



Clapp Ready for Playoffs

by Brian Stull

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You'll have to forgive Memphis Redbirds Manager Stubby Clapp for not tuning in to the beginning of St. Louis Cardinals rookie Jack Flaherty's second big league start tonight. It's not that his former manager doesn't want to watch, but Clapp had his own business to attend to as Memphis (AAA) opened their playoff action with a 4-1 victory over Colorado Springs.

"It's been a great year," said Clapp earlier. He guided the Redbirds to a franchise record 91 wins. "From the guys coming and going and how the atmosphere would just bring them in and kind of adopt them into what we were doing—that was the big thing, the chemistry. The guys getting their work done daily and being accountable for what they were doing."

With the various roster moves from players being called up, injured, or otherwise there were 57 different players who donned the Memphis uniform this season. All the more impressive that chemistry was a strength of the squad.

"In the beginning, it was something where we just held each other accountable for everything," explained Clapp. "From our coaching staff holding the players accountable and our coaching staff holding ourselves accountable to make sure that we give these guys the opportunity to get better and we're thinking about the best thing for them. As the season went on, it was just an atmosphere that was created. I think you hit it on the head, that some of these guys had played together before in prior seasons and stuff like

that, so when guys were coming and going it wasn't such an outcast thing where we got a new guy coming in and you had to re-teach everything. It was something that blended smoothly and the guys fit in just perfect and it was a good season."

As for Flaherty, he left a strong impression from his 15 starts with Memphis.

"He's very intellectual," said Clapp. "He makes adjustments quick. His daily routine is by far one of the best that I've seen. He had nothing but hunger on his mind to get to the big leagues and when he took to the mound, it was presence. And he was coming after ya. I tell you what, after he started making some adjustments after the first couple starts and you could see him starting to control the strike zone again at this level and then starting to use his secondaries like he could, he was a lot of fun to watch."

Recent call-up Breyvic Valera became the 11th player to make his MLB debut with the Cardinals this season. And before him, there's been Harrison Bader, Paul DeJong, Alex Mejia, and many others. And as each one has got the call, Patrick Wisdom has watched.

Drafted in 2012, the same year as Carson Kelly and Stephen Piscotty, this has been a breakout season for Wisdom with 31 home runs. And even with so many teammates getting the call ahead of him, there's been no need to have a pep talk for the infielder.

"I really haven't had to," shared Clapp. "That's just a tribute to the type of characters we have. The character of the team it's just about that—it's been about the next guy for the most part. When guys have been called up, everybody's been great—even to the point when they leave my office you can hear the other guys cheering in the clubhouse that the next guy is getting an opportunity. Patrick Wisdom, he's probably one of the first ones at the front of the line to shake the guy's hand, that's the kind of character he is. He deserves a big pat on the back for the way he's gone about his season and he's going to be an impactful player later."

Wisdom has had some ups and downs in his minor league career thus far, but this season has seen a career-best 456 at-bats.

"He plays everyday," stated Clapp. "He comes to play everyday. When I put his name in the lineup, I don't have to worry about if he's gonna be in the game or not. I know 100% that he's focused on what he needs to do and when you have that kind of consistency at the hot corner it makes it easy for the manager to put his name in there."

Besides his natural third base position, Wisdom has also started a handful of games at first base this season.

“He does very well. Yeah, he moves well. He’s a smooth infielder for the most part. He’s an athlete and he understands both sides of the field and he does a nice job.”

Also trying out new positions is Aledmys Diaz. Optioned down to Memphis by the Cardinals at the end of June, the shortstop has spent 15 of his 43 games split between second and third base.

“He’s looked really good at third base,” said Clapp. “He’s probably had the majority of time moving around at third base. He’s moved off contact really well over there and sure enough, over at second base he’s turned some nice double plays. And he’s made the transition, kind of going the other way, he’s made that transition pretty decent too. Matter of fact, this last week he’s looked really good moving off the ball.”

“Second base, you’re turning double plays blind compared to shortstop and he’s done a nice job with that.”

Diaz hit a pair of home runs and drove in three in tonight’s Memphis playoff victory.

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