Today is a special edition of Minor Happenings, one that comes about as a result of the pretty significant news Tuesday - from a farm system standpoint - that right-hander (and mega-prospect) Hector Rondon has been moved to the bullpen. As fate would have it, Tony happened to have a scheduled visit to Akron Tuesday night and was able to get the scoop on the change (as well as several other topics) from several people in the Indians organization.

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In addition to the Rondon move, I was also able to get some comments on some of the other pitchers recently moved from the starting rotation to the bullpen, namely right-handers Frank Herrmann and Zach Putnam. I was also able to get a better idea on how the Indians put together their Double-A and Triple-A rosters, why they have so many veterans in Triple-A, and why some guys tend to go up and down between the two levels.

Those who read *Minor Happenings* know I give it raw, to the point and straight from the horse's mouth. That's the same approach I have taken with it today as with so many quotes from the people I talked to last night, there is no need to color things up with lead in sentences and all that and instead just give the cuts from the front office personnel

and coaches directly.

Also, here is some video last night of Hector Rondon and Zach Putnam in action:

Video 1: Rondon strikes a hitter out
Video 2: Rondon gives up a weak hit over shortstop's head
Video 3: Putnam with the strikeout

Director's Cuts

Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins spoke for a few minutes on some of the recent decisions to move three of their higher profile starting pitchers into bullpen roles. Here is what he had to say:

On Hector Rondon: "The thinking [with a move to the bullpen] is he has a very impressive arm and is someone who we feel can get major league outs. He showed that in major league spring training and he continues to show in Double-A the ability to do that.

We do have some needs throughout the system for bullpen depth, so we are taking a look at Hector in that role to see if he could potentially help our major league team on the short term.

However, we clearly view Hector having ability to one day be a major league starter.

This is because he is more prepared to potentially help in the bullpen now because of where his secondary pitches are, so we are just taking a look at him in that capacity."

On Zach Putnam: "He is a guy we took in the draft last year out of Michigan who has a power fastball up to 95 MPH and has a strikeout splitter. He did have the ability to start in college and may have the ability to start in the major leagues, but we see him as having the potential to be a high upside bullpen arm.

Sometimes you just make the decisions to develop them in those roles.

Is it out of the question that he will never start again?

No, it is not out of the question.

But in the near future he is going to be developed as a bullpen arm.

Obviously he is moving quickly as he was just taken in the 2008 draft and in 2009 he is already in Double-A.

His first outing was better than his second, but he is showing plenty of ability.

I think he has already touched 95 MPH in Double-A and gotten a couple of strikeouts with his split finger.

He is extremely athletic with a great baseball pedigree.

He is someone we are excited about."

On Frank Herrmann: "Frank is a guy who was taken out of Harvard back in 2005. He really has grinded it out in the minor leagues as a starter, and he has put himself on the map by being durable, consistent, and slowly his secondary pitches have come as he has always had good fastball ability.

He really locates his fastball just about as good as anybody we have, especially down and away or opposite arm side.

Frank has come up to Triple-A and already been better than just competitive.

He has been pretty close to flawless since he has been there.

He is really not intimidated by the bat as he attacks guys and comes after them with his fastball.

Really he is a guy who has already exceeded expectations and is someone we feel will continue to do that."

Assistant Director's Cuts

Like I did with Atkins two weeks ago in Akron, I was able to sit down during the game with Assistant Farm Director Meka Asonye and talk at length about a myriad of topics concerning the Indians farm system. From the role changes of Rondon and Putnam, to how they setup their Triple-A and Double-A squads, why they sign so many veterans, and so on.

On Hector Rondon: "I think the move is definitely prompted by a need at the big league level. We certainly see Rondon as a guy who can contribute sometime potentially in the near future and we feel like this gives him a chance to potentially impact our big league team. I don't want to say [his stuff] will play up because I think even as a starter you see the fact that even in the 6th and 7th inning he is still working 91-94 MPH. It definitely has a chance to play up in short stints, but I think with his stuff even as a starter he has maintained above average stuff throughout his outings."

On Rondon's ability to handle bullpen role: "Because of his weapons he is going to be fine in whatever role he pitches in. The same thing with Fausto Carmona, he was able to break in as a reliever before he was a starter.

In spring training these guys do pitch out of the bullpen, so I don't see it really affecting him at all.

He didn't really have a bad outing tonight (Tuesday).

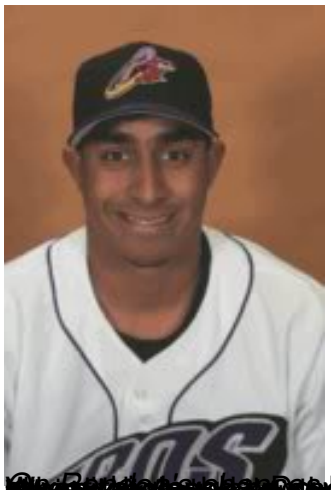
His stuff was still good tonight, he just had a couple bad plays behind him and a couple cheap hits."

On how Rondon prepares for the new role: "I think as a starter you know you are going every fifth day and when your bullpen sessions are.

So there is a little more routine, but even in the minor leagues our bullpen arms still follow the same routine.

It is a little bit different with the conditioning, the lifting, and how they throw, but we are still in the business of developing and working on their player plan.

He still is going to be working on the same things even though he is not starting right now."



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