

## Minor Happenings: Jensen On The Verge Of A Callup?

Written by {ga=consigliere}  
Wednesday, July 11 2007 7:00 PM -

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It is Thursday, and that means another edition of Minor Happenings. Lastoria takes us through the Indians farm system and updates us on the progress of Adam Miller, a potential season ending injury to Tony Sipp, Stephen Head's move to the outfield, Wes Hodges looming callup to Akron and more. Also, be sure to check back often as Tony writes about his stops at each of the Indians minor league affiliates.



*“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.*

## TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player Of The Week

*(for games from July 5 through July 11)*

### **Todd Martin (First baseman - Mahoning Valley)**

*.353 (6 for 17), 2 R, 2 2B, HR, 5 RBI, 3 BB*



In a short week for most of the teams in the system with the All-Star break, Martin was the one player in the system whose performance stood out the most. Martin is currently undergoing a position change as he played outfield prior to this year, but he is now playing first base.

Martin signed as an undrafted free agent last summer, as the Indians like his powerful bat and approach at the plate.

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On the season, Martin is hitting .371 with 4 HR, 18 RBI and a 1.059 OPS in 19 games.

*Honorable Mentions:* Hector Luna (IF - Buffalo), Sean Smith (RHP - Buffalo), Jordan Brown (1B - Akron),

Mike Eisenberg (RHP -

Mahoning

Valley

), and Jeanmar Gomez (RHP -

Lake

County

)

*Previous Winners:*

6/28 to 7/4: Rodney Choy Foo (IF - Akron)

6/21 to 6/27: Reid Santos (LHP - Akron)

6/15 to 6/20: John Van Every (Outfielder - Buffalo)

6/8 to 6/14: Chris Gimenez (Utility - Kinston)

6/1 to 6/7: Aaron Laffey (LHP - Buffalo)

5/24 to 5/31: Josh Rodriguez (SS - Kinston)

5/17 to 5/23: Shawn Nottingham (LHP - Akron)

5/10 to 5/16: Matt Whitney (1B - Lake County)

5/3 to 5/9: Chuck Lofgren (LHP - Akron)

4/26 to 5/2: Adam Miller (RHP - Buffalo)

4/19 to 4/25: Shawn Nottingham (LHP - Akron)

4/12 to 4/18: Jason Stanford (LHP - Buffalo)

4/5 to 4/11: Matt McBride (C - Lake County)

## Jensen On The Verge Of A Callup?

The Indians recently sent down right-handed reliever Eddie Mujica over the All-Star break, but did not replace him on the roster, instead choosing to leave the current 25-man roster at 24 players. The fact that the Indians did not callup right-handers Matt Miller or Mike Koplove from Buffalo seems to imply one of two things are going to happen: 1.) The Indians anticipate a trade coming in the next day to fill the need in the bullpen before play



resumes on Friday, or 2.) one of Adam Miller or Jensen Lewis may be added to the 40-man roster and called up to Cleveland.

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Wedge talked before the All-Star break of a possible shakeup coming in the bullpen, and we may in fact see it. Adam Miller had been rumored as a possibility for a few weeks, but Jensen Lewis may have jumped to the forefront with his dominating performance in Akron and Buffalo to date.

In 33 combined appearances at Akron and Buffalo, Lewis is 3-0 with a 1.76 ERA and in 51 innings has allowed only 32 hits while walking 16 and striking out 59.

Lewis has a very strong mental approach to the game and has excellent command. His changeup is his best secondary pitch, and he also is still developing a slider.

When he was a starter he threw in the 90-92 MPH range, but as many scouts predicted, his move to the bullpen this year has seen the fastball velocity increase and consistently top out at 93-94 MPH.

## Miller Back In The Rotation

Buffalo right-hander Adam Miller's brief stint in the bullpen is over, although his bullpen appearances were more about building up arm strength and his pitch count than showcasing him in the actual role. Miller got the green light to return to



the starting rotation this past Sunday, and was on a strict four inning 65-pitch count (whichever came first).

Things started off good for Miller as he breezed through the first two innings by throwing only 18 pitches, but then he struggled in the third inning. After giving up a bases-loaded clearing double, Miller hit the next batter in the ribs and the homeplate umpire ejected him.

Buffalo manager Torey Lovullo argued the call and ended up getting ejected himself.

Miller contested that he did not hit the batter on purpose, just that the pitch he threw inside got away from him a little.

In any case, Miller's quick exit had him finish the day going 2.2 innings and giving up five runs on four hits and two walks while striking out four.

