

## Chisenhall? Pomeranz? Why Not?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, March 09 2011 11:00 AM - Last Updated Thursday, March 10 2011 9:44 AM

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[Manny Acta tweeted...](#)

*Chisenhall: 2b, Hr, and solid D - Pomeranz: 93 - 96. Overpowering for 2 inn's. COMING SOON... To a ballpark near you.*

Not exactly a master thespian like William Shatner, but I think Acta got his point across.

Pretty soon, oh pretty soon.

Sunday's exhibition game against Colorado served as a bright reminder that the farm system is indeed stocked with young talent, that the drafting ways of the Indians have definitely turned around, and that all of us cannot wait for the future.

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Offensively, Lonnie Chisenhall hit his club-leading second home run of the spring, a reported deep drive to right field. As of action up through Sunday he is hitting .467 with a .556 on-base percentage and four RBI. It is only seven games.

Throwing the ball, Drew Pomeranz has completed three shutout innings, walking just one hitter and striking out five, just as many as anyone else in camp. It is only two games. The sample sizes may be small, no, ridiculously small, but they serve as that hope.

Of course this is the hopeful time of the year, correct? The saying that "hope springs eternal" never rings more true than it does right now, when all 30 teams in Major League Baseball have a shot to be winners. Not the Charlie Sheen winners. Real winners. Maybe we'd be on the Charlie Sheen drug of Charlie Sheen if we began to think that this club had a shot at contention this year, maybe that would be the case.

But that's what hope does to you I guess. The hope that these two bright young talents, who will likely not contribute a whole lot, if anything at all, are going to save the franchise bleeds into the hope that 2011 can be a productive year. This season can be a productive one, it doesn't need to be a totally winning one, but it can be productive with a losing record.

I think I'm straying from the overall point here. This is as much about Drew Pomeranz and Lonnie Chisenhall as it is about the 2011 season. The problem here is, Pomeranz may not be a part of it and Chisenhall may not take part until after the All-Star break, if that. The thought of waiting and the idea that they look so good, makes me almost want to say, "Oh why the hell not."

So let me say it and just explore the idea... Why the hell not?

What would be so insane about fast-tracking Drew Pomeranz? Mike Leake was 8-4 last season, had a 4.23 ERA and a 1.50 WHIP for the Cincinnati Reds. Not bad for a guy straight out of the draft with no professional experience. In his first 11 games he was dynamite, fresh and new, couldn't be touched. He won a rotation spot out of spring training and didn't need to visit the minor leagues, at all.

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Things caught up to him though. Scouts feel he didn't have a dominating pitch; the lack of professional experience (and to that end, conditioning for a full major league season plus playoffs) caused the Reds to pull the plug after 22 starts. He very well may be destined to spend time in the minors this year as the Reds have options and Leake needs to refine himself after the league adjusted to him. If he cannot do it in the majors, there is no harm in letting him do so in Louisville.

What is the lesson learned? You can fast-track a pitcher like Leake, but that doesn't mean it is the right decision, but it also doesn't mean it is entirely wrong. In hindsight was it the right move? It hasn't ruined Leake so far, so we can't be totally sure, but it certainly wasn't a train wreck. Leake was very good for that first half of his season. He could still win the fifth rotation spot in Cincinnati yet again.

Drew Pomeranz has not one, but two dominating pitches, a fastball and a curveball that he calls a "spike curve." He also spent plenty of time at Ole Miss as a college pitcher and so far in spring, so good. Alex White isn't even in the fight for the fifth rotation spot and he has that valuable professional experience. What he doesn't have though is the high-end upside that Pomeranz brings as a top five pick.

So I ask the question again... Why not? Would it be the right decision to rush this kid from the get-go when there is nothing immediate on the line? When I phrase it like that, I'm assuming you just shrug your shoulders and say, yeah that is a good point, why risk it? He'll be here soon enough, just like Acta said. This team is going nowhere; don't end a promising career before it begins.

But what if Drew Pomeranz presents the best opportunity for this team to get production out of the fifth rotation spot? What if Pomeranz has displayed more ability to be more productive from that spot than a Josh Tomlin or David Huff? Is it fair to deny him that opportunity? No it isn't, but baseball can't always be fair. Perhaps the question would rather be: Does it make sense not to go with the best guy, regardless of experience?

