

Minor Happenings: Martin Continues To Dominate the NY-Penn League

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Saturday, August 04 2007 7:00 PM -

Tony's been to so many minor league parks, and there's been so much news regarding the Indians farm system ... he's had to break "Minor Happenings" into multiple columns a couple times recently, and that's the case again this week. Tony checks in with Tribe Farm Director Ross Atkins again on a number of topics, and also reports that SS Asdrubal Cabrera could be very close to joining the Indians as a replacement for Buff's boy Mike Rouse. You'll find no better Indians minor league coverage anywhere else.



"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, from private sources connected to the Indians organization, as well as from club officials from the team itself.

In case you missed it, [part one of Minor Happenings](#) this week posted on Thursday covering the Player of the Week, the Lofton-Ramirez trade, Adam Miller being shutdown and more.

Today, we carry on with the rest of the news as I try to bring everything up to date since I was out a week on vacation.

TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player Of The Month (for the month of July)

Todd Martin (First baseman - Mahoning Valley)

.385 AVG (37-96), 14 R, 5 2B, 6 HR, 26 RBI, 11 BB, 18 K, 1.070 OPS

How much more can you say about Martin? He has flat out dominated the NY-Penn League this year, and every week I find myself giving him accolades whether it be as the player of the week or as a runner-up. Still, he is 24-years old, which is old



for the NY-Penn League, so it remains to be seen if he can maintain his hot hitting at the

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full-season Single-A levels. Martin likely will finish the year at Mahoning Valley, and then next year could very well skip Low-A Lake County and start in High-A Kinston.

Martin's success is directly tied to him being such an advanced, disciplined hitter at the plate where he rarely swings at a bad pitch, and he does a good job of spraying the ball around the field. He also has excelled hitting with men on base, as he is hitting .442 with a 1.118 OPS with runners in scoring position. He missed a few games in mid-July with an injury, but came right back and hasn't skipped a beat. Currently, on the NY-Penn League leader-board he is ranked first in batting average (.382), first in hits (55), first in home runs (8), first in RBI (36), and first in OPS (1.035).

Clearly, he is the MVP of the league so far, and he is on a record-breaking pace to shatter almost every Mahoning Valley hitting record.

Honorable Mention:

Trevor Crowe (OF - Akron): .330 AVG, 23 R, 7 2B, 3 HR, 13 RBI, 17 BB, 10 K, 3 SB, .915 OPS
Matt Whitney (1B - Kinston): .308 AVG, 15 R, 6 2B, 6 HR, 23 RBI, 7 BB, 18 K, 1 SB, .921 OPS
Kevin Dixon (RHP - Kinston): 5-0, 3.93 ERA, 34.1 IP, 39 H, 15 ER, 3 HR, 13 BB, 23 K
Ryan Edell (LHP - Kinston): 3-2, 2.40 ERA, 30 IP, 25 H, 8 ER, 2 HR, 8 BB, 34 K
Jeanmar Gomez (RHP - Lake County): 3-0, 2.25 ERA, 32 IP, 27 H, 8 ER, 6 HR, 12 BB, 24 K

Previous Winners:

June: Aaron Laffey (LHP - Buffalo)
May: Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County)
April: Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County)

Director's Cuts

Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins was in Kinston this week, and chimed in on the play of the team along with a couple players:

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Edell To The Pen

Kinston left-hander Ryan Edell has been pulled from the starting rotation and moved to the bullpen. Edell, who was taken in the 8th round of the 2005 Draft out of The College of Charleston, was having a breakout season in the starting rotation as he was 9-4 with a 3.21 ERA as a starter. The move to the bullpen is not performance or injury related, just a way to limit



his innings pitched since he has piled up a lot of innings this year and is coming off a year last year where he threw only 18.1 innings.

Edell missed most of the 2006 season with a sprained ulnar collateral ligament, pitching in only six games (18.1 innings) and going 0-1 with a 3.44 ERA. The injury Edell suffered in 2006 is the same injury which sidelined left-hander Tony Sipp this year, and ultimately led to Tommy John surgery for Sipp. Edell was fortunate to avoid the surgery to correct "Tommy John ligament", which is what the ulnar collateral ligament is commonly called.

The move to the bullpen will allow Edell to make one or two appearances a week in the bullpen where he pitches two to three innings each outing. Also, instead of keeping him in the rotation and having to shut him down in mid-August, he now can pitch the rest of the year and likely into the postseason. It is not known whether the move to the bullpen will carry over to next season or not.

Typically, the Indians start to make decisions on whether to convert starters to relievers when they go from Kinston to Akron, and Akron is most likely the destination that Edell will pitch at

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next year. Edell has some bullpen experience during his early days at college, but hasn't pitched out of the bullpen since then. If Edell impresses and the Indians like what they see, he could become a permanent fixture in the bullpen because of the starting depth in the system.

Cabrera Movin' On Up

Shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera is having one of the best seasons of any player in the Indians system this year, and was moved up from Double-A Akron to Triple-A Buffalo on Sunday night. On the year at Akron, in 96 games Cabrera hit .310 with 8 HR, 54 RBI, 23 stolen bases, and an .837 OPS.

