washington was an aberration or the start of a pattern.

Truthfully, like any coaching hire, nobody really knows what to expect as Acta was unquestionably in control of his press conference with the assembled media and said all of the right things about all of the right people at all of the right times. How he goes about achieving all of those things - like fixing Fausto and getting some consistency out of Peralta - is where his baseball acumen will have to show, and quickly.

Getting a read on him and making a snap judgment about whether he's the right man for the job borders on folly, but some clues about him and his strategies should begin to emerge with the first order of business - naming a coaching staff. The construction of the staff (according to the Front Office when this process started) is up to the newly named manager, and Acta has made it clear that he would have no problem bringing along coaches that are familiar (and successful) with the current batch of Indians - a category that the AAA troika of Columbus manager Torey Lovullo, Columbus hitting coach Jon Nunnally, and Columbus pitching coach Scott Radinsky all fall under.

Whether any or all of them eventually comprise any part of his coaching staff remains to be seen as it's a certainty that he'll look to bring in coaches he's familiar with and with whom he's coached in the past. Just taking a look at the coaches that surrounded him in Washington brings forth names from his 2006 hiring like Rick Aponte, Pat Corrales (yes, Pat Corrales for those of you DYING for a former Tribe manager to be in the dugout), Jerry Morales, Mitchell Page, Tim

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Tolman, and Randy St. Claire. Some of those names are still gainfully employed in Washington, at least until a new manager is named, but it puts forth the idea that some of the coaching hires (as important as they are) may be names that are simply names to most Tribe fans. Regardless of this fact, the proper mix of coaches familiar with the youngsters on the Indians and those that Acta is comfortable with that can lend a new perspective on players, young and old, is what Acta needs to achieve.

How he attempts to put together a coaching staff as the first step to maximizing the young talent in place on the North Coast and to make contention in 2011 a reality is where Acta will be judged in the very near future as his impressive press conference and demeanor will earn him only so much goodwill in lieu of results.

The time for talk is over and the time for Acta has begun in Cleveland.