It's Thursday afternoon, which means it's time for "Minor Happenings" here at The Cleveland Fan, home of the best Indians minor league coverage. Also, Tony will be appearing on "All Bets Are Off With Bruce Drennan" on Sportstime Ohio today to discuss some of the players down on the farm that could still help the Indians this year. He goes on around 5 PM, so be sure to tune in. The replay is shown tonight at midnight.

"Minor Happenings" covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system. 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.

Sort of last minute notice, but I will be on SportsTime Ohio today and appearing on "All Bets Are Off With Bruce Drennan" around five o'clock. Bruce is on vacation, so I'll be talking with Mike Cairns. This is my second appearance on the show...and second appearance ever on TV for that matter....so cut me some slack when watching. In any case, we'll be talking about the minor leagues and some players who could be on the block to get the Indians some help at the major league level.

TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player Of The Month

(for the month of June)

Aaron Laffey (Left-handed pitcher - Buffalo)
6-0, 0.87 ERA, 6 starts, 41.1 IP, 30 H, 4 ER, 7 BB, 38 K

Buffalo left-handed starting pitcher Aaron Laffey put up one of the most dominating months seen from a starting pitcher in the Indians farm system ever. Laffey set a Buffalo Bisons record by winning six games in one month, besting the previous record of five most recently done by

Tim Drew in May of 2002. On the year, Laffey is now 6-3 with a 3.10 ERA in Buffalo,

and in 15 combined starts at Akron and Buffalo he is 10-4 with a 2.81 ERA.

Laffey has certainly raced up the Indians prospect rankings, a place where he ranked in the 20-30 range in most publications coming into the season, whereas now he is a sure-fire Top 10 prospect. While Laffey is a soft-tossing lefty with a fastball consistently around 87-88 MPH like a Jeremy Sowers, his fastball has excellent movement. The fastball has very good sink, and he compliments it with an above average slider and changeup.

He is not a flyball pitcher like Sowers, in that his sinker induces many groundball outs.

He has solid stuff, but the lack of anything dominating in his repertoire and being a guy who relies more on command, he projects as a solid #3 or #4 starter who eats innings in the big leagues.

Previous Winners:

May: Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County)
April: Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County)

TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player Of The Week

(for games from June 28 through July 4)

Rodney Choy Foo (Utility - Akron)
.421 AVG (8-19), 7 R, 5 HR, 11 RBI, 2 BB, 3K

Akron utility player Rodney Choy Foo put up a great week, pounding out five home runs and driving in 11 runs in only five games played. The explosion by Choy Foo is nice to see since he has been quiet since a hot start the first week of the

season. As he has shown, Choy Foo has some pop in his bat and is versatile in the field where he can play third base, second base and some first base. He has yet to play a

game in the minors at shortstop, and his inability to play the position at this point will severely hinder him from getting much consideration in Cleveland for a utility infield gig in the near future.

On the season, Choy Foo is hitting .284 with 9 HR, 33 RBI and an .885 OPS in 59 games.

Honorable Mentions:

Asdrubal Cabrera (SS - Akron): .414 AVG (12-29), 7 R, 2 2B, 3B, HR, 7 RBI, 4 BB, 2 SB
Michael Aubrey (1B - Akron): .480 AVG (12-25), 7 R, 2 2B, 1 HR, 5 RBI, 0 BB
Shawn Nottingham (LHP - Akron): 2-0, 1.64 ERA, 2 starts, 11 IP, 8 H, 2 ER, 4 BB, 13 K
Ryan Mulhern (1B - Buffalo): .440 AVG (11-25), 3 R, 1 2B, 1 HR, 7 RBI, 1 BB
Adam Davis (2B - Lake County): .429 AVG (12-28), 10 R, 1 2B, 1 3B, 2 HR, 8 RBI, 5 BB, 2 SB
Todd Martin (OF - Mahoning Valley): .444 (12-27), 5 R, 2 2B, 2 HR, 9 RBI, 3 BB

Previous Winners:

