

Minor Happenings: Streaky McBride Is Hot Again

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Sunday, July 11 2010 10:52 AM - Last Updated Monday, July 12 2010 2:54 PM



"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.

It's time for a double-issue of Minor Happenings this week with part one today and part two tomorrow. Lots to cover this week with all the happenings, and later in the week on Wednesday I will be posting a midseason review of the farm system which will include a lengthy conversation between myself and Farm Director Ross Atkins talking about several good and not so good things about the first half.

I leave for my annual near two week family reunion trip to Florida on Thursday morning, so I have a lot to clear out before I leave. Don't worry though, business will be as usual while I am away as I will still be posting updates and news as it happens as well as player articles and a Minor Happenings piece somewhere in there. On my way back, I will also be stopping in Kinston to see them play Saturday July 24-25th, so I should have a lot to share after that visit. Also, big thanks to Andrew Zajac for volunteering to help with the daily game recaps until I return Monday July 26th.

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Also, like everyone else these days, I just have to share a quick thought on that egomaniac LeBron James who just tore the hearts out (again) of all the Cleveland Cavaliers fans (and really the city). I have absolutely no problem with him leaving as it was his right as a free agent to do so. That said, he could have been a little more gracious with his exit rather than make it the spectacle it was and the ultimate kick in the gut it ended up being not only to Cleveland, but to the NBA and sports in general. A complete joke.

If I did not know any better, Vince McMahon of the WWE scripted this entire free agent period and served as an advisor for him. The humiliation he brought onto the city of Cleveland, the sport he plays, and to himself is something one would only see in the WWE when a guy turns from a "face" (a guy everyone loves) to a "heel" (a guy everyone hates). I am not afraid to admit that in the late 90s I was a huge follower of the WWE (then the WWF), and after that big party and welcome they had down in Miami with James, Chris Bosh and Dwayne Wade all suited up in their Heat gear with the smoke, light show, loud music and all in front of thousands of people, I could not help but liken it to a WWE event. That's how much of a circus this whole thing was. It was like watching The Rock join up with NWO or Degeneration X. Something you never thought possible, but ended up happening. McMahon had the sense never to do that, unlike the arrogant James.

Though, is this really a surprise? This is the same guy who in the 2007 Playoffs in Game 1 of the Indians and Yankees series at Progressive Field in Cleveland came in and paraded his love for the Yankees and openly rooted against his Cleveland fans in their own stadium. It was a punk move then - though many overlooked it - but it was a harbinger of the classless, pompous, ass of a person he really is....we just chose to not see it. In any case, good riddance. The Cavaliers will unfortunately be hard-pressed to recover from this, but life goes on and they along with the Cleveland fans will ultimately somehow, someday find a way through it. We always do.

Onto the *Happenings*....

Indians Minor League Player of the Week

(for games from July 1st to July 7th)

Matt McBride (First baseman/Outfielder - Akron)

.379 AVG (11-for-29), 8 R, 3 2B, 0 3B, 5 HR, 11 RBI, 3 BB, 2 K, 1.438 OPS

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Double-A Akron first baseman/outfielder Matt McBride is on another one of his tears. The streaky hitter had one heck of a week,



a hot streak which really started on June 30th as in the 13 games since he is hitting .373 (19-for-51) with 14 runs scored, 5 doubles, 8 home runs, 16 RBI, 8 walks, 5 strikeouts, and a 1.340 OPS.

This is McBride's fifth year in the organization, and those who have followed the Indians system over the past few years know that McBride can go through some extreme hot and cold spells. Last year in 31 games at High-A Kinston he got off to a ridiculous start where he hit .405 with 6 HR, 36 RBI and had a 1.120 OPS before he had to be pushed up to Akron in early May, and then followed that up with a respectable finish to the season in Akron where he hit .248 with 12 HR, 63 RBI, and a .728 OPS. After the season he went out to the Arizona Fall League where in 22 games he hit .378 with 4 HR, 18 RBI and a 1.159 OPS.

