The Indians season will come to an unceremonious end on Sunday as the team looks to leave the 2009 season in the dust as quickly as possible and get right to work on 2010. As the offseason plays out and spring training nears, several moves will be made in regard to the roster and the coaching staff at the big league level. One of those changes is likely to occur at the catching position. Tony says Lou Marson is the odds on favorite to be the team's starting catcher, and writes about it in his latest.

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As the offseason plays out and spring training nears, several moves will be made in regard to the roster and the coaching staff at the big league level. One of those changes is likely to occur at the catching position. The Indians already made a major change at the position just over two months ago when they shipped Victor Martinez to the Boston Red Sox in a July 31st deadline deal.

But, Martinez's successor at the position Kelly Shoppach's days also appear numbered as he will likely either be traded this offseason or be non-tendered by the club making him a free agent.

The Indians already on record as saying that they will not rush uber-catching prospect Carlos Santana and instead let him open the season as the starting catcher in Triple-A Columbus. Wh

at this means is at least at the start of next season the starting catching job for the Cleveland Indians is prime for the taking until Santana likely joins the team midway through the season.

The Indians have three relatively young catchers on their roster besides Santana and Shoppach with the likes of Wyatt Toregas, Chris Gimenez, and the newly acquired Lou Marson. But Gimenez is more a backup or third catcher and is being groomed more as a super utility player, and his roster status this offseason is in huge question after he hit a disappointing .148 (16-for-108) for the Indians this year on top of hitting just .235 (32-for-136) in Columbus before he was called up.

In addition to that Toregas is not a major league starting catcher.

He is probably your model backup catcher, a guy with excellent defense who handles a staff well, but will never hit much in the big leagues.

This is where Marson comes in, and why he seemingly has the starting catcher's gig locked down to start next season. Having been traded just two months ago coming from the Phillies in the Cliff Lee deal, he's still getting to know the organization and they are still getting to know him, but so far they have liked what they have seen out of him.

"Absolutely," said Marson in a recent interview about it being an adjustment getting used to a change of scenery from one organization to another. "I am just trying to get used to all the different faces and new people.

I was with Philadelphia since 2004 so you get used to everybody and the friendships, but this is a new beginning for me and right where I want to be with everything going on."

Marson won't hit a lot of home runs, but he is a good hitting catcher with a very polished approach who has the ability to hit for average and put the bat on the ball consistently. During his one month with the big league club the past few weeks he has quietly put together a solid showing.

Granted he has performed in September where hitters tend to face a lot more young, inexperienced pitching as the non-contenders - like the Indians - have thrown in the towel on the season and are trying to get extended looks at their young pitching.

But, it is encouraging nonetheless to see him hit .250 with a .729 OPS in his first extended playing stint in the big leagues.

But the bat is not where Marson is truly valued. It is the way he handles a pitching staff, his more than solid defense behind the plate, his outstanding leadership skills, and his good throwing arm. While he does not have a laser for an arm, his very quick exchange and transfer of the ball and accurate throws allow him to get the ball down to second base under 1.9 seconds.

His early success in throwing out runners has been nice to see as he is 8 of 17 throwing out runners since being called up, which is good for an exceptional .471 success rate.

For many teams, having a good hitting catcher is a luxury, something Indians fans were spoiled to have with Martinez here in Cleveland the past six years. Finding an elite hitting catcher is a rarity, which is why the Indians and so many fans are so excited to eventually see Santana.

In the meantime, however, Marson should prove to be more than capable as the team's field general next year doing all the dirty work behind the plate, handling his pitching staff, and being a leader.

"Getting to know the pitchers and calling the game are where my main focus is at," said Marson. "Obviously I want to hit, and I know I am going to hit. Catchers that say that they don't care about their hitting I think they are lying to you because it makes the game that much more fun when you are doing well hitting and it makes you play better behind the plate also. I think defensively, running the game, and things like that I think that is what [the organization] is going to look at.

They are going to have their guys who are going to rake like LaPorta, Hafner, and others.

Guys who are paid to drive in runs.

I guess they pay

me to take care of the pitchers."

That rapport with his pitchers is something you often hear scouts and front office executives talk about when discussing Marson. It is more an innate ability to understand how to relate to your staff. To know when to challenge them, or when to lay off the gas. He is new to the system and with that he is getting to know a lot of the pitchers, which is why it was so important to get him up with the big league team this September and get him exposed to a staff that next year should mostly return intact.

"That is huge when you catch these guys," said Marson about getting to know his staff. "You have to know who they are and how you can get on them. How to approach them when they are pitching and are not throwing the ball well.

How to talk to them.

That takes awhile.

Usually a couple starts out on the field and off it as well."

One pitcher he knows very well is right-hander Carlos Carrasco who came over with him in the Lee trade. The two have been together for the most part at every level of the Phillies system for the past six seasons and have gotten to know each other very well and developed a very good chemistry with one another. In a way, they are almost like family and because of this Marson is a little tougher on Carrasco than most other pitchers.

He can be very upfront and honest with him because of how much he believes in Carrasco's ability.

"Everybody in here has good stuff, and I know Carlos has very good stuff," said Marson. "He could have thrown the ball better than he did [since coming here]. I am tougher on Carlos because I have been with him since 2004.

When I signed [with the Phillies] and went to the Gulf Coast League in 2004 it was his first year there too.

So we have come up together since we were 17, and I am much harder on him than other guys just because I know the potential he has and what he can be."

It didn't take Marson long to find his place in the organization and fit right in, but things are a lot less hectic now than they were that final week of July when he learned he was traded to the

Indians in the Lee deal. In an odd twist of fate, on the day of the trade he was playing an early afternoon game for the Phillies Triple-A affiliate in Lehigh Valley who also happened to be playing the Indians Triple-A affiliate Columbus. Near the end of the game when word spread to the Columbus coaching staff that Lee had been traded and they had acquired a few of the Lehigh Valley players, the Columbus coaches jokingly motioned for those guys to join their new team right away.

"We were actually playing Columbus in Lehigh," recalled Marson. "It was an 11 o'clock game and I had the day off.

I was in the dugout and then [Columbus Hitting Coach] Jon Nunnally was over in the Columbus dugout pointing at [me and Jason Donald] saying 'you over here with us now'.

I knew a trade was going to happen that day and I figured the Phillies were going to do something, but I wasn't sure if I was going to be in on it or not.

So I went into the clubhouse and checked my phone and my agent had called me and I had a bunch of text messages saying I had been traded."

The looming offseason presents a bit of a quandary for Marson as he could use the time off after what has been a very long year. But, by the same token he knows this is his time to shine and because of that there is no time for rest, so he needs to get after it this offseason and continue to improve. Aside from playing in the Arizona Fall League one offseason, he previously has never played any winter ball but that may change this year.

"I think hitting-wise it would be great for me to go to the Dominican Republic or Venezuela," said Marson. "I think it would be beneficial for me to get some more at bats. Also defensively it would help me out a lot too. But I think that you can't replace time off.

It's been a very long season, so I think it would be best for me to take some time off.

We'll see."

Time off or not, Marson looks to be on the verge of a solid major league career. He has the mentality for the game, now it is a matter of his skills showing themselves.

He may have little value in fantasy leagues, but he has lots of value to a major league team.

And the Indians are happy to have him.