6/21 to 6/27: Reid Santos (LHP - Akron)
6/15 to 6/20: John Van Every (Outfielder - Buffalo)
6/8 to 6/14: Chris Gimenez (Utility - Kinston)
6/1 to 6/7: Aaron Laffey (LHP - Buffalo)
5/24 to 5/31: Josh Rodriguez (SS - Kinston)
5/17 to 5/23: Shawn Nottingham (LHP - Akron)
5/10 to 5/16: Matt Whitney (1B - Lake County)
5/3 to 5/9: Chuck Lofgren (LHP - Akron)
4/26 to 5/2: Adam Miller (RHP - Buffalo)
4/19 to 4/25: Shawn Nottingham (LHP - Akron)
4/12 to 4/18: Jason Stanford (LHP - Buffalo)
4/5 to 4/11: Matt McBride (C - Lake County)

Director's Cuts

Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins had a lot to share this week on several prospects up and down the system:

On Matt Whitney: The organization feels he is finally back to being the outstanding hitting prospect they saw in 2002 at Burlington after being drafted out of high school.

While he pretty much lost four years from 2003-2006 coming back from his serious leg injury, in some ways he has benefited from it in that he has gained tons of experience dealing with adversity.

The reason it took him so long to come back from the injury is because of a myriad of things, such as complications from the surgery, other injuries cropped up (back) because he compensated for the injury, and he also had a significant decrease in mobility.

While he was moved to first base this year, he could move back to third base if he gets to a better level with his mobility.

On Michael Aubrey: He has stayed healthy and been on the field for awhile now in Kinston and Akron, and the organization is confident that he can finish the season strong.

Aubrey's timetable has to be expedited to make up for lost time, and the Indians are hoping that once the season ends he will take the opportunity to go somewhere in the offseason to get more at bats and games in.

The Indians are confident Aubrey can perform in the minors, and there is not a whole lot to polish off offensively and defensively.

It comes down to health.

On Beau Mills: To date, he has been outstanding. The Indians feel his presence, demeanor, and level of intensity are off the charts amazing.

He has done a good job of easing into the professional environment at Mahoning Valley and Lake County, which is a byproduct of him growing up in it.

On Jeremy Sowers: His first start back with Buffalo was solid, and in all his starts he has put up quality starts. Right now, the organization is asking Sowers to make some subtle adjustments that are easier for him to apply and work on in the minors.

Sowers is committed to the task the organization has laid out for him to get his confidence back.

His biggest problem clearly is a loss of confidence, as well as Sowers being overly hard on himself since he is so disappointed with his performance.

The organization feels he just needs to get back to believing in his abilities, and he will be fine.

On Adam Miller: Right now, it is spring training all over for him. He is in he process of getting his arm and stamina back up to start.

The Indians caught a big break in that the finger injury was not serious.
The Indians have been extremely conservative with Miller's progression back to game action and getting back into the Buffalo rotation.

The injury is not a common injury, so they are following the advice of hand specialist Dr. Graham and listening to his recommendations and protocols.

Three Affiliates in Six Days

This weekend I start a series of pitstops to various affiliates in the Indians system. I'll kick off things in Mahoning Valley this Sunday the 8th, and then go to Akron on Monday the 9th, and finish this round of stops in Lake County on Friday the 13th.

I am setup with clubhouse access before and after games for all three of these affiliates, and also will have field access during batting practice and infield at Lake County. I had actually planned to attend the Buffalo game tomorrow as well, but was unable to get things lined up in time so will visit the Herd another time.

I'll be writing a recap of my thoughts and experiences at each stop, and providing pictures and any video I collect in the process. I've been to Lake County and Akron several times before, but this will be my first visit to Mahoning Valley. Also, I'll be

recording and storing any interviews I conduct with players, coaches, and scouts, and will use some of it in the recaps, and also writing separate stories from some of the interviews.

Also, later this month, I will be in Winter Haven the last two weekends and provide a rundown of the GCL Indians from the rookie-level Gulf Coast League (GCL). And, in August I will be visiting Buffalo and Kinston for my first ever visits there as well.

In all, I will hit all six of the Indians minor league affiliates in two months, with half of those stops coming next week.

