

Minor Happenings: McBride On Quite A Ride

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Friday, May 01 2009 7:00 PM -

Today is part two of this week's edition of Minor Happenings. Yesterday, part one posted, and if you missed it be sure to check it out as it has a nice long recap of a conversation Tony had with Farm Director Ross Atkins on Wednesday night. In today's installment, Tony hands out his Minor League Player of the Week award, chronicles a recent conversation he had with AA manager Mike Sarbaugh, and talks about the most recent surgery for former top prospect Adam Miller.



"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.

Today is part two of this week's edition of *Minor Happenings*. Yesterday, [part one posted](#), and if you missed it be sure to check it out as it has a nice long recap of a conversation I had with Farm Director Ross Atkins on Wednesday night.

Also, the piece included a recent conversation with Columbus Manager Torey Lovullo about some of his players.

Also, be sure to check out Akron closer [Vinnie Pestano's blog post](#) yesterday. He is writing a blog on [my site](#) and is looking for some feedback and ideas on some things to write about.

So, feel free to chime in with your suggestions via the comments section at the bottom of his post or email me at

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tlastoria@indiansprospectinsider.com

and I will forward them to him.

Onto the Happenings, again.

Indians Minor League Player Of The Week

(for games from April 23rd to April 29th)

Matt McBride (First Baseman - Kinston)

.480 AVG (12-for-25), 6 R, 1 2B, 0 3B, 3 HR, 12 RBI, 1 BB, 3 K

Boy, Double-A Akron may be off to the hottest start in the win-loss column among all the Indians affiliates, but High-A Kinston has almost all of the red hot players on the mound and at the plate in the system. For the third straight week a Kinston player takes



home Player of the Week honors, and did first baseman Matt McBride ever deserve it. He is currently in the midst of a 14-game hitting streak and is as hot as you can get at the plate as he has a string of five multi-hit games in a row as well.

He capped off his hot week on Wednesday going 3-for-4 with two home runs and four RBI.

McBride was a 2nd round pick in the 2006 Draft out of Lehigh University, and after a nice start to his career in 2006 and 2007, he battled through a rough season in 2008 recovering from shoulder surgery.

The Indians made the move this offseason to get him out from behind the plate and spare his shoulder, moving him to the outfield and first base because they love his bat.

So far, the decision to move him out from behind the plate is making the Indians look like geniuses.

His success at the plate so far is a combination of good health and a simple approach where he is just trying to be productive every at bat and stick to his plan.

On the season, McBride is now hitting .412 with 5 HR, 27 RBI, and a 1.186 OPS, and he has displayed good plate discipline with 10 walks and 9 strikeouts. In his 21 games played he has multi-RBI games in ten of them.

His .412 batting average ranks 2

nd

in the Carolina League, and he is 1

st

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in RBI, hits (35), doubles (11), extra base hits (16) and slugging percentage (.718).

He is second in home runs (5), runs scored (18) and fourth in on base percentage (.468).

What a hot start.

Honorable Mentions:

Matt LaPorta (OF - Columbus): .381 AVG (8-for-21), 7 R, 1 2B, 1 3B, 2 HR, 5 RBI, 4 BB, 3 K
Luis Valbuena (2B - Columbus): .381 AVG (8-for-21), 4 R, 3 2B, 1 3B, 1 HR, 6 RBI, 4 BB, 5 K
Jose Constanza (OF - Akron): .393 AVG (11-for-28), 6 R, 2 2B, 3B, 4 RBI, 3 BB, 4 K, 7 SB
Jeanmar Gomez (RHP - Akron): 1-0, 0.75 ERA, 2 games, 12.0 IP, 6 H, 1 R, 1 BB, 11 K
Chuck Lofgren (LHP - Akron): 0-0, 0.00 ERA, 1 game, 6.0 IP, 0 R, 0 H, 1 BB, 7 K
Hector Rondon (RHP - Akron): 1-0, 1.35 ERA, 1 game, 6.2 IP, 6 H, 1 R, 1 BB, 9 K

Previous Winners:

04/16 to 04/22: Eric Berger (LHP - Kinston)

04/08 to 04/15: Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP - Kinston)

Coaches Corner: Mike Sarbaugh

I had a chance to sit down with Double-A Akron Manager Mike Sarbaugh before the game on Wednesday. Here is what was said about a few of his players:

On Carlos Santana: "His approach on both sides of the plate has been really good. The one thing I have been really happy with is

his defense. He has really done a good job blocking balls in the dirt, calling a good game, and he really works well with the pitching staff. He knows how to hit and has a good

feel for it. I think too they are careful when they pitch to Carlos, so at times I think he may be a little over aggressive and chase a pitch out of the zone, but he will make those adjustments.

