

Spring Training Rundown: Masterson to Head Rotation

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Monday, March 05 2012 7:00 PM - Last Updated Monday, March 05 2012 1:43 PM



Let the games begin! Baseball Baseball Baseball! Don't even tell me these games don't matter, it's baseball and it's a reason to celebrate. We've been gloomin' around here for the past few days, so let's be excited for once before I start jinxing more people.

[MY FAVORITE MASTY]

Well deserved. This is a guy who came into 2011 with some doubt and he completely turned that perception around. Not only that, he was the team's horse and if anything, he deserves this distinction. It really isn't anything huge in the grand scheme of things, but it just says and shows two things. It is now official, **Justin Masterson** will take the mound [for the Indians on Opening Day](#) when the Tribe faces Toronto at Progressive Field.

The first is that the Indians view Masterson as an ace. They think he can be that guy for them to headline a rotation. They're hoping that Ubaldo Jimenez (slotted number two) will pitch like a number one, but that Masterson will be the number. Masterson thinks that too.

"This is right along the lines of what I think I should be able to do," Masterson said. "And not just for an Opening Day, but throughout a season and for years to come -- to hopefully lead the Indians to a lot of victories and hopefully to the playoffs."

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Part of this can even be considered a little vindication for both Masterson and even Acta. Throughout 2010 when everyone at one point in time argued that Masterson should be in the bullpen (we all did it at some point and if you were me, you changed your mind several times) Acta held tough. He maintained that Masterson would be a starter and there was nothing that was going to change that.

Then 2011 comes around and he finally took that step. He started rearing back and throwing that sinking fastball that is clearly his best pitch and he was throwing it for strikes and as Acta said, he maintained his mechanics.

"He was able to maintain his mechanics throughout the year," Acta said, "which was something that he struggled with in the past. ... Actually, he never had any type of streak where he was wild. He was tough from Day 1 until the end."

I'm all for the Masterson number one status. I think everyone, especially Acta and Antonetti hope that Jimenez pitches well enough to be a number one, but from that number two spot. Two aces in a rotation is something that can really [push a team forward](#) . When you have two headliners setting the tone one day after the other, it can be contagious.

"I like what we have," said Masterson. "I like the four guys we're working with an whoever that fifth guy might be. Whether it's good old Rob (Hernandez), Jeanmar Gomez, David Huff, Zach McAllister or Kevin Slowey."

Good old Rob... Oh brother.

Masterson makes his Cactus League debut today against the Reds.

[INDIANS 6 - REDS 6]

[Recap](#)

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The Indians bolted out to a quick 4-0 lead after the first three innings, only to see the Reds tie it up in one quick fourth inning spurt then take the lead in the fifth. The Tribe trailed until the ninth when they took the lead, but the game ended in a tie when the Reds tied it up in the bottom of the frame.

Michael Brantley was 2-3 with a run scored and a double. Casey Kotchman had a nice debut, doubling, going 2-3 and knockg in a run. Jason Kipnis and Lonnie Chisenhall supplied RBIs each and it was Juan Diaz who tied it up in the ninth with a single.

Pitching wise it was **David Huff** [who started](#) and gave up three hits in two scoreless frames. He did not walk a hitter and recorded a strikeout. Also threw 25 of his 35 pitches for strikes.

"I felt good. I felt really good," said Huff, while still catching his breath after some post-start running. "My big thing was trying to throw into hitters, and I executed it. I was throwing it in there for strikes and I was throwing it in there for balls. I made the hitters really uncomfortable."

That's always the key for David Huff, throwing strikes and not walking hitters. As evidenced by the fact that he didn't give up any runs in his two innings despite the three hits, he fares much better when he isn't giving the opposition free baserunners.

This outing certainly helped Huff in his attempt to win the fifth rotation spot. On the flip-side, even though it is one outing, the outing Frank Herrmann put up will certainly not help him in any way. Herrmann gave up four runs off five hits in one inning of work. Nick Hagadone and Jeremy Accardo tossed scoreless innings.

Don't [pull out all your Herrmann stock](#) after the first day though. Plenty of time left and the first go-around could always be rough for some.

[REDS 8 - INDIANS 6]

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Yesterday, the Indians and Reds did it again and this time there was a winner. This time it was Cincinnati jumping out to a lead, 5-0 after the first inning. Shelley Duncan would bring the Tribe back with a big three run bomb off Homer Bailey. Aaron Cunningham was 1-3 with a RBI and Matt LaPorta knocked one in on a groundout.

