

Minor Happenings: Gimenez Is Tearing It Up

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, June 18 2008 7:00 PM -

The Lastoria World Tour marches on next week as T is off to Frederick, MD to see Kinston in action for the second time this season ... then he heads to Akron to see the Aeros in person once again. Also, keep your eyes peeled to our font page over the next week, as Tony will be unleashing a slew of player feature pieces on some of the guys he's talked to here in June. In the meantime, its time once again for his wildly popular weekly column, "Minor Happenings".



"Minor Happenings" covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system. While most of the information in this report is from my own research and through interviews I have conducted with organizational personnel, some information in this report is collected and summarized from the various news outlets that cover each team.

Several pieces are in the pipeline which I hope to start getting out as soon as tomorrow. I've been beaten down the last week with a terrible cold and fever, so I could not get some pieces out as planned.

There should be an abundance of player features in the next week, the first of which should post tomorrow (Friday) and focus on Adam Davis' transition to catcher.

Others on the docket:

Dustin Realini, Ryan Morris, Randy Newsom, Erik Stiller, and Jeff Stevens.

I'll be traveling to Frederick, MD next Friday to see Kinston in action for the second time this season, so I am excited for that. I'm also trying to squeeze in a trip to Akron this coming Monday.

Indians Minor League Player Of The Week
(for games from June 12th through June 18th)

Chris Gimenez (Catcher - Akron)

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.429 AVG (9-for-21), 6 R, 1 2B, 2 HR, 8 RBI, 2 BB, 2 K

Akron catcher Chris Gimenez is having one heck of a season. He had a nine-game hitting streak snapped on Friday, and during the streak he hit .548 (17-for-31) with 10 walks and got on base at a .659 clip. In June, he

has been sizzling at the plate hitting .440 with

2 HR, 9 RBI and a 1.167 OPS. On the year, Gimenez is hitting .339 with 6 HR, 26 RBI and a 1.024 OPS and he leads the Eastern League in on-base percentage (.487), is 2nd in OPS, is 4th in batting average, and is 1st in walks (52). If he remains in Akron all year, he should shatter the franchise records for walks set by Ken Ramos in 1992 (82) and for on-base percentage set by Jordan Brown last year (.421).

Gimenez has made huge strides this season with his plate discipline. It was something he really honed in on in the offseason and in spring training, and the hard work has really paid off.

Gimenez really started to grasp and understand the importance of good plate discipline back in January when he participated in the Winter Development League held at Progressive Field.

It was there after listening to instructors, coaches, front office personnel, and guest speakers that Gimenez adopted a better strike-zone awareness and a penchant for drawing walks.

Gimenez is not only a catcher, as he can also play first base, third base and left field. Since he needs time off from catching everyday, he has played first base two days a week to keep his potent bat in the lineup.

Given his versatility and now potent and productive bat, he could become an option for the Indians late in the season at any of those positions if they pull the plug on the season.

At the very least he will be a serious candidate to make the major league team out of spring training next year as a bench option, possibly taking over Casey Blake's super utility role.

Honorable Mentions: Wes Hodges, 3B, Akron (.450, 2 HR, 7 RBI); Scott Lewis, LHP, Akron (2-0, 1.54 ERA, 11.2 IP, 9 H, 1 BB, 7 K); Jared Goedert, 3B, Kinston (.381, 0 HR, 3 RBI); Beau Mills, 1B, Kinston (.350, 1 HR, 4 RBI); Hector Rondon, RHP, Kinston (1-0, 0.00 ERA, 5 IP, 5 H, 1 BB, 7 K)

Previous Winners:

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6/5 to 6/11: Jim Deters (RHP - Kinston)
5/29 to 6/4: Steven Wright (RHP - Kinston)
5/22 to 5/28: Chris Archer (RHP - Lake County)
5/15 to 5/21: David Huff (LHP - Akron)
5/8 to 5/14: Steven Wright (RHP - Kinston)
5/1 to 5/7: Jeremy Sowers (LHP - Buffalo)
4/24 to 4/30: Jose Constanza (OF - Akron)
4/17 to 4/23: Hector Rondon (RHP - Kinston)
4/10 to 4/16: Wes Hodges (3B - Akron)
4/3 to 4/9: Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP - Lake County)

Director's Cuts

Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins offered up some comments on short-season Single-A affiliate Mahoning Valley who kicked off their season on Tuesday:



On Travis Fryman: "I can talk about him a long time, as it almost seems on some levels too good to be true. A guy with his pedigree and his experiences in professional baseball is one thing. And then you factor his character, integrity and drive and what that imparts on our players and then almost as important his desire to do it.

All the things added up and it seems almost too good to be true to have a guy like him managing our team in Mahoning Valley.

He is extremely disciplined and very consistent.