While he excels defensively at shortstop, Cabrera is expected to split time with fellow infielder Luis Rivas at shortstop and second base as the Indians look to keep their utility options open this year (and next year). With Mike Rouse struggling in Cleveland, Rivas or even Cabrera could be called upon to fill the utility void. While it has not been confirmed he will play some third base or not, Cabrera could also get some action there and he does have experience playing at the hot corner in winter ball.

Cabrera has arguably been the Akron MVP this year, so he will be missed in Akron, especially as they make a playoff run. But, development comes before winning in the minors, and Cabrera is ready to be challenged by the next level again. Cabrera played in Triple-A last year, and was the youngest player at that level and struggled as he hit .249 with 4 HR, 36 RBI, 12 stolen bases and a .658 OPS.

It should be interesting to see how he performs this time around, especially since he has made strides with his offense this year.

So far, in six games at Buffalo Cabrera is hitting .320 with 0 HR, 2 RBI, 1 stolen base and a .770 OPS.

With the call-up to Buffalo, Cabrera is on the cusp of a call-up to Cleveland and realistically could be someone the Indians call upon in September when rosters expand. His defensive ability could even get him on a postseason roster in place of any other utility option available right now.

Dixon Bullpen Bound Too

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Like left-hander Ryan Edell, Kinston right-hander Kevin Dixon has also been removed from the starting rotation. As a starter, Dixon was 10-3 on the year with a 3.87 ERA and had piled up a team high 118.2 innings pitched.

The move to the



bullpen should not be too much of an adjustment for him, as he was a closer in high school and college. Right-hander Erik Stiller has been moved to the starting rotation to fill Dixon's spot.

Dixon will pitch out of the bullpen the rest of the season because he has reached an innings pitched threshold which requires him to cut back in order to keep him at a reasonable level by season's end. The Indians use a computer program that calculates risk of injury to a pitcher based on how many innings they have pitched and how many they are on pace to pitch for the season.

Dixon knows all too well that a move to the bullpen is not a bad thing, as it helped catapult right-hander Jensen Lewis to the big leagues in one year.

It is not known if Dixon will remain in the bullpen next year when he likely goes to Akron.

The Whitney Comeback Tour

In a year of comeback tours by bands such as The Police, Genesis, and others, Kinston third baseman Matt Whitney has enjoyed a comeback tour of his own this season and continues to roll along. Whitney just finished the month of July where



he hit .308 with 6 HR, 23 RBI and a .921 OPS. On the season, in 101 combined games at Lake County and Kinston, Whitney is hitting .301 with 22 HR, 88 RBI and an .892 OPS.

This season has been a renaissance for Whitney, as he finally appears to be over the injuries that sidelined him and plagued on the field for most of the last four years. Last year at Kinston, he struggled and hit .206 with 10 HR, 39 RBI and a .656 OPS in 96 games, and ended up starting this year in Lake County and had a position change to first base.

The demotion and move to first base now look like a brilliant decision by the Indians brass, as Whitney now appears to have settled back in as a top hitting prospect in the system.

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He has made a lot of adjustments at the plate, with the most notable adjustment being a shortened up stroke.

Brown Banged Up



Akron first baseman Jordan Brown has been bothered by an injury to his left knee since May. Brown has scar tissue and bone chips in his knee causing pain, which will require arthroscopic surgery to remove.

The injury has slowed Brown down some of late as the pain has gotten worse, and he has been slowed on the bases and in the field.

Brown was informed he cannot injure himself any worse by playing, so he opted to play through the season and have the surgery this offseason.

If the pain gets to be too much for Brown to endure, he will most certainly have to opt for the surgery and end his season.

Brown is hitting .326 with 9 HR, 64 RBI and has an .897 OPS in 98 games.

Bunkelman's Last Chance

It was widely speculated right-hander Cody Bunkelman was on his way out of the organization after he went 17 days in Lake County in July without making an appearance. Bunkelman was eventually reassigned to extended spring in Winter Haven

and is in the process of having his delivery re-worked to throw from a new arm slot.

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I happened to be there on Bunkelman's first workout in Winter Haven, and he is working on a new arm slot where he dips down to the side. The angle is not to the degree of Randy Newsom, but more like Jim Ed Warden. From some of the staff I talked to, Bunkelman realizes this is his last shot in the organization, so it will be interesting to see how he adapts to the new delivery. He has a raw power arm, which features a mid 90's fastball and a nasty slider, so the arm slot could be devastating on right-handed hitters if he can command his pitches.

I have some pictures and video of his first bullpen session, which I will provide when I do my recap of my GCL Indians visit soon.

Indians Sign 2002 First Round Pick



The Indians signed former 2002 Chicago Cubs first round draft pick Bobby Brownlie to a minor league deal and assigned him to Akron. Brownlie had been released after several sub-par seasons in the Cubs organization. Last year, the right-hander went 3-14 with a 6.33 ERA in the Cubs system and this year was released in spring training.

Brownlie did not hook up with an organization, so he played Independent ball with the Newark Bears in the Atlantic League before the Indians came calling for his services.

