The end of the Indians minor league season is just days away. All the affiliates are now finished playing except for Akron, who is playing for the Eastern League title. As Tony winds down another great season of "Minor Happenings", he's got a lot of great stuff planned for his last couple versions, and in this week's ... he recaps the playoff performances of Akron and Kinston, talks with Ross Atkins, awards his player of the month award for August, and updates us on Jeremy Sowers.

"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.

The end of the Indians minor league season is just days away. All the affiliates are now finished playing except for Akron, who will finish up playing sometime over this coming weekend. In next week's final Minor Happenings piece (9/20), I'll provide a few parting shots, some player profiles, and any comments from Farm Director Ross Atkins as I wrapup the Indians minor league season.

Then, the following week (9/27), I'll put the capper on the season with my Second Annual Tony Awards where I give out awards in the Indians minor league system for Offensive Player of the Year, Pitcher of the Year, Comeback Player of the Year, Biggest Breakthrough, Team of the Year, Biggest Disappointment, and my All-Indians Minor League Team. The format should be much like the 2006 version , with a few possible changes.

And, over the course of the next two weeks be on the lookout for player articles on right-handed pitcher Frank Herrmann, catcher Chris Giminez, and second baseman Jared Goedert. I'll also finally get the recap of my visit to Kinston out hopefully this weekend, and it will be chock full of pictures and videos.

Also, a Q&A with Farm Director Ross Atkins should post sometime the last week of this month.

Oh, and in case you missed it, here is an article on Kinston shortstop
Josh Rodriguez
which posted yesterday.

TheClevelandFan.com Minor League Player Of The Month
(for August)

Nick Weglarz (Outfielder - Lake County)
.333 (31-93), 21 R, 10 2B, 0 3B, 8 HR, 25 RBI, 1.141 OPS

Lake County outfielder Nick Weglarz edged out Kinston shortstop Josh Rodriguez as the Player of the Month for August. Weglarz's performance in August caps a sensational 2007 season where he had a breakthrough year as a prospect. As one

of the youngest position players in the South Atlantic League, Weglarz held his own this year and his impressive display of raw power combined with a beyond-his-years approach at the plate have many people in the Indians organization and around baseball excited about Weglarz going into next season and beyond. He may not be the most gifted of runners or defenders, but anytime you can hit for ridiculous power AND show very good patience at the plate you have a chance to be special.

Weglarz finished the year at Lake County hitting .276 with 23 HR, 82 RBI and an .892 OPS in 439 at bats, and also piled up 82 walks and 129 strikeouts. In July, he stepped in nicely as the go-to guy offensively when infielders Jared Goedert and Matt Whitney moved up to Kinston.

Weglarz seemed to get stronger and more confident as the year wore on, and finished 6th in the league in home runs (23), second in walks (82), eighth in on-base percentage (.395), and tenth in OPS (.892).

Honorable Mentions:

Josh Rodriguez (SS - Kinston): .299 (35-117), 25 R, 5 2B, 2 3B, 10 HR, 29 RBI, 3 SB, 1.040 OPS
Matt Whitney (1B - Kinston): .292 (33-113), 24 R, 5 2B, 10 HR, 23 RBI, .964 OPS
Ben Francisco (OF - Buffalo): .320 (40-125), 20 R, 8 2B, 2 3B, 6 HR, 17 RBI, 7 SB, .944 OPS
Michael Aubrey (1B - Akron): .345 (20-58), 6 R, 4 2B, 3 HR, 15 RBI, .969 OPS
Jim Deters (RHP - Kinston): 5-1, 2.31 ERA, 6 starts, 35 IP, 24 H, 9 BB, 19 K, .185 AVG
Paolo Espino (RHP - Lake County): 2-2, 2.76 ERA, 6 starts, 32.2 IP, 23 H, 11 BB, 31 K, .200 AVG

Scott Lewis (LHP - Akron): 3-1, 2.76 ERA, 5 starts, 29.1 IP, 26 H, 5 BB, 29 Ks, .234 AVG

Previous Winners:

July: Todd Martin (1B - Mahoning Valley)
June: Aaron Laffey (LHP - Buffalo)
May: Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County)
April: Jared Goedert (3B - Lake County)

Director's Cuts

Indians Director of Player Personnel Ross Atkins has been following the Indians Double-A affiliate Akron during their playoff run, and offered up some thoughts on Adam Miller's start in Game One of the Eastern League Championship Series, and also the playoffs for Akron in general.