He still has a long ways to go with the English, and we have been trying to help him to talk a little more in English to help him with that.

It is not going to happen over night, but I have been really happy with how he is communicating

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so far."

On Nick Weglarz: "He has been having a little bit of tough luck, but I think he is definitely pressing a little bit. Especially coming up here this year I know he wanted to make a good impression and get off to a good start. I think he is just trying to do a little bit too much.

We just talked to him about taking one at bat at a time, and just put a quality at bat up and no matter what happens just move on to his next at bat.

It is just part of his development, and I have talked to him and said 'You know what, you are going to look back and what you are going through now is going to help you down the road'.

He is staying very positive, he is working hard, and he'll come through."

On Carlos Rivero: "I think the thing with Carlos is getting adjusted to the cold weather. It is just part of his development as it is really his first time in cold weather.

He has swung the bat okay, and he has been really good situational-wise and had some really big hits for us.

He has been working on some things with [hitting coach] Lee May Jr. trying to shorten his swing up a little bit and staying more in the middle of the field.

I have been happy with how Carlos has played early on.

I am sure that he would want to be hitting a little bit better, but I am pretty happy with what he is doing.

It is 50-60 at bats, so it is still too early."

On Hector Rondon: "He is establishing his fastball and has good life through the zone consistently at 92-93 MPH. He has really been working hard on his slider, which has been real good, and he throws a good changeup.

Sometimes the pitching is a little ahead of the hitters at this point, but having said that he has been very good.

Guys don't seem to get very good swings on him."

On Josh Tomlin: "He's been good so far. His last outing he did not have his good stuff, but he got us through five innings. He knows how to pitch, change speeds, and keep the ball down in the zone.

He is an athlete out there on the mound, and he looks like a shortstop out there."

Miller Done For the Year, Maybe His Career

Right-hander Adam Miller's season has officially ended after he underwent reconstructive surgery to the right long (middle) finger on Tuesday in Baltimore, MD. Reputed hand surgeon Dr. Tom Graham performed what is just the first stage of a multi-stage reconstruction at the Curtis National Hand Center.

Graham repaired the flexor pulley system in Miller's long finger in a two and a

half hour procedure by replacing two pulley ligaments in the finger with a tendon from his wrist. The second stage of the procedure will be performed in approximately three months at which time the flexor tendon will be reconstructed.

Miller's recovery and rehabilitation from the surgeries is expected to take six to nine months, and he will immediately begin rehab in Goodyear, Arizona once the reconstruction is complete. This is the second surgery on the finger, as he previously had a surgery last year to repair a broken callous and seal a gap in his finger that resulted from it.

The callous came about from a ligament in his finger causing his skin to sag up against the baseball.

News of the needed surgery surfaced last Friday as Miller had some issues in his last bullpen session a few days before where he experienced pain in the finger again. Miller had a setback in spring training where the finger was giving him pain and he could not bend the tip of it, so he had spent the better part of the last six weeks trying to alter his delivery and work on a new release point. He experienced some success in the early going and things seemed to be going well as soon as just two weeks ago, but the recurrence of the pain made it necessary to have the career-threatening surgery.

The reason the surgery to the finger is career threatening is because he will likely develop scar tissue, which will mean yet another surgery down the road to remove it. Scar tissue would hinder his ability to perform and rehabilitate the finger because of the small area, and this would affect the strength of the finger and range of motion.

But there is no guarantee scar tissue will even occur, which is why Miller's status in the future is such an unknown.

It is a rare injury and the surgery itself is innovative and really the first of its kind, so no one

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really knows what to expect going forward and how much recovery time will be needed or what kind of roadblocks will pop up.

This is a pretty big blow to Miller and the Indians. The Indians planned on Miller being a big part of the bullpen this year, and Miller's dreams of pitching in the big leagues have been ended before they could ever be started.

