



Guthrie and Merloni on Fire at Buffalo

(For games from Friday April 14 through Thursday April 20) □

Minor League Player of the Week:

Lou Merloni: .519 avg (14 for 27), 4 2Bs, 1 HR, 5 RBIs in 6 games

Normally, this award would not go to a non-prospect player like Merloni, but his performance early in Buffalo and my disdain for everything that is Ramon Vazquez throws that general thinking out the window. On the season, Merloni is hitting a blazing .415 (17 for

41) in 10 games, and has started at least two games at every position in the infield except 3B. Merloni definitely appears to be fully recovered from the ankle injury that ended his season prematurely last year, and offers an alternative at the utility infielder spot for the Indians. With his history as a solid utility player and Wedge favorite at Cleveland in 2004, if Vazquez continues to struggle up in Cleveland he could be added to the roster very soon.

Honorable Mention: Jeremy Guthrie, Ryan Garko, and Ryan Mulhern

News and Notes:

Jason Stanford was on a strict 60-pitch count in his start yesterday, which could mean he is on his way to Cleveland to replace Rafael Perez or Rafeal Betancourt (DL) on the roster....After hanging around in extended Spring Training building up arm strength, Steve Karsay was activated on Tuesday and will pitch out of the Buffalo bullpen. In his first appearance yesterday, he pitched 2.2 innings and gave up 1 run on 2 hits while striking out 2.....Another pitcher, lefty Felix Heredia, was activated from extended Spring Training on Sunday and also has joined the Buffalo pen.

Michael Aubrey is in extended Spring Training, and the Indians have him targeted for a mid-April to end of April activation where he'll likely start in warm weather Kinston and play DH....Ryan Garko was hit in the hand with a pitch late in Wednesday's game, and was treated for the injury after the game but no long-term injury has been reported. He did not play in Thursday's game.

This past week, the Buffalo Bisons and Cleveland Indians were able to complete a two-year extension of their working agreement through the 2008 season....Catcher Tim Laker actually pitched one inning of relief on Sunday in a blowout loss because the Bisons only had 22 players active on the roster (Carmona called up, etc). Laker held the opposition hitless in his one inning of work, and actually struck a batter out.... Last year, Ryan Garko hit .303 with 19 HRs and 77 RBIs at Buffalo, but only hit .236 (30-127) with 2 HRs and 12 RBIs versus left-handed pitching.

Farrell Talks:

In a radio interview Wednesday night, Indians Farm Director John Farrell talked about several Tribe prospects. According to Farrell, Andy Marte has been streaky to start the season, but has battled and worked deep into counts....Franklin Gutierrez was moved into the leadoff spot so he sees more fastballs. Farrell has been impressed with Gutierrez's complete at bats so far, and feels the

last piece of his development was working on his patience and plate discipline.

Adam Miller is 100% recovered, and Farrell states this is based on the number of uninterrupted starts he has made (no missed starts). For April and May, Farrell says Miller is on a strict 85 pitch count which will do two things: keep him healthy and fresh, and also force him to be more efficient as a pitcher (and early results show this)....Ryan Mulhern's ability to play both 1B and the outfield will be a big key in him possibly making the Indians 25-man roster somewhere down the road. At some point in May he will be moved up to Buffalo so the organization can see a significant number of at bats from him at the AAA level so they can make a sound decision on him in the offseason (adding him to the 40-man roster to protect him in the Rule 5 Draft).

Buffalo Roundup:

The Bisons went 5-2 for the week, and currently are 9-6 on the season sitting in 2nd place in the North Division of the International League....Offensively, the Bisons are off to a hot start hitting .300 as a team which ranks 1st in the 14-team league, and are 5th in pitching (3.00 ERA).

Starting pitcher Jeremy Guthrie continues to impress, and has actually been more dominate than Jeremy Sowers. In three starts this season he is 2-0 with a 1.00 ERA....On Monday, Fernando Cabrera threw 2 innings of relief allowing 0 runs, 1 hit and struckout 3. He followed that up on Thursday pitching 1.2 innings not allowing a run, and only surrendering 2 hits while striking out 3. He is on the 15-day disabled list and is in Buffalo on a rehab assignment....To date, Garko has no errors at 1B.... Garko had reached base in nine consecutive plate appearances before getting retired on a pop-up in the eighth inning Monday, and since has not reached base in 10 consecutive at bats.

Seven Up:

Franklin Gutierrez (CF): .345 avg (19-55), 4 2Bs, 2 HRs, 6 RBIs, 4 stolen bases

Ryan Garko (1B): .346 avg (18-52), 4 2Bs, 1 HR, 15 RBIs

Ben Francisco (RF): .295 avg (13-44), 2 2Bs, 3 HR, 7 RBIs,

2 stolen bases

Andy Marte (3B): .273 avg (15-55), 5 2Bs, 0 HRs, 3 RBIs

Jason Dubois (RF): .280 avg (14-50), 4 2Bs, 3 HRs, 13 RBIs

Jeremy Sowers (SP): 2-0, 0.47 ERA, 19.1 IP, 17 hits, 5 BBs, 11 Ks, 1.14 WHIP

Jeremy Guthrie (SP): 2-0, 1.00 ERA, 18 IP, 10 hits, 5 BBs, 12 Ks, 0.83 WHIP

Akron Roundup:

After a slow start, the Aeros are starting to heat up going 5-2 this week. Currently, they are 8-7 on the season and in 4th place of the South Division of the Eastern League....Akron

is 2nd in the league in hitting (.270) and 11th out of 12 teams in pitching (4.45 ERA).

