



Gary SouthShore RailCats

Press Release

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Willis, Crosby, De Jesus & others return to RailCats in 2019

GARY, IND. — The Gary SouthShore RailCats re-signed infielders Alex Crosby, Andy De Jesus and Randy Santiesteban, outfielder Colin Willis, and catcher Wilfredo Gimenez for the 2019 campaign earlier this week.

“This group has become the RailCats core, following in the footsteps of the great players before them,” said RailCats Manager Greg Tagert. “Back-to-back playoff teams, franchise record for wins, and the desire to accomplish more gives us a great start for 2019.”

The 'Cats also re-signed outfielder John Price, Jr., signed veteran left-handed relief pitcher Felix Carvallo and signed right-handed pitcher Jumpei Akanuma to his first professional baseball contract.

Willis slashed .297/.385/.448/.834 with a team-high 98 hits, 50 RBIs, 148 total bases and 48 walks in a career-high 92 games in 2018. Willis also finished with a team-high-tying nine home runs, reached base in a career-high 34 straight games (third longest in the American Association) and was named the American Association Player of the Week for the first time in his career for the week ending on June 10. Willis was named the American Association Rookie of the Year in 2017 after finishing seventh in the league with a .319 batting average (first among rookies) and led the RailCats with eight home runs, 54 runs, 145 total bases, a .407 on-base percentage, a .482 slugging percentage, an .889 OPS and 29 multi-hit games. Willis originally signed his first professional baseball contract with the Lake Erie Crushers of the Frontier League in the spring of 2016 before signing his first American Association contract with Gary on Aug. 18, 2016. In 11 games (39 at-bats) with the RailCats, Willis batted .231 with three extra-base hits, five RBIs and three runs.

Crosby, the longest tenured current RailCat, slashed .249/.320/.338/.658 with a team-high 28 multi-hit games and 51 runs in his fourth season with the RailCats in 2018. Defensively, Crosby set an American Association single-season record for highest fielding percentage in a season among first basemen (.999) and led all qualifying first basemen in the American Association in games (82), total chances (673), putouts (619) and assists (83). In 2017, Crosby slashed .291/.354/.369/.723 with three home runs, 12 extra-base hits, 24 RBIs and six stolen bases in 70 games. In 2016, Crosby led the RailCats with 311 at-bats and 91 hits and slashed .293/.356/.363/.720 with three home runs, 16 extra-base hits and 44 RBIs in 86 games. Crosby signed his first professional baseball contract with Gary on June 28, 2015, and hit .200 with three extra-base hits and one RBI in 10 games.

De Jesus slashed .290/.319/.345/.664 with 32 runs, 85 hits, nine doubles, two triples, one home run, 39 RBIs and 11 stolen bases over 78 games in 2018. In 2017, De Jesus slashed .254/.286/.360/.646 with 25 runs, 58 hits, 14 doubles, two triples, two home runs and nine stolen over 73 games and finished second on the team with a .429 batting average as a pinch-hitter. In 2016, De Jesus slashed .262/.276/.381/.657 with 11 runs, 22 hits, two doubles, one triple, two home runs, 13 RBIs and four stolen bases over 25 games as a true rookie.

Santiesteban slashed .255/.321/.443/.764 with a team-high 20 doubles, 31 extra-base hits, eight hit by pitches and 11 multi-run games over a career-high 74 games in 2018. Santiesteban also tied for the team lead with nine home runs and hit the RailCats only grand slam of the season. In 2017, the infielder finished second on the team with 16 doubles and was third on the club with a .381 slugging percentage and .781 OPS. Santiesteban signed his first professional baseball contract with the Sonoma Stompers of the Pacific Association of Professional Baseball (PACA) and hit .301 with three home runs, seven extra-base hits, 24 RBIs and 20 runs in 25 games before signing with Gary in June. In two separate stints with the RailCats in 2016, Santiesteban slashed .207/.258/.328/.586 with nine runs, 12 hits, two doubles, one triple, one home run, three RBIs and one stolen base over 30 games.

Gimenez slashed .255/.295/.350/.645 with 23 runs, 56 hits, 12 doubles, three home runs, 27 RBIs and two stolen bases over 62 games in 2018. Defensively, Gimenez led Gary with 53 starts at catcher, 24 caught stealings, a 42% (24/57) caught stealing percentage and a 3.34 ERA when catching. In the 2018-19 offseason, Gimenez played for the Tigres de Aragua of the Venezuelan Winter League, slashing .298/.341/.381/.722 with six runs, 25 hits, four doubles, one home run, and four RBIs in 27 games. A native of Maracay, Venezuela, Gimenez signed his first Independent Professional Baseball contract with Gary in 2017, and slashed .226/.271/.287/.559 with 15 runs, 44 hits, six doubles, two home runs and 25 RBIs in 60 games. Defensively, Gimenez led Gary catchers with 54 starts behind the plate and threw out 17% (10/60) of basestealers. Gimenez began his professional baseball career in 2008 after signing with the Florida Marlins at the age of 17 as an international free agent. Gimenez spent seven seasons in the Marlins minor league system, reaching Double-A, and was invited to Marlins Big League camp for the only time in his career in 2014.

