

## Minor Happenings: House Finishing Up Strong

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Sunday, August 08 2010 1:00 PM - Last Updated Sunday, August 08 2010 1:46 PM

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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.*

Now that the flurry of trades and roster moves have finally calmed, it is time to get things back to normal with *Minor Happenings* for the stretch run of the season. Lots to catch up on, and I (hope) plan to have a follow up piece to this one tomorrow (or Tuesday) with the Player of the Month for July as well as lots of comments from coordinators and coaches throughout the system.

As a quick note, I saw newly acquired left-handed pitcher Giovanni Soto in action this past Thursday so will have some video up of him soon, and I will be going to Akron on Wednesday to see newly acquired right-handed pitcher Corey Kluber in action and will have video up of him soon as well. Also, in case you missed it I was on "Indians Minor League Magazine" this week and [talked about](#) the Indians' recent drafts in 2008 and 2009.

Also, [as I reported on Saturday morning](#) the Indians have signed right-handed pitchers Cole

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Cook (5<sup>th</sup> round) and Michael Goodnight (13<sup>th</sup> round). These are unofficial signings as the team has not released them yet, but they are in fact signed.

Onto the *Happenings*...

### Indians Minor League Player of the Week

(for games from July 29<sup>th</sup> to August 4<sup>th</sup>)

#### T.J. House (Left-handed Pitcher – Kinston)

1-0, 2 G, 0.00 ERA, 13.0 IP, 5 H, 0 ER, 3 BB, 7 K, .116 BAA

High-A Kinston left-handed pitcher T.J. House is on quite a roll of late.

House, 20, put up two scoreless outings this past week and in his last three starts is now 2-0 with a 0.47 ERA (19.0 IP, 6 H, 1



R/ER, 4 BB, 12 K). His recent turnaround is the complete opposite from the five starts he made before his mini streak where he went 0-4 with a 8.10 ERA (20.0 IP, 18 ER, 28 H, 10 BB, 13 K). Overall this season he is 4-8 with a 3.68 ERA, and in 110.0 innings has allowed 104 hits, 49 walks, and has 90 strikeouts in 22 starts for Kinston.

While House has been on top of his game of late, his issues for most of the season has stemmed from him not finishing his pitches this year. He had been stopping short and not exploding through the zone, which resulted in a lot of his pitches staying up and on the same plane. When a pitcher doesn't finish his pitches they lose that leg drive and the ball doesn't jump out of their hand like it should. This is something that has affected House this year as his velocity has been down a little and his fastball has been flat as well as his breaking ball not

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being as sharp as it normally would be.

After some work with Kinston pitching coach Tony Arnold over the course of the season to right the ship, things finally seem to be taking hold. Even still, House is not at all satisfied with his season to date.

"For myself personally, I am having an alright season," said House in a recent interview for the IPI. "I feel like I could have done a lot better throughout the year with a lot of things, but that comes with the learning curve. I am learning a lot of things with the bad things that are happening to me. I feel like my walks are a little high this year as I have had a little inconsistency with the strike zone. I am leaving the ball up a little more than I did last year, which all works back to my mechanical issues I have had a little bit of trouble with. All around I feel like I have learned a lot and my baseball IQ has jumped tremendously, but on the field I am still trying to get things down pat."

While his fastball command and velocity have been a little off this year, it is the improvement of his changeup which has kept him above water. He has made strides in the confidence he has in his changeup, and has also recently started working on throwing a curveball.

"My changeup has been great," said House. "I really love that pitch as this year it has made a major leap for me. My slider is inconsistent. Sometimes it is just not there, and sometimes it is good. I think with me taking so much time from my changeup I think I have kind of neglected it a little bit. So I am really trying to get that feel back with my slider. I have started to throw a curveball too. The curveball is really going to be more of a first strike pitch. It is not going to be anything that they are looking to be devastating - I mean it if it is - but the main goal is it gives me something with a little more depth. So they wanted to give me something that gives hitters a different view with a slower speed and a little bit more break and a downward plane. I have not thrown it yet in a game, but I have been working on it [since the end of June]."

