

Minor Happenings: Whitney and Gimenez Earn Promotions

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Friday, June 29 2007 7:00 PM -

Lastoria chimes in today with the second part of Minor Happenings this week. Part one posted on Thursday and talked at length about Adam Miller, and also about Player Of The Week Reid Santos. Today, Lastoria takes us on a trek throughout the system and reviews all six affiliates (who all happen to be in first place) touching on the promotions of Matt Whitney and Chris Gimenez, a no-hitter in Lake County, Hodges possibly on his way to Akron, some Buffalo All-Stars, and more.



“Minor Happenings” 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.

In case you missed it, *Minor Happenings* was broken up into two parts this week, with the [first part](#) posting on Thursday.

Whitney's Revival Tour Moves To Kinston

First baseman Matt Whitney has taken his revival tour on the road as he has been called up to advanced Single-A Kinston this week. While the offensive production has been there to



earn a callup weeks ago, the Indians wanted to see Whitney shore up his approach at the plate against right-handers before moving him up. Whitney has absolutely hammered left-handed pitching, but has had some troubles with right-handers and laying off breaking pitches in the dirt.

Whitney finished up at Lake County hitting .308 with 16 HR, 64 RBI, and a .919 OPS in 71 games.

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This is the healthiest Whitney has been in years, and it is showing in the box scores. Whitney underwent a position switch from third base to the much less demanding first base this year, and was dropped down a level to start the season and it all could not have worked out any better for him.

He now is back on the prospect map, and will need to prove himself in the very tough Carolina League.

Stephen Head is still the everyday first baseman at Kinston, so Whitney will move around the diamond playing some first base, some third base, some designated hitter, and maybe some outfield.

Head may even get some consideration in the outfield at times.

In two games at Kinston, Whitney is 1-for-7 with a walk and two strikeouts.

Gimenez Also On The Move

There was a flurry of activity this past week across the Indians entire player development system. With first baseman Beau Mills moving to Lake County, and first baseman Matt Whitney moving to Kinston, it served as a catalyst to utility



player Chris Gimenez being moved to Akron. But that was not the only reason for the promotion, as Gimenez definitely earned the promotion with his play.

In 59 games with Kinston, Gimenez hit .286 with 16 HR, 41 RBI, and a 1.019 OPS.

He leaves Kinston ranked second in the league in home runs and first in OPS.

Gimenez will take his power bat and versatile glove to Akron where manager Tim Bogar will have the benefit of mixing Gimenez into games a variety of ways.

Gimenez can play first base, third base, left field, catcher and designated hitter.

In his first game at Akron on Friday night, he went 2-for-4 with a double, home run and three RBI.

Lake County No-No

Lake County right-handed starter Carlton Smith and two relievers combined to throw a no-hitter

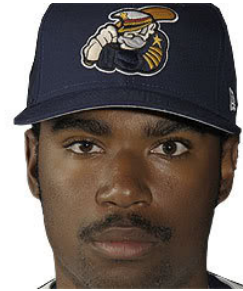
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last Sunday. Smith went seven innings, throwing 78 pitches allowing one walk and striking out four.

Right-handers Austin Creps and Luis Perdomo



combined to throw two shutout no-hit innings in relief to preserve the first no-hitter in Lake County franchise history.

Smith was on his A-game, commanding his entire four-pitch repertoire. He consistently mixed his 94 MPH fastball with a nasty 90-91 MPH sinker that had great velocity down in the zone, and topped it off with a slider in the 83-87 MPH range with great late bite.

Smith now has a string of three straight impressive starts, going 2-1 with a 2.12 ERA and allowing only 9 hits and 2 walks while striking out 14 in 17 innings pitched.

For his efforts, Smith was named the South Atlantic League Pitcher of the Week.

Smith is a promising young player, but is still very much a mystery. Last year, after going 3-3 with a 4.09 ERA in 11 starts at Lake County the first half of the season, Smith was shutdown the second half of the season with elbow tenderness.

He started slow this year, but club officials now think he is starting to come around.

His delivery has been much more consistent, and the command and velocity in his pitches has gone to another level where his fastball is exploding through the zone and his slider very tight.

