

2008 Kinston Indians Preview

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Thursday, April 03 2008 7:00 PM -

While yesterday was Opening Day around Minor league Baseball, a few leagues do not kick off their season until today. The Carolina League is one of them, and the Kinston Indians will finally get their season underway at 7:00 p.m. ET tonight at home against Winston-Salem. In his final preview of the Indians minor league affiliates, Tony takes a look at the 2008 version of the Kinston Indians.



This is the final article previewing the Cleveland Indians full-season minor league affiliates. [Lake County](#), [Akron](#) and [Buffalo](#) were showcased earlier in the week.

While yesterday was Opening Day around Minor league Baseball, a few leagues do not kick off their season until today. The Carolina League is one of them, and the Kinston Indians will finally get their season underway at 7:00 p.m. ET tonight at home against Winston-Salem.

Last season, Kinston finished the regular season with the best record in the Carolina League at 87-52. The season ended abruptly however, as their bid to make their fourth straight appearance in the Mills Cup Finals and repeat as league championship ended with an opening round loss to Salem 2-1 in a best-of-three series.

Even with the disappointing end to the season, it was yet another successful season in the win/loss column for Kinston, and in the player development department for the Cleveland Indians. The revolving door that is the player development system continues to turn as players like Josh Rodriguez, Wes Hodges, Chris Gimenez, Matt Whitney, Frank Herrmann, David Huff and Jose Constanza have moved on, and several new bigtime prospects have arrived with the likes of Nick Weglarz, Carlos Rivero, Paolo Espino, Hector Rondon, and Jeanmar Gomez.

While there are some new faces coming to Kinston, there will be a lot of familiar ones returning. With the Indians system so jammed with prospects in the upper-levels, particularly with pitching and outfielders, players like John Drennen, Beau Mills, Jim Deters, Jerad Head, Erik Stiller and Jared Goedert will start the season in Kinston.

From a talent standpoint, Kinston should be loaded on offense as there will be several big bats up and down the lineup. The key to their success will fall in the laps of the Latin starting pitching trio of Espino, Rondon and Gomez. If the three young right-handers continue to progress as expected, Kinston could challenge some team records in the win-loss department and also with home runs and runs scored. Kinston is as strong as ever and will be a favorite to win the Carolina League Championship and hold the Mills Cup trophy high above their heads for the third time in five years.

Minor League Affiliates

Buffalo Bisons (AAA)

Akron Aeros (AA)

Kinston Indians (High A)

Lake County Captains (Low A)

Mahoning Valley Scrappers (Short Season A)

GCL Indians (Rookie)

Kinston Indians Coaching Staff

Manager: Chris Tremie

1st season as Kinston manager, 3rd season in Indians organization

Hitting Coach: Jon Nunnally

2nd season as Kinston hitting coach, 2nd season in Indians organization

Pitching Coach: Greg Hibbard

2nd season as Kinston pitching coach, 6th season in Indians organization

Roster & Rotation

Pitchers (12):

Jim Deters (RHP)

Paolo Espino (RHP)

Jeanmar Gomez (RHP)

Matt Meyer (LHP)

Luis Perdomo (RHP)

Hector Rondon (RHP)

Carlton Smith (RHP)

Erik Stiller (RHP)

Heath Taylor (LHP)

Josh Tomlin (RHP)

Neil Wagner (RHP)

Steven Wright (RHP)

Catchers (2):

Alex Castillo

Brian Juhl

Infielders (6):

Adam Davis

Jared Goedert

Todd Martin

Beau Mills

Carlos Rivero

Niuman Romero

Outfielders (5):

Jason Denham

Cirilo Cumberbatch

John Drennen

Nick Weglarz

Jerad Head

Rotation:

Steven Wright

Paolo Espino

Hector Rondon

Jeanmar Gomez

Carlton Smith

Players to Watch

Jeanmar Gomez -

Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 20 Height: 6'3"

Weight: 168 Bats: Right

Throws: Right

2007 LHP
Career 20 - 0 - 7 - 4.88 - 37



Gomez was signed as a non-drafted free agent out of Venezuela in April

of 2005. In his first three seasons in the Indians farm system Gomez has been outstanding. At the end of last season, Gomez showed increased arm strength and has good potential for future strength gains for plus arm strength. He shows a feel for a three pitch mix at times, with a

good fastball, curveball and changeup. His fastball consistently clocks in at 87-90 MPH and tops out at 93 MPH. His curveball has 11-5 break, and shows good potential. His changeup is an average pitch with sink and fade, and he has good command of it. He has average

command and control right now, but has the possibility of having plus command/control in the future. Gomez finished the year strong and showed improvement in his fastball velocity as it was higher than it was at the beginning of the season. As one of the youngest players in the

league, he hung in there, competed and in the second half made a lot of strides. He made every start, and the Indians never had to back him off his starts. He stayed healthy showing durability, and got better as the season went on. Gomez has considerable upside,

and his growth potential in size and stuff is very good.