Will that push inevitably end up ruining the kid's future? That's a risk not worth taking, but if Pomeranz has the mentality to handle it, then what's holding him back? Obviously the safe route is to start him in Single-A Kinston and let him work his way through the system and if he is that good, that dominant, keep moving him up after minimal looks. The quicker he gets to Columbus, the quicker he gets to Cleveland in my mind.

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The Reds won the Central pennant last year and Leake was only a small fraction of the reason why. Yes he was important early, but they had the team around him in other areas to get the job done over the course of a 162 game season. They gambled a little bit with their future, Leake's future, but they came out the other end with a division crown and a young pitcher with invaluable experience and major league success.

The Indians, by most accounts, are not fighting for an AL Central crown this year, so why bother? Now if the club is contending at mid-season for that division and Pomeranz is making minor league hitters look like little leaguers against Danny Almonte, then we'll resume this discussion.

Still, sometimes you just have to ask yourself, why not?

More feasibly, we have Lonnie Chisenhall, who was drafted not this past year or even the year before that, but rather in 2008. Not only did he make his debut later that year, he's spent the majority of his past two seasons in Double-A Akron.

A big reason he didn't make it Columbus last year was an injury that held him back both in level, but in performance too. Chisenhall has demonstrated time and time again that his bat is ready and the club has even said so. He just needs more work at third base, the position he was moved to for his professional career.

The club wants to season him a little more with some time at Triple-A, which begs the question. Does the seasoning at Triple-A make him taste that much better? If so, then I'll gladly wait. I'm a man of good taste so I can be patient if something will taste better after the process. However if that seasoning is only delaying the inevitable of the current product, why wait? I've taken this metaphor as far as I can and now it's time to talk about what I really mean.

When Carlos Santana arrived at the majors last year, he was ready. So ready that Manny Acta stuck him right in the middle of the order. His defense was ready, so ready that he threw out the first runner that tested him with a laser of a throw. I remember that, I was there. Does that mean he has no work left to do? Does that mean he was a liability until they called him up? I fully

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believe the club could have called Santana up far earlier than they did; even start him at catcher from the beginning of the season. He still has work to do, but his bat was ready and he certainly could have done no worse than Lou Marson.

Don't misunderstand that point though. This doesn't become a Chisenhall versus Donald versus Nix versus Valbuena (ugh) debate. In a way it is, but if Chisenhall's bat is ready, and the Indians think it probably is, why not go for it? Why delay the inevitable of Chisenhall starting at third. He's hitting well right now, rocketing home runs off major league pitchers. I haven't read anything about him completely butchering the position of third base. And no this isn't another "he could do better point" but was the revolving door at third base that much better of a situation? Yes it did not risk the future and Jason Donald or Jayson Nix keeps Chisenhall's future in tact without the risk of exposing him to the big bad monsters that live under his bed.

But who says now isn't the time to turn the night light off? We've gone from him having no chance and only being in big league camp to gain experience, to saying, "Well, nothing is impossible and it's great to have that goal."

Chisenhall has that smooth swing and the assumption is we'll wait a few months before we see it in Cleveland. But why wait? Like it was with Santana, a few months may mean an extra year in Cleveland, which we know is extremely valuable to a club that can't exactly hand out many multi-year contracts. Do you really want one of these years that we have Chisenhall to be one that is ultimately not worth it team-wise? I guess the overall winning argument against both Chisenhall and Pomeranz is simply need. Do we really need these players right now? If we go back to the central idea that there is no Central contention, then why rush something?

And that is an argument that is hard to ignore. In fact, it pretty much deflates any hope for any of the reasons I provided to convince Chris Antonetti, Manny Acta, and the rest of the decision makers to say "Why not?" and just give us the youngsters.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ [TheTribeDaily](#) where he tweets about Shelley Duncan's Hawk Blood. You should also follow his [blog](#) [on Facebook](#)

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*so you can prepare to watch him run into a wall for the sake of Chad Durbin.*