Sowers Facing Adversity For First Time

Struggling left-hander Jeremy Sowers was sent back to Buffalo a few weeks ago, and since returning to Buffalo has had mixed results going 0-2 with a 4.26 ERA in three starts. Sowers has had two good seven inning performances allowing

three runs in each start, but he is still having a hard time missing bats as in 19 innings he has already given up 26 hits and only has 7 strikeouts.

The Indians still anticipate he will return to the Indians rotation at some point this season, but

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before doing so the Indians have very specific tasks for Sowers to take on to improve both mentally and physically. From a mental standpoint, the Indians want him to stop nibbling and be more aggressive and go after hitters and show the ability to make adjustments during the game and from pitch to pitch. If Sowers can improve mentally, the Indians feel that the improvement will carry over to his mechanics.

This is Sowers first taste of failure, as prior to this season he dominated and tasted nothing but success all the way from high school to the majors last year.

Hodges Akron Bound?

Kinston third baseman Wes Hodges is having an outstanding season in Kinston, and should be on the move soon to Akron. With no one really blocking him at third base, and with Hodges performing at an exceptional level in Kinston, it is only a



matter of time before Hodges gets the call and is moved to Akron.

Currently, Hodges is hitting .333 with 7 HR, 37 RBI and a .913 OPS at Kinston, and is ranked second in the league in hitting. He also had a 20-game hitting streak snapped on Sunday. His numbers to date and standing in the league are very impressive in that this is his first professional season, and he is doing it in a league that typically favors pitching.

Hodges was a second round pick in the 2006 Draft out of Georgia Tech.

A lot of Hodge's success this year is attributable to him working directly with Kinston hitting coach John Nunnally on shortening his swing. Early in the year, Hodges swing mechanics were somewhat erratic as he held his hands close to his chest and as the pitcher went into his delivery he would slide them back to generate load in his bat.

This hitting style gave Hodges fits against pitchers with quick deliveries and slide steps from the stretch.

After some tinkering, Hodges now has his hands cocked back into a pre-loaded position by his right shoulder, and now uses his legs as a timing mechanism and to shift load in his bat.

McBride's Defensive Struggles

Lake County catcher Matt McBride has had a great season offensively to date, hitting .292 with

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6 HR, 46 RBI and an .826



OPS. In his last ten games, McBride is hitting .333 with 2 HR and 14 RBI, and he was also named an all-star in the South Atlantic League (SAL). But, while he has had a good season offensively, he has struggled behind the plate.

This is somewhat surprising because going into the season McBride was considered a good defensive catcher.

One of his biggest problems this year has been his inability to control the running game as through Friday he has only thrown out eight of 64 runners attempting to steal bases.

McBride has worked a lot on the side with his throwing, and getting more fundamentally sound with his feet and being quicker with his release.

Back To Starting

With the promotion of Aaron Laffey to Buffalo and J.D. Martin on the disabled list with elbow issues, an opportunity in the Akron rotation has been available for a few weeks now. Right-hander Jake Dittler looks to make good of that opportunity as he was moved back into the starting rotation this past week.

Prior to the start of this season,

Dittler had been a starter his entire career, but this year was converted to a reliever. To date, Dittler is 6-2 with a 3.71 ERA in 20 combined appearances in Buffalo and Akron.

There is no explanation why the Indians had a change of heart with Dittler's conversion to a reliever as he had been handling the new role well, but this looks like a move for later in the year when Buffalo will need an experienced arm to likely fill a void in the rotation. Buffalo already has lost starters Rafael Perez and Jason Stanford to the Cleveland bullpen, and there is a possibility Adam Miller will be joining them in the Cleveland bullpen soon.

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Knowing this, the plan with Dittler is to increase his inning workload now so he can handle starting in Buffalo later in the year.

In two starts since moving to the rotation, Dittler is 2-0 with 0.00 ERA in 11 innings pitched.

King Of The Valley

Mahoning Valley infielder Jeff Hehr has become sort of a celebrity at "The Valley" in that he is a hometown kid from



Cardinal Mooney High, and may be the most publicized player in the New York-Penn League. Hehr was drafted by the Indians in the 20th Round of the 2007 Draft out of Eastern Michigan, and he is only the second local player to play at Mahoning Valley in the last 12 years. Hehr had a great game in his homecoming during the Scrapper home-opener last Friday night, going 2-for-3 with a walk and two runs scored while playing great defense at second base.

Unfortunately the news is not all good, as Hehr hurt his leg while running out a hit on Sunday, and will be out of action for about a week with a slightly pulled hamstring.

