Part I of "Minor Happenings" this week featured an interview Tony did with Tribe Farm Director Ross Atkins. Part II talked about TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player of the Week infielder Todd Martin (Mahoning Valley), and also featured short interview writeups with Mark Thompson and Michael Aubrey. And today, Part III is a mish mash of all the top news from the Indians afilliates. Look long, look hard ... you will find no better coverage of the Indians farm system anywhere else.

"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, from private sources connected to the Indians organization, as well as from club officials from the team itself.

This is part three of the three part installment of *Minor Happenings* this week. Part one was an extensive recap of a sitdown I had with Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins and provided a rundown on several prospects.

Part two
talked about TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player of the Week infielder Todd Martin (Mahoning Valley), and also featured short interview writeups with Mark Thompson and Michael Aubrey.

One final reminder, there will be no *Minor Happenings* this week, and it will return on Thursday August 2nd. I'm checking out the rookie-level GCL team today in Winter Haven, then vacationing for a week.

While I am out, be sure to still check back this week as I have three articles ready to post from interviews I conducted with right-hander pitcher Mike Eisenberg, third baseman Beau Mills, and outfielder Brian Barton.

Oh, and if you missed it, please be sure to see the interview and writeup with Akron closer Randy Newsom
.

Great stuff from Randy there.

Goedert Returns

Kinston infielder Jared Goedert made his expected return to the Kinston lineup on Thursday night. Goedert had been sidelined for almost six weeks with a recurrence of an injury to his left shoulder (labrum) which he had surgery on back in

October. He had recovered before the season started, but in a game at Lake County near the middle of May he reaggravated the injury when he was playing third base and dove to his left to get a groundball and ended up landing on the shoulder funny. He played through the pain for a few more weeks before he eventually went on the disabled list at Kinston.

Back in April and May, Goedert hit .364 with 16 HR and 51 RBI in 46 games at Lake County and was the talk of the Indians system and around minor league baseball. But, after being called up to Kinston he hit only .229 in ten games before being sidelined with the injury.

The shoulder injury may help explain some of Goedert's early struggles in Kinston.

He is still trying to get back into game shape with the swing since he had not swung a bat in a month.

He started hitting off a tee last week, and graduated to soft toss swings before starting to hit in the batting cages earlier this week.

In his return, he went 0-for-3 with a walk and strikeout.

Miller Getting Bombed In Buffalo

Buffalo right-hander Adam Miller returned to the starting rotation last week, but has encountered some early trouble in his quest to return to full strength. In his three return starts to the rotation, Miller has been battered around the park

Bunkelman On His Way Out?

Lake County right-handed reliever Cody Bunkelman has been placed on the disabled list with a left calf sprain. But, there is wide speculation the injury does not even exist, and that Bunkelman was reassigned to Winter Haven to pitch with the rookie-level GCL team to try and either work on finding his fastball command, or send a message to him. Bunkel man was a

6th round pick out of high school in the 2004 Draft, and may be about done with baseball, or at least in the Indians organization. It is not necessarily him as a person, although he is a somewhat wild personality, but it has more to do with his ongoing struggles to command his fastball. Considering that Bunkelman had not pitched in 17 days before going on the disabled list, and he was mysteriously put on the disabled list, you do the math.

Bunkelman was dominant in 24 games at Lake County last year where he went 1-2 with a 2.82 ERA, held batters to a .169 BAA and struckout 48 batters in 44.2 IP. But, he struggled with his first taste of advanced Single-A at Kinston last year going 3-1 with a 6.65 ERA, and struckout 23 hitters in 23 innings pitched.

Last year was Bunkelman's first experience in the bullpen as he was moved there that offseason.

He has a raw power arm, which features a mid 90's fastball, a nasty slider, and a changeup that is still a work in progress.

On the year, Bunkelman was 1-2 with a 6.93 ERA in 24 games.

Gimenez Earns Honors

Akron jack-of-all-trades Chris Gimenez is having a fine 2007, and his hot bat earned him Eastern League Player of the

Week honors last week. Gimenez has only been at Akron for about three weeks, but he quickly has become one of the most important cogs to an offense that other than Gimenez and Trevor Crowe has struggled for the past few weeks. For the week, Gimenez hit .474 (9-for-19) with three doubles, three home runs, five RBI, nine runs scored and a 1.105 slugging percentage from July 9-15.