The RailCats re-acquired outfielder Price Jr. from the Florence Freedom of the Frontier League to complete the Chuck Weaver trade from May 30, 2018. Price Jr. slashed a career-best .266/.311/.460/.771 with 16 runs, 33 hits, one triple, five home runs, 16 RBIs, five walks, three hit by pitches and three sacrifice hits in 36 games (34 starts) between the Gateway Grizzlies and Florence of the Frontier League. Price Jr. began the 2018 season with Gary, slashing .217/.213/.304/.517 with four runs, 10 hits, two doubles, one triple and one RBI in 13 games before getting traded to Gateway for future considerations on July 4.

Carvallo was acquired from the Cleburne Railroaders for right-handed pitcher Steve Pastora on Dec. 20, 2018. Carvallo signed his first American Association contract with the Wichita Wingnuts on Jan. 26, 2018, and went 2-1 with a 2.44 ERA in 33 relief appearances before getting traded to Cleburne on Oct. 5. In 51.2 innings pitched, the southpaw yielded 21 runs (14 earned) on 57 hits and 19 walks and struck out 48 hitters. Carvallo signed his first professional baseball contract with the Texas Rangers as an international free agent on June 1, 2012, at the age of 19-years-old. The southpaw won a career-high eight games and posted a 3.35 ERA in 21 relief appearances in his first season of professional baseball with the Dominican Summer League Rangers in 2012. In 45.2 innings pitched, Carvallo allowed 21 runs (17 earned) on 44 hits and 13 walks and struck out 47 batters. Carvallo returned to the DOSL Rangers in 2013, posting a 1-1 record with a career-best 0.90 ERA, eight saves, .206 opponents batting average and 0.80 WHIP in 25 relief appearances. In 30.2 innings pitched, Carvallo yielded three runs on 22 hits and three walks and struck out 41 hitters. Carvallo was promoted to the Hickory Crawdads (Lo-A) in 2014, going 4-4 with a 3.41 ERA in 34 relief outings. In 66 innings pitched, the southpaw allowed 30 runs (25 earned) on 69 hits and 26 walks and struck out 58 hitters. Carvallo was promoted to the High Desert Maverick (Hi-A) in 2015, finishing the season 3-2 with two saves and a 5.18 ERA in a career-high-tying 36 relief appearances. In 64.1 innings pitched, Carvallo allowed 40 runs (37 earned) on 68 hits and 24 walks and struck out 63 hitters. Carvallo returned to High Desert in 2016, going 6-3 with a 3.74 ERA in 36 relief appearances. In a career-high 67.1 innings pitched, Carvallo allowed 35 runs (28 earned) on 70 hits and 34 walks and struck out 69 batters.

Pastora was acquired from the Wichita Wingnuts on Oct. 5 to complete the Tyler Sullivan trade from July 27, 2017, after signing his first professional contract with the Wingnuts on Aug. 25. Pastora finished without a record and didn't allow a run in three relief appearances. In three innings, the right-hander yielded two hits and hit two batters, walked none and struck out three.

Akanuma went 5-4 with a 5.02 ERA and one complete game shutout in 13 games (12 starts) as a senior at Lee University in 2018. In 71.2 innings pitched, Akanuma allowed 45 runs (40 earned) on 78 hits and 18 walks and struck out 59 batters. During the 2018 summer, Akanuma won the Western Major Baseball League (wmbll) Championship with the Medicine Hat Mavericks and was named a Second Team All-Star among starting pitchers after going 7-1 with a 3.13 ERA in 10 starts. In 60.1 innings, the Kyoto, Japan, native yielded 24 runs (21 earned) on 50 hits and 12 walks and struck out 39 batters. As a junior in 2017, Akanuma finished 1-4 with two saves and a 5.08 ERA in 15 games (13 starts). In 56.2 innings pitched, Akanuma allowed 41 runs (32 earned) on 74 hits and 23 walks and struck out 46 batters. Before transferring to Lee University in 2017, Akanuma pitched collegiately at the College of the Desert from 2014-2016. As a sophomore in 2016, Akanuma finished 3-6 with one complete game and a 3.45 ERA in 13 games (12 starts). In 70.1 innings, Akanuma yielded 56 runs (27 earned) on 87 hits and 15 walks and struck out 47 batters. During the summer of 2017, Akanuma went 2-1 with a 5.50 ERA in eight games (seven starts) with the Arroyo Seco Saints of the California Collegiate Summer Baseball League. In the summer of 2016, Akanuma went 5-2 with a 2.30 ERA in nine games (seven starts) with the Palm Springs Power of the Southern California Collegiate Summer Baseball League.

Gary opens the 2019 regular season on Thursday, May 16th in Rosemont, Ill., against the Chicago Dogs at Impact Field. Ticket packages for the 2019 Gary SouthShore RailCats season are available online at railcatsbaseball.com and can also be purchased by calling the RailCats ticket line at (219) 882-BALL. The RailCats box office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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