

## Spring Training Rundown: The Roberto Arrival Probability

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Tuesday, March 13 2012 5:00 AM - Last Updated Monday, March 12 2012 8:56 PM

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Here in Akron, still reeling over the loss to OU in the MAC Title game. Such a talented Akron squad won't get a chance in the tournament after winning their regular season championship. Akron would never win the National Championship, but they could win a game in the tournament. Let's not get into debating that though. Baseball does it right and the new playoff system is intriguing.

### [SHAKING OUT]

Things should start getting interesting in camp in the next week. This past week has simply been boring. Sure we've had stuff to yammer on about and the whole Grady Sizemore thing made for some real talk, but really, nothing significant has or ever comes out of the first week of games. Heck not many significant things come out of spring training as a whole because the roster on April 4th may not even be the same a week later, let alone a month later.

But there is some real intrigue here now with the left field job because even though Sizemore may not miss a majority of the season, he's going to miss a good chunk of it. This has sidelined him early enough that he may not miss two months, but he very well could.

Either way, left field is open and it significantly impacts how the roster is going to look and that could have a long-term impact. What if someone like Felix Pie, Fred Lewis, or Ryan Spilborghs end up winning a spot because of the opening created and go on to have significant contributions?

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You don't know what significant impact is going to result in this move, so we can only speculate and follow each detail of left field closely.

What I'm now a little intrigued with is what is happening around that left field spot. I mean with Sizemore out, it not only creates a starting spot for someone, it creates another roster spot. Instead of just **Shelley Duncan** getting a spot, now what if **Aaron Cunningham** gets one too. Could that re-open a door for Matt LaPorta if Jason Donald wins the utility spot? With Donald's versatility and Cunningham's ability to play all three spots, carrying someone like LaPorta is more of a luxury. Not saying LaPorta is a luxury, just the fact that they can pretty much pick anyone regardless of position, which way they hit, whatever.

You could take a chance on a Russ Canzler, or add a NRI like a Ryan Spilborghs who might do something for you. Heck, you could take a speedy Zeke Carrera to have as a designated runner. The possibilities are endless. You could carry both Lonnie Chisenhall and Jack Hannahan.

Then again if Chisenhall wins the third base job, Jack Hannahan is a backup infielder automatically, so in a way, that takes up a spot.

If Hannahan wins, Chisenhall is going to Columbus to play every day.

If you want, you can take a right-handed hitting compliment in left field like Fred Lewis.

Granted you do not want to be in a position like this one, you'd rather have a healthy and productive Grady Sizemore, but the silver lining isn't bad. Acta has some flexibility. He could even take an extra infielder too if he wanted. Jose Lopez seems to be fighting hard for a spot and as Jordan Bastian [has pointed out](#), provides some right-handed pop and experience (and versatility).

Basically we've gone from having some tight races with little speculation as to how things will shake out, to a wide-open competition. No one is exempt from that final roster spot at this point. The left field spot will be filled, the fourth outfield spot and the utility infielder one will be too.

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That final bench spot is one that is open for interpretation with no real criteria attached.

Roster cuts are coming, with more advanced prospects just in for some additional big league camp experience (Chun Chen, Tyler Sturdevant, Austin Adams) being the first to go, joining the rest of the organization at Minor League camp. Then we'll start getting down to players on the 40-man roster (Weglarz, Neal, Kluber, Salazar) who do not really have a chance at winning a spot. By next week, we'll probably be at that point where the next cuts, are ones that eliminate people from competitions.

### [IDENTITY CRISIS]

If you missed the "Identity Crisis" piece on ESPN's Outside the Lines on Sunday, [you can watch it here](#)

Pedro Gomez sat down with both the former Leo Nunez and Fausto Carmona. I feel like after that, I should move forth calling him

**Roberto Hernandez**

and not Fausto Carmona.

One interesting note is that Juan Oviedo grew up with the real Leo Nunez and was rather cooperative with everyone involved when the news first broke. Hernandez on the other hand said that the real Fausto Carmona is a "distant relative" of sorts and that the first time he was confronted about it publicly, he did not acknowledge it. The real Carmona exposed Hernandez on the radio and Roberto, did not take action until he was arrested.

Pedro Gomez went on to note that MLB could take action of suspension and/or fines against both Oviedo and Hernandez when they do return. Suspension seems more likely if its rather soon (which is unlikely). Oviedo has already missed time, while Hernandez has technically missed none to this point. I think Oviedo's situation will be resolved before Hernandez's, because remember his happened last year during the season.

The latest development as recently as last night is that Hernandez [has seen the charges against him dropped](#), which means he is now one step closer to returning. He still has to work out his situation, much like Oviedo does, but now he, like Oviedo has need not worry about criminal issues with his native

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country.

Perhaps we are a little closer than we would have thought to seeing Roberto Hernandez pitch for the Cleveland Indians. I'm not saying it's close, but it is certainly closer than I had anticipated.

