

## Minor Happenings: Chen Is Exploding In Lake County

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Saturday, June 05 2010 9:56 AM - Last Updated Sunday, June 06 2010 5:44 AM

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*"Minor Happenings" is a weekly column which 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.*

This is the second part of Minor Happenings this week as [part one posted yesterday](#) .

The Indians are preparing for the 2010 MLB Draft which gets started this coming Monday night June 7<sup>th</sup> and then carries on with rounds 2-30 on Tuesday June 8<sup>th</sup> and rounds 31-50 on Wednesday June 9<sup>th</sup>. Me along with several others on the site will be posting the picks and tons of information as it comes in, so if the draft is your thing and you crave information on the new players in the system, the [IPI](#) is the place to be.

I was in Lake County last night and was able to talk with several Indians brass as well as a couple scouts from other organizations. One name in particular which came up was Roberto

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Perez as the feeling was mutual among all parties that he is a big league defensive catcher RIGHT NOW. He still needs work with the bat, but the feeling is it will come, but worst case the feeling is he will be at worst a major league backup provided he avoids injuries and continues to work hard. I will have more on him soon in a feature piece on the site.

Onto the *Happenings*...

### Indians Minor League Player of the Month

(for May)

#### Chun Chen (Catcher – Lake County)

.400 (32-for-80), 10 R, 11 2B, 3 3B, 2 HR, 15 RBI, 10 BB, 15 K, .478 OBP, .688 SLG, 1.166 OPS

There's another catcher starting to make some noise in the Indians minor league system. Everyone knows about Triple-A catcher Carlos Santana and the promise he has as a big league catcher in the near future, but a catcher in the lower levels of the system



at Low-A Lake County known as "Chun" looks like he may be in line to take over as the best "hitting" catching prospect in the system once Santana graduates later this year. I make note of him being the best hitting prospect solely because fellow Lake County catching prospect Roberto Perez far and away is the best defensive catcher in the organization who many believe is Major League ready as a defender right now.

Chen, 21, is having a break through season offensively for Lake County where in 39 games he is hitting .345 with 4 HR, 27 RBI, and a .996 OPS. His play to date is a far cry from the disappointing year he had last season at short season Single-A Mahoning Valley where in 59 games he hit .215 with 1 HR, 19 RBI and a .635 OPS. He has always displayed good plate discipline during his three seasons in the Indians' minor league system, but what has changed

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this year is the reemergence of his power stroke as he has 24 extra base hits – including a whopping 17 doubles - in 145 at bats so far this year which has already bested his 16 extra base hits in 195 at bats last year at Mahoning Valley.

Chen's bat has always been something the Indians have been excited about since they signed him out of Taiwan in September 2007 and then impressed in the Gulf Coast League in 2008 and Instructional League after that. He has an uncanny knack to consistently square the ball up, and when he does the ball just jumps off his bat. The scary part is he is continuing to get stronger and projects to have more power down the road.

The biggest question mark with Chen is his defense as he is a converted third baseman that since he signed with the Indians has been playing catcher. He has split the season at catcher with Roberto Perez and when he has not caught he has been in the lineup as the designated hitter. He has shown a lot of improvement behind the plate, but still has a long way to go. Even still he has the tools where it is felt he could become an offensive-minded catcher with average defensive skills, and if catching does not work out for him he should be able to handle first base as he definitely seems to have the bat for the position. His progress will be interesting to follow the remainder of the season, and what a shot in the arm to the catching depth it would be if he can continue to develop both as a hitter and defender.

