

Minor Happenings: Several Affiliates In Playoff Hunt

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Friday, August 14 2009 7:00 PM -

T checks in with Part II of Minor Happenings this week, which is loaded with good stuff. He had a chance to sit down with High-A Kinston Manager Chris Tremie to talk about Lonnie Chisenhall and some of the other players on the Kinston roster. T also had an opportunity to see new Indian Nick Hagadone (acquired in Victor deal) throw in Lake County this week. Also, he gets us up to speed on the post-season possibilities for the Indians affiliates ... all of whom have a great chance to make the playoffs.



"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.

In case you missed the abbreviated part one to *Happenings* this week, it posted yesterday and [can be found by clicking here](#)

In it I provided a smorgasbord of updates from Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins.

Also, for those interested, here is a quick programming note for this week. I will be on the Kendall Lewis (The BSK) radio show on Monday afternoon on SportsTalkCleveland.com.

No idea on the time yet, but sometime between 4:00-6:00pm.

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I will also be on SportsTime Ohio this Tuesday appearing on the "Minor League Magazine" show for a segment talking about some of the prospects and my recent trips to see them.

I also plan to attend the game in Akron this Tuesday or Wednesday night.

Onto the *Happenings*...

Coaches Corner: Chris Tremie

I recently had a chance to sit down and talk to High-A Kinston Manager Chris Tremie about a few players on his roster, and here is what he had to say:

On Lonnie Chisenhall: "He has gotten better as the year has gone on. His approach at the plate offensively is very good, especially for a kid at his age and his developmental experience. He is well on his way to a good career.

Defensively he shows good range at third base, and has really adapted well moving over from shortstop to third base and gotten better as the season

has gone on. His hands and everything have always been good. I would say there are two things that contributed to [his early errors].

One, with the position change early, and also the angles in which he had to play probably produced a few more errors.

But the fact that he gets to a lot more balls than some guys don't get to, which played a part early on.

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He has just been solid since that first month."

On Tim Fedroff: "He has done a good job of dealing with some issues with the hamstring and learning to play everyday and been hampered a little bit by it. He has still been able to get things done and get better at the same time even though he has missed quite a few games.

His progress is good.

He is just battling through that hamstring and looks to be healthy again now and hopefully can finish out the year playing everyday and getting a lot of at bats."

On Ole Sheldon: "He is a big first baseman, and has some power. He has come in here and actually done well helping out with the guys in the clubhouse as he has a little more experience than these guys have.

He swings the bat well.

He has a little bit of an unorthodox style, but it seems to be working for him."

On Cord Phelps: "I think he has a good idea of the strike zone. He obviously has drawn quite a few walks, so his on-base percentage is very good.

I know he would like for his average to be higher, and I think that will come as he continues to play.

He will also I think start to produce more power numbers.

It is just a transition he is making, and he is going to continue to get better.

Right now his on-base percentage is good, and I think he can only get better in every other category because of his ability."

On Matt Brown: "He started off swinging the bat very well. He started to come down a little bit, but from .480 you are going to come down some.

He ended up getting a little bit of an injury issue which affected his hitting a little bit and his

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overall game, and tried to play through it for awhile and eventually he just couldn't do it anymore.

So that is where he is at right now, getting back healthy.

I would think once he is healthy again we would expect him to produce and play well again."

Coaches Corner: Aaron Holbert

This past week I was in Lake County to see left-hander Nick Hagadone pitch. Prior to his start I had a chance to sit down for a few minutes with manager Aaron Holbert to talk about Hagadone as well as a few other players.

On Jason Knapp's return coming back from injury: "We just want to start off slow with Jason to make sure as he had not



pitched in a while competitively. He was just three innings or 50 pitches [in his Tuesday start]. His next start he will be five innings or something like 60 to 75 pitches, and then hopefully get him to the point he is set at 85 pitches [his next start after that].

So it is just a progression for him to take it slow and just to make sure he is going to stay healthy and not break down.

I know it is an important and exciting time in his life, so you hate to hurt him going out there to try and impress us.

It is important for the kid and the fans to understand that the most important thing is his career.

It is not smart of us to run him out there to try and throw 75-90 pitches when he has not thrown in two weeks or so.

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That is taking a chance of injury, and that is the last thing we want.

It is just important that he is healthy throughout this whole experience, he comes in and gets familiar with the organization, and we have a chance to get familiar with him.

So just to take him slow is the most important thing."

First impressions of Knapp: "Jason is a very confident kid, and he commanded his fastball extremely well. I know he only went 46 or 48 pitches and two innings, but he came out aggressive. He is a competitor and he thrives on the competition and the excitement of being out on the mound.

Everything I saw was positive, and it was refreshing to see him go out there and have the confidence he had and compete the way he did.

Unfortunately, we could only get that much out of him, but when we get to the end of the season hopefully he will be out there for the seven innings and dominating.

That's what we are hoping for."

On Nick Hagadone's plan returning from injury and first impression: "His plan coming off of Tommy John, the Red Sox had him at three innings or 50 pitches and we are going to leave him there for the rest of the season.