Be sure to check back at
http://www.theclevelandfan.com/
and
http://www.sportstimeohio.com/
for all this coverage and more on the Indians minor league system.

Another Victor Martinez In The Making?

That's what they are saying about Kinston's Max Ramirez. Like Martinez when he was in the minors, there are big question marks in regard to Ramirez's defense, but no question about his ability to hit. About the only difference between Ramirez and Martinez is that Martinez showed a bit more power in the minors while Ramirez may be showing a bit more patience at

the plate drawing more walks.

Last year, scouts tore Ramirez apart calling him a below average receiver. Apparently, Ramirez has taken those scouting reports to heart as he has been much more steady as a catcher this year and even thrown out 29% of attempted base-stealers.

The Indians have kept Ramirez behind the plate as much as possible in order to properly

evaluate him as a catcher and whether or not a position change is needed.

Most scouts agree the bat no doubt will play at the major league level, and that he will hit for a high average and hit around 20 home runs a year. Ramirez's strength is taking the ball the opposite way to the right-center field gap, and he has impressive power to the opposite field.

He has great pitch recognition and can turn on fastballs and handle breaking balls as well, and sprays the ball all over the field.

Fans can see Ramirez in action during the Futures Game on ESPN July 8th. To date, Ramirez is hitting .311 with 12 HR, 52 RBI and a .972 OPS.

Another No-No For Lake County

Wow, talk about déjà vu. Not even two weeks ago, Lake County's Carlton Smith teamed up with two other relievers to throw the first ever no-hitter in franchise history.

They did not wait very long to notch the second ever no-hitter in

franchise history as right-hander Hector Rondon and right-handed reliever Neil Wagner teamed up for another no hitter on Monday night. Rondon went the first six innings and walked two while striking out five, and then Wagner came in to close the door the final three innings not allowing a baserunner and striking out five.

Rondon, 19, clearly had his best start of the season and has grown as a pitcher this year. Rond on mixed up his pitches well, had great location to both sides of the plate, and his offspeed pitches were outstanding.

Rondon is 6'3" and 170 pounds, and many feel he has plenty of projection still with his body.

Right now, he consistently throws his fastball around 89-90 MPH and it can touch 92 MPH at

times.

On the season, Rondon is 6-4 with a 3.59 ERA at Lake County.

Miller Updates

Buffalo right-hander Adam Miller continues to make his way back into the starting rotation by working out of the bullpen.

Last Thursday, Miller threw two shutout innings of relief and allowed no hits and one walk while striking out one. On Monday, Miller made his third appearance out of the bullpen and had one great inning and one bad inning. In his great inning, he struckout the side and his fastball topped out at 99 MPH, but in the bad inning (next inning) he gave up three runs on four hits. Do not be discouraged by the one bad inning, however, as some of those hits should have been outs.

Bottom line, Miller is healthy.

The same can be said of reliever Matt Miller who was activated off of the disabled list with a right forearm strain. He returned to the mound on Friday throwing a shutout inning of relief, but was touched up for four unearned runs on Tuesday in an inning of relief. Miller now has made 13 consecutive appearances without giving up an earned run, and had his streak of 12 straight without giving up any runs snapped on Tuesday.

In 17 appearances at Buffalo, Miller is 0-0 with a 2.81 ERA and in 16 innings has allowed 10 hits and 8 walks while striking out 21.

Tseng A Master Of Hard Luck

Kinston right-hander Sung-Wei Tseng is 8th in the Carolina League in ERA (3.59), 8th in innings pitched (90.1), and 3rd in WHIP (1.21). With that kind of lofty ranking in several key categories, you would think Tseng was having a great year in the win-loss department. Unfortunately, this has not been the case as in 16 starts Tseng is 3-6 on the year.

Tseng's problem stems from his offense disappearing nearly everytime he takes the hill.

In his starts, he is getting under two runs of run support on average per game, which makes it very hard for any pitcher to get in the win column.