Paolo Espino -

Right-handed

Pitcher

Age: 21 Height:

5'10" Weight:

190 Bats: Right

Throws: Right

2007 Major League Career **4** **5** **3.66** **33**



The Indians selected Espino in the 10th round of the 2006 Draft out of high school (Bradenton,

FL). Espino was signed in July of 2006, but 2007 was his professional debut as he did not pitch for a short-season league team in 2006. The Panamanian righty showcases a fastball that usually sits at 90 MPH and tops out at

92 MPH, and he compliments it with a good curveball and changeup. His best pitch is his changeup, but all three of his pitches grade out as at least average with the chance to be above average pitches. Espino started last

season in the backend of the Lake County bullpen, but after progressing nicely and going 2-1 with a 3.65 ERA and .213 batting average against in 20 appearances out of the bullpen he was moved into the starting rotation in June.

Espino finished the year in the rotation, and was strong as he went 2-4 with a 3.66 ERA and .243 batting average against in 13 starts. He pitched better than his win-loss record and ERA show, as he pitched every fifth day

and pitched strong just about every time out going five or six innings, and only in two of his final ten starts did he allow more than two runs. While he will be in the Kinston starting rotation to start the season, down the road

- because of his size -
Espino may be more
suited for a bullpen
role.

**Hector Rondon -
Right-handed
Pitcher**

**Age: 20 Height:
6'3" Weight:**

165 Bats: Right Throws: Right

■ GP
Cared: 3 17 3.83 35



Rondon was signed

as a non-drafted
free agent out of
Venezuela in
August of 2004.
Rondon is a young
and projectable
starting pitcher with
a fastball with
average life that

consistently clocks
in at 89-90 MPH
and has topped out
as high as 94 MPH.
He also throws a
curveball and
changeup, with the
potential in the
future to be an

average breaking ball and straight changeup. At 6'3" and 165 pounds, Rondon is long and lanky and has plenty of projection still with his body. He has

shown the ability to mix up his pitches well, and showed plus control with the ability to throw strikes and locate his pitches well to both sides of the plate. He is a

competitor on the mound and very aggressive with his fastball where he likes to challenge hitters. He often gets himself into good counts, and as the year wore on

last season he became more consistent with making his pitches and gradually got stronger. He has a good plan when he takes the mound, sticks with it, and

shows good tempo. He showed good durability as he made every start last year and did not wear down. Rondón grew a lot as a pitcher over the course of last

season, and he has a good ceiling. He is part of a young Latin Trifecta which also includes Kelvin De La Cruz and Jeanmar Gomez that has the Indians excited.

Beau Mills - Third Baseman

Age: 21 Height:

6'3"

Weight: 220 Bats:

Left Throws:

Right

INDIANS
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The Indians
drafted Mills in the
1st round of the

2007 Draft out of Lewis-Clark State (ID). While the results may seem to indicate otherwise, the Indians were very pleased with Mills professional debut

last summer,
saying he was
"outstanding
". Mills has
an electric bat with
excellent power
and strength. He
has very good
hitting skills, and

hits the ball hard
and has a nice line
drive stroke where
he gets good loft
to hit balls a long
way and punish
mistakes. He
covers the plate
well, and hits the

ball well to all fields, and is good at making adjustments at the plate. When he is able to get good extension, he crushes balls. He has a good major

league body and size for a corner infield position. He is not a fast runner, but he is smart on the basepaths and makes good decisions. The

Indians feel his
makeup,
presence,
demeanor, and
level of intensity
are off the charts
amazing. There is
no question that
Mills is an

excellent hitting prospect, but it is his defense which has set him back in recent years. He moves around well and shows good agility and footwork to where

he could be an average third baseman someday, but he has been hindered by a bad shoulder which has hurt his throwing. The Indians feel he has

the agility and athleticism to play third base, and he will split time there and at first base this season. With Mills looking good at third base and responding well to

the rehab program
the Indians
medical staff has
laid out for him,
the organization
wants to see him
play third base
more before
abandoning it and

moving him to first base full time.

