

Covering All the Bases: Dubois Deserving of Another Shot

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In Lastoria's weekly gander at the Indians minor league system, he takes a particularly close look at outfielder Jason Dubois. Dubois is tearing the cover off the ball at Buffalo, and could be one of the first bats we see called up this season.



(For games from Friday April 28 through Wednesday May 3)

Minor League Player of the Month (April):

*Jason Dubois (OF- Buffalo): .338 avg (8th), 5 HRs (3rd), 20 RBIs (2nd),
.964 OPS (6*

th

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(league rankings in parentheses)

For many fans, all they remember with Jason Dubois is him striking out in 25 of 45 at bats last season. He looked completely lost and overmatched, and seemed like a wasted pickup even for the over-valued Jody Gerut.

Many fans wrote him off after the season, but with what is transpiring in Cincinnati with Brandon Phillips, maybe

Tribe fans (and Indians management) should take it as a lesson learned not be so quick to give up on a player.

Dubois has been Buffalo's most consistent player to date. While Ryan Garko has had a few hot stretches, and Andy Marte continues to struggle with the longball, Dubois has been a steady force offensively. Sure, there were several great pitching performances in the system for the month, like Scott Lewis who had a 0.42 ERA and 0.78 WHIP (both ranked 1st in the Carolina League for the month), and Jeremy Sowers who was 2-1 with a 1.44 ERA. Other pitchers like Chuck Lofgren, Adam Miller, Tony Sipp and Kevin Dixon were outstanding in April.

But, outside of maybe Ryan Mulhern, Dubois was really the only Tribe hitting prospect to flourish in April. He is showing the power that the Indians coveted when they traded for him, and also hitting for average. He is still striking out a lot (24 Ks in 80 at bats in April), but if he continues to impress at Buffalo, I don't see how the Indians cannot call him up and give him another shot.

Minor League Player of the Week:

Brian Barton (OF- Kinston): .455 avg (10-22), 3 2Bs, 1 3B, 2 HRs, 6 RBIs

Since returning from an early season injury that caused him to miss a few games, Barton has been on a tear hitting .339 with 4 HRs and 12 RBIs on the season. His .339 average and .447 on-base% are tops in the Carolina League, and he currently is in the midst of a 13-game hitting streak and opening some eyes in the Indians organization (more on that below). With the organization loaded with outfield prospects at Akron and Buffalo, Barton will be hard-pressed to move up, but if he continues to play like he has the first month of this season and last year (.326 avg with 7 HRs and 64 RBIs) they'll find a way to promote him.

Honorable Mention: Joe Inglett (SS- Akron), Jeremy

Sowers (SP- Buffalo), Josh Noviskey (C- Lake County)

Notes From Farrell:

As always, Indians Farm Director John Farrell provided some information on some prospects this week in his weekly radio interview, and this week the focus was on Joe Inglett, Kevin Kouzmanoff, Brian Barton, Matt Davis and Scott Lewis. On Inglett, he stated that Inglett made a very positive impression on Indians manager Eric Wedge in Spring Training. He came on defensively at 2B in 2005, and to help add versatility he is now playing SS full-time at Akron. The reason he was “demoted” to Akron was to help him with making in game decisions at SS, holding runners, and testing his backhand (I am still not sure why this could not be done at Buffalo, but oh well).

On Kouzmanoff, he mentioned the key has always been health with him. After missing half of last season due to injury, he is back on track and moving well. Farrell also went on to say he is an “average fielder” who drives the ball well, will hit for a high average and pile up extra base hits....On Barton, he said since debuting in Lake County last year he has opened some eyes with his performance. This year, he is picking up right where he left off last year, and even though the system in the upper levels is crowded with outfielders, Barton’s performance to date (as well as Trevor Crowe’s) could garner him a promotion soon.

Farrell also opined on Kinston starting pitcher Scott Lewis. Farrell mentions that Lewis might have had the most encouraging April of any pitcher, and they are very pleased with his aggressiveness in releasing the ball especially coming off of injury. Lewis gets a lot of action on his pitches in the strike zone. Since he is up for roster protection this offseason for the Rule 5 Draft, the Indians will be

aggressive in moving him up the minor league ladder this season.....And, on Matt Davis, he mentioned that Davis pitched out of the bullpen for two years in Kinston, but the Indians dropped him down to Lake County to work on him exclusively in a closers role. By working in Lake County, the Indians can attempt to create more aggressiveness with his pitching (whatever that means, he must have said "aggressive" 10 times in the interview).

