



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
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Twins retain Shelton, have 5 openings on staff

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | November 7, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Derek Shelton will return as the Twins' bench coach after interviewing with the Rangers about their managerial opening that ultimately went to Chris Woodward, but Minnesota remains busy with five openings on its coaching staff.

Pitching coach Garvin Alston, bullpen coach Eddie Guardado, third-base coach Gene Glynn, first-base coach Jeff Smith and Major League coach Jeff Pickler will not be brought back next year. The only returning coaches are hitting coach James Rowson, assistant hitting coach Rudy Hernandez and Shelton.

The Twins were hopeful to retain Shelton after he interviewed with both Minnesota and Texas this offseason about becoming a Major League manager for the first time. Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey and general manager Thad Levine were impressed by Shelton, but they hired Rocco Baldelli with the hopes of keeping Shelton on the staff as his right-hand man.

Shelton has an extensive history with Baldelli, as Shelton was the hitting coach for the Rays in 2010 when Baldelli was a player. They also worked on the same coaching staff in Tampa Bay, as Shelton was there from 2010-16 and Baldelli joined the coaching staff as a first-base coach in '15.

Shelton, 48, has 14 years of coaching experience. Before his time with Tampa Bay, he was Cleveland's hitting coach from 2005-09; he also served as quality control coach for the Blue Jays in 2017.

With five openings on the Twins' coaching staff, Baldelli said at his introductory news conference that understanding analytics and being able to convey that information successfully to the players will be important. He also spoke of the importance of having a diverse staff, especially considering the Twins have several Latin American players.

"When you have a staff that can relate to different players in different ways, I think you have a much better chance of touching these guys and helping them in their careers and getting them where they need to be," Baldelli said. "If everyone spoke English and everyone came from the same place and everyone was very similar, personality-wise, with the same background, I think that staff is going to struggle, and I believe that. Diversity on the staff in a lot of different ways matters to me a lot."

Prospects on deck: Royce Lewis

USA Baseball | USA Baseball | November 7, 2018

When many baseball fans think of the offseason, the first thing that comes to mind is images of winter with snow-covered fields across the country, and their favorite players sitting at home relaxing from a grueling season. However, when professional baseball players think of the offseason, they see a limited amount of time to focus on honing their craft to be the best player that they can possibly be.

For the 2017 No. 1 overall draft pick of the Minnesota Twins and two-time USA Baseball alum Royce Lewis, there isn't a second to waste.

"There is that little term that everyone says: 'there is no offseason.' There really isn't," the 19-year-old Lewis said. "Your offseason depends on how bad you want to be great. For me, I want to be one of the greatest players to ever play this game. How am I going to do that? You have to keep working, you don't really stop."

“Being able to compete with guys that are just as good, if not better than me, at the sport that I truly love... I think that helps you grow as a player.” Lewis was a competitive kid who wanted to stand out and be one of the best players in the country. This drive to compete against the best pushed him into camps with the best players in the world and he ultimately attended the USA Baseball National Team Championships and Tournament of Stars. While playing for Team USA, Lewis recognized the talent of the other athletes on the national level and realized that USA Baseball was the place to play against the best.

Lewis first donned the red, white and blue for the 15U National Team at the 2014 COPABE Pan Am “AAA” Championships in Mazatlan, Mexico, where the squad fell in the gold medal match to Cuba, 6-3. That defeat motivated him to come back to the USA Baseball National Training Complex and finish what he had started. Two years later, he set his sights on becoming a member of the 18U National Team.

Despite an admittedly shaky performance during the week of trials for the national team, the coaching staff saw bright spots in Lewis’ game and ultimately earned a spot on the final roster.

“I was thankful for that,” he admitted. “I just kept proving to them why they made the right decision to pick me. From there I learned to never give up and to never stop fighting.”

This time, Lewis and his teammates learned from their previous experiences, winning the gold medal at the COPABE Pan Am “AAA” Championships with a 6-1 victory over Cuba. Lewis stood out on a star-studded 18U Team roster, tying for second on the team with nine hits and batting .500. These numbers put scouts on notice; but, for the time being, Lewis was just happy to bring a gold medal back to the United States.

“It put a smile on my face and actually brought me to tears of joy when we finally did it,” he remembers. “I was locked in on getting that gold. I was telling my mom and dad that whole year... that I really hope I could make the (18U) team and win the gold because we missed out on the first one. I was excited to bring home the championship and the gold medal.”

Playing for your country is something only a select few of the nation’s best get to experience, and it elevated Lewis’ growth. Not only was he given an opportunity to grow as a player during his time with Team USA, but also as a person.

“At the end of the day, the experiences that I had with USA (Baseball) and being able to be a part of a winning team – a team that teaches you how to be a great young man before being a player – and then being a great player after that... I would say USA Baseball changed my career at that age.”

