

Minor Happenings: Herrmann Shows Progress In Bullpen Role

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Thursday, July 16 2009 7:00 PM -

I'm not sure how Tony does it. Dude is in the middle of a four affiliates in nine days stretch where he will see Mahoning Valley, Lake County, Kinston and Akron all in action over the next week. Cranking out interview pieces, blogging, tweeting, doing radio and TV spots. And somehow staying out of Divorce Court and chasing around two young kids while doing all this. Tony's latest for us? His most recent installment of Minor Happenings, his weekly column here on the site.



“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.

I'm in the middle of a four affiliates in nine days stretch where I will see Mahoning Valley, Lake County, Kinston and Akron all in action over the next week. I was in Mahoning Valley on Wednesday and provide some thoughts on that visit below, and will be in Akron on Saturday night to see right-hander Jeanmar Gomez in action, Lake County on Sunday to see right-hander Trey Haley, and then in Kinston next Friday.

In fact, I will see Kinston several times in the coming weeks as I will see them in Kinston next weekend, the following weekend in Myrtle Beach, and then three weeks later in Wilmington, DE.

For those that missed them, I wrote a piece on helium prospect outfielder [Delvi Cid](#) and right-hander [Mike McGuire](#) this week.

I have several other pieces in the pipeline coming on guys I have recently talked to in Chris Jones, Marty Popham, Clayton Cook, Jordan Henry, Chun-Chen, Vinnie Pestano, Jerad Head,

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and Nick Weglarz.

To get breaking news as it happens, be sure to [follow me on Twitter](#) . Also, check out a friend of the feather [Josh Kusnick's Twitter page](#) to follow what he is up to.

For those that do not know, he is the agent for Tribe outfield prospect Michael Brantley as well as many other players around baseball.

I was on the radio on Friday morning on SportsTalkCleveland.com's morning show "The Leadoff" hosted by T.J. Zuppe. For those that missed it and are interested in hearing it, I will post the link to a podcast of the interview on my blog when it comes available.

I will also be on STO's "Minor League Magazine" show in two weeks (August 4th).

Onto the *Happenings*...

Indians Minor League Player Of The Week

(for games from July 9 through July 15)

Matt McBride (Outfield - Akron)

.500 AVG (10-for-20), 7 R, 5 2B, 0 3B, 4 HR, 8 RBI, 0 BB, 1 K

All of the recent injuries and promotions are starting to show in the win-loss column for Double-A Akron, and they lost their last five games heading into the All Star break. Outfielder Matt McBride did all he could though to help his team get a win and was

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[REDACTED]
Henry!

I was in Mahoning Valley on Wednesday night and got my second look at a lot of the Indians 2009 draftees. Right-hander Kyle Smith made his second professional appearance and pitched five solid innings allowing two earned runs on five hits, one walk and did not record a strikeout.

He used a pitch to contact approach with two quick innings of work to start the game, but he ran into some trouble in the third and fourth inning with some hard hit balls and poor defensive play behind him.

He was noticeably

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tired in the fifth inning and battled to finish the inning, which was good to see.

Left-hander Nick Kirk came on in the sixth and breezed through the inning, but the game got away from him in the seventh inning with the key blow being a grand slam home run. He finished the night going two innings and allowed six runs on six hits, two walks (both intentional) and had one strikeout.

It was his first poor outing, as his previous seven outings were near flawless (13.1 IP, 9 H, 2 R, 2 BB, 19 K).

On the offensive side of things, the Scrapper offense did very little. The team lacks any big power bats, though almost all of the hitters are still adjusting to using wood bats since most of them came from the college ranks just a month ago where they were accustomed to using aluminum bats. Outfielder Jason Smit (.311, 0 HR, 14 RBI, .833 OPS) has looked very good so far and displayed his versatility playing both first base and everywhere in the outfield.

Aside from fellow outfielder Jordan Henry, the rest of the players have struggled mightily at the plate as the next highest OPS among active Scrapers is outfielder Greg Folgia's .646 OPS.

Ouch.

Speaking of Jordan Henry, he was clearly the best player on the field on Wednesday night, at least for the Scrapers. Whether he was out there playing defense or at the plate hitting, he clearly is a much more advanced player than the rest of his teammates.

He has excellent range in center field and showed good jumps and route-running in tracking down a few balls into the gap and to the wall.

At the plate he made solid contact on a couple of hits, and also showed some ability to drive the ball by turning on a pitch and yanking it to the gap on the warning track in right-center.

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Henry is hitting .333 with 0 HR, 8 RBI and has an .874 OPS in 23 games. More impressive is his 19 walks to only 10 strikeouts, which is yet another example of his advanced approach at the plate. He is confident hitting late in counts, and is very fast and shows good instincts on the bases.

