

## Minor Happenings: Davis Closing? Crowe To Akron?

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Wednesday, June 28 2006 7:00 PM -

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When it comes to knowledge of the Indians minor league teams and prospects, there are few men on the planet Earth that know more than Tony Lastoria. Which is the reason I wanted him to be a big part of this website from day one. In his latest weekly whirlwind through the Indians farm system, Tony brings us up to date on all the latest with the key Tribe farmhands. And as always, recaps the weekly radio interview of Tribe Farm Director John Farrell. Enjoy.



*“Minor Happenings” covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system over the course of the past week. Information in this report is collected from the various news outlets that cover each team, some national news, and in some cases from private sources connected to the Indians organization. Also, “Minor Recaps” (which hopefully will return this weekend) is a quick run down of the noteworthy statistics for players in the farm system, league leaders, and the standing of each team in their league.*

*Also, the temporary format change made last week has become a permanent change based on feedback received from some readers.*

### Director’s Cuts

Here are some comments shared by Indians Farm Director John Farrell on several topics in his weekly radio interview:

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*On Adam Miller:* Farrell mentioned that Miller has really had an up and down season. First and foremost, the injury issues are completely behind him. But, his up and down performance is a result of the inconsistent location of his fastball. His changeup is a work in progress, and his slider currently grades out as an above average major league pitch. But, his main problem has been an inability to harness his emotions and adrenaline on a consistent basis in order to allow better command of his fastball and secondary pitches when behind in the count.

*On Fausto Carmona:* His late game demeanor has impressed the entire organization, and the organization feels he has made a quick progression at the big league level. Right now, the decision on whether to keep him as a reliever or move him back to a starter is something they will continue to evaluate as the season progresses.

*On the Akron coaching staff:* Farrell applauded Akron manager Tim Bogar and the way he has handled the almost daily roster changes as a result of injuries and demotions/promotions, and how he has adapted to the Indians philosophy his first year in the system. Bogar has great credibility as a manager, communicates well, the game does not speed up on him, and his in-game decision making is strong. Also, Farrell expressed how Felix Fermin has done a wonderful job. Fermin has been instrumental in Joe Inglett's transition to a utility player, and is very knowledgeable and able to bridge the gap with the Latin players on the Akron roster.

*On the recent purge of talent:* There has been a recent influx of young players added to the major league roster, and this does have a trickle down effect on the farm system. Farrell mentioned that when a lot of players are called up by the big league club in a short period of time, it does affect all the teams in the system from Buffalo on down. In most cases, however, Buffalo (or Akron) receives a player back from the major league club. The organization also communicates well, as Farrell is well abreast of any potential moves Shapiro may make, so Farrell can backfill the roster accordingly.

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*On getting pitchers to trust their stuff:* Farrell mentioned that the organization makes a strong effort to get pitcher's to learn to trust and believe in their stuff. If the pitcher does not trust the pitches they possess, when they arrive in Cleveland they end up trying to be a different pitcher, which usually leads to trouble for them.

*On the "no fear" mentality of pitching:* Farrell stated that this trait is in innate quality some pitchers possess. This mentality is typically shown in the personality and energy of the player. Picking up on such a trait starts with the scouts, but harnessing and developing it becomes hands on work at each level by the coaches the player comes in contact with.

### Davis Closing?

Sure looks like it. In the last two games involving a save situation at Buffalo, Jason Davis was called upon to close out the game each time. He responded well in both appearances, picking up 2 saves and repeatedly hit 99 MPH on the radar gun. Even though the sample size is small, he was dominant in both saves by not allowing a hit or walk in 3 IP and striking out 3.

### Crowe Akron Bound?

This past week, speedy outfielder Juan Valdes was called up to Akron from Low Class A Lake County. The callup to Akron should only be for a quick cup of coffee for Valdes (pun fully intended) as this move is a clear indication that Kinston outfielder Trevor Crowe will be moved up to Akron when he returns from the disabled list. Valdes hasn't hit at Lake County, and is just a temporary replacement in the Akron outfield until Crowe arrives. At Kinston, before going on the disabled list Crowe was hitting .329 with 4 HRs and 31 RBIs along with an

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impressive 48 walks and 29 stolen bases in 60 games. He is expected to come off the disabled list any day.

## Goleski Continues His Tear

Outfielder Ryan Goleski continues to roll. After a sizzling stint in Kinston this year where he hit .331 with 10 HRs and 43 RBIs and 1.077 OPS in 38 games, Goleski was promoted to Akron on May 28th. Goleski hasn't missed a beat since coming to Akron, hitting .340 with 4 HRs and 15 RBIs and a .962 OPS in 27 games. On the season, Goleski is hitting .335 with 14 HRs and 58 RBIs in only 65 games. Goleski is coming off a sub-par 2005 season where he hit .212 with 17 HRs and 67 RBIs, but he has hit in the past. At Lake County in 2004 he hit .295 with 28 HRs and 104 RBIs, and in short-season Mahoning Valley in 2003 he hit .296 with 8 HRs and 37 RBIs in 64 games. He is a prototypical rightfielder, having power at the plate and a power arm in the outfield. His resurgence could put him back on the prospect map for the Indians, and if his performance continues, he could figure into the Indians outfield sometime next year.