Buffalo Roundup:

The Bisons went 3-4 on the week, and currently are 14-13 on the season in 3rd place in the North Division of the International League (IL).....Offensively, Buffalo is 2nd

in the league in hitting with a .269 avg, and are 7th out of 14 teams in pitching with a 3.41 ERA.

Utility player Joe Inglett was sent to Akron, and SS Ivan Ochoa was promoted from Akron to the Bisons. The Indians want Inglett to play everyday at SS in Akron for the next six weeks as they want to get a better look at him as they get ready to make a roster decision on him in the offseason since they are considering him for a utility role next year (or even this year).... Ivan Ochoa was promoted to Buffalo despite a .179 batting average (10-for-56) in 18 games at Akron.... Ryan Garko was hit by a pitch just below his wrist on Tuesday and suffered a soft tissue bruise. He did not play Wednesday, and is listed as day-to-day.

Lou Merloni is doing his best to pressure Shapiro into making a tough decision on what to do with Ramon Vazquez (blatant sarcasm). Merloni is 5th in the IL with a .356 batting average, but surprisingly is 3rd in OPS (.988)....Also, Steve Karsay continues to

pitch well (1-1, 0.77 ERA), as in 11.2 IP he has only given up 1 run, struck out 8, and has a 0.69 WHIP....Starting pitcher Jason Stanford continues to pitch well for the Bisons (0-2, 3.52 ERA, 1.17 WHIP), and could be an option the Indians turn to in the bullpen for much needed left-handed help.

Jeremy Sowers may be 4th in the league ERA (1.47), but his walk/hit totals are somewhat concerning. A 1.39 WHIP to go along with a 1.47 ERA means he is consistently bearing down and getting out of some tough jams....Through 24 games and 88 at bats, 3B Andy Marte still has yet to homer, and also sports a higher on-base% (.402) than slugging% (.398).....Andy Brown is 2-0 with a 2.81 ERA in 9 relief appearances, but until he improves his walk-rate (15 walks in 16 IP), he won't be

an option for the Indians bullpen....Jake Dittler (1-4, 5.87 ERA, 1.70 WHIP) looks like the first one to go on the 40-man roster if a roster spot is needed.

Buffalo Six Pack:

Franklin Gutierrez (OF): .295 avg, 10 2Bs, 2 HRs, 8 RBIs, 4 stolen bases

Ryan Garko (1B): .287 avg, 6 2Bs, 2 HRs, 22 RBIs

Andy Marte (3B): .295 avg, 9 2Bs, 0 HRs, 5 RBIs

Ben Francisco (OF): .250 avg, 3 2Bs, 4 HRs, 12 RBIs, 4 stolen bases

Lou Merloni (UT): .356 avg, 9 2Bs, 2

HRs, 10 RBIs

Jeremy Sowers (SP): 3-1, 1.47 ERA,
36.2 IP, 23 Ks, 1.39 WHIP

Akron Roundup:

Akron continues to roll going 5-1 this week, and are currently are 17-10 on the season good for 2nd place in the Southern Division of the Eastern League (EL)....Offensively, the Aeros are ranked 2nd in the league with a .276 batting average, and on the pitching front are ranked 7th in the league out of 12 teams with a 3.44 ERA.

Starting pitcher Tony Sipp was placed on the disabled list last Friday with a right oblique muscle strain, and right-hander Sean Smith was called up from Kinston to replace him.....3B Kevin Kouzmanoff missed five straight games last week with a mild back strain.....On Monday, catcher Dave Wallace was placed on the disabled list with a strained left calf, and catcher Armando Camacaro was called up from Kinston to replace him.

In six games since being shuttled off to Akron, Joe Inglett is hitting .500 (12-24) with 1 HR, 1 RBI and 3 stolen

bases....3B Kevin Kouzmanoff leads the EL by 63 points with .418 batting average....Unlike Kouzmanoff, OF Brad Snyder's slide continues as he is hitting .230 with 38 strikeouts (100 ABs)....OF Todd Donovan (.300 avg) continues to rack up the stolen bases, as he leads the league with 17....2B Eider Torres is right behind Donovan, and ranked 2nd with 15.

The Akron bullpen has been outstanding of late, and per the Akron Beacon Journal in the last 45.2 IP the bullpen has a 0.79 ERA with 46 Ks and only 16

walks.....The bullpen has been led by Eddie Mujica, Bubbie Buzachero and Tom Mastny. Mujica has yet to allow a run in 10 games (13.2 IP) and has 7 saves, and not to be outdone Buzachero (0.51 ERA) has only allowed 1 run in 17.2 IP and Mastny (1.42 ERA) has only allowed 3 runs in 19.2 IP....1B Ryan Mulhern is 2nd in the league with 19 RBIs....Adam Miller leads the EL with 4 wins, and is 7th in strikeouts (31).