After a slow start to his season, McBride's recent hot streak has had a significant impact on his overall numbers as in 81 games with Akron he is now hitting .274 with 12 HR, 48 RBI, and an .804 OPS. His recent spike in performance can be attributed to a small change in his swing where he is using his hands much better and not using so much of his body when he swings. The change has allowed him to see the ball better. In addition to that he is just trusting his abilities and putting up better quality at bats

Unfortunately, due to the logjam of outfielders and first basemen at Triple-A Columbus, it does not appear that McBride will be pushed up to Columbus anytime soon, though injuries always can have an affect on that, especially after Travis Hafner just went down with a back injury on Saturday night and may have to miss some time. If he does and someone like Jordan Brown in Columbus is called up, then McBride may move up to Columbus to fill his first base/outfield role.

For his efforts, McBride was also rewarded as the Eastern League Player of the Week last week for the week ending July 4th. He won the award after a blazing hot week from June 28th to July 4th where he hit .370 (10-for-27), 7 runs scored, 2 2B, 6 HR, and 9 RBI, including a three home

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run game.

Honorable Mentions:

Cord Phelps (2B - COL): .444 (8-18), 4 R, 3 2B, 1 3B, 0 HR, 5 RBI, 3 BB, 2 K, 1.246 OPS
Josh Rodriguez (INF - COL): .360 (9-25), 8 R, 3 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 2 RBI, 2 BB, 4 K, .887 OPS
Jared Goedert (3B - COL): .346 (9-26), 6 R, 1 2B, 0 3B, 3 HR, 6 RBI, 2 BB, 8 K, 1.124 OPS
Tim Fedroff (OF - AKR): .500 (10-20), 5 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 2 RBI, 2 BB, 1 K, 1.165 OPS
Beau Mills (1B - AKR): .421 (8-19), 4 R, 0 2B, 0 3B, 2 HR, 6 RBI, 3 BB, 3 K, 1.237 OPS
John Drennen (OF - AKR): .385 (10-26), 3 R, 3 2B, 1 3B, 0 HR, 3 RBI, 3 BB, 3 K, 1.025 OPS
Aaron Siliga (OF - AZL): .313 (5-16), 2 R, 0 2B, 1 3B, 1 HR, 2 RBI, 2 BB, 7 K, .993 OPS
Owen Dew (RHP - MV): 1-0, 2G, 1.54 ERA, 11.2 IP, 4 H, 2 ER, 2 BB, 7 K, .108 BAA
Brett Brach (RHP - LC): 0-1, 2 G, 0.87 ERA, 10.1 IP 7 H, 1 ER, 3 BB, 8 K, .194 BAA
Matt Packer (LHP - LC): 0-1, 2 G, 1.54 ERA, 11.2 IP, 8 H, 2 ER, 2 BB, 15 K, .186 BAA
Scott Barnes (LHP - AKR): 1-1, 2 G, 1.98 ERA, 13.2 IP, 10 H, 3 ER, 4 BB, 8 K, .208 BAA

Previous Winners:

06/24 to 06/30: Michael Brantley (OF - Columbus)
06/17 to 06/23: Jason Kipnis (2B – Akron)
06/10 to 06/16: Jared Goedert (3B – Columbus)
06/03 to 06/09: Josh Rodriguez (INF – Columbus)
05/27 to 06/02: Paolo Espino (RHP – Akron)
05/20 to 05/26: Kyle Bellows (3B – Kinston)
05/13 to 05/19: Carlos Santana (C – Columbus)
05/06 to 05/12: T.J. McFarland (LHP – Kinston)
04/29 to 05/05: Trey Haley (RHP – Lake County)
04/22 to 04/28: Jason Donald (INF – Columbus)
04/15 to 04/21: Bo Greenwell (OF – Lake County)
04/08 to 04/14: Carlos Santana (C – Columbus)

