

Spring Training Rundown: Hot Corner Heat and the Fall of Matola

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, March 28 2012 10:00 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, March 28 2012 10:08 AM



Last night was the highly anticipated 16-team The Cleveland Fan Insider Fantasy Baseball Draft. I don't think I've ever been involved in a draft that involved that many teams, so this will surely be an interesting season of waiver wire hunting. I will also no-doubt take an active role in providing you with updates throughout the season, especially if I'm winning. If not, then you can forget about it. The stakes are high too, so you can bet that my team headlined by Adrian Gonzalez and Giancarlo Stanton is going for it all.

[ALRIGHT WHATEVER]

I appreciate the angle Castrovince is taking [with his latest posting](#) on the optioning of **Lonnie Chisenhall** and **Matt LaPorta** to Triple-A Columbus. But is it a bit frightening?

Why did the Indians have to send down LaPorta the same day they sent down Chisenhall?

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That's all I'm asking here.

In seriousness, Castrovince makes an excellent point and it kind of brings me around to the quarrel I had with myself the other day in regards to the idea of handing **Jack Hannahan** [the third base spot](#).

Hannahan gets this role based off his defense, which is nothing new to us or my quarrel. But what Castro believes is that the Indians are not so much going with Hannahan because of Hannahan, they are going with Hannahan because of Chisenhall.

The thinking in the Indians' camp is that Chisenhall pressed too hard to win the job, resulting in his .205 average in 16 Cactus League games. They were pretty pleased with his D. I certainly don't think the Indians were so wowed with Hannahan's second-half surge (.321 average, .874 OPS in 121 plate appearances... all in a part-time role) that they think he's suddenly going to reach his peak in his early 30s. Because that's crazy talk.

I think they just want to protect themselves on the defensive end while simultaneously protecting Chisenhall from becoming the next LaPorta.

I dig... But the point that rings true is the fact that he needs regular time. Of course the argument of why can't he get regular time at the Major League level is very good, you know that will not end up happening as long as Hannahan is on the roster.

And you know why? Acta will insist on playing Hannahan when his sinkerballers are pitching. That much erratic playing time will surely lend to him becoming Matt LaPorta more than anything.

And moving forward with Hannahan? Oh it won't be so bad in my eyes...

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"I've always kind of been that last guy to make a team," Hannahan said. "If you don't do your job, they're going to find someone else to do it. Instead of just always looking in the rear-view mirror at who's coming, I'm not going to worry about that stuff. I'll just go out and I'm going to play and be myself and let everything take care of itself."

And Hannahan went on to say that he's confident offensively and defensively. Eh, let's roll with it. There's no turning back now friends.

LaPorta meanwhile? Yeah it's [kind of a footnote](#) in all of this, which is fascinating to say the least. Manny Acta said that the opportunity was there and that he simply did not grab it. While Antonetti basically talked in code.

"As we've said all along," general manager Chris Antonetti said, "Matt continues to demonstrate in spurts that he has the ability to be a quality middle-of-the-order Major League hitter. The challenge for Matt is to demonstrate that consistently. Unfortunately, we did not see that consistency here in camp."

Did you decode it? No? Well basically in Shapiroese he's saying that Matt LaPorta cannot hit anything that isn't a fastball and therefore cannot hit consistently enough to be a viable major league player.

The truth hurts. But just look at LaPorta in that picture up there. Shaggy beard with a half-smile that tells you all you need to know about his situation. That is the look of upcoming failure and the knowledge that there is nothing he can do to stop it.

And Chad Huffman was also re-assigned. Talk about a footnote.

[GAME RUNDOWN]

The Indians fell [6-5 to Milwaukee](#) on Monday, with **Carlos Santana** DHing and hitting a

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two-run home run. Jack Hannahan returned to the lineup and was 2-2 with a run scored. It was his first game in a few weeks. Jutin Masterson pitched six innings in his second to last tune-up game giving up five runs off seven hits and a walk.

Frank Herrmann and Chris Ray pitched scoreless innings in their pursuits for a bullpen spot.

And then on Tuesday the [Indians fell to the White Sox 7-1](#) behind Ubaldo Jimenez. More on that later, but the Indians mustered five hits, with Asdrubal Cabrera going 1-1 with the lone RBI. Andy LaRoche went 1-3 and is now hitting .391 and

Jose Lopez

was 0-for-4 with his fifth error of the spring.

I don't know about you guys, but the defense is a major turn-off for me with Lopez. Sure he's had a great spring, but so what? This guy will get playing time every so often so there's no way he'll be hitting well if he's rusty. I'd rather give the spot to someone else who won't botch things.

For the second straight day a starter returned to the lineup as Michael Brantley went 1-2. Stretch that hammy out.

Hernicus Capernicus went one inning and gave up two runs, as did Robinson Tejeda. Jeremy Accardo inched closer to a relief role as he tossed a shutout frame with two strikeouts.

[UBALDO TWO GO]

Mr. Ubaldo meanwhile was the story this one. **Ubaldo Jimenez** made his second to last start of the spring and there was much anticipation as the season nears for him to be able to, not suck. I can understand the rise in concern with Ubaldo needing to show us something as this spring has progressed, but I guess I'm not as worried as everyone else. I'll worry when he's not doing well in the regular season. Sure, some clean performances now would be better and I guess the tick down in velocity earlier is cause for concern.