Scrappy Scrappers

Mahoning Valley outfielder Adam White, a 9th round pick in the 2007 Draft out of the University of West Virginia, is one of the fastest players in the minors.

The 5'10" 195-pounder was considered one of the fastest players available in the draft

after he ran the 60 yard dash in under 6.5 seconds, and was graded out as an 80 on the scouting scale for speed (80 is the highest mark). While defense and speed are his hallmarks, his bat is questionable and will decide how far in the system he can go.

To date, White is hitting .222 with 0 HR, 2 RBI, 2 stolen bases and a .611 OPS in nine games

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for Mahoning Valley.

Also, shortstop Mart Thompson converted from the outfield to shortstop at Lewis-Clark State this year, and hit .382 with 19 doubles, six triples and 4 home runs, while swiping 38 bases in the process. Thompson was a teammate of 2007 first round pick Beau Mills at Lewis-Clark State, and was taken in the 8th round of the 2007 Draft. To date, Thompson is hitting .097 with 0 HR, 2 RBI and a .340 OPS in ten games for Mahoning Valley.

Nottingham's June Swoon

After an impressive first two months at Akron, left-hander Shawn Nottingham has hit some hard times in June. After going 2-1 with a 3.06 ERA in April and 3-1 with a 2.48 ERA in May, Nottingham has hit a wall in June going 1-3 with a 7.43



ERA. On the season, Nottingham is now 6-5 with a 4.16 ERA in 15 starts.

Nottingham's troubles are mostly mental as his pitching repertoire is good. The mental issues he is struggling are has to do with confidence, and it is carrying over into his mechanics where he is not repeating his delivery well.

The confidence issue is always something that crops up with pitchers and hitters when they go through a bad funk, and Nottingham has shown signs of coming out of it as in his last two starts he is 1-1 with a 2.08 ERA allowing only 10 hits and 2 walks while striking out 10 in 13 innings pitched.

In any case, the All-Star break can't come soon enough for players like Nottingham and even guys like outfielder Trevor Crowe who look forward to the break to recharge the batteries.

Pestano Still Not 100%



The Indians took a shot in the dark drafting right-hand reliever Vincent Pestano in the 20th

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round of the 2006 draft out of Cal-State Fullerton. Pestano had undergone Tommy John surgery after blowing out his arm earlier in the year and was just starting his rehab, but the Indians liked his potential and drafted him anyway.

Pestano is still not 100% and on the road to recovery, but may end up being a risk that pays big dividends for the Indians.

He is a confident pitcher with good mound presence who goes after hitters, and now is saving games at Mahoning Valley.

His fastball sits in the low 90s, but as he continues to regain health he is expected to add another 3-4 MPH on his fastball.

In three appearances at Mahoning Valley, Pestano is 0-0 with 2 saves and 4.15 ERA allowing 5 hits and no walks while striking out 6 in 4.1 innings pitched.

Futures Game

Kinston catcher Max Ramirez and Akron left-handed pitcher Chuck Lofgren were named to the Futures Game



roster this past week. Akron manager Tim Bogar also was selected to be part of the game and will be one of six coaches on the World Team, and this is also his second trip to the game.

Also, the game will have a local flavor to it as Oakland A's left-handed pitching prospect Mike Madsen will pitch for the United States team.

Madsen went to school at Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin High and also at The Ohio State University.

The Futures Game is part of Major League Baseball's All-Star festivities, and will be played July 8th in San Francisco.

Triple-A All-Stars

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Buffalo Notes (44-35, 1st place) | Akron Notes (48-31, 1st place) | Kinston Notes (4-3, 2nd place, 49-27 overall) | Affiliate Notebook



Buffalo Notes (44-35, 1st place): Buffalo has been in first place in the International League North since May 5. ... Right-hander Adam Miller threw two innings of scoreless relief out of the bullpen on Thursday night. In two appearances since being activated off of the disabled list, Miller has pitched three innings and not allowed a hit while walking one and striking out one. ... With right-hander Eddie Mujica in Cleveland, right-hander Mike Koplove is now the closer in Buffalo. ... Utility infielder Hector Luna returned to the lineup on Monday when x-rays of his nose and cheek came back negative after he was hit by a pitch last Wednesday. ... Outfielder Brad Snyder showcased his good throwing arm on Saturday by gunning down two runners out at home. ... On Monday, left-hander Aaron Laffey tossed seven innings and gave up one run on eight hits while striking out six. ... Right-hander Matt Miller has been placed on the disabled list with a right forearm injury. ... Right-hander Rich Rundles has had his delivery reworked, and is now dropping down his arm slot to create more deception with his pitches.



