

Minor Happenings: Former Buckeye Dominates Class A

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, May 17 2006 7:00 PM -

In the weekly roundup of the happenings down on the farm, Lastoria profiles former Buckeye Scott Lewis, as well as provides news updates for all the Indians minor league affiliates. Don't forget to check out "Minor Recaps" this weekend for up to date player and team performance.



(for games from Thursday May 11 through Wednesday May 17)

Prospect Profile:

Scott Lewis, Left-Handed Pitcher- Kinston

For those that do not know who Scott Lewis is, he is a pitching prospect you'll be hearing a lot about very soon. To date his performance in Kinston (1-1, 0.56 ERA) has raised several eyebrows in that he has been so dominant in striking out 45 batters in only 32 IP and has an almost unheard of 0.75 WHIP. To the casual observer, his high strikeout rate and low walk-hit rate may seem to indicate he throws some serious heat; however, this is not the case with Lewis. Lewis has a good fastball that clocks at 92-93 MPH consistently, but it has been the tremendous command of his secondary pitches that are making the difference. According to a recent report in *Baseball America*, the power and depth he has added to his breaking ball has been a big key.

Lewis, a left-handed pitcher, was drafted in the 3rd round of the 2004 Draft from THE Ohio State University, and was recently tabbed the Indians 28th best prospect by *Baseball America*. He has a history of dominance, as in his

sophomore season at Ohio State in 2003 he went 9-1 with a 1.61 ERA and struck out 127 batters in just 84 innings pitched, and won Big Ten Pitcher of the Year honors.

But, while he has a history of being a dominating pitcher, he also has a history of injury. After his brilliant 2003 season at Ohio State, he was being considered as a first round possibility in the 2004 Amateur Draft; however, he later suffered a severe arm injury that resulted in Tommy John surgery and resulted in him missing a lot of the 2004 season. The injury problems have followed him to the minor league circuit, as prior to this season he had been limited to only a total of 21 IP in 2004 and 2005 at Mahoning Valley, going 0-3 with a 4.71 in 10 games over those two seasons.

After being shutdown with tightness in his bicep last year, Lewis is trying to prove to the Indians he can stay healthy this season and that he was worthy of gambling a 3rd round draft pick and the \$460,000 the Indians signed him for. Currently, he has been kept on a strict 60-70 pitch count, which is why he has not racked up very many decisions since he rarely gets through five innings in his starts. The bicep tenderness still plagues him and is probably something he'll continue to deal with for the remainder of the season.

Indians Farm Director John Farrell hinted a few weeks back that this is a key season to evaluate Lewis since they need to make a decision whether to add him to the 40-man roster this offseason because he will be eligible for the Rule 5 Draft. Knowing this, if Lewis can show he can remain healthy, the Indians are expected to be much more aggressive in moving him up in order to help further evaluate him.

Farrell Speaks:

Indians Farm Director John Farrell focused his attention this week toward the recent roster moves made by the Indians to their 25-man roster. Jeremy Guthrie was optioned to Buffalo when Rafael Betancourt was activated from the disabled list, and also Ramon Vazquez was optioned to Buffalo when Lou Merloni was called up.

On Jeremy Guthrie: Farrell mentions that one of the things the Indians have focused on is finding a reliever who can pitch multiple innings, and that the Indians like Guthrie's progression in this area. For now, he will go back into the Buffalo rotation to stretch his arm out, which will keep it in shape. Guthrie will remain an option as a spot starter, and essentially is flip flopping roles with Fausto Carmona. From a physical standpoint, the Indians view Guthrie as one of the most durable pitchers in their system, so his usage is not a concern. He should be fine bouncing back and forth in a role as a starter or a reliever.

On Vazquez: Farrell mentioned that while Vazquez will be disappointed with his demotion and goes through a short transition period, Vazquez will play everyday at Buffalo to ensure he gets regular at bats. He will play 2B and SS regularly.

On Lou Merloni: Farrell talked of how Merloni has shown his value as a versatile player in that he can play any position in the infield and even play left-field. He is healthy, and his effectiveness against left-handed pitching will be a big plus off the bench.

On Brandon Phillips: Farrell also made an some comments about the demands of the utility position, in that as a utility player since you don't

play everyday you are unable to keep up with the maintenance of your swing that you normally get through the repetition of playing everyday. He mentioned "this is why Brandon Phillips did not fit into the role."

New and Notes:

Buffalo (AAA): On Sunday, Brian Slocum was injured while warming up before the bottom of the second inning in a spot start for the Bisons. He left the game with tightness in the elbow, and there currently is no word on his status.....Slocum's replacement that game, Hyang-Nam Choi, pitched 5 innings of shutout baseball to run his consecutive shutout streak to 18 innings....The Indians released lefty Felix Heredia and added veteran lefty Vic Darensbourg to the Bisons roster. Heredia was 0-0 with a 6.75 ERA in 8 appearances with a 2.88 WHIP with the Bisons this season. Last year Darensbourg was 2-0 with a 0.29 ERA and 7 saves and a .171 BAA in 44 games with the Toledo Mud Hens, as well as 1-1 with a 2.82 ERA with the Tigers....3B Andy Marte finally hit his first home run of the season this past weekend. The home run came in his 138th plate appearances of the season.

Akron (AA): Tom Mastny was promoted to Buffalo, and Dan Denham sent to Akron. Mastny had a 1.09 ERA with a .169 BAA and 30 strikeouts in 24.1 IP for the Aeros....Sean Smith took home honors this past week as the Eastern League Pitcher of the Week after going 2-0 with a 0.64 ERA and 14 strikeouts in two starts.....2B Eider Torres was promoted to Buffalo after Jake Gautreau was placed on the disabled list with intestinal inflammation....When Torres was promoted, outfielder Todd Donovan was activated off the Akron disabled list....The Indians promoted closer Edward Mujica to Buffalo, and in his first appearance went 2 IP and gave up 0 runs on 2 hits. Kyle Collins was called up from

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Kinston to replace him..... Bubbie Buzachero was on the disabled list with a right ankle sprain, but was activated from the disabled list yesterday....Outfielder Nathan Panther also is on the disabled list with a sore left hand.

Kinston (A+): Outfielder Brian Barton's 22 game hitting streak was snapped Tuesday....Barton was also named the Carolina League Batter of the Week, as in six games he hit .391 (9 for 23) with 2 HRs, 5 RBIs, and 3 stolen bases, and has pushed his hitting streak to 20 games.... For as bad as Jensen Lewis was in April (6.52 ERA in 19 IP), he has been just as good in May (3-0 with a 2.50 ERA).

Lake County (A-): Right-hander Kevin Dixon was promoted to Kinston last Thursday. Dixon compiled a 2-1 record with a 1.36 ERA in 7 starts for the Captains, and those numbers earned him the promotion. Dixon was one of the few Captains players worth watching this season.....In Dixon's first start for Kinston the other night, he went 5 IP and gave up 3 earned runs on 5 hits while only striking out one.