On Adam Miller: "He did well. He is obviously on a return to start progression where his pitch count is getting higher and higher. He threw 56 pitches last night through five innings, he punched out five guys, and showed some of the Adam Miller of old with a 95 MPH fastball in a very big game.

It was a positive night for Adam.

It's great that at this point we can give him the opportunity to build up some innings, and where he is in his development he definitely needs to keep his innings on the up and up and increasing so as he gets into a major league season he is throwing 180 to 200 innings.

So this is an opportunity for him to pitch."

On Akron in the playoffs: "It is extremely fulfilling and a great big bonus. It is not extremely important, however.

What's paramount is that our guys are in a position to succeed individually and team success at the lower levels is not paramount from a player development standpoint.

However, when you do get to that environment you find out a lot more about guys and guys have an opportunity to develop in a championship environment.

When the entire season is hanging in the balance on one pitch, one inning or one at bat it is a very different feeling in your stomach.

So it is definitely a great bonus to be there."

Akron Rolls To Eastern League Championship Series

Akron won their first round best-of-five series with Erie three games to one. With the series win, Akron is now making an appearance in the Eastern League Championship Series for the third consecutive year and the fourth time in five years.

Things have not gone well for Akron in the first two games of the series, however, as they lost both games and are down 2-0 and facing elimination. Akron lost Game One 5-3, losing it in the seventh inning when newcomer Ryan Edell allowed two runs.

The offense was inconsistent all night, and was led by first baseman Jordan Brown (2-for-4, HR, RBI).

In Game Two last night, Akron blew a 2-1 lead in the eighth inning and eventually lost in the ninth on a walkoff game-winning hit by Trenton.

There was a controversial play at the plate in the ninth inning where it appeared that Akron catcher Wyatt Toregas clearly tagged out the runner yet he was called safe, but the problems go back to Akron going 0-for-16 so far in the series with runners in scoring position and executing poorly as an offense.

To win the series, Akron will have to win the final three games of the series, of which they should get a boost from the home crowd since the series shifts back to Akron for the remaining three games. Here are the dates, times and scheduled Akron starting pitchers for the final three games in the Eastern League Championship Series which resumes play on Friday night after an off day today:

Game Three: Friday 9/14 at 7:05 pm in Akron, Jeremy Sowers (LHP)
Game Four (if necessary): Saturday 9/15 at 7:05 pm in Akron, Bobby Brownlie (RHP)
Game Five (if necessary): Sunday 9/16 at 2:05 pm in Akron: Adam Miller (RHP)

One note, is if the series goes a deciding fifth game, there is some irony having Adam Miller start the deciding Game Five. Last year, Akron lost the deciding Game Five of the 2006 Eastern League Championship Series and did so in a game Miller was supposed to start but never did since the Indians shut him down due to a high innings pitched count.

There was some controversy about that, and wouldn't it be ironic if it came down to Miller again in a Game Five for all the marbles this year (Miller would pitch this time).

Akron Division Series Wrapup

Here is a quick summary of what happened in each game of Akron's playoff series win in the Eastern League Division Series:

In Game One, Akron won 12-9. Akron pounded out 16 hits in the game, and were led offensively by designated hitter Jordan Brown (3-for-6, RBI), first baseman Michael Aubrey (3-for-5, 2 RBI), and right-fielder Stephen Head (2-for-6, HR, 4 RBI).

Left-hander Chuck Lofgren battled to throw five innings, and gave up four runs on seven hits and no walks while striking out three for the win.

In Game Two, Akron lost 9-6. Right-hander Jake Dittler allowed eight hits and five walks in four innings and was bombed for nine runs. Right-fielder Stephen Head (3-for-4) and center-fielder Trevor Crowe (2-for-5, HR, 3 RBI) led the offense.

With the series shifting back to Akron for Game Three, Akron won 6-3. Left-hander Jeremy Sowers made a controversial start (more on that below) and allowed only one run on four hits and two walks in 7.1 innings of work.

First baseman Jordan Brown (2-for-4, HR, 2 RBI) and right-fielder Stephen Head (2-for-4, HR, 2 RBI) paced the offense.

In Game Four, Akron won 8-6 clinching the series three games to one. Akron was down 4-0 and 6-2 in the game, but four shutout and hitless innings of relief from right-hander Michael Finocchi, left-hander Reid Santos, and right-hander Jim Ed Warden allowed Akron to come back and pull out the win.