Kinston Sweeps Awards Again

High-A Kinston once again swept the weekly awards in the Carolina League this week as third baseman Lonnie Chisenhall was named the Player of the Week and left-hander Eric Berger was named the Pitcher of the Week. It is the second straight week they have swept the awards as outfielder Matt Brown was the Player of the Week and left-hander Kelvin De La Cruz was the Pitcher of the Week the previous week. So, two weeks into the weekly awards in the Carolina League, and so far Kinston has swept each

week, and this week the Indians have two good candidates in right-hander Jeanmar Gomez and first baseman Matt McBride to take home the honors again!

Chisenhall had a monster week at the plate hitting .333 (10-30) with three home runs and 15 RBI. He hit a home run in three straight games with back to back grand slams on Tuesday (4/21) and Wednesday (4/22) followed by a three run home run on Thursday (4/23). To date, Chisenhall is 4th in the league in RBI and is hitting .274 with 4 HR, 20 RBI and a .785 OPS in 20 games.

Berger was sensational on the week going 2-0 with a 0.00 ERA in two starts.

He gave up only four hits in ten innings of work, striking out 13 and not giving up a run.

His 1.42 ERA and 25 strikeouts both are ranked 2nd in the league.

Both Berger and Chisenhall are natives of North Carolina, with Chisenhall living there his whole life and Berger being born in Goldsboro, NC.

Berger was born into a military family and moved to California at age two.

Everything Not So Hot In Akron

When you consider Double-A Akron's torrid record-breaking start where they are 16-4 through

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18 games, you would think they are hitting on all cylinders as a team. While the pitching has been spectacular and leads the 12-team Eastern League with a sparkling 2.71 team ERA, the hitting has been so-so as they rank 7

th

in hitting with a .248 team average.

The one saving grace for the offense has been the walks which they currently rank 1st in the league (86), as well as some timely hitting.



Like many of his teammates, first baseman Beau Mills is off to a slow start offensively hitting just .266 with 1 HR, 10 RBI and a .665 OPS in 20 games. His problems in the early going have centered mostly around him being a little too aggressive at the plate (2 BB, 12 K), which is natural at this time of the year when players tend to press at the plate because of some ugly numbers posted on the scoreboard.

Early season problems aside, when you look at him and the way he carries himself on the field, his build and body language absolutely scream baseball player.

He has certainly benefitted from being a part of the game since his childhood because of his dad Brad Mills' involvement in the professional game, and his intelligence as a player is something that the Indians really like about him.

Some other players who are off to some very rough starts are shortstop Carlos Rivero (.208 AVG, 1 HR, 12 RBI, .588 OPS), outfielder John Drennen (.180 AVG, 1 HR, 9 RBI, .616 OPS), and outfielder Nick Weglarz (.089 AVG, 1 HR, 6 RBI, .386 OPS). Rivero and Weglarz are probably the two most disappointing performers to date in the entire system, Weglarz especially.

Though he only has 56 official at bats in 19 games, he has struck out 19 times and walked 10 times, which means in almost half of his at bats he is not even putting the ball in play.

Weglarz is widely praised because of his advanced approach and plate discipline at a young age, and it still very young in the season, but it may be time for Weglarz to be a little more aggressive up there.

LaPorta Honored

Earlier this week the International League announced that Triple-A Columbus outfielder Matt

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LaPorta was named as the Player of the Week for the week of 4/20 to 4/26. For the week, LaPorta hit .520 with an International League leading 13 hits, 10 runs scored, and .613 on-base percentage. He

hit safely in all seven games for the week, including four multi-hit efforts.

He also homered in

back-to-back games last Friday and Saturday becoming the first Clipper to homer in consecutive games this season. At the moment, LaPorta is tied for 4th in the league in home runs (5), tied for 10th in RBI (14), 8th in batting average (.368), 9th in on-base percentage (.436), 3rd in slugging percentage (.706), and 4th in OPS (1.142).

LaPorta's excellent start to the season where he is currently hitting .368 with 5 HR, 14 RBI and a 1.142 OPS through 19 games has many people thinking he could be Cleveland bound very soon. Indians manager Eric Wedge downplayed that to the media earlier in the week, but it is a legit possibility given the inconsistent way the offense has performed so far, especially Ben Francisco and Trevor Crowe in the outfield. I was able to talk to a National League scout recently, and he says that LaPorta is "ready for the big leagues" and that "he is hitting everything hard".

Do not be surprised if LaPorta is called up sometime before Memorial Day.