At Akron, Gimenez is hitting .295 with 5 HR, 10 RBI and

1.016 OPS, and on the season is hitting .289 with 21 HR, 51 RBI, and a 1.020 OPS.

Smith A Model Of Consistency

Buffalo right-hander Sean Smith continues to put together a solid season as the Triple-A level, and now can be considered starting depth at the major league level and trade bait to teams looking for young pitching. On the year, Smith is 8-6 with

a 4.15 ERA.

Smith has grown by leaps and bounds in the last year. After he was disappointed to start last season in Kinston, his third straight year there, he refocused and put forth an excellent 2006 effort. Smith seemed to pick up season when he was moved up to Akron in May last year, and finished the year in Akron going 10-5 with a 3.88 ERA in 25 starts. S mith does not have electric stuff, so last year he learned that he had to attack hitters by getting ahead of them in the count and to be aggressive by pitching to contact.

Smith throws a low 90s fastball, and he throws a 12-6 curveball, slider and changeup.

One of Smith's best attributes is how consistent he has been during his six years in the Indians system. Coming into this season, he had a career ERA of 3.71, and to show how consistent he has been he never has had an ERA below 3.24 and never higher than 3.99.

Lewis Earns Promotion To Cleveland

Right-handed reliever Jensen Lewis was recently called up by the Indians this past Friday. It was a well deserved promotion, as in 34 combined games at Akron and Buffalo, Lewis was 3-0 with a 1.73 ERA.

Lewis shot through the system this year after he was converted to a reliever.

He had been a starter his two previous years in the system in 2005 and

2006, going 12-10 with a 3.75 ERA in 41 starts in total at Mahoning Valley, Kinston and Akron.

According to Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins, Lewis was the hottest pitcher in the system as since May 1st he had a 0.68 ERA and on the year has held batters to a .177 average. After his promotion to Buffalo, in his debut Lewis gave up a solo home run to the first batter he faced and since then only allowed one run.

One of the big reasons for his success is his makeup on the mound and the confidence that flows from him while on it.

His fastball touches 93-94 MPH, but more importantly his changeup is devastating, and his newly developed slider has been the pitch that has finished him off to make him a quality reliever.

Santos The Akron Ace

Sianara Lovullo?

Now that the Indians have extended manager Eric Wedge for another three years, what about Buffalo Bisons manager Torey Lovullo? Lovullo is one of the top up-and-coming managers in baseball, and had been tied to the Los Angeles Dodgers last year for their vacant manager spot, and ESPN's Peter Gammons even mentioned on a broadcast recently that Lovullo could be a top candidate for the open Baltimore Orioles job.
One thing is certain, Lovullo most likely will find a major league job next year and has paid his dues.

Whether it is as a manager, or on the coaching staff for Eric Wedge or someone else remains to be seen.

Inconsistency In The Rotation At Akron

Inconsistency has plagued the Akron rotation all year, and starters Jake Dittler and Shawn Nottingham have both been the posterboys for that inconsistency for most of the year. The right-handed Dittler has had a problem with attacking hitters and going right after them, and just lacks confidence in his stuff.

The left-handed Nottingham's struggles are more related to his pre-game routine, which the Indians are trying to correct.

Dittler and Nottingham's struggles along with the rest of the Akron staff are a main reason why Akron has tailed off of late and struggled in the win/loss column.

Affiliate Notebook

Buffalo Notes (52-44, 2nd place): Last Friday, left-hander Aaron Laffey made a bid to win his seventh consecutive start, but did not figure into the decision.

He finished the game going 6.1 innings and allowed three runs, and on the year he is 11-4 with a 2.92 ERA in 17 combined starts in Akron and Buffalo. ... On Monday, left-hander Jeremy

Sowers continued to struggle, going six innings and giving up five runs on eight hits while throwing 108 pitches.

In six starts for Buffalo, Sowers is 0-4 with a 5.82. ... Right-handed reliever Matt Miller currently is in the midst of a string of 17 straight innings without giving up an earned run. ... Left-hander John Koronka gave up five hits and three runs in three innings on Monday.