Still, Tseng has not been discouraged, and he has grown this season. The Taiwan native, who is making his professional debut stateside this year, has put up very good numbers in Kinston and could be on the move soon. He has been working on locating his low-90s fastball in and out to batters, while changing things up by mixing in his slider often and also changeups here and there. Tseng's best pitch is a devastating split fingered fastball which he has used sparingly this year in order to develop his other pitches.

Mulhern Gets Defensive

Buffalo first baseman Ryan Mulhern has been getting extra work in at first base lately. While he is having an outstanding

season offensively at Buffalo hitting .320 with 12 HR, 49 RBI and a .911 OPS in 77 games, his defense has been shaky. The Indians have been working with Mulhern on his mental approach to playing the position, and he has responded well to the additional instruction.

Mulhern is a player at a position where there appears to be no immediate need at the major league level for the Indians, and he could be someone the Indians move at the upcoming trading deadline to acquire a needed bullpen arm or bat.

Landis Breaks In At The Valley

Right-hander Kyle Landis is making his professional debut at Mahoning Valley after being taken in the 18th round of the

2007 Draft. Landis was a dominating relief pitcher in college at the University of Pittsburgh where he went 4-4 with a 2.12 ERA in 51 innings pitched. In the first half of the season he was arguably the best relief pitcher in the nation when he put up a 0.33 ERA. Landis excels at throwing strikes and has good command of his fastball, and so far this season he is 1-0 with a 0.00 ERA allowing 7 hits and 5 walks while striking out 7 in 8.1 innings pitched out of the bullpen at Mahoning Valley.

Akron All-Stars

The Akron Aeros are having a great season as a team, and individually have had some great performances in the first half of the season. So much so, that Akron will send six players to the All-Star game. To get six players from one team on an

All-Star roster of 24 players is remarkable, and telling of how great of a season these guys are

having.

The All-Stars:

Asdrubal Cabrera (SS): .338 AVG, 19 2B, 3 3B, 7 HR, 42 RBI, 37 BB, 32 K, 21 SB, .916 OPS
Jordan Brown (1B): .320 AVG, 25 2B, 2 3B, 6 HR, 55 RBI, 34 BB, 32 K, 10 SB, .879 OPS
Brian Barton (OF): .304 AVG, 11 2B, 2 3B, 7 HR, 44 RBI, 30 BB, 69 K, 16 SB, .847 OPS
Wyatt Toregas (C): .247 AVG, 10 2B, 3 HR, 25 RBI, 19 BB, 31 K, .677 OPS
Reid Santos (LHP): 6-1, 2.09 ERA, 60.1 IP, 42 H, 14 BB, 49 K
Randy Newsom (RHP): 3-0, 13 saves, 2.16 ERA, 25 IP, 24 H, 10 BB, 13 K

Affiliate Notebook

Buffalo Notes (47-36, 1st place): On Sunday, catcher Mike Rose hit home run in the 10th inning to lead the Bisons to victory. ... Left-hander Jeremy Sowers went 6.2 innings and gave up 10 hits and 6 earned runs in his last start on Sunday.

In four Buffalo starts, he is 0-2 with a 5.26 ERA and has allowed 36 hits and 6 walks in 25.2 innings pitched. ... Utility infielder Hector Luna belted a pair of home runs on Monday, and is hitting .258 with 5 HR, 31 RBI and a .685 OPS.

He also has 20 errors in 66 games. ... Right-handed reliever Jensen Lewis continues to impress and is quickly moving into the Indians bullpen picture.

In seven games at Buffalo he is 1-0 with a 0.90 ERA, and in 31 combined appearances at Akron and Buffalo is 3-0 with a 1.65 ERA and has allowed only 31 hits and 15 walks in while striking out 58 in 49 innings pitched. ... Third baseman Andy Marte is hitting .253 with 9 HR, 27 RBI, and a .786 OPS in 41 games.