House is getting a good introduction to the higher levels of the minor leagues in the Carolina League, a league the Indians often consider a separator for prospects. After experiencing success last year at Low-A Lake County, he is quickly learning that hitters further up the chain get much tougher and tougher.

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"I definitely have learned a lot this year," said House. "Some of the hitters are bigger and stronger. The strike zone shrinks and you have fewer teams [in the Carolina League], so they know your strengths and weaknesses. Guys are a lot more patient here and they don't chase outside the zone as much. If you don't get ahead in the count and expand from there, then you are going to be in a lot of trouble because they are not going to chase if you are not pounding the strike zone. You can get a lot of guys to chase in Low-A as there are a lot more high school guys and they are more raw."

House is unaware of any inning threshold set for him this year, but he thinks he should end up with around 145-150 innings this season. That should put him right on line to easily make another six to seven starts before the end of the season in a month. With his recent three outings, if he can finish strong it would be a big confidence and momentum builder going into the offseason.

"Obviously everybody wants to finish the season strong, but really, legitimately, I want to finish strong," said House. "That's one of the main focuses I have from last year as I started off real strong in Lake County and I kind of hit a plateau and struggled toward the end as I got real tired and fatigued. This year my body feels better and my arm feels better. I now know what is expected for a full season and I know how to handle certain things and I know how to treat myself better and prepare for my next start. I just want to go out there and have good outings. You are going to give up runs, but you have to take it in stride and limit the damage, that's what the most important thing is."

And if he doesn't finish strong?

"I am hoping to continue to learn," said House. "If the season doesn't go the way I wanted it to at the end or my numbers are not where I want them to be, well, then I have next year to take what I have learned here and use it and who knows where you can go from there. You learn from the tough outings. I'd rather get them out of the way now than have them in the future."

### *Honorable Mention:*

Josh Rodriguez (INF – COL): .370 (10-27), 6 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 3 HR, 5 RBI, 1 BB, 6 K, 1.171 OPS  
Matt McBride (OF – COL): .360 (9-25), 5 R, 1 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 3 RBI, 1 BB, 4 K, .905 OPS

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Michael Brantley (OF – COL): .333 (8-24), 5 R, 3 2B, 1 HR, 2 RBI, 3 BB, 1 K, 2 SB, .991 OPS

Jason Kipnis (2B – AKR): .407 (11-27), 6 R, 1 2B, 3 3B, 1 HR, 7 RBI, 2 BB, 6 K, 1 SB, 1.226 OPS

Jordan Henry (OF – AKR): .385 (10-26), 7 R, 1 2B, 1 3B, 0 HR, 2 RBI, 5 BB, 7 K, 1 SB, .984 OPS

Chun Chen (C – KIN): .400 (8-20), 2 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 4 RBI, 2 BB, 6 K, .935 OPS

Adam Abraham (3B – LC): .414 (12-29), 5 R, 3 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 8 RBI, 6 BB, 4 K, 1.135 OPS

Greg Folgia (OF – LC): .400 (10-25), 8 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 5 RBI, 5 BB, 4 K, 2 SB, 1.084 OPS

Roberto Perez (C – LC): .389 (7-18), 5 R, 2 2B, 1 3B, 1 HR, 3 RBI, 8 BB, 1 K, 1.355 OPS

Giovanny Urshela (3B – MV): .391 (9-23), 2 R, 0 2B, 0 3B, 2 HR, 4 RBI, 0 BB, 1 K, 1.043 OPS

Brett Brach (RHP – LC): 1-1, 2 G, 1.29 ERA, 14.0 IP, 10 H, 2 ER, 1 BB, 7 K, .204 BAA

Matt Packer (LHP – AKR): 0-0, 2 G, 1.29 ERA, 14.0 IP, 11H, 2 ER, 1 BB, 13 K, .220 BAA

### *Previous Winners:*

07/22 to 07/28: Adam Abraham (3B – Lake County)

07/15 to 07/21: Jason Kipnis (2B – Akron)

07/08 to 07/14: Jesus Aguilar (1B – Arizona)

07/01 to 07/07: Matt McBride (OF – Akron)

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 chimed in this week on some of the players the team has acquired in recent trades. He also provided some insight on how his staff has handled roster issues in the upper levels after so many players have been called up to Cleveland recently.