Outfielder Todd Donovan (.321 avg) continues to swipe bases at a ridiculous rate, as in 13 games he has 10 stolen bases...Brad Snyder and Ryan Mulhern continue to rack up the K's at a Branyan-esque pace. The two have combined to strike out 44 times in 122 at bats....Prized lefty Rafael Perez rebounded with a quality start Sunday after two bad starts, going 6 innings and giving up 3 runs while striking out 7....Perez was also called up to the Indians on Thursday and made his major league debut late in the game....Future Indians utility infield prospect Eider Torres is hitting .305 with 7 RBIs and has stolen 5 bases.

Akron Six Pack:

Indians Farm Report

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Thursday, April 20 2006 7:00 PM -

Brad Snyder (RF): .279 avg (17-61), 3 2Bs, 1 3B, 3 HRs, 10 RBIs, 2 stolen bases, 24 Ks

Ryan Mulhern (1B): .279 avg (17-61), 3 2Bs, 3 HRs, 12 RBIs, 20 Ks

Kevin Kouzmanoff (3B): .333 avg (17-51), 1 2B, 1 HR, 4 RBIs, 7 Ks

Adam Miller (SP): 2-0, 2.04 ERA, 17.2 IP, 12 hits, 3 BB, 15 Ks, 0.85 WHIP

Tony Sipp (SP): 2-0, 2.25 ERA, 16 IP, 12 hits, 5 BBs, 21 Ks, 1.06 WHIP

Nick Pesco (SP): 0-1, 8.25 ERA, 12 IP, 14 hits, 5 BBs, 8 Ks, 1.58 WHIP

Kinston Roundup:

The K-Tribe went 4-3 for the week, and currently are 10-4 on the season and sit atop the Southern Division of the Carolina League....Kinston is 6th out of 8 teams in the league in hitting (.229 avg), but 2

nd

in the league in pitching with a 2.55 team ERA. Prior to last night's 17-hit and 15 run outburst, Kinston as a team was hitting .203 in their last 10 games.

After very good starts, 2005 draft picks Trevor Crowe and Stephen Head have cooled considerably. Prior to Thursday's game, Head was only 4 for his last 25 (.160 avg) and Crowe 3 for his last 18 (.167 avg).... Ohio State alum and 2004 draft pick Scott Lewis has been sensational in his first three starts. He missed almost all of 2005 due to injury, and has impressed early this season not allowing a run in 12.2 IP and has

struckout 16 while only walking one batter....3B prospect Matt Whitney's struggles continue, as he is hitting only .146 and has struckout in 21 of his 41 at bats....Outfielder Brian Barton has returned from injury to the Kinston lineup, and his bat has helped jumpstart the offense (2-4 with 2 HRs and 4 RBI Thursday).

K-Tribe Six Pack:

Trevor Crowe (CF): .286 avg (12-42), 1 2B, 1 HR, 8 RBIs, 4 stolen bases

Stephen Head (1B): .222 avg (12-54), 3 2Bs, 1 HR, 7 RBIs

Brian Barton (RF): .280 avg (7-25), 1 2B, 2 HRs, 4 RBIs, 2 stolen bases

Matt Whitney (3B): .146 avg (6-41), 1 2B, 2 HRs, 5 RBI, 21 Ks

Scott Lewis (SP): 0-0, 0.00 ERA, 12.2 IP, 8 hits, 1 BB, 16 Ks, 0.71 WHIP

Chuck Lofgren (SP): 3-0, 1.15 ERA, 15.2 IP, 11 hits, 5 BB, 17 Ks, 1.02 WHIP

Lake County Roundup:

The Captains are clearly the weakest of the four full season minor league teams. For the week, they went 2-4, and on the season they are 7-7, which puts them in 5th place out of 8 teams in the South Atlantic League's Northern Division....Of no surprise, the Captains are 10th

out of 16 teams in hitting (.246 avg), and are 3rd in pitching (2.70 ERA).

Captains Six Pack:

John Drennen (CF): .326 avg (15-46), 1 2B, 1 3B, 1 HR, 3 RBI, 3 stolen bases

Nick Petrucci (3B): .179 avg (7-39), 2 2Bs, 0 HR, 3 RBIs

Niuman Romero (SS): .294 avg (15-51), 2 2Bs, 0 HR, 6 RBIs

Matt Fornasiere (2B): .361 avg (13-36), 1 2B, 1 HR, 3 RBIs

James Deters (SP): 0-0, 2.12 ERA, 17 IP, 17 hits, 1 BB, 19 Ks, 1.06 WHIP

Kevin Dixon (SP): 0-1, 2.16 ERA, 16.2 IP, 11 hits, 5 BBs, 13 Ks, 0.96 WHIP

Coming Soon:

Part 1 of a two-part Q&A with Baseball America's Chris Kline has been completed, and will post on Monday, April 24th.