Akron Notes (52-32, 1st place): On Friday night, Kinston utility player Chris Gimenez was called up and in his Akron debut went 2-for-4 at the plate with a double, home run, and three RBI. ... Right-handed side-armer Randy Newsom is 13-for-13 in save opportunities as the Akron closer, and in 24 appearances is 3-0 with a 2.16 ERA. ... With Gimenez joining the Akron roster, catcher Armando Camacaro was sent down to Kinston. ... Right-hander Cliff Politte was activated from the disabled list on Thursday, and in three appearances since his return is 0-0 with a 15.43 ERA having allowed four runs in 2.1 innings pitched. ... With Politte being activated, right-hander Scott Roehl was sent back to Kinston. ... Left-hander Chuck Lofgren has

allowed 13 earned runs in 16 innings pitched in his last three starts. ... Right-hander Jake Dittler was hammered on Sunday, giving up 11 hits and 9 earned runs in 5.1 innings pitched.

Kinston Notes (8-4 second half, 1st place, 53-28 overall): On Sunday, first baseman Matt Whitney hit his first homer at Kinston and in seven games is hitting .259 with 2 HR, 9 RBI and an .852 OPS. ... Also on Sunday, left-hander Ryan Edell went 5.2 innings and allowed only one run on three hits, and on the year is 8-3 with a 3.27 ERA in 15 starts. ... Middle infielder Brian Finegan has been activated from the disabled list, as he had been out since May 5th with a thumb injury. ... Utility infielder Chris De La Cruz last played on Friday.

No word if he is injured or why he has been absent from the lineup the last five games. ... Third baseman Wes Hodges is hitting .329 with 7 HR, 39 RBI, and an .896 OPS in 56 games.

Lake County Notes (10-3 second half, 1st place, 41-42 overall): In his Captains debut on Thursday, 2007 first round pick Beau Mills hit a grand slam home run and finished the game 2-for-5. ... Right-hander Jeanmar Gomez went 5.1 innings allowing only one run on three hits Tuesday night, and is now 8-6 with a 5.57 ERA. ... Shortstop Carlos Rivero is still on the disabled list, and likely will not return for at least another week. ... Catcher Matt McBride is hitting .292 with 7 HR, 48 RBI, and an .822 OPS. ... Second baseman Adam Davis is hitting .280 with 5 HR, 27 RBI, 12 stolen bases and an .813 OPS. ... Right-hander Neil Wagner is 1-3 with 10 saves and a 2.70 ERA, and has 43 strikeouts in 36.2 innings pitched.

Mahoning Valley Notes (7-9, 4th place): On Friday, right-hander Michael Eisenberg had his first rough outing for the Scrappers, giving up four runs and six hits in five innings. ... Left-handed starter Ryan Miller has had a rough go of it early on, and last just one-third of an inning in his last start on Sunday giving up five runs on three hits and four walks.

In three starts, he is 0-2 with an 18.69 ERA having allowed 9 hits and 8 walks in just 4.1 innings. ... The Scrappers won on Wednesday, ending a five game losing streak. ... Right-hander

Jonathan Holt, a 2007 5th round draft pick, made his professional debut on Wednesday, going 2.2 innings and allowing one run on five hits and no walks while striking out three. ... Shortstop Jansy Infante is hitting .414 with 0 HR, 7 RBI and a .960 OPS in 13 games. ... Outfielder Todd Martin is hitting .377 with 3 HR, 13 RBI, and a 1.054 OPS in 14 games.

GCL Notes (9-5, 1st place): On Monday, left-hander Ryan Morris threw six shutout innings and did not allow a hit while walking three and striking out four. In three starts, Morris is 2-0 with a 1.80 ERA and has allowed only 6 hits and 5 walks while striking out 17 in 15 innings pitched. ... On Friday, right-hander Gregorio Rosario went 4.2 innings and allowed only three hits while walking no one and striking out five.

Rosario is the player the Indians obtained in the trade of Jason Davis to Seattle, and he is 2-0 with a 2.70 ERA in two games. ... Left-hander Kelvin De La Cruz is 3-0 with a 0.50 ERA in three starts, having allowed only seven hits and two walks while striking out 20 in 18 innings pitched. ... First baseman Chris Nash is hitting .389 with 3 HR, 11 RBI and a 1.169 OPS in 10 games.