

MINOR LEAGUE REPORT



[Clockwise, from Top L]: Wermes, Doyle and Gibson (with boom) are somehow both ever-present and invisible when the *Homegrown* crew descends upon PNC Field. The players have gotten used to being filmed, which helps build a sense of comfort for all parties.

me and for everybody. The people can't understand how tough the minor league system is — it's just a grind. And this helps people get to know that."

Rijo, a Dominican Republic native with bat speed as eye-catching as his wide smile, tries to encourage his Latin teammates to work on their English with the *Homegrown* crew, and Scheer goes out of her way to help the players along. In the confessional booth, she'll try to get them to give her a sentence in English at a time, and she can help create seamless, paragraph-length thoughts in editing. When necessary, she relies on translated subtitles or overdubbing, whatever it takes to get the most players possible in front of the camera. "I don't ever want this show to not feature someone because they don't speak English," she says.

For a confessional segment with Garcia, Scheer has Rijo translate a question in advance. Then they walk into the booth (actually the umpires' dressing room) and record his answer. They're in and out in

about 30 seconds. "He's lucky, he gets no follow-ups," Scheer laughs. As for Garcia, the attention is no bother. "I've actually enjoyed it so far," he says later, assisted by coach Julio Borbón. "I know the importance of it, and it's something I've embraced."

The confessional booth is where a lot of *Homegrown*'s magic happens. Scheer hopes to get about eight or so individual interviews during each trip, anywhere from Garcia's 30 seconds to a couple of minutes for a more complicated topic. Wermes sets up the camera and the backdrop, remembering where each of the umpires' possessions had been so they can all be put back perfectly when the shoot is done (and heaven forbid the umpires show up when the crew is still in there, which has happened once or twice). Fortunately for the crew, there are still tape marks on the carpet from the first season's camera positions, so resetting the room is easier than it would be otherwise. The room sits just outside the main locker area, off a hallway that leads to the video room, heavily

trafficked by RailRiders players and coaches. "There's always someone who will come in," Wermes says as he sets the backdrop in place. "If you build it, they will come."

As for the sunglasses-buying trip, minor league life giveth and also taketh away. The plan was for Garcia and fellow pitcher Adonis Rosa to head out to the store with the crew, but when Rosa had to cancel due to his pitching schedule, Garcia didn't feel comfortable going without someone who could help translate. "You want to get him," Scheer says of building a program around Garcia, who fortunately is scheduled to pitch on Sunday, before she heads back to Stamford, Connecticut. "That's the star. Our prospects change a little bit, so you want to make sure you get those stars. Everyone in this clubhouse is important. But you do want to feature the top prospect because as much as I love showing the Brady Lails and the Cale Coshows, the fans do want to see that next star. And that is how I sold this show."

Garcia may be destined for stardom, but he has struggled since the promotion to Triple-A, with more experienced hitters, a tighter strike zone, and the new major league ball that the International League uses. Yet, the total package he offers still shines bright.

"Another 20-year-old?" Phelps thinks while trying to find a pitcher with whom to compare Garcia. "Well, I haven't had too many 20-year-olds here." Kratz echoes that sentiment on the field, saying that the only thing about Garcia that makes the stud hurler seem like a 20-year-old is his driver's license.

There's a composure to Garcia — in conversation, to be sure, but also in the way he stands on the rubber, ready to compete, raring to go. "It doesn't matter what the situation is out there on the mound," Bell says. "He is prepared for everything." He talks like a veteran, thinks like a veteran. There's never doubt in his voice, and translated from Spanish, the confidence still screams. He says he's patient. He's observant, detail-oriented. He doesn't believe in bad outings; he learns something every time he's on the mound. "I never really in my mind doubted