So we will have somebody that will constantly piggyback him. He has looked good.

He is a strong kid with a good live arm.

He commanded the strike zone, threw his fastball for strikes, and put the guys away with a nice slider down and away to left-handed hitters.

He got out there and was very confident and sure of himself and had a nice downhill plane to his fastball."

On Francisco Jimenez: "The most important thing is he is not scared. He came in one ball game in Lakewood recently with the bases loaded and nobody out and faced the first batter and struck him out with three pitches, the next guy in three pitches, and the next guy with I think five pitches. For

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me he does not get intimidated.

I know he is a young pitcher and just over to the states this year, and you would never know it by his demeanor on the mound and his confidence out there.

He mixes up a slurvy curveball with some changeups, but really he is coming after guys with his fastball.

His fastball jumps a little bit, but it is actually high 80s to low 90s, it is not like he is overpowering but the swings that are being taken it looks like there is some deception in there.

He is basically saying 'if you can hit, hit it' and I like his enthusiasm and confidence out there.

It is paying off for him not being tentative or afraid of getting hit and afraid of contact."

Nuno Pitching Like Numero Uno

Just about every year at least one late round pick sparkles in his professional debut and starts to open some eyes. This year that player may be short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley left-handed pitcher Vidal Nuno.

The Indians took him in the 48th



round of the draft this year out of Baker University (KS). The 5'11" 195-pounder is now 3-0 with a 1.30 ERA in nine appearances (four starts) for Mahoning Valley, and in 13 combined appearances between Mahoning Valley and rookie-level Arizona he is 3-0 with a 1.94 ERA (41.2 IP, 33 H, 10 BB, 41 K).

In Nuno's last two seasons at Baker he piled up 15 wins and a 1.98 ERA and was named the HAAC Pitcher of the Year this past season. While his college resume was impressive, it was also at a minor college program. That all said, to date he has shown to be one of those late round picks the Indians seem to specialize in finding.

His emergence has come as a starter, which really was not planned as he filled in for his first start and pitched so well that the Indians kept him in the role.

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As a starter he is 2-0 with a 1.29 ERA (21.0 IP, 12 H, 3 BB, 15 K) and he recently had a string of 15.2 consecutive scoreless innings come to an end.

The Indians feel that down the road his true value will be as a lefty in the bullpen, but for now he will continue to fill a role in the Mahoning Valley starting rotation.

Nuno isn't a power pitcher by any means as he is a command and control left-handed pitcher who has a very advanced ability to throw strikes. He has a four pitch mix led by an average fastball and a curveball, changeup and splitter.

His fastball has some sinking action and he has shown the ability to pile up groundball outs in college and now professionally.

He repeats his delivery and changes speeds well which helps him create deception with all of his pitches and makes his fastball much more effective.

His curveball is sharp with good tilt and 11/5 action, he has a good feel for his changeup with good late fade, and his splitter has good downward action.

He is a fearless competitor with outstanding work ethic with pitchability and plus makeup.

He has the ability to handle any role, and that versatility has already been put to the test this year and will likely continue to be tested in the years to come with the Indians.

Brown Not Down For Long

Last Saturday, Triple-A first baseman/outfielder Jordan Brown was placed on the seven-day disabled list with inflammation of his right shoulder. The shoulder had been bothering him for several weeks, though you would never know it with his performance, but he finally landed on the disabled list after he tweaked it pretty good taking batting practice before a recent game.

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Brown's injury is not considered to be a serious injury at this time and is more a nagging thing as it only hurts when he extends his swing, so with rest it is expected to get better. He and the Indians would rather not push it and potentially make it worse which would end up being an injury he would carry into what will be a huge offseason for him.

On Thursday he took some dry swings in batting practice and shagged fly balls, hit balls off a tee yesterday, and is expected to take live batting practice soon (maybe today).

If all goes well, he could return within the week.

Brown's injury puts a damper on his chances for a callup to Cleveland in September. Had he not gotten hurt, there was a good chance that when Columbus' season ended that he and outfielder/first baseman Matt LaPorta would be promoted and called up to Cleveland together, but now it may just be LaPorta.

Regardless, he is virtually certain to find his way onto a major league roster this offseason, be it the Indians rostering him, the Indians trading him to a team who rosters him, or another team plucking him in the Rule 5 Draft if he is not rostered.

Unlike last year where there were some questions about his health and dip in performance going into the Rule 5 Draft, he'd seem to be a sure-fire selection this year if left exposed.

Brown is also in the mix for the International League batting title as of those qualified he leads everyone with a .331 batting average. If something were to happen where he did not play the rest of the year, he has enough plate appearances to qualify regardless and would likely finish with the batting title unless someone below him got ridiculously hot the final three weeks of the season. On the year he is hitting .331 with 12 HR, 58 RBI and a .902 OPS.

Judy In, Pestano Out

Double-A Akron right-handed closer Josh Judy has had a quick jump up the Indians minor league ladder, both in the level he is playing at and in his standing within the organization. As a 34th round pick in the 2007 Draft out of Indiana Institute of

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