Designated hitter Jordan Brown (2-for-4, RBI), first baseman Michael Aubrey (3-for-4, 2 HR, 4 RBI), and right-fielder Stephen Head (1-for-4, HR, RBI) once again paced the offensive attack.

Kinston Season Ends Abruptly

Kinston lost their best-of-three first round series in the Carolina League playoffs against Salem two games to one. After a dominating season where they won the first and second half division titles, Kinston's season came to an abrupt close after a rough three games against Salem.

What makes it worse is Kinston hosted all three games of the series, yet still lost two games in front of the home crowd.

In Game One, Kinston lost 10-3. Salem pounded out 15 hits against Kinston, and roughed up league ERA champ Jim Deters for five runs on eight hits and three walks in just four innings.

The only highlight offensively was Matt Whitney going 2-for-4 with a HR and RBI.

In Game Two, Kinston won 1-0 on a dramatic walkoff home run by shortstop Josh Rodriguez in the bottom of the ninth inning. Rodriguez was not the only hero of the night, as right-handed starter Frank Herrmann was brilliant in shutting out Salem for seven innings and allowed only six hits and no walks while striking out five.

In the deciding Game Three, Kinston lost 5-3. Kinston built an early 3-0 lead after a two-run single by outfielder Jose Constanza in the second inning, but Salem scored the final five runs of the game. With the score tied 3-3 in the 8th inning, a key throwing error by third baseman Beau Mills opened the floodgates for two runs and the winning margin for Salem. Kinston also blew several scoring opportunities as they had two runners gunned down by a mile at the plate during the game, and first baseman Matt Whitney struckout with two outs and the bases loaded in the bottom of the 7th inning.

Erie Not So Sweet About Sowers

There was some drama with the assignment of left-hander Jeremy Sowers to Akron this past week. The drama unfolded when Akron's opponent Erie and Minor League Baseball (MiLB) objected to the Indians assignment of Sowers to Akron. Sowers had pitched all season either in the majors for Cleveland or in Triple-A at Buffalo, and had not pitched in Akron since 2005, so Erie and MiLB initially blocked the assignment of Sowers to Akron feeling like Cleveland was loading up their Akron roster.

When their initial assignment of Sowers being transferred from Buffalo to Akron was blocked, the Indians went another route by calling up Sowers to Cleveland and then optioning him to Akron. The option from the major league club to Akron was then considered a major league transaction, and as a result minor league baseball had no say and Sowers had to be allowed to play for Akron. It was a slick move the Indians used to circumvent the rules and it left some at Erie steaming.

In reality, the Indians assigned Sowers to Akron to keep him on a regular routine and get more starts as he likely will get the call to make a scheduled spot start in a double-header for the Indians in Seattle on September 26th. With Buffalo's season over and the major league club still in the thick of a pennant race and the rotation set, there was no room for Sowers to get in regular work except in Akron.

The Indians feel they are not in the wrong here, and given that the Akron rotation is decimated with injuries, moving down Sowers is not an unexpected move nor an attempt to load up the Akron roster. Sowers dominated Erie in Game Two of the Eastern League Division Series, holding them to one run on four hits while striking out seven in his 7.1 innings of work.

Aubrey's Last Hurrah?

Akron first baseman Michael Aubrey may very well be a 40-man roster casualty this offseason as the Indians have several tough decisions to make in regard to what players they remove from the roster and what players they add to the roster to

protect them from the Rule 5 Draft. But, even if Aubrey's appearance in the postseason with Akron has him playing his last few games in the Indians organization, he is going out with a bang. In August, Aubrey hit .345 with 3 HR, 15 RBI and had a .969 OPS, and in Akron's first round series against Erie -in four games - Aubrey hit .353 (6-for-17) with 2 HR and 6 RBI, and hit two key two-run home runs in Akron's series clinching win in Game Four.

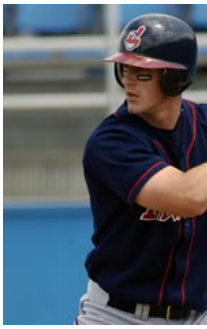
On the year, Aubrey hit .277 with 12 HR, 45 RBI and had an .813 OPS in 65 combined games at Akron and Kinston, and this season marks the first time since his professional debut in the Indians system in 2003 that he finished the season still playing. In 2004, 2005 and 2006 Aubrey's season was prematurely ended earlier in the year for various injuries.