Nick Weglarz -

Outfielder

Age: 20 Height:

6'3"

Weight: 215

Bats: Left

Throws: Left

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The Indians

selected Weglarz
in the 3rd round of
the 2005 Draft out
of high school
(Ontario,
Canada). Weglarz
was one of the
biggest stories of

the year in the
Indians minor
league system
last year, as his
raw power
combined with his
advanced
approach at the

plate at just 19
years of age in a
full-season
Single-A league
impressed many
in the Indians
organization. With
his size and raw

power, Weglarz is one of the best power prospects to come out of Canada in some time. Weglarz is a big kid who the Indians think will

get bigger as he matures. Last year, comparisons to Jim Thome at similar stages of their development began to be thrown around by

various people
around baseball.
Weglarz is a
developed hitter
with
above-average
hand-eye
coordination, and

he loves low pitches so he can extend through it either away or down and in. Weglarz has some flaws in his swing that need to

be tinkered along
the way, but his
long arms and
good bat speed
generate
tremendous
power. He is still a
young, unpolished

hitter who strikes
out a lot, but he
also shows
excellent patience
in waiting for his
pitch and rarely
swinging at
pitches outside of

the zone, which is uncommon for a player his age. Weglarz played first base all the way up until the Indians drafted him, but they

decided to move
him to the outfield.
He'll never win a
Gold Glove out in
left field, but he
has become at
least an average
fielder and shows

an adequate arm.

Jared Goedert -

Second Base

Age: 22 Height:

6'1" "

Weight: 180

Bats: Right

Throws: Right

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The Indians

originally drafted
Goedert out of
high school in the
36th round of the
2003 Draft, but he
chose to go to
college and the
Indians took him

again when he was eligible in the 9th round of the 2006 Draft out of Kansas State. Goedert is not a big assuming player nor overly

strong, but he has very good power, the ball explodes off his bat, and he has the ability to hit the ball out to any part of the ballpark. He is a

quiet, mentally
tough kid with a
consistent swing
and line drive
stroke that help
generate most of
his power. He is a
line drive hitter

who hits the ball
where it is
pitched, and with
the help of
instructors in the
offseason and
spring training last
year he was able

to correct some
flaws in his swing
and get more
backspin on the
ball to help balls
travel further in
the air. Goedert's
sound mechanics

and low
maintenance
swing help create
a nice, consistent
bat path to the
ball. Goedert has
shown a very
good eye at the

plate where his
plate discipline is
excellent. While
he can definitely
hit, his defense is
what holds him
back. Goedert is
not flashy

defensively, but he makes all the routine plays and has an above average arm. To make him more versatile and push him to Kinston,

the Indians moved him from third base to second base last year. Goedert has had problems with his left shoulder since he had surgery on

it in October 2006,
so if the shoulder
issues become
chronic it could be
a roadblock for
him down the
road. Goedert's
clear path to the

majors is at
second base, as it
is a position in the
Indians' system
where he has
absolutely no one
in front of him. He
should play most

of the time at second base, but could occasionally play third base.

Carlos Rivero -

Shortstop

Age: 19 Height:

6'3"
Weight: 200
Bats: Right
Throws: Right

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Rivero was signed out of Venezuela in March of 2005 at just 16 years of age. Coming into last season,

Rivero was a hidden gem in the Indians system that finally started to show himself over the course of the season at Lake County. Now

at age 19, he is
an impressive
physical specimen
at such a young
age. To go along
with his size,
Rivero has all the
outstanding

abilities and
intangibles except
speed. What he
lacks in speed,
though, he more
than makes up
with his power
potential,

bat-to-ball ability,
his hands, and his
glove-work.

Rivero has the
potential to be a
good hitting
middle infielder
with some power

potential down the road. He has a very good approach for a young player, and last year he got better as the year went on and

competed at a
high level for a kid
who just turned
19-years old
during the
season. Rivero is
a big kid with a
great looking

swing with good
technique, and
the ball comes off
his bat well. He hit
a couple home
runs last year
which were very
deep, and could

have hit more
home runs if he
was allowed to
pull the ball more,
but he was
working on
staying in the
middle of the field.