In three appearances with Akron so far, Brownlie is 0-1 with a 5.06 ERA, and has allowed 16 hits and six walks while striking out 11 in 16 innings pitched.

One interesting note, is Brownlie was the player selected just before the Indians drafted right-hander Jeremy Guthrie that year.

Affiliate Notebook

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~~Buffalo Notes (68-50, 2nd place, 95-81):~~



Akron Notes (64-47, 1st place): Catcher David Wallace has been placed on the temporary inactive list to serve as the Cleveland Indians bullpen catcher.

The Indians regular bullpen catcher Danny Williams has been sidelined with back problems. ... Outfielder Nathan Panther has been called up from Kinston, and right-hander Joe Ness has been placed on the disabled list. ... Before Panther's arrival, Akron had only three outfielders.

So, when Trevor Crowe sat out a few games with a wrist injury, utility man Chris Gimenez played left field. ... Right-handed reliever Rich Rundles has been promoted to Buffalo, and in return received right-hander Michael Finocchi from Kinston. ... Jake Dittler was placed on the disabled list on July 19th with a left hip strain, but was activated on July 31st and and threw seven shutout innings. ... Infielder Shaun Larkin has been activated from the disabled list. ... Outfielder Brian Barton is hitting .310 with 9 HR, 56 RBI, 19 stolen bases, and an .849 OPS. ... Left-hander Chuck Lofgren is 10-6 with a 4.28 ERA. ... Left-hander Scott Lewis is 3-8 with a 3.95 ERA.



Kinston Notes (25-14, 1st place, 70-38 overall): Catcher Armando Camacaro had never hit more than three home runs in a season in his eight years in the Indians minor league system, but on July 26th Camacaro hit three home runs in ONE GAME.

On the year, in 22 combined games at Akron and Kinston he has five home runs in 71 at bats. ... Right-hander Kevin Dixon won eight consecutive starts, which had not happened in the Carolina League in over five years. ... With left-hander Ryan Edell moving to the bullpen, right-hander Jim Deters will assume the spot in the rotation. ... After being sidelined for four weeks with a high ankle sprain injury, infielder Chris De La Cruz was activated off the disabled list on Tuesday.

On the year, De La Cruz is hitting .318 with 1 HR, 26 RBI, and a .781 OPS. ... Outfielder Nathan Panther and right-handed reliever Michael Finocchi have been promoted to Double-A Akron. ... Third baseman Wes Hodges is hitting .304 with 10 HR, 53 RBI and an .865 OPS in 79 games.

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Lake County Notes (21-19, 2nd place, 3.5 GB, 52-58 overall): 19 year old left-hander Ryan Morris had a nice debut with the Captains, throwing five shutout innings. Miller was a 4th round pick in the 2006 Draft out of high school in North Carolina. ... Outfielder Nick Weglarz is in a funk, hitting .225 in his last ten games.

He also saw his on-base streak come to an end on July 22

nd

at 37 games. ... Over their last ten games, second baseman Adam Davis is hitting .200 and outfielder Roman Pena is hitting .211. ... In 59 games, outfielder Cirilo Cumberbatch is hitting .291 with 6 HR, 33 RBI, 5 stolen bases and an .839 OPS. ... Third baseman Beau Mills is hitting .269 with 4 HR, 29 RBI, and a .777 OPS in 32 games at Lake County.



Mahoning Valley Notes (22-20, 2nd place, 2.5 GB): Left-handed reliever Garrett Rieck is starting to open some eyes, and on the year he is 3-0 with a 0.74 ERA in 11 appearances (24.1 innings).

Rieck throws from two different arm slots, and while he is not overpowering he has a very good slider. ... It looks like right-hander Joanniel Montero may become a permanent part of the Scrappers starting rotation.

On July 27

th

, he went 6.2 innings and allowed no earned runs on four hits.

On the year, Montero is 5-1 with a 3.66 ERA. ... Right-hander Mike Eisenberg continues to put up solid starts, going six innings has last start and giving up one run.

At Mahoning Valley, Eisenberg is 2-4 with a 3.72 ERA. ... Right-hander Kyle Landis has been dominant out of the bullpen, allowing only one run in 21.1 innings. ... Indians advisor Buck Showalter spent the week in Mahoning Valley working with the Scrappers. ... The New York-Penn League All-Star Game is on August 14th in Fishkill, N.Y.



GCL Indians Notes (21-17, 2nd place, 5.5 GB): The GCL Indians wrapup play on August 27th, and once their season is completed several players will likely be moved up to Mahoning Valley and even Lake County for the final week of games for both affiliates. ... Santo Frias is 1-3 with a 2.20 ERA.

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I have some pictures and video of him in action that I will share in my recap of my GCL recap (which will post soon). ... Catcher Robbie Alcombrack is hitting .263 with 6 HR, 14 RBI, and an .899 OPS.

Alcombrack is a very good looking catching prospect who was a highly rated catcher out of high school in the draft last year.

I have an interview with him that should post soon. ... First baseman Chris Nash is hitting .301 with 3 HR, 20 RBI, and an .843 OPS