### [SOMEONE LIKE YOU]

There was a buzz around the fact that Major League Baseball was going to have the Indians and Diamondbacks mic'd up for a spring training contest. It has been done in sports before, but not really so much in baseball. Baseball has weird unwritten rules, remember? So I'm sure the idea of sticking mics on people playing the game seemed intrusive to some. There's a lot of chatter in-game between players and players, player and coaches, players and umpires, coaches and umpires, etc etc. Surely something awesome would come from this.

Something awesome did happen this past week in the MLB Network broadcast of Arizona and Cleveland and in a way, a star was born.

Well it comes as no shock to me that Kipnis is now more of a house hold name in three aspects... Baseball, Cleveland, and Chicks..man.I've pegged **Jason Kipnis** as a potential superstar. It half has to do with his talent, the other half has everything to do with his style of play and his personality. He's a "get dirty" type of player. He fits Cleveland well and with Grady Sizemore's star fading out, the city is still searching for that "poster boy" for their baseball team. Kipnis fits it and he has a wide smile and engaging personality on display in the world of Twitter and Facebook.

First off, he was singing on MLB Network, and this was a [hotly](#) [posted](#) [issue](#) around the internet.

Second, Cleveland pays attention.

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Thirdly, he was singing Adele.

Chicks...man.

Now I wouldn't expect "Kip's Chicks" to start-up immediately, but I feel it could be close. All we need now is the production full-scale and Kipnis' star may start shining really bright.

And Kipnis has made it a point that this [wasn't an attention grabber](#) . He routinely does this during games. Hey it can get pretty boring out there at second base. You don't have anyone to talk to like the first baseman. No one can really hear you, so, why not?

Most places have termed it as Kipnis getting "caught" singing. Yet Kip is showing no shame. And why Adele? I guess [http://twitter.com/TheJK\\_Kid/status/177568784742223873](http://twitter.com/TheJK_Kid/status/177568784742223873)">only Chris Rose knows for sure.

He might be taking Vinnie Pestano with him because Vinnie is just as fun and seems to be a partner in crime ( [or a partner in whatever this is](#) ) with Kipnis.

### [FIGHTIN' WORDS]

So looks like things were not exactly rocky mountain cool between the Colorado brass and **Ubaldo Jimenez**

last season. Our little tale begins with Tracy Ringolsby

[&nbsp;uncovering some angst](#)

between Jimenez and the Rockies and Jordan Bastian completely ripping the cover off.

Jimenez told Ringolsby that he saw Colorado only had room to sign two players to big deals. Those two players ended up being Troy Tulowitzki (who wouldn't sign him?) and Carlos Gonzalez (kinda would want to sign him too.)... It made him unhappy.

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*"It wasn't the season I feel I should have, but I am happy I kept pitching," said Jimenez. "I was not going to get traded if I was on the disabled list. I wanted to move from Colorado (from the start of last spring). It wasn't working for me with the team. So I was happy when I got traded."*

And when he says "I kept pitching" he was referring to the fact that he kept pitching through injuries, not because he was unhappy about his contract situation.

Jimenez went on to tell Bastian and Cleveland reporters that being in Cleveland is like being in heaven. Jeeze, when have you ever heard an athlete say that about Cleveland?

*"It was kind of hard being with the Rockies," Jimenez said. "I went through a lot. I think people outside the organization, they don't know. But me and the people in the front office, they know. It works both ways. They're happy and I'm happy. I'm happy to be here. And they're happy with what they got."*

Jimenez ultimately felt unwanted.

On one perspective... Jimenez has a nice contract. Not as nice as Tulo or Car-Go's recent deals, but he has a nice contract. I wouldn't feel unwanted, but we can only speculate as to what else was going on there between Ubaldo and Colorado... So thought ended there.

Part of Jimenez's appeal to the Indians is that contract. But that was a commitment the Rockies made to Jimenez, not the Indians. The Indians have made no commitment to Jimenez yet and I think Jimenez knows he has to prove what he can do to the Indians before they can consider committing to him long term. That bodes well for the Indians because not only does Ubaldo look to be focused and willing to play for Cleveland, he looks to be healthy.

One other thing he told Ringolsby is that by the time he had healed from other injuries and arrived in Cleveland, his arm had fatigued, which would explain why he wasn't really any good when he did arrive.

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All of this points to a good sign for Cleveland and Ubaldo. We'll see how it actually shakes out, but signs right now, are definitely positive. Jimenez went three innings, giving up a run off three hits and two walks on Monday.

### [GAME RECAPS]

The nice thing about having things to talk about? I don't have to tell you about the single Jose Lopez hit or the scoreless inning of relief by Dan Wheeler (whoops, that never happened.)

But I do want to pick out a few interesting details from the past few games.

Tuesday's game against the Diamondbacks provided the opportunity to tee-off. Because it was the MLB Network game, [you can see](#); [Shin-Soo Choo](#); [and Jason Kipnis homering](#). You can also see the birth of Jack Grand Slammahan.