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His stuff was electric in the windup, but once he got into the stretch in the third inning his command suffered and he fell apart. Miller is certainly 100% healthy now, as he touched 99 MPH on the gun last week, but the key now is to shake off the rust.

On the season, Miller is now 4-2 with a 3.51 ERA.

## Head In The Outfield

Kinston first baseman Stephen Head has recently undergone a position change where he now is playing mostly in right field. While he will still play first base at times, the focus for now is to get him as much exposure in the outfield to become

more comfortable playing the position and to evaluate how he handles it.

This is actually a move that was a long time coming, as with the Indians loaded with first baseman up and down the system, a move like this was bound to happen to create some versatility for Head and provide a way to get him up to Akron. With Ryan Mulhern in Buffalo, and

Jordan

Brown and Michael Aubrey in

Akron

, Head has been roadblocked all season at first base and unable to move up to

Akron

Also, with the revitalized Matt Whitney now back in

Kinston

and needing to play first base often, the Indians needed to find a way to keep Head in the lineup and potentially a way to move him up a level.

The move to the outfield should not come as a complete culture shock to Head, as he did play some outfield in high school, nor should it be much of a hardship as he is a pretty good athlete. The biggest problem he will likely have is proper route running to fly balls, which is one of the things he is working on with fellow Kinston outfielder Nathan Panther and former major league outfielder and current Kinston hitting coach Jon Nunnally.

Ultimately, if Head can show he can play some outfield he becomes much more valuable to the Indians because of his power bat and versatility. Being able to play a very good first base defensively, and also hold his own in the outfield makes him valuable to an organization that

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loves versatile players. Head has now been at Kinston for three years, playing there for the last half of 2005, all of 2006, and the first half of 2007.

It is time to push him up a level and see what he can do.

Head is hitting .251 with 13 HR, 48 RBI and a .776 OPS in 83 games.

## Sipp Shutdown



There was some bad news this week from the farm system, as prized left-handed relief prospect Tony Sipp had a setback in his recovery from an ulnar collateral ligament injury to his pitching elbow that he suffered in the spring. Sipp had been shutdown since the spring, and was just starting up his rehab in the hopes of pitching for

Buffalo

or

Cleveland

later in the season, but reportedly experienced some pain in the elbow again when throwing last week. The Indians ended up sending him to Dr. James Andrews in

Alabama

on Monday, and apparently he may be done for the year and most of next season as he most likely will undergo Tommy John surgery.

Sipp has been in the Indians system for three years, and has a career record of 13-6 with 5 saves and a 2.75 ERA, and in 219.1 innings has only allowed 158 hits while striking out 284.

## Osborn Traded, Hodges Up Soon?

On Friday, the Indians traded Akron third baseman Pat Osborn to the Houston Astros for a player to be named later, or



more likely for a minor cash deal. Osborn left Akron hitting .230 with 1 HR and 19 RBI in 183 at bats, but in his first 11 at bats with

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Salem

club he has 2 HR and 6 RBI.

This looks to be less a move to trade a player with the hope of acquiring something in return, but instead helping the much-liked Osborn get placement with another team and to also potentially create a spot in

Akron

for heralded third base prospect Wes Hodges.

Hodges is down in

Kinston

having a very nice year in the pitcher friendly

Carolina

league, hitting .312 with 7 HR, 39 RBI and an .854 OPS.

Hodges also ranks 5

th

in the Carolina League in batting average.

## Trevor Finally Crowing

Akron outfielder Trevor Crowe has started to heat up the past few weeks, and may be on the brink of salvaging his season and prospect status. Even if Crowe comes back and brings his numbers up to a respectable level at season's end, his

prospect status has taken a hit and he has lost some of his luster. That said, it is still too early to give up on him, and he still should be a solid contributor at the major league level.

Crowe has been working hard all season to try and get out of the offensive funk he has been in, coming to the park early and taking extra batting practice and instruction from the coaching staff. Even when things were at their worst, Crowe stayed mentally strong and remained focused and it looks like his unwavering persistence may finally be paying off. Crowe had been hitting near the bottom of the

Akron

batting order, but was moved back to his customary leadoff spot a few days ago.

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Crowe recently had a 14-game hitting streak snapped on Sunday, and during the streak raised his batting average by over 40 points.

On the year he is now hitting .225 with 4 HR, 34 RBI, 16 stolen bases and a .624 OPS.

## Snyder Needs Strong Finish

Buffalo outfielder Brad Snyder had an awful June, hitting .179 (14-78) with 3 HR and 7 RBI. It goes without saying that Snyder was more than happy to see June pass and for July to come, and he has heated up since the flip of the page on the

calendar. In July, Snyder is hitting .353 (6-17) with 1 HR and 3 RBI in five games. Snyder attributes his recent success at the plate to him just simplifying his approach and waiting back on the ball longer.