For his size, he moves around well at shortstop. He is not fast, but he has good first step quickness, has real good hands, and a

strong and
accurate arm. In a
system mostly
barren when it
comes to good
middle infield
depth, the 2008
season is a big

opportunity for
Rivero to
establish himself
as an elite
prospect.

**John Drennen -
Outfielder**



The Indians
snatched Drennen
up with their
supplemental pick
in the 1st round of
the 2005 Draft out

of Rancho
Bernardo High in
San Diego. The
Indians selected
Drennen because
they loved his
advanced bat and
polished approach

to hitting. Drennen has a compact build with good power, and also creates a nice smooth bat path with his swing. Although he is

somewhat
undersized, he
packs a lot of
punch in his swing
and has good pop
and a dynamite
bat. Right now, he
is more a gap

hitter, but as he matures he is expected to develop more power. Drennen buffed up some last winter packing on 20

pounds of weight
and came into
camp in great
shape, and this
offseason he set
goals to continue
to work on
improving his

strength, speed
and agility.

Drennen is an
extremely hard
worker and is very
aggressive at the
plate, on the
bases and in the

field. He is an intelligent player, and is an energy player with a motor that does not stop. In his return trip to Kinston last year,

Drennen hit right-handers very well as he hit .292 with 11 HR, 65 RBI and an .820 OPS in 359 at bats. But, he really struggled

against
left-handers as he
only hit .153 with
2 HR, 12 RBI and
a .481 OPS in 137
at bats. While
Drennen is a very
good hitter, one of

the main focal
points with his
development this
coming season
will be improving
his approach
against
left-handed

pitching. The
Indians have a
plethora of good
outfield prospects
in the upper levels
of the
organization, so
Drennen is back

in Kinston again
to continue his
development and
wait for an
opportunity in
Akron.

The Rest

**Cirilo
Cumberbatch
(Outfielder):** The
Indians signed
Cumberbatch as
an undrafted free
agent in July of
2003 out of

Panama City,
Panama. Last
year,
Cumberbatch had
a breakout
season where he
hit .299 with 6 HR,
45 RBI and had 5

stolen bases in 84
combined games
at Lake County
and Akron.

Cumberbatch is
solidly built and
very strong, and
the Indians feel he

is someone who
can develop some
good power in a
few years
because he has a
projectable body
that should
continue to get

bigger. He runs well, and defensively he takes good routes to balls and displays a strong and accurate arm.

Adam Davis
(Second
Baseman): Davis
is a switch-hitter
taken in the 3rd
round of the 2006
Draft out of The
University of

Florida. Last year at Lake County, Davis hit .266 with 6 HR, 41 RBI, and had 22 stolen bases in 500 at bats. Davis is a scrappy player

with very good speed and works counts well, and he sprays the balls to all fields and has some pop in his bat. He has good instincts

in the field, is quick to the ball, and showcases a strong arm. While he primarily plays second base, his strong throwing arm will allow him

to play shortstop
or even third base
with not much of a
problem.

Jim Deters
(Right-handed
pitcher): The

Indians selected
Deters in the 7th
round of the 2005
Draft out of Calvin
College (MI).
Deters finished
last season 12-4
with a 2.24 ERA

in 33
appearances (10
starts) for Kinston
and won the
Carolina League
ERA Title. Deters
throws a fastball
that tops out

around 90 MPH,
and compliments
it with a curveball
and changeup.
His biggest
strength is his
consistency,
versatility,

makeup, and his ability to throw strikes. Deters will serve as a swing man on the pitching staff.

Jerad Head

(Utility): Head was signed as a non-drafted free agent in August 2005 out of Washburn University (KS). Head is a

jack-of-all-trades
who can play at
any position on
the field. He was
converted to
catcher this
offseason to
improve his

versatility and will
get plenty of
action behind the
plate at Kinston to
get better at the
position. He has
good pop, and
last year at

Kinston hit .266
with 5 HR and 32
RBI in 83 games.

Todd Martin
(First Baseman):
Martin signed as
an undrafted free

agent out of
Middle Tennessee
State in July of
2006. Last year at
short-season
Single-A
Mahoning Valley,
Martin hit .360

with 8 HR and 40
RBI in 54 games
and won the
NY-Penn League
batting title. The
Indians like his
powerful bat and
approach at the

plate as he is a mechanically sound hitter with a great swing. Last year, Martin underwent a position change to first base and

handled it well,
and going forward
could split time in
the outfield and at
first base.