### *Honorable Mentions:*

Jordan Brown (OF/1B – COL): .353, 15 G, 9 R, 7 2B, 1 3B, 1 HR, 19 RBI, 4 BB, 4 K, .978 OPS

Carlos Santana (C – COL): .324, 28 G, 19 R, 6 2B, 1 3B, 5 HR, 23 RBI, 24 BB, 24 K, .998 OPS

Josh Tomlin (RHP – COL): 3-0, 5 G, 1.52 ERA, 29.2 IP, 22 H, 5 ER, 6 BB, 19 K, 0.94 WHIP, .208 BAA

Frank Herrmann (RHP – COL): 1-0, 10 G, 0.00 ERA, 16.2 IP, 8 H, 3 BB, 13 K, 0.66 WHIP, .145 BAA

Jared Goedert (3B – AKR): .340, 26 G, 19 R, 10 2B, 0 3B, 6 HR, 16 RBI, 11 BB, 15 K, 1.051 OPS

Alex White (RHP – AKR): 2-2, 6 G, 2.11 ERA, 38.1 IP, 23 H, 9 ER, 11 BB, 25 K, 0.89 WHIP, .173 BAA

Jordan Henry (OF – KIN): .343, 26 G, 24 R, 4 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 10 RBI, 23 BB, 17 K, 9 SB, .851 OPS

Joe Gardner (RHP – KIN): 3-0, 6 G, 30.2 IP, 17 H, 6 ER, 13 BB, 27 K, 0.98 WHIP, .160 BAA

T.J. McFarland (LHP – KIN): 4-1, 7 G, 2.13 ERA, 42.1 IP, 37 H, 10 ER, 7 BB, 26 K, 1.04 WHIP, .231 BAA

Trey Haley (RHP – LC): 3-1, 6 G, 2.84 ERA, 31.2 IP, 24 H, 10 ER, 17 BB, 28 K, 1.29 WHIP,

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.216 BAA

### *Previous Winners:*

April: Bo Greenwell (OF – Lake County)

### **Scout's Takes**

Indians' Director of Amateur Scouting Brad Grant and his staff are hard at work getting set for the Major League Baseball Draft which kicks off this coming Monday night June 7<sup>th</sup>. Last minute preparations are being made to put their draft board together and go through all the players they are interested in taking this year. Earlier in the week he shared some thoughts on the draft:



*On preparing for the draft:* "We started last year right after the draft. We knew we were going to have a high pick last year right after June 10th and started to focus on things and we have been able to narrow it down now to where we have just a handful of players that we are looking at and focusing directly on. It has been a fun process and it is good to kind of get to the end of it right now."

*On the strength of the draft:* "This year's draft has good depth to it overall. Obviously the focus is going to be on the fifth pick, but what we are looking to do as a Scouting Department is to infuse as much talent as we possibly can into the organization. We are going to be picking at the top of each round, and we are doing everything possible to get the best players as possible in each round and use the entire draft. We have done a good job of that in the past and we

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want to continue to make sure we don't lose focus on the other rounds in the draft and ensure that we are adding from the depth of the draft. This year's depth does look like it is pretty pitching heavy, especially with high school right-handed pitching. There are a lot of them out there, so we are going to try and add as many quality players as possible throughout the draft this year."

*On picking for need vs. best player available:* "We have a very deep system, so we are not looking to fill needs. What we are looking for is to just get the most talented player as possible. We have done a very good job as a staff as our scouting staff has done an excellent job of evaluating everybody and not focusing on a specific player or eliminating a player based on an agent or signability. We have focused on evaluating everybody and will take the best player available this year."

*On the availability of a Strasburg-type player this year:* "I wouldn't say there is that kind of player as Strasburg is a once in a generation type player, so there is not that clear cut player this year. There are a lot of good players out there and like I said there is a lot of depth. It is a good draft and I think you will get good players throughout the draft this year."

*On preparing for the draft:* "I [recently] started to pull back and come to Cleveland a lot and started to look at and gather all the information talking to our scouts and just try to piece everything together. They all [came] in on Sunday and we [started] with conference calls on Sunday and go with those for three days. We start to put our draft board together and bring all of our scouts in an entire week before the draft just to go all through the information and prep for all of the players."

*On the toughest pick to make in the draft:* "That second pick is usually the most difficult pick because there are a lot of good players there that we like. The first round kind of filters out as you get a pretty good feel of who you are going to get and who will be there if you have enough information, but that second round pick is difficult because you have players there you like and you have to choose one or the other. We have 17 area scouts and five crosscheckers and all of them like a certain player, so you are getting a lot of information from a lot of different people and you ultimately have to make a decision."