Fast-forward to SportstimeOhio's first broadcast on Saturday when the Indians [took on the Padres](#) and really the only highlight for the Indians was the solo shot by Choo. Choo was 2-2 in the game and the double he hit was classic Choo. The home run he hit against the D'Backs? It was a rather low and slightly to the outside but still close enough for Choo to drive to opposite center field.

Stats do not tell you much about spring training, but just watching those three hits from Choo, tell me a whole lot about the season the guy is shaping up to have.

On Friday, Milwaukee pretty much [laid a beat down](#) on everyone who came in to pitch for the Tribe. No pitcher entered and exited without getting damage done but it was Derek Lowe who struggled to find the strike zone in walking three hitters.

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Monday was a great game for the left field battle as Shelley Duncan [&nbsp;knocked in a pair going 1-3](#) with a walk. Aaron Cunningham also went 1-3 and don't look now but Russ Canzler was 2-3 and is hitting .368 this spring.

Perhaps Duncan is [getting a lift from his visiting dad](#) , pitching coach Dave Duncan who is currently on a leave with the Cardinals as he spends time with Shelley's mom in her battle with brain cancer. Great for Shelley.

### [STARTER UPDATE]

Huff: 8 IP, 6 ER, 2 BB, 5 K

Gomez: 4 IP, 0 R, 2 BB, 4 K

McAllister: 4 IP, 3 R, 0 BB, 5 K

Slowey: 5 IP, 2 R, 0 BB, 1 K

The race for the fifth starter should start heating up. As starters stay in longer, they'll get their own starts and likely face more prominent talent, giving you a better idea as to who has what it takes. Plus now that the cobwebs of inactivity in live game action are beginning to be shook off, the real tests are forthcoming.

All have had two official games at this point.

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Slowey commented after Sunday that he is [getting closer to where he wants to be](#) mechanically. Slowey is a smart guy (If you played [Guess the New Indian](#), you would know he went to Winthrop on an academic scholarship) so credit him for having the brains to change up his style. He knows the Indians infield defense can eat up the grounders, [so he's going to try and adapt](#)

.

David Huff looked awful against the Angels if you watched the game. It's hard to look good against that lineup, but he was not pitching ahead and missing spots.

### [INJURY UPDATES]

**Grady Sizemore** is back in the house and it looks to [be another frustrating period](#) for the off-injured center fielder. Sizemore says that he wants to be 100% because that will stop him from putting stress on other areas of his body in his rehab process.

It's going to be tough to do that, especially if the Indians cannot find an answer in left field for the first month or so. But it will be something to keep an eye out for. I say, take your time if you want to come back and play from when you come back to the end point.

Chris Perez played catch from 120 feet on Sunday, which is good news. It isn't March 15th yet and he's on track to throw a bullpen soon, so he's making good on his personal timetable, but it won't be exact. Still on track to be the ninth inning guy come April though.

Rafael Perez threw a [bullpen session Thursday](#) and then again on Monday, one of the last hurdles needed to be cleared for him to pitch in Cactus League action. Robinson Tejeda meanwhile has been playing catch after dealing with a right calf strain. I wouldn't expect him to be in any sort of bullpen competition now.

Casey Kotchman and Felix Pie have been added to the injury report though with back tightness and neck stiffness respectively.

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Austin Adams [reported that he threw another bullpen](#) on Friday. He's on his way to minor league camp though along with Chun Chen, who's been in a walking boot after rolling his ankle. Tyler Sturdevant was also re-assigned.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

It is looking as if the Indians are going to get the Yu Darvish frenzy in Goodyear. Darvish pitched on Wednesday against the Padres and with the Indians and Rangers set for a tilt on Tuesday in Goodyear, Darvish is likely to be on the mound. And it looks like that game will be on MLB Network.

I'm not sure what to make [over this fortune cookie Manny Acta received](#) at P.F. Changs. For one it was at P.F. Changs, which is essentially America's version of Chinese food. The Chinese would never put something about sports in their fortunes...

Now if the Indians win the division, everyone's going to point to that damn cookie and I'm going to have to eat at P.F. Changs. Not really, but people will point to that cookie. I mean it's a nice little story, but if a P.F. Changs fortune cookie is correct, then, I'm going to go with it being a coincidence.

Terry Pluto says that Michael Brantley is ultimately one of the two [biggest keys for the Indians](#) along with Ubaldo Jimenez. He says with Sizemore out, Brantley has to be healthy, hit and be a solid leadoff guy as well as play strong center field defense. So far so good is correct, but he needs to do all of that in the regular season and the biggest key is staying healthy.

Bastian was able to snap a good photo of [Shin-Soo Choo's new forearm tattoo](#) . It's no Hawk...

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*Nino has a blog and it's so entertaining it should be nominated for most entertaining blog competitions. Give it a vist at [The Tribe Daily](#) .*

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