Aubrey can still be found in the trainer's room regularly after every game, and he looks like he went through a war as he has huge ice packs practically wrapped around his entire lower body to help treat nagging abdominal and hamstring issues.

Aubrey is scheduled to play for the Indians in the Arizona Fall League this October.

Super Stephen

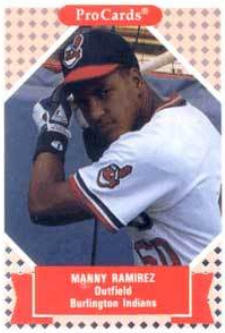
Akron right-fielder Stephen Head has been pretty hot of late. After a rough start in Double-A Akron, Head finished up the



season hitting .361 with 2 HR and 9 RBI over his last ten games, and his blazing bat has carried over into the playoffs as Head has been one of the main offensive weapons for Akron so far this postseason. In the four game series against Erie, Head had big hit after big hit, and hit .444 (8-18) with 3 HR and 7 RBI for the series. Head's recent surge at the plate can be traced back to him making adjustments where he has gotten much better with his pitch selection each at bat.

Head finished the season hitting .256 with 16 HR, 79 RBI and a .768 OPS in a combined 128 games in Kinston and Akron.

Top 10 Kinston Players Of All Time



The Kinston Free Press recently conducted a poll of the Top 10 Kinston Indians of all time for the commemoration of the franchise's 20th anniversary as an affiliate for the Cleveland Indians.

Manny Ramirez came in first in the fan poll which had just under 600 voters, followed by Jim Thome (2nd), Bartolo Colon and Mike Soper (tied for 3rd), C.C. Sabathia and Marco Scutaro (tied for 5th), Grady Sizemore (7th), Albert Belle (8th), Victor Martinez (9th), and Charles Nagy (10th).

Of note, Soper is the only player on the list who never made it to the majors.

He was a right-handed pitcher who set a club record with 41 saves for the 1991 Carolina League champion Kinston team, and reached as high as Triple-A before retiring in 1993 with 102 career minor league saves.

Affiliate Notebook

Akron Notes: Left-hander Ryan Edell was called up from Kinston to Akron, and replaced right-hander Jake Dittler on the roster. Dittler was put on the disabled list with a left hip strain. Edell was 11-6 with a 3.70 ERA in 31 games (17 starts) for Kinston this season. ... Left-handed starter Scott Lewis was a mainstay in the Akron rotation all year, going 7-9 with a 3.68 ERA in 27 games.

However, Lewis will not pitch a single inning in the postseason because he has inflammation in his left elbow.

He complained of some soreness in the elbow and had some tingling and numbness in his hand.

As a precaution, he was shutdown. ... Right-hander Adam Miller was on a 55-pitch limit in Game One as he is on a return to start program. ... With left-hander Jeremy Sowers being added to the Akron roster, Akron created room for him by sending left-hander Mariano Gomez to the GCL. ... Catcher Matt McBride was assigned to Kinston, and catcher Armando Camacaro was called up.

Kinston Notes: With Kinston getting ousted in the first round of the Carolina League playoffs, manager Mike Sarbaugh also experienced his first loss in the playoffs as a manager.

When Kinston lost Game One to Salem, it was Sarbaugh's first post season loss as a manager as he had a 9-0 record in the playoffs at the start of the series.

He went 5-0 last year in helping lead Kinston to the 2006 Carolina League championship, and in 2004 he went 4-0 in leading Mahoning Valley to the NY-Penn League championship. ... Kinston had four players on the 2007 playoff roster who were on the 2006 Championship team:

outfielders Jose Constanza and John Drennen, and relievers T.J. Burton and Scott Roehl.

Mahoning Valley Notes: Last Thursday, when scheduled starter Dan Frega could not go because of a blister on his finger, right-hander Josh Judy got a spot start.

Judy went three scoreless innings before being removed, and finished the season 1-2 with a 0.36 ERA in 12 combined appearances in the GCL and Mahoning Valley.

Judy was a 34th round pick in the 2007 Draft this past June. ... First baseman Todd Martin set Mahoning valley records for highest batting average (.360), slugging percentage (.533) and on-base percentage (.423), and is the second Scrappers player to win a league batting title.

Also, relief pitcher Kyle Landis set a franchise record for lowest earned run average with at least 10 appearances (0.33 ERA), and outfielder Adam White tied a club record with 22 stolen bases. ... The Scrappers were 28-23 at the All-Star break, but finished 9-14 in their last 23 games after the break.

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