Russ Canzler singled in Zeke Carrera and was 2-2 with a walk as well. Crusty Rusty.

The 5 spot? Well it happened on **Ubaldo Jimenez's** watch but it was hardly his fault. It also resulted in an early exit for him as he was supposed to pitch two innings instead of just one.

Jimenez would give up five runs but only one was earned after a Rusty Crusty (oops) committed an error and a few "soft ones" were hit.

"It's up to you guys to say they hit the ball soft," Jimenez said with a laugh. "It probably doesn't look good in the paper, but I felt good. Whoever knows about baseball knows that things like this are going to happen. They kept hitting bloopers."

Acta echoed Ubaldo's sentiments, saying that the Reds did not hit the ball hard and defense was not played well.

Josh Tomlin and Jeanmar Gomez both threw two shutout innings, with Tomlin striking out a pair and giving up a pair of hits while Gomez struck out three and didn't allow a baserunner. Huff jabs, Gomez jabs back, we'll see what Slowey's got soon.

I keep cursing people as I said on Twitter that it was nice to see Rob Bryson in a game and not hurt. He gave up a solo shot to Dioner Navarro.

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HECTOR AMBRIZ IS BACK!! He pitched a scoreless inning.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Terry Pluto always [has the nuggets that others don't seem to have](#) . How does he do it? We'll never know, but you can always count on what he says and take it on good authority. He is reporting that **Asdrubal**

Cabrera

came into camp "in less than ideal condition." This isn't the first time Cabrera has had the weight issue and I can only assume this is part of the reason the Indians haven't really pressed the extension talks with Cabrera.

The weight issue had Cabrera demoted a few years ago back when Eric Wedge was around. The purpose was for Cabrera to get on a diet and get into game shape. I'd hate to see him struggle with this issue again and get complacent about his diet.

On the flip-side, **Cord Phelps** added 12 pounds, but the good kind. Phelps barked up with some muscle and that can only help him in his versatility. If he figures to be more of second baseman/third baseman, I'd think the muscle would help him over the added range in the field.

Injuries: Perzes are still out. Chris Perez says he is hopeful to resume throwing this week and still looking at March 15th for game action (unlikely) and Rafael Perez is apparently close and on a throwing program. Chris is [also trying to get over sneezing and feeling it in his oblique](#)

Aaron Cunningham was taking BP on Friday and [in the workout on Saturday](#) . He then made his Cactus League debut on Sunday and had a RBI as mentioned. Cunningham is grateful for [his new chance in Cleveland](#)

. He says the fresh start is motivation and surely a new face is going to bring intrigue to the Tribe.

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"He's a guy that we need to take a look at," Acta said after the Indians' 8-6 loss to the Reds at Goodyear Ballpark. "Everybody knows he came in a trade and he's out of options. He's very athletic. He can play the corners and he can stand in center field and play there, too. He's an interesting guy, so it was good to see him out there."

Cunningham will play center and lead off in the 'B' game against the White Sox today. Fred Lewis and Trevor Crowe will also be in the outfield and Nick Weglarz will DH. So the LF job is certainly going to get competition in that one.

Bastian says that **Matt LaPorta** worked with Bruce Fields in the offseason on his hitting. LaPorta's stance is changed in that he's taller and Fields worked with him on chasing pitches. Let's see if he can use the fact that he's flying under the radar to his advantage.

Just because Josh Tomlin has a spot, doesn't [mean he isn't going to go out there](#) and pitch like he's competing.

"I'm still going to go out there and compete," Tomlin said. "There's guys always wanting to take your spot. There's always guys good enough to take your spot. So, for me, it's just going out there competing and trying to do the best I can. Hopefully, that takes care of itself in the end."

Still think [Cutter Chisenhall](#) is the most badass name ever. No kid is ever going to mess with him, ever.

In not related but related news, [former Indian Alex White was picked up for a DUI](#) ...
Oops.

You should probably take part in the latest edition of [Guess the New Indian](#) ... Last time it was Russ Canzler, who's just really popular right now.

Take a look at the results of a [crowdsourcing poll conducted by Wahoos On First](#) for the top

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Indians prospects. They compare it to some of the leading prospect expert lists.

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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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