He's not a power hitter by any means, so this will always hurt his prospect ranking, but he is a very good leadoff hitting prospect with his ability to get on base, see pitches, work counts, create havoc on the bases, and play well above average defense.

The Indians may have found something with their 7th round pick, and he may not be in Mahoning Valley for long.

Also, his brother Justin Henry - who is three years older - is in the Detroit Tigers system and currently plays for their High-A Lakeland team.

Kipnis In The Fold

The Indians signed 2009 second round pick outfielder Jason Kipnis last Friday. As a junior at Arizona State this past season he hit .384 (91-for-237) with 76 runs scored, 21 doubles, 4 triples, 16 HR and 71 RBI in 63 games.

In addition, he had an

excellent .497 on-base percentage, showed good patience at the plate with 51 walks to only 32 strikeouts, and he had a .709 slugging percentage. He was named the Pac-10 Conference Player of the Year and to the Pac-10 First Team for the second consecutive season.

In 2008 as a sophomore he hit .371 (88-for-237) with 16 2B, 6 3B, 14 HR and 73 RBI in 62 games.

This marked the second time Kipnis had been selected in the MLB draft, as he was taken by the San Diego Padres in the fourth round of the 2008 draft.

With the signing, the Indians have now signed 26 of their 50 selections and 19 of the first 20.

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The only player not signed in the top 20 is first rounder right-handed pitcher Alex White.

Kipnis is in Mahoning Valley with the Indians short-season Single-A affiliate, though he has not been activated. He is recovering from a minor injury suffered in the College World Series and is expected to be activated in the next two weeks. When he is activated, he should add some much needed punch to the Mahoning Valley offense, though it is possible that when he is activated that a player such as outfielder Jordan Henry or Jason Smit could get a well-deserved promotion to Low-A Lake County to make room for him.

Infirmiry Report

Here is a quick update on some of the key injured players in the Indians system:



Kelvin De La Cruz: Is scheduled to throw his first bullpen session on Saturday and will increase his pitch count from there. If there are no setbacks, it looks like he could be cleared for game action by mid-August and make a handful of starts before the end of the season.

Rob Bryson: He is scheduled to pitch in a sim game on Monday (July 20th) and barring any setbacks is set to start game activity on July 28

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(likely in Arizona).

Josh Rodriguez: Should be game ready by the end of the month for game action.

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Abner Abreu: His shoulder surgery was a success and he is recovering well. He will not play the rest of this season and likely will not return to game action until next spring training.

Rosario Returns

Right-hander Gregorio Rosario made his return to the pitching mound on Tuesday night for the rookie-level Arizona League



Indians. He tore the UCL in his pitching elbow before the 2008 season and ended up having Tommy John surgery and had been sidelined all of the 2008 season and the first half of the 2009 season until Tuesday night. In his return to the mound for the first time in almost two years he went just two-thirds of an inning and allowed three runs on two hits, one walk, and had one strikeout. He is still in the early stages of his recovery program and will be restricted for the rest of the season as he continues to work his way back to 100% from the surgery.

He will likely pitch the remainder of the season in Arizona.

For the diehards who remember, Rosario was the promising Latin pitching prospect the Indians received from the Seattle Mariners for right-hander Jason Davis in a trade early in the 2007 season. Rosario, now 20, was just 18 years old when he was acquired and picked off the Mariners Dominican Summer League team, so there was some intrigue with him due to his long projection and why the Indians would even be interested in him (my guess is they liked him and were in on him when he originally signed with Seattle).

All-Star Wrapup

With the Futures Game as well as Triple-A and Double-A All Star games being played this past week, here is how the Indians participants did:

Futures Game: The Indians sent two players to the Futures Game last Sunday in St. Louis, Double-A outfielder Nick Weglarz

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~~Kinston, North Carolina (7/16/09) - The Kinston Indians, a Class A Short Season affiliate of the Carolina League, are currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast. The team is currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast. The team is currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast.~~



~~Cape Fear, North Carolina (7/16/09) - The Cape Fear Crawdads, a Class A Short Season affiliate of the Carolina League, are currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast. The team is currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast.~~



~~Mahoning Valley, North Carolina (7/16/09) - The Mahoning Valley Scrappers, a Class A Short Season affiliate of the Carolina League, are currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast. The team is currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast.~~



~~Wilmington, North Carolina (7/16/09) - The Wilmington Indians, a Class A Short Season affiliate of the Carolina League, are currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast. The team is currently in the middle of a 15-game road trip through the Southeast.~~