Matt Meyer
(Left-handed

pitcher): The
Indians selected
Meyer in the 15th
round of the 2006
Draft out of
Boston College. In
43 combined
appearances at

Lake County and Kinston last year, Meyer was 3-4 with a 3.31 ERA. Meyer throws a low 90s fastball that gets up to 93 MPH, and

compliments it
with a deceptive
slider. He throws
from a
three-quarters
arm slot and is
very tough on
lefties. The

Indians are excited about his potential, and he will continue his work in Kinston on becoming a lefty specialist out of the bullpen.

**Luis Perdomo
(Right-handed
pitcher):** Perdomo was signed by the Indians as a non-drafted free agent in April of 2003. Last season

at Lake County,
Perdomo went 4-6
with 10 saves and
a 3.27 ERA.

Perdomo is a
flame-throwing
reliever whose
biggest weapon is

a plus-plus
fastball that
consistently
clocks in around
95-96 MPH, and
he used that pitch
to mow down 81
batters in 66

innings pitched
last year. While
he is small
(6'0" & 170
lbs), he is athletic,
strong, and very
durable. Perdomo
projects as a

power armed
pitcher in the
middle of the
bullpen, but will
start the season
as the closer in
Kinston.

**Carlton Smith
(Right-handed
pitcher): The
Indians selected
Smith in the 21
st
round of the 2004
Draft out of high**

school (NJ).
Carlton is the
brother of former
Indians #1
prospect, third
baseman Corey
Smith. Smith
throws a fastball

which hovers in
the low 90s and
tops out at 93
MPH, and
compliments it
with an above
average slider
and is still working

on developing a
changeup. Last
year at Lake
County, Smith
was 11-6 with a
4.22 ERA in 31
games (18 starts).

**Erik Stiller
(Right-handed
pitcher): Stiller
signed with the
Indians as an
undrafted free
agent out of
Princeton**

University shortly
after the 2006
Draft. Last year,
Stiller was 3-6
with a 2.89 ERA
in 25
appearances (5
starts) in Kinston.

Stiller's fastball typically hovers around 90-92 MPH with the ability to reach back and get it to 93-94 MPH if needed. Stiller

also throws a cutter, curveball, and changeup with his best secondary pitch being his changeup. Working out of the

bullpen, Stiller will continue to work on his fastball command and being more aggressive with it, and is still a starting pitching

option. He could move to Akron quickly if a spot opens up there.

**Josh Tomlin
(Right-handed
pitcher): Tomlin**

grew up in East Texas and went to Angelina Junior College before transferring to Texas Tech, and was drafted by the Indians in the 19th

round of the 2006 Draft. Last year, Tomlin went 11-4 with a 3.36 ERA in 32 combined games (20 starts) at Lake County and Kinston.

Tomlin has a three pitch mix where he throws a fastball that consistently clocks in at 85-89 MPH, sometimes touching 90 MPH,

and he also
throws a slider
and changeup.
Tomlin has great
career stats, and
has been an
under-rated
performer the last

two years. He will begin the season in the bullpen, but at some point this season he should get a chance to start.

Neil Wagner (Right-handed pitcher): The Indians drafted Wagner in the 21st round of the 2005 Draft out of North Dakota

State University.
In 50 combined
games at Lake
County and
Kinston last year,
Wagner went 1-4
with 11 saves and
a 3.44 ERA.

Wagner closed in college, and at this point it appears the Indians intend to develop him as a late inning reliever. Outside

of Adam Miller,
Wagner arguably
has the most
explosive fastball
in the system that
touches
96-98MPH
consistently.

While he controls his fastball well and can blow it by hitters, the key to him becoming a bonafide relief prospect will be the development

of at least one secondary pitch, which he has struggled with.

Steven Wright (Right-handed pitcher): Wright

was selected by
the Indians in the
2nd
round of the 2006
Draft out of the
University of
Hawaii. Last year,
Wright went 7-9

with a 5.67 ERA
in 27 combined
started for Lake
County and
Kinston. Wright
has very good
makeup and a
fastball that

hovers in the low 90s, but the best pitch in his arsenal is a slider that grades as a plus pitch. He is still working as a starter, but as he

climbs up the
minor league
ladder many feel
he will eventually
end up in the
bullpen.

The Others: Alex

Castillo (Catcher),
Jason Denham
(Outfielder), Brian
Juhl (Catcher),
Niuman Romero
(Utility), Heath
Taylor
(Left-handed

pitcher).

*All photos
courtesy of Carl
Kline*