Lewis knew that playing for Team USA would give him the platform (or opportunity) to be seen by all 30 clubs, he was just unsure where he would land in the 2017 MLB First-Year Player Draft.

Fast forward to June 12, 2017, the day that would change his life forever. Lewis knew that playing for Team USA would provide unparalleled exposure to all 30 Major League Clubs prior to the 2017 MLB First-Year Player Draft, he was just unsure where he would land. So, he kept busy with the help of his family and friends.

“I had no idea where I was going to get picked, or even if I was going to get picked. All I know is that my family was right there beside me. That day just consisted of me having some family time, praying and hoping that I would have the opportunity to play the game at the next level. That day was nerve-wracking in the morning, but it was a lot of fun at the same time. I was spending time with my family, having fun and cracking some jokes.”

When Lewis was selected No. 1 overall by the Minnesota Twins, many in various baseball circles around the country were not surprised, however, it meant the world to him knowing how hard he worked.

After experiencing short season baseball in 2017, Lewis spent Spring Training with the Twins preparing for the grind of a full regular season. He relied heavily on a number of veterans, including three-time Gold Glove Award winner and USA Baseball alum Joe Mauer, to help him with his progression. That experience is something that he knows will continue to make him progress as his career moves forward.

“I just appreciate all the people that are able to give it out and help us gain knowledge of the game, and help us become better baseball players. Just learning how to prepare my body and getting ready for a long 142 game season is so valuable.”

So, after a successful 2018 season, where he was named the Prospect of the Year and Postseason All-Star while playing for the Cedar Rapids Kernels and leading the Ft. Myers Miracle to a Florida State League Championship, how does Lewis relax and prepare for the next season?

“I haven’t really taken a break yet, it’s kind of fun. We ended our season on September 12, I came home for two weeks and we did a defense camp. That was much needed for myself and my development at shortstop. I was really happy to be able to go to that and I appreciated all of the guys that came out and helped me with that. We basically got right back on the grind once the season ended.”

That's the thing about the offseason, while everyone thinks that you are sitting at home taking a break, you are putting in those extra hours that push you above and beyond. Those hours are making the already bright future of Royce Lewis even brighter.

Sta Tuesday: Kepler stands out in final 2018 Twins defensive ratings
Dave Heller | Fox Sports North | November 7, 2018

Back in July, we presented the initial results of the Society of American Baseball's (SABR) Defensive Index rankings (SDI).

As we mentioned back then, according to SABR, these rankings account for roughly 25 percent of the selection process used in determining each season's Gold Glove winners, which were announced last week.

The Defensive Index is compiled from different fielding metrics and incorporates a myriad of categories.

The Minnesota Twins didn't have any finalists for a Gold Glove — but maybe they should have.

Right fielder Max Kepler had the 11th-best SDI in the American League and was third among AL right fielders with a 7.8. The two players above him — Mookie Betts (12.4) and Aaron Judge (8.7) were both Gold Glove finalists, with Betts winning.

The third finalist, the Angels' Kole Calhoun, ranked fifth at 4.3 (Seattle's Mitch Haniger was fourth at 4.7). Maybe Kepler was victimized by his inexperience and/or name recognition compared to the other three. We expect next year that won't be an issue.

Last season, Minnesota only had one pitcher qualify for the SDI and Ervin Santana ended up with a negative number. This year is a different story.

Kyle Gibson had the seventh-best SDI among AL pitchers — 1.2 — and tops in the AL Central (of the top six, five were from the AL East). Not bad considering he was at -0.2 back in July.

In addition, Jose Berrios came in at an 0.8. Jake Odorizzi was the only other Twins pitcher listed and he was a -0.2, a full -1.0 ahead of the AL's worst-ranked pitcher, Cole Hamels, and well ahead of Pittsburgh's Ivan Nova, who clocked in at -3.0.

For some reason Joe Mauer, who was ranked fifth among AL first basemen in July, was not listed among the qualifiers as he ended up with 90 games at first base. Either was Jake Cave, who played just 70 games in center field.

Among other position players who finished the season Minnesota's roster, well, there were no standouts. Eddie Rosario was decidedly average, finishing seventh among AL left fielders at -0.3. Shortstop Ehire Adrianza came in at -6.7 (Kansas City's Alcides Escobar ranked last in the AL at -11.0) and catcher Mitch Garver was, welp, worst among all MLB catchers at -9.3. However, he was far from having the worst SDI among all players; that "honor" belonged to Yankees third baseman Miguel Andujar who was at an incredible -21.1.

Speaking of third baseman, Eduardo Escobar, who was traded to Arizona, still qualified for the Twins and had a 1.3. Same with second baseman Brian Dozier who was at -3.5.