## Kouzmanoff Update

Hot-hitting 3B prospect Kevin Kouzmanoff has been out of the lineup for almost two weeks now, but a return is around the corner. Akron recently embarked on a 10-game road trip, and club officials have noted in the press that he could play at the tail end of the trip. Since this is the second time this season that he has injured his left hamstring, the team is being a little more careful and want to be sure the injury has healed before putting him back into game action. If the Aeros elect not to activate Kouzmanoff at the end of this road trip, at worst Kouzmanoff should be back in the lineup after the Eastern League All-Star Break (July 10-12).

### Sipp Returns

Aeros left-handed reliever Tony Sipp was activated off the disabled list this past Sunday. He had been sidelined for the past two months, first with an oblique injury of which he returned from on May 22, but went on the disabled list four days later with a left elbow inflammation. Sipp began the season as a starter, but is now expected to pitch out of the bullpen the rest of the year. Sipp didn't show any rust in his return Sunday, as he pitched two scoreless innings of relief, but was bombed for 3 runs on 5 hits in 1 inning of work Wednesday night. If Sipp can stay healthy, he could earn a late season callup to the Indians when rosters expand on September 1st. Sipp, along with Rafael Perez, is a candidate to fill the large left-handed pitching void in the Indians bullpen.

### Remember Me?

Anyone remember that outfielder the Indians obtained in April for Kaz Tadano? Probably not. His name was Ramon Alvarado, and with the start of short-season play in Burlington, we are finally getting a chance to what he can do. To date, in 6 games at Burlington, he is hitting .286 (6 for 21) with 3 HRs and 6 RBIs. Alvarado is only 20 years old, and is long and lean (6'1" & 160 lbs). While he still needs to grow into his body, Alvarado is considered a big power hitter, with juice in his bat and good pitch recognition at such an early stage in his development. He projects as a 20 home run, 20 stolen base player, and according to one report "could be an above-average left or right-fielder in the Jermaine Dye-mold." Keep an eye on this kid.

### Remember Me? (Part II)

Jeffrey Stevens. The guy obtained from the Reds in probably one of GM Mark

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Shapiro's worst decisions ever. In two starts at Lake County, Stevens has been hammered. In 3 games (2 starts), he is 0-1 with a 10.80 ERA and has pitched a grand total of 6.2 IP giving up 10 hits and 3 walks while striking out 8. Yuck.

## **Carolina All-Star Wrapup**

Kinston left-hander Chuck Lofgren was the starting pitcher in the Advanced A All-Star game this past Tuesday. Lofgren was more impressive than the box score would indicate (1 IP, 1 ER, 3 hits, 2 Ks), as he left was the most impressive player on the field to some scouts. Outfielder Brian Barton went 1-for-4 with a double and an RBI, and right-hander Joe Ness allowed a run in one inning of work. League ERA leader Scott Lewis did not get into the game. Catcher Wyatt Toregas and outfielder Trevor Crowe were selected to the team, but did not appear because Toregas was promoted to Akron, and Crowe is on the disabled list still rehabbing an oblique muscle injury.

## **Wakeup Call For Butia**

Minor league outfielder Mike Butia no doubt is getting ridden hard this year by the Indians. Reportedly, in the first few days of Spring Training, Butia met with Farrell in his one-on-one and Farrell told Butia he was ticketed for Kinston but would have to win a starting job there. Butia didn't like it and quit, packing up his stuff and going home. The Tribe kept an open mind about it and he decided to return. No doubt, since this episode, Butia is learning a tough lesson as he has been placed all the way back in Burlington (instead of Kinston as the Indians originally planned). At Burlington, to date he is hitting .250 (6-24) with 1 HR and 2 RBIs.

## **Buffalo Soldiers**

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Jason Stanford was shutdown a few weeks ago because of soreness in his throwing arm. Currently, he is throwing bullpen sessions at Buffalo trying to rehab.....Andy Marte missed a few games over the weekend because he came down with strep throat....Buffalo promoted catcher Armando Camacaro from Single A Kinston, but it should be short-lived as catcher Tim Laker is expected to clear waivers and accept an assignment to Buffalo.... Buffalo will send two players to the AAA All-Star Game on July 12<sup>th</sup>: 3B Andy Marte and OF Jason Dubois. Had Jeremy Sowers not been called up to Cleveland, he also would undoubtedly have been selected.

## Parting Shots

Congrats to Akron right-handed pitcher Adam Miller for being named to the Futures Game roster....Since the struggling right-hander Dan Denham was demoted to Akron a few weeks ago, he has settled into the Akron rotation and is 3-0 with a 2.77 ERA in 10 appearances (2 starts)....Goleski is not the only one to play well since his callup to Akron, as lefty Aaron Laffey is 3-0 with a 1.83 ERA in 6 starts since his callup to Akron....Nick Pesco (7IP, 0 ER) and JD Martin (6 IP, 1 ER) have each made two starts and pitched well in rehab appearances with Mahoning Valley. Reports are that Martin could be moved up to Akron sometime in the next two weeks, maybe after the All-Star break....Infielder Jared Sandberg was signed as a minor league free agent and added to the Akron roster because of the injury to Kouzmanoff at third base. He is the nephew of Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg.