

Spring Training Rundown: A Return to Normalcy

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Friday, February 24 2012 7:00 PM - Last Updated Friday, February 24 2012 12:20 PM



Fittingly, today we're talking about normalcy. I've strongly campaigned that this spring and the past offseason was one of normalcy (sort of!) and well. We are returning to normalcy. I will be regularly posting Spring Training Rundown up until the season, when then Morning Rundown will then return. Enjoy your normalcy...

[NORMALCY]

I think in the primer I made such a big deal about how it was going to be a normal spring training, that it would make sense if there were stories about normal...ness. So let's go.

Carlos Santana said [it was a normal offseason](#) and he's looking forward to a spring training where he won't have to worry about hamate bones, long seasons, or another hubalaboo.

"It was a great experience," he said. "It was my first time working out with a trainer in the offseason. It was a big difference. There was more preparing for the season. I'll be ready. This offseason was normal."

Acta says Santana will learn from experience that he needs to use the whole field more consistently. Having your cleanup hitter (the spot Acta has already said Santana will be hitting in the order) coming in feeling relaxed, rested, and heck, normal, is certainly a good thing.

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I didn't list **Josh Tomlin** under the injury section and I probably should have given that he ended the year with a major concern in the elbow. But apparently, the elbow issues that some people thought would be a problem coming into spring are not really an issue. On top of that, [Tomlin isn't restricted in anyway](#)

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"He threw a great bullpen," Radinsky said. "He looked really good and under control. ... He looks good and he feels good. I'm just going off what he says, but from what I saw today, he looks totally normal."

Thank to Scott Radinsky for playing along with our "normal" theme.

Tomlin is going to be such a key for this rotation. Many people expect him to regress. Out of all the pitchers, he's the least likeliest to because with him, what you see is what you get. What you got last year is Josh Tomlin. He's not going to walk people, he's going to make you hit, he's got his control 90% of the time out there and you know he'll give you five innings.

But if this rotation is going to be successful as a whole, it can't just be Ubaldo and Masterson. It has to be Tomlin and Lowe too, especially if spot five is a question.

And to finish up our talk on normal, it is assumed that **Ubaldo Jimenez**, despite being in a new organization now and beginning his first spring as a member of the Indians, had a somewhat normal offseason. The Big U pitched in winter ball, which is something he did not do last year.

Radinsky says

[going to be a different guy](#)

[there's](#)

out there this year. Also coming in with no restrictions is

Justin Masterson

, who

[had offseason surgery on his shoulder](#)

. He had made such great progress though, he went ahead of his timetable. The other good news? The surgery performed was arthroscopic and on his non-throwing shoulder and it had been a known issue for several years. If anything, it was a cleanup that Masterson had waited to get done at the proper time.

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"I think we already know what he can be," Radinsky said. "We've seen that. If he says he's healthy, I'm going with it. I'm just curious to see what happens here. Me, personally, my gut kind of has some expectations. I'm not putting them on him, but he's got a good arm, man."

Jimenez himself says he isn't thinking about the trade anymore and after training in his native Dominican Republic with catcher Carlos Santana and strength and conditioning coach Nelson Perez, he seems really comfortable with where he's at.

It may not be what he's accustomed to, but it sure does sound normal at least. Additionally, Jimenez says he worked on strengthening his legs and worked on staying consistent with his landing. Add in a clean bill of healthy (let's not mention what happened to him last year), and I think we're all hopeful for a Ubaldo 2010 version.

[FAUSTO HERNANDEZ]

So the rotation, normal right?

How long before we refer to Fausto Carmona as Roberto Hernandez without having to mention that he was formerly named Fausto Carmona?

That's the one thing that is far from normal. The Indians do not have **Fausto Carmona** and will never have him ever again. If they get the guy that had the name back, well, it sounds [like they'll welcome "Rob" back](#) with open arms. "Rob"?

Leave it to Justin Masterson...

"We're definitely in a good spot. We'd definitely like to have Rob here, but you make due. I imagine he'll be here at some point in time," added the pitcher. "And the big goof will fit in just as well as before -- after he gets worn out tremendously by every single person."

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Josh Tomlin took a more serious approach saying that they'll support their teammate regardless. Jimenez has spoken with Fausto and given him words of encouragement, knowing exactly what it's like to be tempted. Jimenez himself said he had people tell him to fake his age for a bigger payout, but resisted thanks to strong parental support.

Acta says that Carmona is currently speaking to kids that have not entered academies yet, a stage at where Acta says is crucial in young players making a decision. The AP has Carmona saying that he is doing what is necessary to be done so he is ready to go when this situation gets ironed out and he gets pardoned.