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*On managing minor league rosters at this time of the year:* "We have had the perfect storm over the last week. We are at that



point in the season where your depth is a little bit thinner because you have been playing more games and have had more injuries. That's the case throughout baseball as there is less of a supply to pick from. We have recently had a surge of injuries with [Mitch] Talbot, [Carlos] Santana, and [Wyatt] Toregas and a couple of weeks ago with Nick Weglarz and Carlos Carrasco that have made our upper levels thin, which we then have to push up. You start to run out of options, but we have been able to fill some holes. It is always about making sure our prospects are not overexposed. We certainly want to put a winning team on the field at every level, but most importantly make sure we don't have to pitch an individual too much and making sure we can give due rest to certain players. That is a constant balance."

*On the catching situation in the upper levels:* "We felt pretty good about our catching depth just a week ago watching Carlos Santana take the field everyday. Fortunately, he will be back playing for us certainly at some point next year. There are always going to be injuries, and the catching position especially you have more injuries there because of foul tips, the amount of action, and blocking the plate. We have recently had a couple [injuries] at the upper levels, so just a week ago we felt very good about that depth and that has changed quickly."

*On Corey Kluber:* "We are excited about Corey as he has had some upper level success already. He is a durable, strong, physical right-handed starting pitcher that has all of the attributes of someone that could start in the major leagues and haul innings. Those are the things we are looking for. To have value you have to be stepping on the rubber every five days and contributing. We feel he is going to be in a position to do that for a long time. He has an average fastball which is sometimes above average, a great feel for a breaking ball, and a four pitch mix, and has been a strike thrower. He is certainly someone that is going to be competitive in the minor leagues, and there is some development left."

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*On getting to know Kluber:* "You can answer that question a couple of ways. You will have a real good feel for his ability in probably one inning or two. It doesn't take long. You read scouting reports and you know what to look for. You see the delivery with your own eyes and if that matches up with what you read, and then you see the pitches with your own eyes and does that match up with what you read. And then you have a pretty good feel for what he can do. But then comes the second part. How does he deal with failure? How does he deal with success? How does he deal with the rigors of the entire season? How does he deal with the offseason? How does he deal with his teammates? Those are the things that take time. Is this a person that we are going to be able to depend upon and rely on, we certainly think so or we wouldn't have acquired him. But we won't have our own assessment of that for at least a month into the season, which we only have that left. We will spend ample time with Corey this offseason getting to know him."

*On Ezequiel Carrera:* "He has been absolutely everything that we have expected from our scouting reports. He has really shown an above average ability as a defender. As a base-runner he hasn't been effective stealing bases, but it is a short sample size as he only has 55 plate appearances with us as he had a hamstring injury and that set him back. He [played] for the first time again on [Thursday], and we look forward to getting him back in that Columbus lineup again on a regular basis. But he is a guy who was one of the best hitters in his league a year ago, and has always been someone who gets on base, and he has shown that already with us at a .400 clip."

*On Juan Diaz:* "He has gotten off to a slow start offensively and I am sure he is disappointed. It seems like he is trying to show us he is an offensive player too and might be pressing a little bit. But he is really, really impressive defensively. He immediately has probably become our best defender in our system behind Asdrubal Cabrera. He is a pure shortstop with the ability to be an above average defender. Every coordinator and evaluator that has been through Kinston thus far has said the exact same thing. The combination of the increased pressure of the trade and facing a new caliber of talent in the Carolina League he has had a tough run this first month. We are expecting great things out of him and we have a lot of time to evaluate him as he is very young."

## Stowell Rising

One of the biggest movers this year not only in the level he plays at but also his standing as a prospect is that of Triple-A Columbus right-handed reliever Bryce Stowell. He opened the season at High-A Kinston and in 11 games there went 1-0 with a

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