This is a crucial final two months of the season for Snyder as he is a on the bubble to remain with the team given how precious 40-man roster spots will be this coming offseason. With so many young outfielders already on the 40-man roster and so many pitchers and other position players in need of being added to the 40-man roster this offseason for protection from the Rule 5 Draft, Snyder will need a strong showing the last two months to save his place in the Indians organization.

## Sowers Sour Season



Buffalo left-hander Jeremy Sowers' trainwreck of a season continues to roll on. His struggles with the Indians are well documented in that he was sent down to

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Buffalo

in June after he was 1-6 with a 6.93 ERA in 12 starts with Cleveland

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When you consider how Sowers breezed through the International League last year going 9-1 with a 1.39 ERA in 15 starts, and upon returning to the league he dominated last year but is 0-3 with a 5.51 ERA after five starts, it clearly shows he is in a tailspin.

Sowers is working through some adjustments and some struggles are expected, but he has to find his command and aggressiveness.

Sowers last start was encouraging in that he went seven innings and struckout six, although he gave up five runs.

His biggest problem this year has been throwing strikes, but on Saturday of the 101 pitches he threw, 73 of them were for strikes.

## Plucked From The Outback

Fans of the Indians in the 90s will remember that Dave Nilsson, a former Milwaukee Brewer and productive player, was a player that John Hart always seemed to covet, but was never able to obtain. I guess if you can't sign him, go get his



nephew, which explains the Indians signing of Jay Nilsson out of Australia as an international free agent last summer.

Dave Nilsson just happens to be the uncle to Jay, who is now in his second year in the Indians farm system and plays with the rookie-level GCL Indians club.

An Indians international scout stumbled on Nilsson in an Australian All-Star game last summer, and soon after that the scout called Nilsson and signed him.

The young Nilsson, a third baseman, grew up in Australia and followed his uncle when he played professionally with the Milwaukee Brewers.

His uncle now serves as a sounding board for his nephew as he tries to climb the minor league

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ladder and get to the major leagues.

Some of the elder Nilsson's best advice to Jay has been to stay with his approach at the plate and keep giving maximum effort.

While he struggled early in the year, the Indians feel Nilsson has done a good job keeping that consistent approach his uncle said was so important, especially now that he is playing regularly, which is something he was not doing early in the season.

The Indians like his power potential, and Nilsson is currently hitting .300 with 2 HR and 8 RBI in 12 games.

## Thompson and Brown Working Hard



Mahoning Valley shortstop Mark Thompson has had a rough go of it early in his professional career.

After being taken in the 8th round of the 2007 Draft out of Lewis-Clark State College, the same school 1st round pick Beau Mills attended, Thompson has struggled early.

To date, Thompson is hitting .185 with 0 HR and 3 RBI in 20 games.

On the positive side, in the last ten games he is hitting over .300, which is a byproduct of his work in the batting cages to try get his problems at the plate worked out.



Outfielder Matt Brown is another Scraper who has gotten off to a rough start. Brown is a 13th round pick out of Wichita State

in the 2007 Draft, and is making his professional debut this season.

Brown has been one of the Scrappers more consistent performers offensively to date, and is hitting .273 with 0 HR, 12 RBI and a .721 OPS in 18 games.

A lot of this is attributable to the extra work he has done coming to the park early and taking extra batting practice.

Most notably, he has made some adjustments with his batting stance to help him avoid dipping his shoulder and get a better look at the baseball.

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## From No-Hitter to Shi\*\*er



Talk about a night and day performance. Lake County right-hander Hector Rondon tossed six innings of no-hit shutout baseball on July 3rd, and combined with Neil Wagner's three no-hit shutout innings was part of the Captains second no-hitter in less than ten days.

So, what does Rondon do for an encore in his next start?

Get bombed.

On Sunday in his first start since being part of the no-hitter, Rondon was pounded to the tune of nine runs on ten hits in just four innings.

Somehow, in all of that, he managed to not figure into the decision and escaped being tagged with the loss because of a ton of run support from his offense.

## All-Star Game Roundups

Indians minor leaguers took part in several all-star games this week. Here is a quick rundown of how they did in each game:



*Futures Game 7/8:* Kinston catcher Max Ramirez had a double off the wall in left-center, and Akron left-hander Chuck Lofgren pitched a scoreless inning giving up one hit and striking out one.

*Double-A All-Star Game 7/11:* Akron had six players playing in the game, but it was cancelled in the third inning because of fog.