*On if he has seen any of the 2009 Draft picks play this year:* "I unfortunately don't get to see them as I am out looking at everyone for this year's draft, but I live and die with the box scores and look at them every night. It is fun to see Jason Kipnis making the transition over to second

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base as we hoped he would. He is playing an excellent second base right now and also hitting at the same time. Joe Gardner has been pitching very well and has moved up to Kinston now and has been great for us. Austin Adams threw 97 [the other] night, so it is fun to get the box scores and game reports and see how those guys are doing."

## Hagadone Has Solid Double-A Debut

After making ten starts for High-A Kinston where he went 1-3 with a 2.39 ERA (37.2 IP, 28 H, 29 BB, 45 K), left-handed pitcher



Nick Hagadone was moved up to Double-A Akron earlier this week.

In Hagadone's Double-A debut on Tuesday night he had a so-so performance as he battled through four innings and allowed three runs on three hits, two walks and had five strikeouts. While the actual numbers from the game were not particularly impressive, he did show better control of his emotions, something which at times have flared up on him this season. One of the early knocks on him since being acquired from the Red Sox in the Victor Martinez trade is he has a tendency to get too amped up and his intensity can work against him at times, and it is something he is currently working through. At least for one night this was not the case on Tuesday and is a good sign considered he should have been amped up considering it was his first Double-A appearance. On top of that he located his pitches well down in the zone and his changeup was as good as it has been all season, so while the numbers were not there his actual performance was better than it was in the box score.

In addition to controlling his emotions, another thing Hagadone is still working on is pounding the strike zone more consistently with strikes and eliminating the big misses. He is averaging over six walks per nine innings which is not going to cut it at the big league level, much less the Double-A level. Command is typically the last thing that comes when a player has Tommy John surgery, and he is still just under two years from the surgery, so as he becomes further removed from the surgery the hope is his command will return.

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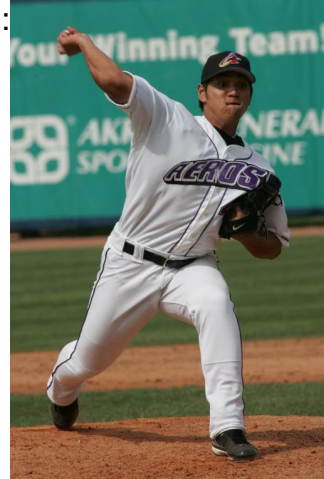
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### Comings & Goings

Here is a quick update noting some recent releases or signings as well as a look in to see how some former Tribe farmhands are doing with their new teams:



Former Indians farmhand right-hander Sung-Wei Tseng recently signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers, and former catcher Rolando Petit - whose release was somewhat of a surprise this spring - was recently signed by the Baltimore Orioles. Neither player has appeared in a game yet for their new organization.

Left-hander Chuck Lofgren is pitching well for Triple-A Nashville (Brewers) where in 12 starts he is 6-4 with a 5.49 ERA (62.1 IP, 69 H, 30 BB, 37 K). Left-hander Ryan Edell has made four starts for Double-A Midland (Athletics) and is 1-0 with a 0.98 ERA (18.1 IP, 14 H, 5 BB, 8 K) and right-hander Neil Wagner has made six relief appearances for Midland and is 0-1 with a 4.82 ERA (9.1 IP, 9 H, 10 BB, 13 K). Right-hander Erik Stiller has made five relief appearances for Double-A Corpus Christi (Astros) and is 0-0 with a 4.00 ERA (9.0 IP, 8 H, 2 BB, 7 K). Left-hander Matt Meyer is with Double-A Springfield (Cardinals) and in 18 appearances he is 0-2 with a 5.40 ERA (16.2 IP, 18 H, 13 BB, 13 K). Finally, third baseman Jesus Brito is struggling with Low-A West Virginia (Pirates) where in 48 games he is hitting .208 with 6 HR, 20 RBI, and a .677 OPS.

### Affiliate Notebook

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[Baseball.com's Top 10 Prospects & More @lastoria 2010](#)