

## Minor Happenings: Buffalo Stampedes To Greatest Comeback Ever

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, May 09 2007 7:00 PM -

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Thursday nights means it's *Minor Happenings* time here on the site, and you'll find no better Indians minor league coverage anywhere else ... in print or on the web. In this week's column, Tony tells us about the Buffalo Bisons pulling off the greatest comeback in

### **professional baseball history**

! In addition, Tony updates us on the hottest hitter in all of the minor leagues, Jared Goedert ... and also gives us progress reports on talented young Tribe hurlers Adam Miller and Chuck Lofgren.



*&quot;Minor Happenings&quot; covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system. Information in this report is collected from the various news outlets that cover each team, some national news, and in some cases from private sources connected to the Indians organization.*

### **TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player of the Week**

*(for games from May 3 through May 9)*

#### **Chuck Lofgren (Left-handed pitcher - Akron)**

*1-0, 1.98 ERA, 2 starts, 13.2 IP, 9 H, 3 ER, 4 BB, and 10 Ks*



Prior to his two starts this week, Lofgren had been inconsistent in his four earlier starts. This week, Lofgren finally seems to be settling in at Akron and showing the stuff that has scouts and team officials excited. Lofgren made two very good starts, giving up only 9 hits and 3 runs in 13.2 innings of work. On the year, in six starts Lofgren is now 3-2 with a 3.21 ERA, has struckout 36 hitters in 33.2 innings pitchers, and has held opposing batters to a .226 batting average.

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*Honorable Mention:* Jordan Brown (1B - Akron), Ryan Mulhern (1B - Buffalo), Sean Smith (RHP - Buffalo), Ryan Edell (LHP - Kinston), Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County) and Carlos Rivero (SS - Lake County).

### Director's Cuts

Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins had the following to say about Single-A Lake County this week:

*On Lake County:* The team is very young, but for someone in his position it is the most exciting team to follow because of the youth and projection of the players there. The players are exciting to watch, and the team is loaded with athletic players who are playing

with a passion to try and get to the next level. For most of the players, this is their first experience playing baseball everyday for roughly half the year, and they are adjusting to the transition of the long bus rides and constant travel.

*On Jared Goedert:* His power numbers to date are indicative of the success he should have in the future. His home run outburst is a result of making consistent hard contact, but more impressive is him having more walks than strikeouts at this point in the season. His ability to work counts has put him in some good hitting situations, as evidenced by the 15-pitch late inning at bat on Tuesday night when he ended up hitting a home run. Bottom line, he has a consistent approach from at bat to at bat. He also runs the bases well, and has been solid defensively at third base.

### Goedert Streaking



Speaking of Goedert, the Lake County third baseman's magic carpet ride of a season continues. After a sensational April where he hit .357 with 8 HR and 17 RBI, so far in the first week of May he has not skipped a beat and is hitting .433 with 5 HR and 15 RBI for the month. Goedert also is in the midst of a 14-game hitting streak and has reached base in 22 straight games. On the season, he is hitting .380 with 13 HR, 32 RBI and a 1.338 OPS, and he ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the South Atlantic League and all the minors in home runs. Oh, and for those wondering, his

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name is pronounced "Geh-dirt" where the "o" is silent.

### The Greatest Comeback...Ever

While Buffalo manager Torey Lovullo was away for the weekend in California for his daughter's first communion, his Buffalo squad staged the most incredible ninth inning comeback in professional baseball history. Down 14-6 going into the bottom of the ninth inning, Buffalo scored nine runs and won the game 15-14.



In the ninth inning, Buffalo sent 13 men to the plate and only made one out, which was on a hard hit line drive off the bat of outfielder Franklin Gutierrez. In total, Buffalo had five hits, three walks, a hit batter, and reached base on three fielding errors. Outfielder Ben Francisco scored the winning run on a bases loaded walk to catcher Mike Rose, and infielder Trent Durrington got the win as he had been summoned to pitch the ninth inning, giving up a walk in a third of an inning. Durrington is the first Buffalo positional player to earn a win as a pitcher since Chris Coste did it back in 2002.

The game was actually the continuation of a suspended game from April 23<sup>rd</sup> that was stopped because of rain in the bottom of the first inning with Pawtucket up on Buffalo 3-0.

### More Comeback Notes

- The minor leagues do not have record of the best ninth inning comeback in their history, but in the major leagues only one team has ever come back from eight or more runs down in the ninth to win it, and that was Cleveland when they beat Washington 14-13 way back in 1901.

- Prior to the epic comeback, Buffalo had never come back from a ninth inning deficit of more than four runs. The nine runs scored in the ninth amazingly was just the second inning ever that Buffalo has scored nine or more runs in an inning at Dunn Tire Park.

- Buffalo catcher Mike Rose reached base two times in the ninth inning and had two RBIs without making an out or getting a hit. He was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, and also drew a walk with the bases loaded to plate the game-winning run.

- In an odd coincidence, Lovullo's son won a Little League game earlier in the week coming back from eight runs down in the last inning and scoring nine runs to win the game. Interim Buffalo manager, hitting coach Dave Myers, was one of Lou Piniella's coaches with Seattle when Cleveland rallied from a 14-2 deficit in the seventh inning in 2001 to win the game 15-14.

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### Miller In Cruise Control



It has become business as usual for Buffalo right-hander Adam Miller, as he continues to dominate hitters at the Triple-A level. Miller has been on quite a roll since July last year, and the need for another starter in Cleveland were to come up he could come up to Cleveland right now and more than hold his own. In the meantime, Miller is finishing off his development in Buffalo and polishing off his game by waxing hitters in the International League. In his last start on Monday, went six innings allowing two runs on three hits and struckout seven. Miller yielded a run in the second inning, which broke a 14-inning scoreless inning streak. On the year he is 4-0 with a 2.43 ERA with 37 strikeouts in 37 innings pitched and has held opposing batters to a .207 average.

### Rivero Off To Good Start

Lake County Captains shortstop Carlos Rivero got off to a slow start, but the last two weeks has really settled in.



Rivero is one of the youngest players in the South Atlantic League, and will turn 19-years old later this month. Even at such a young age, he has incredible size (6'3" 200 lbs) and has developing power. Scouts are quickly starting to take notice of this hidden gem in the Indians system signed out of Venezuela, and one scout in *Baseball America* even recently compared him in a roundabout way to Miguel Cabrera. On Tuesday, Rivero had a career night hitting 2 HR (one a grand slam) and also had 6 RBI. On the year he is hitting .292 with 3 HR, 19 RBI, and a .761 OPS.

### Dittler's New Role

Akron Aeros right-handed reliever Jake Dittler is learning a new trade. Up until this year, he was primarily a starting pitcher and one of the Indians top rated prospects at the position. In

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fact, in 2004 he was ranked as the #4 overall prospect in the



system. But, just three years later, stalled progress and a lack of development now have Dittler hanging on in the organization by a thread. Last year at Buffalo, Dittler was 5-12 with a 4.70 ERA in 24 starts and seemed to be on the outs in the organization, especially after they removed him from the 40-man roster this past offseason. However, Dittler cleared waivers and was reassigned to the minors.

With the switch to middle relief, the Indians are hoping to take advantage of Dittler's penchant to induce groundballs with his sinker and good fastball. As a reliever, Dittler can come in with the mindset that he can go right after hitters and doesn't have to worry about setting them up for future at bats later in the game like he did as a starter. On the year, Dittler is 0-1 with a 3.86 ERA in 9 appearances out of the Akron bullpen. He has held opposing hitters to a .190 batting average, and has 9 strikeouts in 16.1 innings pitched.

### **The Domino Effect**

After the Indians had to blow through their entire bullpen last Wednesday when Jake Westbrook left with a strained oblique in the second inning, the Indians recalled left-handed starter Rafael Perez from Buffalo the next day. This left Buffalo in a jam, as Perez was the scheduled starter in Buffalo's Thursday game.

The move by the Indians had a domino effect in Buffalo since as a result right-hander Jeff Harris ended up having to pitch on two days rest and he could not get out of the second inning. It got so bad in the game that infielder Trent Durrington was summoned to pitch late in the game, and he threw one shutout inning and allowed one hit. Of note, prior to Durrington's appearance, the last time a position player pitched in a game for Buffalo was when catcher Einar Diaz did it in a 16-inning game last year on June 4, 2006.

### **Gutierrez Streak On Hold**

Buffalo outfielder Franklin Gutierrez was called up to Cleveland last weekend, but before being called up to Cleveland he was in the



midst of a nice 16-game hitting streak, which is the longest active run in the International League. Gutierrez will return to Buffalo at some point, and when he does the hitting streak will

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be intact and he will pick up where he left off.

Gutierrez was called up because outfielders Ben Francisco and Shin-Soo Choo were optioned to Buffalo because the Indians were in need of pitching last week, and by rule could not be re-called for ten days. It remains to be seen when the ten days are up if Gutierrez will remain in Cleveland, or if Francisco returns and Gutierrez is optioned back to Buffalo to get more regular at bats. In 19 games at Buffalo, Gutierrez was hitting .358 with 2 HR, 10 RBI, 5 stolen bases, and an .889 OPS.

### Rule 5 Checkup

Akron outfielder Ryan Goleski and Buffalo right-handed reliever Jim Ed Warden were selected in the Rule 5 Draft this past offseason,



but later returned to the Indians when spring training ended since they did not make the opening day rosters for their respective teams. Both Goleski and Warden seem to be suffering through a Rule 5 hangover, as both are off to very slow starts this year. Goleski is hitting .263 with 1 HR, 11 RBI and a .681 OPS in 28 games, and Warden is 1-0 with a 9.75 ERA and opposing batters are hitting .389 off him in 9 appearances out of the Buffalo bullpen.

It should be noted, Goleski got off to a very similar start last year in Kinston then took off in May, and he is hitting .321 with 1 HR, 4 RBI, and a .911 OPS in May so far this year. Also, Warden's ERA is heavily influenced by an atrocious appearance this past week when he went 1.1 innings and gave up 6 runs, 6 hits and 3 walks.

### Akron Rundown

Akron is 17-13 on the year, good for 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Southern Division of the Eastern League. Akron ranks 1<sup>st</sup> out of 12 teams in batting with a .272 team average, and are 6<sup>th</sup> in the league with a 3.80 team ERA.

Left-hander Shawn Nottingham continues to pitch well, and in his start this week allowed seven hits and two runs in 6.1 innings. On the season, he is 3-2 with a 3.19 ERA. On Sunday, Scott Lewis allowed one run on three hits and struckout eight in six innings of work, and on the season is now 0-1 with a 3.04 ERA. Outfielder Brian Barton has been taking infield practice recently, but it wasn't in preparation for a position switch. Akron coaches were working with him on his throwing and footwork, which is easier to do in the infield.

Here are some up-to-date statistics for some notable prospects:

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Jordan Brown (1B): .352 AVG, 3 HR, 17 RBI, 11 BB, 7 K, .954 OPS



John Van Every (OF): .333 AVG, 1 HR, 19 RBI, 11 BB, 23 K, .951 OPS

Asdrubal Cabrera (SS): .311 AVG, 3 HR, 12 RBI, 16 BB, 13 K, .863 OPS

Brian Barton (OF): .263 AVG, 3 HR, 18 RBI, 12 BB, 27 K, 5 SB, .807 OPS

Trevor Crowe (OF): .178 AVG, 0 HR, 12 RBI, 15 BB, 22 K, .516 OPS

Aaron Laffey (LHP): 4-0, 2.25 ERA, 28.0 IP, 17 K, 1.04 WHIP

Reid Santos (LHP): 1-0, 0.63 ERA, 14.1 IP, 13 K, 0.84 WHIP

### Kinston Roundup

Kinston is 17-13 on the year, good for 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Southern Division of the Carolina League. Kinston is 5<sup>th</sup> in the league out of eight teams with a .243 team batting average, and is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>

in the league with a 2.64 team ERA.

Kinston left-hander Ryan Edell went six shutout innings on Sunday and allowed only four hits while walking no one and striking out three. Catcher Max Ramirez had a great week at the plate, hitting .350 (7 for 20) with 3 HR, 8 RBI, and 7 walks. Kinston has not lost a series to date this season, and last year did not lose one until late May.

Kinston's Friday night game two of the four outfield light towers were not working for the first three innings. Eventually, it became an issue because of darkness and play was stopped in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning when Kinston outfielder John Drennen attempted to catch a fly ball and could not find it (it landed 50 feet in front of him). City officials repaired the lights, and after a 40 minute delay play resumed.

Kinston almost had a perfect game and no hitter thrown against them earlier in the week. Kinston broke up the perfect game with one out in the eighth inning with a walk by Wes Hodges, and ended the no-hit bid with a hit by Mike Butia to lead off the ninth inning. Kinston has not been no-hit since August 4, 1996, and the last perfect game thrown by Kinston was by Keith Ramsey on September 6, 2004.

Here are some up-to-date statistics for some notable prospects:

Max Ramirez (C): .289 AVG, 5 HR, 16 RBI, 20 BB, 21 K, .916 OPS

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