And yes all you Super-2 honks, it has little bearing on when he is called up.

The Vin Man

Akron right-handed closer Vinnie Pestano continues to do what he does best, which is come into games in the ninth inning and shut the door ensuring victory for his team. Pestano has been closing since he played ball at Cal State-Fullerton, and since becoming a professional he has been the closer at every level of the Indians system be it at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley



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in 2007, Low-A Lake County and High-A Kinston in 2008, and now Double-A Akron in 2009. After saving a combined 30 games for Mahoning Valley, Lake County and Kinston from 2007 to 2008, Pestano is off to a hot start at Akron with nine saves already this year.

In ten appearances he is 0-0 with a 1.93 ERA and in 9.1 innings has allowed just 5 hits, 4 walks and has 8 strikeouts.

It is a role he has always flourished in because of his excellent makeup and strong will. When he comes sprinting out to the mound from the bullpen, he comes out with a purpose and focus many relievers lack.

He may not have the heat-seeking 95+ MPH fastball or fall off the table curveball teams and fans like to see out of a late-inning pitcher, but you can't argue with the results and the intestinal fortitude he possesses.

His strong mental approach combined with his ability to throw strikes and a quirky sidearm delivery has become a true separator for him.

His slider may be his best pitch, but he pounds the zone well with his fastball and creates a lot of deception with his delivery and hides the ball well.

When you are only throwing 88-90 MPH, you need all the advantages you can get.

Getting A Little Help From His Friends

Double-A Akron right-hander Hector Rondon continues to cruise in the early going this season. On Tuesday night, Rondon went 6.2 innings allowing just 1 run on 6 hits, 1 walk and had 9 strikeouts.

As has been the case in his three prior starts, Rondon was dominant for all of the game before tiring late and yielding a run in his final inning of work.

He struck out seven of the first 11 hitters

he faced en route to setting a new Aeros season-high with nine strikeouts in the game, and worked into the seventh for his first quality start of the season. On the year, Rondon is now 4-0 with a 1.17 ERA and in 23.0 innings has allowed 19 hits, 4 walks, and has 22 strikeouts.

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Things got a little dicey in the seventh inning for Rondon as he gave up a lead off home run to former tribe farmhand Matt Whitney and then got two quick outs before allowing a hit and walk. Right-hander Erik Stiller was summoned in from the bullpen and he closed the door on the potential rally and preserved the 3-1 lead by retiring the first batter he faced on a groundout.

Stiller was even more impressive in keeping the lead in the eighth as he allowed the first two batters to reach base with singles, and a bobble by right fielder Jerad Head put the tying runners at second and third with no out.

The next batter hit a fly ball to Mickey Hall that he dropped which allowed a run to score and make it 3-2 and put runners back on second and third with no outs.

Stiller recovered to strikeout Whitney for the first out, and after intentionally walking the next batter to load the bases with one out, he came back to punch-out the next two batters to escape with the lead intact.

Right-hander Vinnie Pestano then worked a drama-free ninth retiring the side in order and recording the save.

Infirmity Report

High-A Kinston left-handed pitcher Kelvin De La Cruz is out indefinitely with what team officials have categorized as "left forearm tightness". The situation appears to be serious enough where the Indians went out of their way on Wednesday to have him flown

into Cleveland for a medical evaluation by team doctors at Progressive Field on Thursday. As of this writing, there is no word or comment from the Indians on how that evaluation went, but one team official did comment that the purpose of the evaluation was to make sure there was no ligament damage.

Due to HIPPA provisions, the Indians are not allowed to talk about it.

In two starts so far this season, De La Cruz is 2-0 with a 1.50 ERA and in 12 innings of work has 19 strikeouts and just two walks.

High-A Kinston right-handed pitcher Zach Putnam was struck with a ball on his throwing hand on Tuesday night. After he had completed his warmup tosses at the top of the third inning, Kinston catcher Alex Castillo threw wildly down to second and clipped Putnam in the hand with the ball on the way by. Apparently, Putnam will be okay, though may be

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held out for a start just to make sure. He had some bleeding, soreness and a broken fingernail as a result, but disaster appears to have been averted.

Second baseman Josh Rodriguez left the game on Wednesday in the seventh inning with a hamstring injury. No word yet on the severity of the injury, and he is day-to-day at the moment.