*Triple-A All-Star Game 7/11:* First baseman Ryan Mulhern and second baseman Luis Rivas both went hitless in one at bat.

## Behind The Scenes In Kinston

Kinston Free Press beat reporter David Hall wrote a nice piece last Friday about some of the [b](#)

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### ehind the scenes stuff

in

Kinston. Of note, while the Cleveland Indians supply and pay for the bats and balls that Kinston uses,

Kinston

foots the bill for player uniforms which run about \$250 a player for the entire home-away and batting practice wardrobe.

Also, aside from any bonuses players receive when they sign with the Indians, players at Kinston

make between \$1200 and \$1300 a month.

On the road, players get \$20 a day for meal money and coaches get \$30, and the monthly pay and per diem meal money increases as you climb the minor league ladder.

## Affiliate Notebook



*Buffalo Notes(49-38, 1<sup>st</sup> place):* On Thursday, right-hander Sean Smith pitched seven shutout innings and allowed only four hits while walking three and striking out four to get the win. Smith is 7-5 with a 3.93 ERA on the season. ... Right-hander Mike Koplove is serving as the Buffalo

closer, and has nine saves and a 2.08 ERA in 32 appearances. ... Third baseman Andy Marte recently had a modest eight-game hitting streak snapped, and in his last ten games is hitting .359 with 2 HR and 6 RBI. Overall, Marte is hitting .267 with 9 HR, 30 RBI and a .785 OPS in 45 games. ... All-star first baseman Ryan Mulhern is hitting .319 with 12 HR, 50 RBI and a .908 OPS in 80 games.



*Akron Notes (53-37, 1<sup>st</sup> place):* On Saturday night, outfielder Trevor Crowe hit two home runs and also extended his hitting streak to 14-games, of which ended the next day. ... Hitting coach Lee May Jr. filled in as the acting manager while Tim Bogar was in San Francisco

for the Futures Game. ... Outfielder Brian Barton escaped serious injury on Saturday when he crashed face first into the outfield wall trying to make a running catch. While he initially collapsed to the ground in pain after impact, he was able to shake it off and escaped with minor bumps and bruises. ... First baseman Jordan

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Brown is hitting .329 with 7 HR, 57 RBI and a .900 OPS in 85 games.



*Kinston Notes (11-6, 1<sup>st</sup> place, 56-30 overall):* Catcher Chao Kuan Wu, who is a Taiwan native and rarely used, was sent to the mound in the 9th inning of a blowout loss last week.

The game was well out of hand, and the Kinston

bullpen was depleted, so Wu was called upon.

Wu went one inning and allowed one run on one hit and two walks.

He is the second position player to pitch this season as outfielder Nathan Panther pitched earlier in the year. ... Right-hander Kyle Collina was moved up from

Mahoning

Valley

to

Kinston

, after going 0-1 with a 2.89 ERA in four games at The Valley. ... Right-hander Kyle Collins (not to be confused with Kyle Collina) is on the disabled list with mononucleosis. ... Right-hander Chris Niesel has returned from his trip on the disabled list, but left-hander Dan Cevette was placed on the disabled list with inflammation in his throwing shoulder.



*Lake County Notes (11-8, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, 42-47 overall):* Shortstop Carlos Rivero returned to action on Sunday after having been sidelined for two weeks with an ankle sprain.

Rivero had last played on June 22nd when he rolled his ankle. ... To make room for Rivero, infielder Niuman Romero was removed from the roster and placed on the inactive list. ...

Catcher Matt McBride is hitting .291 with 8 HR, 50 RBI and an .822 OPS. ... 19-year old outfielder Nick Weglarz is hitting .272 with 14 HR, 50 RBI, and an .876 OPS. ... Right-hander Josh Tomlin is 7-1 with a 3.17 ERA in 20 games (9 starts).



*Mahoning Valley Notes (10-11, 4<sup>th</sup> place):* 18-year old left-hander Kelvin De La Cruz was moved up from the GCL Indians and made his first appearance on Friday.

De La Cruz struggled, only lasting a third of an inning and gave up six runs on one hit and five walks.

In three starts with the GCL squad, De La Cruz went 3-0 with a 0.50 ERA. ... Infielder Jeff Hehr has returned to the lineup from his hamstring injury. ... Right-hander and recent 2007 draft pick Jonathon Holt made his second professional start on Monday, allowing six runs and eight hits in 3.1 innings pitched in a loss. ... Right-hander Mike Eisenberg is 1-1 with a 2.45 ERA in four starts, and in 22 innings has allowed only 18 hits and walked 1 while striking out 18.

