The 2007 season has been a year of ups and downs for Mahoning Valley right-handed pitcher Mike Eisenberg. The 2006 8th round pick out of Marietta College (Ohio) had a good start to his professional career in 2006 at Mahoning Valley, going 3-1 with a 4.29 ERA in 13 starts, but he started this season in the Single-A Lake County starting rotation and just never could get it going. Tony Lastoria had a chance to sit down and talk with him last week.

The 2007 season has been a year of ups and downs for Mahoning Valley right-handed pitcher Mike Eisenberg. The 2006 8th round pick out of Marietta College (Ohio) had a good start to his professional career in 2006 at Mahoning Valley, going 3-1 with a 4.29 ERA in 13 starts, but he started this season in the Single-A Lake County starting rotation and just never could get it going.

Eisenberg stuck around for two months in Lake County earlier this year, going 1-5 with a 6.96 ERA in eight start before he was eventually shipped out to extended spring training at the end of May to work on his fastball command. He resurfaced in mid-June when short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley started play, and has been the anchor of the starting rotation there going 2-2 with a 4.11 ERA in six starts (through July 20th).

While he has tailed off some of late, Eisenberg's trip to extended spring seems to have helped straighten him out.

"When I got sent down, my main goal was to start throwing strikes," recalls Eisenberg. "If I had to take a couple miles an hour off the fastball to make sure I am getting the ball where it needs to go, then that was what it took. So far it has been pretty successful. I have been able to throw strikes, and even if I get into a three ball count I can bear down and give him something that the batter can hit but not hit it well."

Eisenberg's performance during his time in Lake County certainly dictated his demotion to extended spring and to Mahoning Valley. And, it was not a shock to Eisenberg.

"I pretty much saw it coming from the way I had been pitching," says Eisenberg. "I had not been locating my fastball very well. That's a big thing with the organization. Of the guys struggling up there [Lake County], I had the most clear thing to work on which was the fastball command. So far it has been a road getting it back. It's almost there, and if I can get back up to Lake County then we'll know I am back on track."

For some players, a demotion can be a mental obstacle they have a hard time overcoming. For most of these players in the minor leagues, they have never really experienced failure before since they pretty much dominated from the time they were a kid all the way through high school or college. Professional baseball can be a hard dose of reality for a lot of these players, and ultimately what separates these players is how they learn to handle adversity and failure. The ones who handle it well, make the necessary adjustments and get into a consistent routine are usually the ones who have much more success down the road.

Sometimes, getting knocked down can pay future dividends, and Eisenberg seems to realize this.

"A lot of times you have to do that," says Eisenberg. "No matter what job it is, whether it be baseball or anything else. You just have to start over. Now, I'm not totally starting over, but I got a taste of the league up there (Lake County) and it is not that different from down here. I think it is me as a pitcher, I needed to just refocus and get back to what I was doing in college and I think I have done that."

At Lake County, Eisenberg had 22 walks in 32.1 innings, but at Mahoning Valley he has only walked 4 batters in 30.2 innings. Eisenberg attributes his better fastball command to dialing it down a notch.

"I was throwing around 90, and now I am throwing 87-88," says Eisenberg. "89-90 every once in awhile, but just trying to stick around 87-88. My changeup and curveball are there and those are still my good offspeed and breaking ball pitches."

While his fastball is still coming around, Eisenberg still can rely on his bread and butter secondary pitches, a curveball and chanegup. Amazingly, he has much better command and confidence in these pitches, which usually is the other way around for most pitchers as they normally always rely on the fastball when they need it.

"Right now I would say my changeup is my best pitch," says Eisenberg. "It is never always one thing as it changes game to game or week to week. This season my changeup has been my best pitch by far. The curveball has always been a go to pitch when I want to strike somebody out, but the main thing with this organization is they want your fastball to be the go-to pitch."

Some may be familiar with Eisenberg's blog on MLB.com where he wrote about his experiences as a minor leaguer earlier this year. As his struggles on the mound continued to pile up, and he eventually was sent to extended spring training, Eisenberg put the blog aside and just decided to concentrate on what he is here to do in the first place. Play baseball.

"When I got sent down, I wanted to stop doing that and do baseball," says Eisenberg. "I feel like it is easier to focus when I am not thinking about updating it."

It certainly appears Eisenberg is back on track and focused, but tackling the mental side of things in baseball is only half the battle. Now he needs to perform, and will need to show if he has the talent to advance through the system to eventually live his dream as a major league baseball player.

While he can't wait to walk into the clubhouse at Eastwood Field in Mahoning Valley and get pulled into manager Tim Laker's office to be told he has been called up to Lake County, he is still enjoying his time in The Valley.

"I have all of my closest friends on this team," says

Eisenberg. "I look at the guys I know as friends, as well as the guys at Lake County."

Note: Be sure to also checkout the Q&A that I had with Eisenberg back in May.