Give Bastian's story linked up there a read as Justin Masterson has some pretty good insight (as he always does) into this situation. He has some solid reasoning behind why someone in Carmona-Hernandez's position did what he did.

All in all though. It sounds like the team would love to have him back. And if he gets back at some time to occupy spot number five? I'd take that. You could do a lot worse in terms of a fifth starter.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Speaking of fifth starter. It looks like Kevin Slowey is the go-to-guy as Jon Garland's [deal with the Indians has fallen through](#)

. It looks as if it is a matter of Garland simply not being ready to go and compete for a job. I wouldn't close the door on Garland yet, as it sounds like he was simply not in a position to go all-out with no restrictions and for him, signing right now wouldn't make much sense given that when he is ready, the Indians may not have the opening.

But if they do, I'm sure the two could find their way back to the negotiating table.

One minor league signing that could make the team is **Dan Wheeler**, who will be competing for

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one of the few spots open in the bullpen. He knows there is an opportunity here and with a good bullpen like Cleveland's, [it could be easy to fit in](#).

"This is more about the opportunity," said Wheeler. "I don't like talking about the other stuff (big-league contracts vs. minor-league invitations). This was definitely the best opportunity for me.

"What I've done my whole career is get into a spot where the manager and coaches trust me. Hopefully, I can earn a spot here and get back in some situations that help us win some ballgames."

I'm kind of pulling for Wheeler myself because out of all the vets they signed, he seems like the one with the most experience and potential to come in and fit where the team will need him to.

After the Julio Lugo deal fell through, the Indians signed **Cristian Guzman** to a minor league deal. He'll now compete for the backup utility spot (of which Jason Donald has a "lead" on) and Acta has a history with him in Washington. Guzman was out of baseball in 2011. Let's just get spelling his name with the h out of the way because I'm sure I'll do it.

Christian, Christian, Christian, Christian, Christian. Five times should be good right?

[RANDOM NONSENSE]

Shelley Duncan's hawk tattoo (and the new visible ink by Asdrubal Cabrera) was a big point of discussion last spring, at least if you interacted with me on Twitter or read my blog. Why make a big deal about something like that? What else are we going to talk about at the end of February, the expected race for the final utility spot? No thanks. This offseason's tattoo winner is **Shin-So o Choo**.

Unfortunately it seems to be by default because word has not been leaked that Shelley came in with a Minotaur tattooed on his other shoulder, but how awesome would that be?

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Choo [has a combination](#) of the initials of his wife, his children, and himself tattooed on his forearm. It is in clear view and you can kind of see it in this [picture](#) .

In more important baseball related news, Choo has dropped some significant poundage. Which means absolutely nothing other than we can at least conclude he is in shape. He still has to swing the stick.

Just because **Shelley Duncan** didn't get a Minotaur tattoo (but how awesome would that be?) doesn't mean he isn't awesome. Hawkman and Travis Hafner [look a picture with political candidate Ron Paul](#) after the CNN debate the other night. He also provided some political commentary.

What really matters here is that we can only assume the blonde that he has his arm around is his wife, Elyse. We can also assume that given she has a stomach, a little Hawkman is on it's way to the nest. Do Amy Hafner's hips look a little bit? Could we also be getting another little Pronk? If so, let's hope they don't name he/she after Casey Blake.

And because I'm the master of segues, how about Lonnie Chisenhall [naming his newly born boy Cutter](#) ? Cutter Chisenhall? If that kid doesn't grow up to be a pitcher, or at least a really awesome ball player, the world is wrong.

The Indians will [be mic'd up for their spring game](#) against the Arizona Diamondbacks on March 7th. The game will be broadcast on MLB Network. Shelley Duncan is in favor of it and I can only hope he is one of the guys on the Indians chosen.

Fred Lewis is the cousin of Matt "My child's bike is better than your bike" Lawton. Lewis says Lawton spoke highly of the organization. Nino says Lawton is still a dork.

Speaking of steroids.. What?

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Ryan Braun's [case is crazy](#) . Guy didn't FedEx it the right day so he failed the test? There is humanity, but help us all if Braun does actually test positive. We'll never know if he did actually test positive this last time (or we may, who knows...) but if he does at some later point.

This doesn't really concern the Indians, but it concerns baseball as a whole and I find it interesting that everyone has jumped to exonerating him. It SOUNDS like Braun's positive test was a weird gaff that happened, but we'll never know. What we do know is that the rules of sending in a urine sample are rather strange.

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Nino has a blog and he is just as fun there (but not too much)! Give it a vist at [The Tribe Daily](#) .

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