

The New Utility Specialist ...Zach McKinstry!

[Kike Hernandez](#) is gone and that hurts a lot. If you watched Kike in the last 6 years, one thing you would have noticed is how he can play almost every position (#LetKikeCatch). Over Kike's 7 years in the majors, he netted average to above average defense in each position (except 3B) while also posting positive dWAR, quite possibly making him the best Utility player in the league right now. While other ambiguous players like Chris Taylor and Max Muncy can fill that void, no one can truly replace the flexibility Kike offered. However, Dodger prospect [Zach McKinstry](#) is going to make a case as the new go to Utility guy. There are already [reports that Zack is eyeing Kike's old spot](#), but who is this kid?

Who is Zach McKinstry?

Zach McKinstry was drafted in the 33rd round by the Dodgers in 2016. While he mostly played shortstop for Central Michigan, the Waterloo Bucks (the Collegiate Summer Team), made him play the 3-9. This skill wouldn't come in handy until his 2018 season where he spent a few innings in the outfield. While still primarily an infielder, McKinstry has spent a considerable amount of time split between the infield and outfield. The infield is where he's most comfortable, posting over 100 games at 2B, 3B, and SS with a nice RF/G above 4 at 2B and SS and an average 2.46 at 3B. The biggest concern of his would be his outfield defense. In his brief stints in the outfield, Zach has averaged around the low 90's in his fielding percentage. While that doesn't tell the whole story, it at least begs the question of if this guy can comfortably play in the outfield.

In terms of offense, Zach McKinstry is exactly what the Dodgers need. To quote [AJ Pollock](#): "McKinstry - that guy can flat out rake." He appears to be a contact, slap hitter who hits for average, something the Dodgers struggle with every season. Across his 4 years in the minors, McKinstry posted a slash of .270/.357/.416 with an OPS of .773. It looks painfully average, but what the numbers don't tell is the absolute TEAR Zach had in AAA, hitting .382/.421/.753 for an OPS of 1.174 in 26 games.

<iframe src="https://streamable.com/m/zach-mckinstry-home-run-to-left-field" width="100%" height="315"></iframe>

<iframe src="https://streamable.com/m/zach-mckinstry-s-rbi-single" width="100%" height="315"></iframe>

While he does get on base a decent amount, the question for his career is his plate discipline. Zach averages around a 20% strikeout rate and a 10% walk rate, a 10% gap I would like to see get smaller as his career goes on. Even in his call up to the MLB last season, he struck out 3 times out of his 7 plate appearances, but let's cut him some slack for that, it was his first big league at bats. If Zach can strike out less and walk more, he'll have no problem getting a solidified role in the MLB, but you can say that about anyone.

Is 2021 The Year of McKinstry?

No. Well, maybe? The Dodgers have a noticeable hole at 2B with Kike leaving, but [Gavin Lux](#) is still an option, and by the way spring training is going, it seems he'll be getting the starting job. That being said, Lux has had his fair share of issues last season and should anything reoccur, I can see an early season call up for McKinstry, though that role would probably go to [Chris Taylor](#) instead (he originally played 2B and SS). Despite Zach's unique skill set and flexibility, it's hard to see him take time away from the already established positions, especially when the outfield has [Cody Bellinger](#) and [Mookie Betts](#). It'll be hard to fit McKinstry in if the Dodgers are healthy (knock on wood). There is still that X factor with Dodger rookies. We've seen emerging talents like [Will Smith](#), [Dustin May](#), and [Matt Beaty](#) (remember him?) burst onto the scene outta nowhere and there's that chance McKinstry will be too good NOT to play. I even saw an article predicting a RotY race between Lux and McKinstry, but given that McKinstry will have to fight for his playing time, the odds are against him.

Still, I'm rooting for him. I'm a sucker for weird players (bring back [Pat Venditte](#)).