Director's Cuts

Indians Director of Player Development Ross Atkins has been around the system the past few

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weeks to check in on a lot of his players at several different levels. Here are some of his comments provided on a few of the players he has seen recently:



On Josh Tomlin: "You know what, he is the kind of pitcher who will always have to perform because he doesn't have the feeling and [repertoire of a high profile pitcher]. There is not a lot of reason to believe that his actual pitches will improve greatly or his weapons will take huge strides forward. But his ability to pitch, his ability to compete, and his ability to consistently make adjustments pitch to pitch is as good as anybody. He is a former shortstop and I think he benefits from that with the athleticism and the repeatable slot. In other words there are a lot of young pitchers at 21-22 that start trying to throw as hard as they can and lose that athletic slot. He never lost it and still has it and can repeat it. He knows it is hard to hit and remembers that very well, so he is very aggressive in the strike zone. He is really a lot of fun to watch pitch. He has four pitches and uses them well. His cutter has been his best pitch as it has been up to 86 MPH."

On Josh Rodriguez: "It's been a pleasant surprise with Josh. He had an injury that made him miss most of the season last year with the hamstring. Then he went to the Arizona Fall League, and we can't manage who plays where and how much as he did not get a ton of playing time there for the second year in row. He came into this season and was a little bit behind the eight-ball, and he has put himself at the forefront much like Jared Goedert has in Triple-A. With his athleticism and ability to play multiple positions if he hits he will play in the big leagues, and he is hitting right now. We certainly want to see him sustain it a little bit longer, but the power numbers are nice to see and the batting average is there. It certainly has been a very productive year for Josh."

On Luis Valbuena: "With Luis, it is not like the guy playing second base in [Columbus] Cord Phelps is more valuable [because Luis is not starting there]. He will benefit from playing other positions right now and he is at a maturity level where he can handle that. He is very

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comfortable at second and it is always where he can go back to and be comfortable. Having him play other positions will make him more versatile and it is not something we think will affect his offense at all."

On Bryce Stowell: "Bryce has had a great year. Last year he was coming off of a very, very full amateur workload, so we probably did not see all of him in his first full professional season and he was pitching in a piggyback situation. He is a pretty high profile college pitcher that we were fortunate to get in the 2008 Draft. I think the introduction to professional baseball, the work in the offseason, his commitment to his body, and his commitment to the process has allowed him to really benefit from what professional baseball offers. He is up to 99 MPH - touching that - and pitching in the mid-90s consistently and hasn't really been challenged yet this year. He has only had to pitch with his fastball. He has a good breaking ball and has a changeup, but really has not needed them. I think in Triple-A he will start to see that he will need his secondary weapons. He will never have to be a high command guy with a mid-90s fastball and touching the upper 90s, but he is really a great story and someone who has had a great 2010."

On Alex White: "Alex has been fantastic. He has been one of the most fulfilling guys for our staff and our front office to work with. He is a very mature professional with the way he goes about his work and bullpens. On a side note, he has really learned the importance of valuing every time he touches a baseball and how fragile it can be as a pitcher where you only have so many bullets and there are only so many times you can throw a baseball. He seems to have learned that without an injury or years of experience, and it is really fun to watch how he goes about his business at a young age and at the Double-A level. From a performance and stuff standpoint he has been incredible. He is putting the ball on the ground, he is answering challenges that we are giving to him about his delivery, he controls a running game exceptionally well, and he has a developing slider and an out pitch split. So, I think the development point for him is "how good can you be" or "can you become a middle rotation frontline starter". [Things to focus on are] developing a little bit more swing and miss to his pitches, developing a little more four-seam fastball command, and not relying on the sink of the two-seamer to get the groundballs. We love the groundballs, but if he starts to get the swing-and-miss too then we have something exceptionally special and not just a Major League pitcher."