High-A Kinston backup outfielder and first baseman John Allman injured his hamstring last Thursday. He has not played since, but the injury is not considered serious at the moment and he is day-to-day.

Transaction Rundown

Last Thursday, right-handed pitcher Greg Aquino was placed on the Triple-A Columbus disabled list and left-handed pitcher Zach Jackson replaced him on the roster from Cleveland. Also, with RHP Scott Roehl leaving Akron and joining Columbus a few days earlier, the Indians filled his vacant spot in the Akron bullpen by promoting right-handed reliever Josh Judy from High-A Kinston.

Right-handed reliever Mike Pontius joined High-A Kinston from extended spring training, filling the spot in the bullpen left open by the departure of Judy.

Last Saturday, right-hander Paolo Espino was summoned from Low-A Lake County and promoted to Double-A Akron to provide some much needed bullpen relief to a taxed Akron staff which had pitched 39 innings over three days from Wednesday through Friday because of double-headers. To make room on the roster, right-hander Steven Wright was placed on the Mahoning Valley roster (paper move).

On Tuesday, right-handed reliever Randy Newsom was promoted to Triple-A Columbus and infielder Andy Cannizaro was transferred to Mahoning Valley. Also, right-handed pitcher Paolo Espino was transferred back to Low-A Lake County and right-handed pitcher Steven Wright was moved off the Mahoning Valley reserve list.

Right-handed pitcher Eddie Burns was also called up to Low-A Lake County from extended spring training.

On Wednesday, right-hander Jeanmar Gomez was promoted from High-A Kinston to Double-A

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Akron. Left-hander Russell Young was called up from Low-A Lake County to Kinston to fill Gomez's spot on the roster and in the rotation. Right-handed pitcher Steven Wright was taken out of the Akron rotation and inserted into the bullpen to make room for Gomez in the rotation.

On Friday, right-handed pitcher Kyle Landis was promoted from Low-A Lake County to High-A Kinston and right-handed pitcher Mike Pontius was put on the Kinston disabled list with an undisclosed injury.

2009 MLB Amateur Draft

We are getting closer to yet another MLB First-Year Player Draft, which kicks into action five weeks from this coming Tuesday. The draft itself will now be a three day long event, with day one occurring on Tuesday June 9th at 6:00 PM in Studio 42 of the MLB Network in Secaucus, NJ.

Day one will consist of three rounds, and then the rest of the rounds will be broken up over the final two days on Wednesday June 10 and Thursday June 11 and be conducted as they were in the past via a conference call from MLB headquarters in New York City.

Affiliate Notebook



Columbus Notes (9-12, 4th place, 3.0 GB): Second baseman Luis Valbuena saw his five game hitting streak end on Tuesday at Toledo, but he did have an on-base streak of 13 games to start the year. His 13 game streak ranks tied for 10th in

the International League this season.

O
n the season, Valbuena is hitting .311 with 2 HR, 10 RBI, and a .927 OPS in 21 games. ... First baseman Michael Aubrey is starting to cool off some as in his last eight games he is only hitting .200.

On the season he is still hitting a red-hot .404 with 2 HR, 11 RBI and 1.066 OPS in 16 games. ... Catcher Wyatt Toregas has had a nice, quiet start to his season.

In limited playing time, he is hitting .281 with 3 HR, 8 RBI and a .945 OPS in 10 games played. ... Clippers manager Torey Lovullo managed his 1,000th regular season game on April 24th vs. Indianapolis, winning the contest 9-7. ... In 2009, the Clippers sit at dead last in the International League in fielding percentage (.968), having committed 22 errors in 20 games.

After playing flawlessly on opening day, the Clippers made errors in ten straight games until April 20th.

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They currently project out to 158 errors in 144 games, and the all-time record is 178 errors in 1978.



Akron Notes (16-4, 1st place, 3.0 GU): Right-hander Steven Wright threw a gem last Friday in what was to be his final start of the season going 6 innings and allowing just 1 run on 3 hits, 1 walk and striking out 2.

Wright has officially been moved to the Akron bullpen, and was awesome in his debut as a reliever on Wednesday night going 2.2 shutout innings allowing 4 hits with no walks while striking out 3.

In four total appearances on the year Wright is 2-0 with a 2.55 ERA, and in 17.2 innings has allowed 18 hits, 4 walks, and has 10 strikeouts. ... One may take a quick look at catcher Carlos Santana's batting average of .262 and say he is only hitting so-so, but this is not the case as he is hitting into some loud outs, 10 of his 16 hits have gone for extra bases, and he has demonstrated excellent patience at the plate with 15 walks to 11 strikeouts.