It is incredible to see how much strength he has right out of the gate.

His presence and the strength of his message.

He by far in my career in player development has been one of the most prepared individuals I have dealt with in the way he prepares for his day, how he gets ready for his day, and how he gets ready for his season."

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On Lonnie Chisenhall: "He had a great (opening) night. Lonnie is an interesting individual. He is very smart, very baseball intelligent and obviously very gifted.

It is obvious that loves to play.

Right out of the gates he comes in and is very comfortable, he throws a wooden bat on for size the first night and gets a couple hits and a double.

Travis Fryman's voice mail was seven or eight minutes long on the game, and I'd say half of it was on Lonnie Chisenhall.

Travis is a guy a lot like Lonnie, coming out of high school and similar in age as Lonnie when they started pro ball, so I am sure Travis see a lot of himself in Lonnie Chisenhall."

Coaches Corner: Jim Rickon

I recently had the chance to sit down and talk to Lake County hitting coach Jim Rickon about several of the hitters in Lake County. Here is what he had to say:

On Adam White: "He has only been swinging left-handed for a couple years now, so hitting from that side is really new to him still. He has to go through some experiences with it. It is a good thing because he had a clean slate on that side of the plate, so a lot of the things he is learning now he can create some good habits and he doesn't have to battle any bad habits he picked up as a kid.



He is doing a good job of trying to put together a good, solid routine. He keeps himself balanced at the plate.

He does get a little out front because he loves to run, so he has to really teach himself to slow down.

He is really just trying to put together good at bats, learn the strike zone, and to stay within it which is the key for him.

If he puts the bat on the ball and hits a groundball, almost 50% of the time it is going to be a hit because he is so fast.

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Bunting is a part of the game he is working on.

He is learning to bunt from the left side, and he has some improvements to learn there where he has to become a little better with his feet.

He works on it daily.

He has world class speed, and if he just figures out the strike zone and learns how to consistently place bunts on the field he can be an impact type of player.

He has been very consistent with getting on base for us, and is one of the league leaders in runs."

On Dustin Realini: "He has gotten a little bit more of an opportunity this year. He has a year under his belt already, and it always seems like that first year of full season ball guys are trying to find themselves.

After that first year they are a little more acclimated on how to prepare themselves daily and deal with the rigors of everyday play.

With him being able to play everyday, it has given him a chance to get in the groove timing-wise at the plate and see pitching everyday.

He has a great attitude as he was not an everyday guy when he came here.

Chris Nash was the everyday guy, and he was playing maybe once a week.

He has a great team attitude, and when he did get an opportunity to play he put together good at bats and kind of earned each at bat.

With Chris going down with an injury it has given him an opportunity to produce and stay in the lineup."

On Roman Pena: "He is definitely more confident this year. He is a little bit smarter, which obviously comes with another year in the game and having a little more experience under his belt. I think this year he is a little more balanced and staying on the ball a little bit longer.

He is not trying to pull off the ball as much, and that has helped along with the little bit of experience he has gained."

On Karexon Sanchez: "This is the first year of me working with him. What I see is a kid with really good hands, a good feel for the game.

He is young and he is still trying to get himself acclimated to the everyday pro ball game that comes with a full season.

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He is going through some adjustments in regard to that.

He definitely has a bright future.

He is a good young infielder who has some good hands at the plate.

He is still trying to find himself as a hitter, and we don't see any negatives in his numbers dipping as we don't really look at that a whole lot."

On Lucas Montero: "He is very comparable in speed to White. Those two guys are similar because their bodies are so quick.

Sometimes in hitting when you are swinging the bat to hit the ball you need to slow some things down.

Lucas is a really strong kid, and has a lot of pop off his bat and can drive the ball.

You never want to see guys who can run swing at balls out of the zone without a whole lot of control with their swing.

So we are trying to control the strike zone to get good swings out of it and slow some things down so he can actually do that."

Congratulations To The Captains

On Saturday night, Single-A Lake County clinched the first half South Atlantic League (SAL) Northern Division Championship. As third baseman Jeff Hehr threw to second baseman Mark Thompson to record a force out at second base for the final out of the game, mass hysteria erupted as players stormed the field and formed a large man pile before donning division championship shirts. Players sprayed each other with non-alcohol champagne and beer, and eventually the celebration carried over into the clubhouse.



The first half title locks Lake County into a playoff spot come September, and will be their first playoff appearance since their inaugural season in 2003. Aside from a near stumble the second to last week of the season, Lake County coasted all year as they were in first place in all but ten days of the season and had sole possession of first place since April 22nd.

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Details about the upcoming Divisional Championship Series in September have already been released. The series will be a best-of-three games format with the Captains hosting Game Two on September 5th and Game Three on September 6th (if necessary). If the Captains advance, the Championship Series is a best-of-five games format with the Captains hosting Game Three on September 11th, and also if necessary Game Four on September 12th and Game Five on September 13th.