Akron Six Pack:

Jonathan Van Every (OF): .314 avg, 7 2Bs, 3 3Bs, 4 HRs, 17 RBIs

Ryan Mulhern (1B): .286 avg, 7 2Bs, 1 3B, 5 HRs, 19 RBIs

Eider Torres (2B): .323 avg, 3 2Bs, 1 3B, 0 HRs, 8 RBIs, 15 stolen bases

Adam Miller (SP): 4-1, 2.76 ERA, 32.2 IP, 31 Ks, 0.98 WHIP

Rafael Perez (SP): 2-3, 4.75 ERA, 30.1 IP, 30 Ks, 1.45 WHIP

Bear Bay (SP): 2-3, 3.81 ERA, 26 IP, 25 Ks, 1.42 WHIP

Kinston Roundup:

Kinston went 4-2 on the week, and currently are 17-8 on the season which is good for 1st place in the Southern Division of the Carolina

League.....Offensively, Kinston ranks 1st in the league with a

.257 team batting average, and are 1st in pitching (by 38 points) in the 8-team league with a 2.54 ERA.

Highly touted Indians 1B prospect Michael Aubrey finally debuted at Kinston Monday night and went 1-3 with a 2B and RBI and played 1B. The Indians plan to have Aubrey split time at first base and designated hitter with Stephen

Head as Aubrey recovers from a lower back injury that practically wiped out all of his 2005 season. His length of stay in Kinston is unknown at this time, but Kinston manager Mike Sarbaugh hinted “there is a timeline” and they will “re-evaluate the situation after 10 days.”

Just an idea how much the Carolina League is dominated

by pitching, of those who qualify, only 7 players in the league have a batting average over .300, and one of them is Kinston outfielder Brian Barton who leads the league with a .339 average....OF Trevor Crowe (.294 avg) is 1st in the league in walks (21), 2

nd

in the league with 11 steals, and 2

nd

in on-base% at .426 (Barton 1st

at .447)....Lefty Scott Lewis continues to dominate the league, and is 1st

in ERA (0.42) and WHIP (0.78)....Also of note, unheralded Aaron Laffey is 3rd

in the league in ERA (1.29) and WHIP (0.90)....Chuck Lofgren is 1st

in the league with 4 wins.

Kinston Six Pack:

Wyatt Toregas (C): .352 avg,
9 2Bs, 1 HR, 10 RBIs

Stephen Head (1B): .205 avg,
5 2Bs, 2 HRs, 13 RBIs

Matt Whitney (3B): .243 avg,
5 2Bs, 3 HRs, 11 RBIs

Brian Finegan (SS): .253 avg,
4 2Bs, 1 3B, 0 HR, 15 RBIs, 8
stolen bases

Chuck Lofgren (SP): 4-1, 2.13

ERA, 25.1 IP, 24 Ks, 1.14

WHIP

Joe Ness (SP): 2-0, 2.73

ERA, 26.1 IP, 29 Ks, 1.18

WHIP

Lake County Roundup:

The Captains went 3-3 for the week, putting them at

15-11 on the season and in 1st place in the Northern Division of the South Atlantic League standings....Offensively, the Captains are ranked 11th in the league out of 16 teams in hitting with a .240 average, and are ranked 3rd in pitching with a 2.90 ERA.

Highly touted right-handed

pitcher Cody Bunkleman made his 2006 debut last Saturday giving up no runs in 2 innings and striking out 4. Bunkleman was kept in extended spring training to become more acclimated to his new bullpen role. Per Baseball America, Bunkleman “has a 95 mph sinker and complements it with an above-average slider”Another noteworthy

pitching prospect Carlton Smith made his Captains debut Sunday. Smith was stellar in going 6 innings, allowing only 3 hits and a walk while striking out 8....Kevin Dixon is 3

d

in the league with a 1.34 ERA.

Lake County Six Pack:

Josh Noviskey (C): 9
games, .314 avg, 1 2B, 3
HRs, 12 RBIs

Matt Fornasiere (2B): .313
avg, 3 2Bs, 1 3B, 1 HR, 9
RBIs

Mike Conroy (OF): .250
avg, 2 2Bs, 3 HRs, 15
RBIs

Kevin Dixon (SP): 2-1, 1.34
ERA, 33.2 IP, 18 Ks, 1.01
WHIP

James Deters (SP): 1-0,
2.89 ERA, 28 IP, 28 Ks,
1.21 WHIP

Albert Vargas (SP): 3-1,
4.21 ERA, 25.2 IP, 13 Ks,
1.32 WHIP