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But don't go jumping off the cliff here now. All indications were though is that Ubaldo did well...
[At least according to Ubaldo](#)

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"I felt great," Jimenez said. "I was able to throw a lot of strikes to get ahead and stay ahead. I think it was the first game that I've been able to do that in Spring Training. I only have one more game left and then I'm going to be ready for the season."

And Manny too, I guess.

"Ubaldo stretched out today," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "I liked what I saw today. His secondary stuff was a lot better -- probably the best I've seen him in the spring. He was able to throw it at times when he was behind in the count, so we're encouraged by where he is right now."

Jimenez went five innings, giving up two earned (three total) off seven hits and no walk and a wild pitch. He struck out three and tossed 90 pitches. He did get through the first three innings with no damage, then fell into some issues in the fourth, thanks in part to the Lopez error.

Jimenez has one more go-around before he pitches Saturday April 7th against the Blue Jays. It'll be his final tune-up and I'm sure even more emphasis will be placed on him showing some good control (which you can say he did in this start aside from a wild pitch).

[DOLAN SPEAKS]

Paul Dolan [had a sit-down with](#) Terry Pluto of the Cleveland Plain Dealer and there are a few quotes of intrigue.

He clarified the annual Forbes report that said the Indians made \$30 million in profit last year. I mean, I could of told you that if you asked me. Maybe they did make \$30 million, but they

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certainly didn't out-earn their expenses. Dolan says that the team put back the money they made into the team, so quit your whining. The only year the owners profited was the playoff year in 2007. So if that doesn't tell you they want to win, you are just one person who cannot be and will not ever be convinced otherwise.

"Both the union and MLB agreed we were doing it the right way," said Dolan. "That's why they had [President Mark Shapiro and General Manager Chris Antonetti] talk about how we operate. If we were just pocketing the money, the union would never agree to have us represented as the franchise doing it right. The union has called out other teams [for taking excess profits], but never us."

Seems like the Dolans are not a fan of the fact that the new CBA didn't address some things...

"We achieved labor peace," said Dolan. "But we didn't address the fundamental problems [such as a lack of a salary cap]."

If only there were more owners in the situation Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, etc. were in... Maybe.

And there is this gem, which I find the most intriguing.

"About a year ago, there was a rumor that there was something with Fausto," he said. "These type of things [name changes, age changes] do happen."

I know, you're saying, well if they knew about why didn't they do anything! Simply put Dolan said it was a rumor. You can't act on a rumor and the Indians efforts to find anything out came up empty. We do now know that the Indians certainly were not shocked at the development that happened earlier this year... That's for sure.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

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The Indians will save some salary regardless of what happens with **Roberto Hernandez** this season. The Indians re-did the deal with the renamed Fausto Carmona.

[Details have now surfaced](#)

via the Associated Press that Hernandez's base salary has gone down to \$2.5 million and he has the opportunity to earn \$2.7 in incentives. That is less, regardless of if he makes both the base and the incentives combined.

Although if he doesn't make it off the restricted list, none of this matters. What does matter is that his \$9 million option for 2013 is now \$6 million in base with \$3 million in bonuses. But we're a long way away from that getting discussed.

Speaking of things that we won't bother discussing. Casey Blake (now 38) [was released](#) by the Colorado Rockies. I can't believe I'm even seeing Indians fans suggest the Indians pick him up. I'm just going to end this paragraph here.

And speaking of Rockies and in news that has nothing to do with the Indians, but really does, the Rockies [moved Alex White to the bullpen](#) . They say it's the only way he can make the roster this season. The Indians were moving forward with White as a starter and were dead-set on making sure he stayed there, but there was talk of him possibly having to be a reliever when all was said and done. The Ubaldo trade looks way better if White is nothing more than a reliever.

Going back to not speaking about things. I didn't even bother to tweet about the Vladimir Guerrero news that the Indians worked him out in the Dominican Republic. I was asked about it on Ohio Baseball weekly on Monday night and really, is there anything to say?

That thought was re-affirmed [when Chris Antonetti spoke](#) on the issue.

"I think Vladdy continues to have an interest in playing this year," Antonetti said. "He asked if we'd have interest in working him out, so we just worked him out. That was really the extent of it. I wouldn't read too much into it at this point. It's just us doing our due diligence."

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I wouldn't read too much into it. Exactly. In other words, a favor was done and you should make nothing of it, just as you shouldn't have when you saw the news. Vlad cannot play the outfield and therefore is not a viable option.

The Indians will watch the three starters, Slowey, Gomez, and Huff one more time each before making a choice. So it really is [going down to the wire](#) , as is the bullpen race.

Kudos to Thomas More for his [interview with the guys at Uni Watch](#) on Chief Wahoo and the Indians uniforms. Uni Watch is having a re-naming contest for the Indians as well as a re-designing of the uniforms and in this case, logo. Interested to see what is brought forward.

[Cleveland Municipals anyone](#)

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Deadline is April 15th... So if you have ideas and creativity (and Photoshop abilities far superior to mine), go for it.

The Indians have a new social blog out called [Tribe Vibes](#) . I'm not sure the overall point right now as it's only posting videos and quick game recaps. But the initial posting promises behind the scenes type news when the Tribe is on the road and to keep us "informed on the latest decisions made by our Baseball Operations Department and coaching staff." So there's that.

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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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