All games for both series' will be at 7:05 PM.

Tickets are already on sale and will cost the same as a regular season ticket.

For more information on playoff tickets, go to

<http://www.captainsbaseball.com/>

Lofgren Takes A Break

Akron placed left-hander Chuck Lofgren on the temporary inactive list Sunday and sent him to extended spring training in Winter



Haven to "clear his head". In Lofgren's last start he struck out five of the first seven batters he faced, but as has been the case almost all year once he got into a little trouble he became rattled and erratic with his pitches. He only lasted 2.1 innings and allowed a run on three hits, three walks and struck out five.

On the season, Lofgren is now 1-3 with a 5.95 ERA in 13 starts.

Opposing hitters are hitting .286 off him and he has allowed 39 walks in 56 innings.

So what is ailing Lofgren? It is a touchy subject, and private by nature, but according to a source close to the team it is a personal issue with his family. There is more to it than that of course, but out of respect to the family I think it best to keep the issue private for now.

So with that, I will neither confirm nor deny some of the rumors mentioned this past week.

Lofgren has had trouble focusing on the mound, been very hard on himself, and trying to do too much.

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This is a bit out of character for him as he typically has amazing composure on the mound.

There is no doubt that the personal issues he is facing have been a big reason for his struggles this year, and it has been such a distraction that he has regularly talked to the team psychologist.

Bottom line, the Indians want Lofgren to take some time away from the game, and a shutdown may be best for him right now.

Going to extended spring training will also give Lofgren more time to workout a delivery issue which has plagued him all season. Lofgren has been a bit too much over the top which has affected his command. The focus will be to get his arm slot more to a three-quarter angle to help him re-find his lost command.

The Chisenhall Era Begins

The Indians signed infielder Lonnie Chisenhall to a minor league contract on Saturday. Chisenhall received a \$1.1 million bonus, and was the Indians first round pick in the 2008 Draft two weeks ago.

He played his freshman season in 2007 for the University of

South Carolina (20 games, .313, 1 HR, 13 RBI) before enrolling at Pitt Junior College for the 2008 season where he hit .410 (68-for-166) with 27 doubles, 8 homers and 66 RBI. He also drew 38 walks and struck out just 8 times all season.

Chisenhall is from North Carolina and grew up as a Kinston Indians fan since he lived close and attended games regularly, so joining the Indians organization was sort of a homecoming for him since he has been a fan for a long time. It has already been widely reported (and overblown if I may say) that Chisenhall was kicked off the South Carolina baseball team during his freshman year in March 2007 because of burglary and grand larceny.

I won't rehash the details which have been mentioned ad nauseum already, but he plead guilty to the charges and received six months probation, and transferred to Pitt junior College.

Chisenhall admits he made a terrible mistake, but also is now focusing on getting his baseball career going and sort of leaving that experience in the past.

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Chisenhall will be the Mahoning Valley everyday shortstop and the plan for him in the offseason is to move him to third base. Chisenhall is a very disciplined hitter who has the potential to develop power.

with a double and three runs scored.

in the fifth inning was a near home run as it hit off the right field wall.

In his debut on Tuesday, Chisenhall went 2-for-5

His double

He went 1-for-5 with a run scored on Wednesday night.

Goleski Reborn

It has been a long time coming for Akron outfielder Ryan Goleski, but it looks like his career has been reborn. With the birth of his daughter



daughter Gabrielle on May 24th, his first child, it sort of has become a starting point for not only a new life for the Goleski family, but the resurrection of his fading baseball career.

Goleski put up an incredible 2006 season where he hit .306 with 27 HR, 106 RBI and a .948 OPS in 445 combined at bats at Kinston and Akron. Since then, however, his career had been in a tailspin.

Goleski was left unprotected by the Indians in the Rule 5 Draft where Oakland ended up picking him up.

spring training where he struggled at the plate and also was still having troubles with an offseason wrist injury, Goleski was sent back to the Indians at the end of spring training.

Goleski ended up being assigned in Akron to start the season, and the wrist injury combined with his disappointment in himself and his displeasure to be back in Akron lead to a subpar 2007 campaign where he hit .257 with 9 HR, 73 RBI and a .702 OPS.

Then, through his first 43 games this season, Goleski was batting just .221 with 3 HR and 10 RBI.

Since then, however, Goleski has been on a tear. In eight games since the birth of his daughter, Goleski batted .419 (13-for-31) with three home runs, nine runs scored, and nine RBI.

So far in June, Goleski is hitting .350 (14-for-40) with 3 HR, 10 RBI and a 1.097 OPS and has raised his overall average to a more respectable .253.