On college arms vs. high school arms: "Yeah, there is no question that a college guy should if not skip a level or two, should start to progress quicker especially if they are higher profile. They have already become men. They have already developed physically most likely to the extent that they are going to develop. There are little things you can do to help them, but they have been in pretty good programs from a strength and conditioning standpoint. So once they start to answer the challenges and knock off their task list of developmental goals that we place for them, then it is just a matter of performance. If they are dominating at a level then we move

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them to the next one. Alex is doing that, though there is not a great rush with him as he has a chance to be a starting pitcher. When a guy has a chance to be a starting pitcher you really need to take advantage of those minor league innings. Much like Carlos Carrasco, you really have to do what you can to maximize that time in the minor leagues to make sure that when they get [to the big leagues] they can be all of their talent. It is a little bit different when you are talking about a college starter versus a college reliever, but certainly college versus high school we expect guys to move a little bit quicker."

New All Stars

Two more Indians' farmhands were announced as All Stars this past week as Triple-A Columbus right-handed pitcher Josh Tomlin and Double-A right-handed pitcher Paolo Espino were both announced to their respective league All Star games.

Tomlin technically replaced Chris Tillman from Norfolk on the roster, but when outfielder Michael Brantley was called up to



Cleveland last week and was unable to attend the All Star game, it was obvious that another player would be added from the first place Clippers roster. In 18 appearances this year (15 starts) he is 8-3 with a 2.58 ERA and in 94.1 innings has allowed 72 hits, 30 walks, and has 66 strikeouts. He ranks 4th in the league in wins, 5th in ERA, and 3rd in WHIP (1.08). He and outfielder Jose Constanza will represent the International League team in the Triple-A All Star game which pits the International League versus the Pacific Coast League. The game is Wednesday in Lehigh Valley, PA.

Espino is replacing right-handed pitcher Bryce Stowell since he was recently promoted to Columbus. In 18 games (12 starts) for Akron this year he is 8-3 with a 4.02 ERA and in 85.0 innings has allowed 75 hits, 32 walks, and has 74 strikeouts. He has started most of the year, but with the recent promotion of left-handed pitcher Nick Hagadone to the team Espino has been piggybacking Hagadone's starts. His good season to date is the result of a lot of hard work and also the addition of a slider to his mix that the organization challenged him to add. He

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along with third baseman Lonnie Chisenhall and outfielder John Drennen will play in the game on Wednesday at Metro Bank Park in Harrisburg, PA.

Infirmity Report

Here are some updates on some players in the system who have been dinged up:

Triple-A Columbus outfielder Ezequiel Carrera, the player the Indians received in the trade from Seattle two weeks ago for Russell Branyan, is expected to be activated from the disabled list when play starts up in the second half on Thursday. He has



been in Goodyear rehabbing a hip injury.

High-A Kinston first baseman Nate Recknagel was just activated off the disabled list on Wednesday after missing about six weeks with a knee injury. He had been out in Arizona rehabbing from the injury and then played in a few rookie-level Arizona league games on a rehab assignment where in nine games he hit .364 with 0 HR, 0 RBI and a 1.048 OPS. He has played in three games since returning to Kinston and has a hit in each game.

High-A Kinston outfielder Bo Greenwell twisted his ankle last Saturday in the outfield while making a catch and then tweaked it when he tried to get out of the way of a pitch that hit him in Sunday's game. He sat out of Monday and Tuesday's games as a precaution, but has been back in the lineup since Wednesday.

High-A Kinston outfielder Abner Abreu went on the disabled list on Friday with an injury to his right shoulder. No word as to the extent of the injury at this time.

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Low-A Lake County right-handed pitcher Trey Haley had to leave his start earlier this week due to a persistent blister on his right thumb. In order to allow the blister to heal correctly, he likely will miss at least one or two starts.

Follow Tony and the Indians Prospect Insider on Twitter [@tlastoria](#) . His new book the [2010 Cleveland Indians Top 100 Prospects & More](#) is also available for purchase on [Amazon.com](#) or [his site](#)

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