Akron Notes (48-31, 1st place): Right-hander Cliff Politte was shelved last week and placed on the disabled list on Thursday with shoulder fatigue. Politte is still about a week away from returning to action. ... With right-hander Jake Dittler back in the Akron rotation, right-hander Joe Ness has been moved back to the bullpen. ... Catcher Wyatt Toregas has been activated from the disabled list, recovering from a lower back strain. ... Last year, Barton was hit by pitches 25 times, but this year has already been hit 23 times in 73 games. ... Third baseman Pat Osborn was placed on the disabled list with a blister on his right hand. ... Shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera is hitting .326 with 6 HR, 36 RBI, 19 stolen bases, and has an .883 OPS. ... First baseman Jordan Brown is hitting .324 with 6 HR, 53 RBI, 10 stolen bases, and has an .888 OPS. ... Outfielder Trevor Crowe finally pushed himself over the .200 mark this week, and is now hitting .207 with 1 HR, 24 RBI, 15 stolen bases, and a .559 OPS.



Kinston Notes (4-3, 2nd place, 49-27 overall): With left-hander David Huff still sidelined for about another month with a strained ligament in his elbow, right-hander Steven Wright was

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called up to Kinston to take Huff's spot in the starting rotation.

Wright is a 2006 2nd round pick out of the University of Hawaii, and at Lake County this year was 4-7 with a 4.61 ERA. ... Utility player Chris Gimenez won the Home Run Derby at the Carolina All-Star game, hitting a combined 12 home runs in two rounds. ... Closer Scott Roehl was promoted to Akron last Saturday after Cliff Politte was placed on the disabled list, but returned to Kinston on Thursday. ... Infielder Cristo Arnal was sent to short-season Mahoning Valley. ... Right-hander Nick Pesco has been put on the disabled list with elbow soreness. ... Catcher Max Ramirez is hitting .308 with 12 HR, 49 RBI, and has a .977 OPS. ... Outfielder John Drennen is hitting .246 with 8 HR, 44 RBI, and a .713 OPS.



Lake County Notes (7-1, 1st place, 38-40 overall): With Matt Whitney moving up to Kinston, as expected first baseman and 2007 top draft pick Beau Mills was called up to Lake County. ... In an 11-5 win last Thursday night, Captains batters drew 13 walks. ... Last Thursday, all-star catcher Matt McBride got the second half of the season off to a hot start, going 2-for-4 with a home run and six RBI. ... Also last Thursday, right-hander Jeanmar Gomez gave up one run in six innings. ... Outfielder Ramon Alvarado has been added to the Captains roster, and is the player the Indians received last year in the Kaz Tadano trade to Oakland. ... Shortstop Carlos Rivero has been slowed with an ankle sprain, and while listed as day-to-day he has not played since June 22

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. ... Outfielder Nick Weglarz went 4-for-4 with a solo home run and double on Monday. ... Also on Monday, right-hander Josh Tomlin continued his nice season as he yielded three runs on six hits in seven innings. ... First baseman Fernando Pacheco and right-handed pitcher Alan Brech also have been added to the Lake County roster.



Mahoning Valley Notes (5-3, 1st place): Right-hander Mike Eisenberg continues to rebound from a bad start at Lake County earlier this year, and went five innings on Monday and allowed only one run on three hits and a walk while striking out four. ... Right-hander Dan Frega is making his starting debut with the Scrappers after pitching out of the bullpen last year, and in two starts is 1-0 with a 1.17 ERA. ... Right-hander Alan Brech has thrown 6.2 shutout innings in two appearances. ... First baseman Beau Mills finished his short stint in The Valley hitting .179 with 0 HR, 1 RBI and a .553 OPS in eight games. ... Middle-infielder Jansey Infante is hitting .441 with 0 HR, 5 RBI and a 1.045 OPS in eight games. ... Speedy outfielder Juan Valdes is hitting .344 with 1 HR, 7 RBI, 4 stolen bases and a .975 OPS in ten games.

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