The electricity in his bat has returned as demonstrated last Tuesday when he hit a walk off

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game-winning three run homer, and he followed that up with a home run in each of the next two games.

Goleski finally feels that he has his stroke back and it is showing.

This is now Goleski's third season in Akron, and with him being a six year free agent after the season he likely will not remain in the Indians organization as he looks to latch on with another organization where he won't be blocked by so many outfielders. He was pretty vocal about his displeasure when he was returned to the Indians by Oakland last year, and it is probably safe to say he is counting down the days to the end of the season.

As a free agent this offseason, he will have an opportunity to sign with someone else to maybe get a better chance of reaching the big leagues, or even Triple-A for that matter.

Scrapper Trio Looking To Improve

The start of short-season leagues is especially exciting for the players who have been in Winter Haven since February doing drills, listening to instruction, and scrimmaging everyday for the last three to four months. Finally the games count, and all the drills and instruction they were peppered with they can finally put to use.

Three Mahoning Valley relievers in particular have their sights set on applying what they have learned this year.



Right-hander Mark Rodrigues spent the last several months in spring training and then extended spring training working on a new cut-fastball. Rodrigues struggled in his professional debut last season at Mahoning Valley going 1-1 with a 6.75 ERA in 12 appearances.

A year later, Rodrigues is more confident, has developed a routine, and armed with his new cut-fastball is hoping to make a name for himself this season to move up in the system.

In addition to working on his new cut-fastball, Rodrigues also worked extensively on his slider command and working inside to batters.

Right-hander Daniel Morales also is returning to The Valley after going 2-1 with a 4.63 ERA in 15 appearances last year. After several months in extended spring training, Morales has shown enough to where he is being groomed right now as a late inning reliever and should be

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the Scrappers closer this season.

The key for Morales this year will be to develop a more aggressive attack by pounding the zone with quality strikes and to maintain his focus pitch to pitch and at bat to at bat.

Morales has a low 90s fastball and compliments it with a very good slider.

Left-hander Russell Young is a newcomer to the Mahoning Valley pitching staff as he was a 28th round selection in the 2008 Draft a few weeks back. Young played collegiately at Dartmouth College where in nine appearances in 2007 he went 5-4 with a 4.55 ERA with 12 walks and 55 strikeouts in 65.1 innings pitched.

The focus early on for Young will be to get him into a routine, build arm strength, develop his breaking ball, and work on his fastball command.

Mr. Olympian



Kinston outfielder Nick Weglarz was cleared by the Indians this week to participate and play with Team Canada in the upcoming Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China. Weglarz's last game with Kinston should be on July 27th as he will leave on July 28th to go to Toronto and meet up with the rest of his Team Canada teammates and practice for a few days before heading back to North Carolina for four exhibition games against the United States team.

After that, the team will depart for Beijing and take part in the Opening Ceremonies on August 8th.

Weglarz is expected to return to Kinston (or possibly Akron) the final week of August.

This is the last time that softball and baseball will be a part of the Summer Olympics as back in 2005 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to drop the two sports from the Games starting in 2012. The Indians could also have a few other players take part in the Games, as Canadian right-handed pitcher T.J. Burton likely will be a part of Team Canada.

Also, right-hander Sung-Wei Tseng could play for his native Taiwan, and right-hander Jeff Stevens could play for Team USA.

Fryman Gets High Marks

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First-year Mahoning Valley manager Travis Fryman has gotten a lot of praise this year in what is his professional baseball managing debut. While he did not manage his first game until Tuesday night (a win), Indians personnel and players have raved about the former Tribe third baseman.

That's because Fryman has been working hard since March in spring training getting to know the

players, teaching them, and also learning from them as well. He has also been around to all the other affiliates the past few months as an additional set of eyes for the organization and helping with players like third baseman Wes Hodges.

Players love how approachable Fryman is and how well he works with them. He is no doubt a player's manager, which is a perfect fit at Mahoning Valley where every year players there for the most part will be making their professional debuts.

Having Fryman around will help ease the tension the players feel with the start of their careers, and he will be valuable in helping them adapt to the professional game.

Those that remember watching Fryman over the course of his 13-year big league career know he was the consummate professional. He came to the park everyday, played hard, and had a passion for playing the game. Those things along with his knowledge and ability to work with young players convinced the Indians he was the right man for the Scrappers managerial gig this past offseason.

Fans should not expect Fryman to be a major league manager in the making, as he is content with the Mahoning Valley gig as it allows him to have ample time off to be with his family.

More Kudos For Hodges

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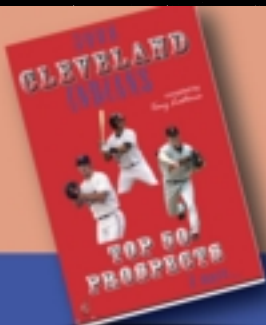
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