He has a .405 on-base% and 1.028 OPS, and his 6 home runs and 19 RBI are tied for 1st in the Eastern League and his 1.028 OPS is 2nd in the league. ... Outfielder Jose Constanza had three three-hit games in the span of four games last week, boosting his average almost 100 points in the process.

Constanza is now hitting .323 with 0 HR, 6 RBI, 10 stolen bases, and an .819 OPS.

His 10 stolen bases lead the Eastern League. ... Second baseman Josh Rodriguez and utility man Jerad Head are off to good starts.

Rodriguez is hitting .314 with 0 HR, 5 RBI and an .831 OPS in 18 games, while Head is hitting .350 with 2 HR, 9 RBI, and a .972 OPS in 13 games.



Kinston Notes (11-10, 1st place, 0.0 GU): Third baseman Lonnie Chisenhall's three consecutive games with a home was the first time a Kinston player had accomplished that since infielder Josh Rodriguez put together a four game streak in August 2007.

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His modest 11-game hitting streak came to an end on Sunday. ... Outfielder Matt Brown has 22 hits, but just two have gone for extra bases (both are doubles).

Still, he has displayed excellent plate discipline in the early going drawing 15 walks to 11 strikeouts, and on the season he is hitting .349 with 0 HR, 7 RBI and an .855 OPS. ... Left-handed starter Ryan Miller has been hard to hit so far this season, as in 12.1 combined innings pitched between Low-A Lake County and Kinston he has yielded just 5 hits and held opposing hitters to a .122 batting average.

His problem has been the walks, as in those same 12.1 innings he has allowed 15 walks. ... Second baseman Cord Phelps had an 11-game hitting streak snapped on Tuesday.

On the season he is hitting .303 with 0 HR, 9 RBI and an .884 OPS. ... With right-handed closer Josh Judy being promoted to Double-A Akron, the new closer in Kinston will be right-hander Dallas Cawiezell.

While they do go with a closer-by-committee approach, he will be afforded the majority of the opportunities.

On the season Cawiezell is 0-0 with 1 save and a 2.53 ERA.

In 10.2 innings

he has allowed 6 hits, 3 walks, and has 12 strikeouts. ... Kinston is 2nd in the Carolina League in team hitting (.293 AVG),

2nd in OPS (.818), 2nd in doubles (40), and 1st in walks (106).

On the pitching front Kinston is 1st in team ERA (3.42, 80 points better than the rest of the league!), 1st in strikeouts (177), and 1st in WHIP (1.23).



Lake County Notes (8-12, 6th place, 4.5 GB): Left-hander T.J. House picked up his first professional win on Monday going 6 innings and allowing just 1 run on 4 hits, no walks and had 4 strikeouts. In four starts so far this season he is 1-1 with a 1.53 ERA and in 17.2 innings has allowed 13 hits, 11 walks, and has 16 strikeouts. ... Outfielder Donnie Webb has reached base in 16 straight games.

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Even with the long streak, his on-base percentage is still only .330 and on the season he is hitting .244 with 2 HR, 7 RBI and has a .650 OPS. ... Right-handed reliever Dave Roberts has been impressive in the early going for the Captains.

He has made six appearances on the season and in each one of those outings he pitched at least two innings out of the bullpen.

He got the win in relief on Tuesday pitching 2.1 innings of relief and allowing one run while striking out five batters.

On the season he is now 1-0 with a 2.30 ERA and in 15.2 innings has allowed 14 hits, 2 walks, and has 16 strikeouts. ... The Captains offense has struggled mightily the first month of the season, but the two bright spots to date have been first baseman Nate Recknagel and second baseman Karexon Sanchez.

Recknagel leads the team in hitting with a .327 batting average and he also has 1 HR, 9 RBI and a .860 OPS in 13 games.

Sanchez has been the big bopper in the early going, and is hitting .268 with 4 HR, 11 RBI, and an .835 OPS. ... Outfielder Abner Abreu is happy the calendar has turned to a new month as in 72 at bats he has 29 strikeouts and only 2 walks.

He is hitting .208 with 0 HR, 3 RBI and a .532 OPS in 17 games.