It was Koronka's first appearance with Buffalo after being claimed off waivers by the Indians from the Texas Rangers. ... Right-hander Eddie Mujica has 12 saves for Buffalo. ... Outfielder Jason Cooper hit two home runs on Tuesday night.

Akron Notes (57-42, 1st place): Left-hander Chuck Lofgren has had mixed results this year, and is 9-5 with a 4.13 ERA. Still, Lofgren ranks high in the Eastern League in strikeouts, and has put up a pretty good season in Double-A as a 21-year old. ... Last Friday, right-hander Jake Dittler had one of his best starts in a few years, going eight innings and allowing only one run on six hits and two walks while striking out five.

On the year, Dittler is 7-2 with a 4.76 ERA. ... Closer Randy Newsom injured the cornea in his right eye while trying to remove a contact.

He has not been placed on the disabled list and has some blurred vision in the eye, but has been able to pitch recently. ... Catcher Wyatt Toregas has not played since his July 3rd collision with Michael Aubrey while chasing a popup in the infield.

His right elbow has been bothering him since, but he reportedly is close to a return. ... Shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera hit a walkoff three-run homer on Wednesday night. ... First baseman Jordan Brown is hitting .325 with 7 HR, 59 RBI, and an .887 OPS.

Kinston Notes (15-10, 1st place, 60-34 overall): Lake County reliever Neil Wagner has been promoted to Kinston. In his first appearance on Thursday, Wagner pitched two innings and gave up two runs on three hits while striking out three. ... In 18 games at Kinston, first baseman Matt Whitney is hitting .288 with 5 HR, 20 RBI, and a .914 OPS. On the season, Whitney is now hitting .304 with 21 HR, 84 RBI and a .918 OPS in 89 combined games in Lake County and Kinston. ... Catcher Max Ramirez is hitting .301 with 12 HR, 59 RBI, and a .925 OPS. ... Right-hander Kevin Dixon is 8-3 with a 3.78 ERA in 18 starts.

Lake County Notes (15-12, 3rd place, 46-51 overall): Last week on Thursday and Friday, several of the Indians scouts, coordinators, as well as Farm Director Ross Atkins were on hand at Lake County to work with players before the games and evaluate them in person.

... Outfielder Nick Weglarz has now reached base in 35 straight games by hit or walk. ... Right-handed reliever Scott Sumner was placed on the disabled list with inflammation in his pitching shoulder. ... Infielder Dustin Realini was placed on the disabled list with a right-calf strain. ... With Sumner and Realini sidelined, their were replaced with infielder Niuman Romero and catcher Brian Juhl.

Julh was drafted in the 35th round of the 2007 Draft out of Stanford. ... Outfielder Lucas Montero is on the disabled list with a broken bone in his right hand. ... Right-handed relief pitcher Michael Pontius has been added to the roster.

Mahoning Valley Notes (14-16, 4th place): After giving up six runs in just a third of an inning in his Scrapper debut last week, right-hander Kelvin De La Cruz went five no-hit innings a week ago this past Thursday. While he gave up an unearned run, he combined with Dan Frega and Vinnie Pestano to throw a no-hitter. ... On Monday, the Scrappers stopped a streak of bad play where they had lost three in a row by busting out for 16 runs. Infielder Jeff Hehr led the attack going 5-for-6 on the day and scored four runs. ... Right-hander Mike Eisenberg had his first rough outing with Mahoning Valley on Tuesday night, going only 2.2 innings and allowing six runs on six hits, one walk and four hit batters. ... Outfielder Juan Valdes is hitting .302 with 4 HR, 22 RBI, 5 stolen bases, and an .888 OPS in 28 games.

GCL Indians (14-13, 4th place): Outfielder Kevin Rucker made his Indians debut on Monday. He is a 2007 47th round pick out of high school in California. ... First baseman Chris Nash is hitting .269 with 3 HR, 15 RBI and an .809 OPS. ... Third baseman Jay Nilsson is hitting .264 with 2 HR< 9 RBI and an .805 OPS. ... Catcher Robbie Alcombrack is hitting .246 with 3 HR, 8 RBI, and an .810 OPS.