Coming off a Carolina League Championship in 2004, Kinston finished 76-54 in 2005 and qualified for the Carolina League playoffs. Unfortunately, Kinston fell in the decisive Game Five of the League Championship Series, and was not able to repeat as champions.

The Kinston Indians are probably the least known of the major minor league affiliates in the Cleveland Indians organization. While other major minor league affiliates such as Buffalo, Akron, Lake County, and Mahoning Valley all are in close proximity to Cleveland, Kinston is located several states away in North Carolina.

Kinston is the next step up from Lake County, and fans of the Lake County Captains will notice several familiar faces peppered throughout the Kinston lineup and pitching staff in 2006. In all, Kinston will have six Baseball America Top 30 Indians prospects (3 of the top 11 prospects in the system), and the strength of the team will be in the starting staff and outfield.

Here is the organization affiliate listing, and how the starting lineup and starting rotation should look on opening day:

Minor League Affiliates:
Buffalo Bisons (AAA)
Akron Aeros (AA)
Kinston Indians (High A)
Lake County Captains (Low A)
Mahoning Valley Scrappers (Short Season A)
Burlington Indians (Rookie)

Projected Lineup:

1. Trevor Crowe CF
2. Argenis Reyes 2B
3. Stephen Head 1B
4. Ryan Goleski RF
5. Matt Whitney 3B
6. Jordan Brown LF/DH
7. Brian Barton LF/DH
8. Brian Finegan SS
9. Caleb Brock C

Projected Starting Rotation:

#1 Chuck Lofgren
#2 Jensen Lewis
#3 Scott Lewis
#4 Joe Ness
#5 Aaron Laffey and Reid Santos

CF: Trevor Crowe

Crowe highlights a solid group of outfielders at Kinston, as Crowe was the Indians #1 draft choice in the 2005 Draft out of The University of Arizona. Crowe's first professional season was not much to get excited about as he hit .251 with 1 HR, 29 RBIs and 11 stolen bases in 59 games combined at Mahoning Valley, Lake County and Akron. Still, he was recently tabbed as the Indians 8th best prospect by Baseball America, and is a similar in playstyle and performance to Coco Crisp. With the abundance of talent in the outfield in the organization, and lack of talent at 2B, the Indians currently are thinking of switching Crowe to 2B in the off-season. For now, he is the everyday CF at Kinston.

RF: Ryan Goleski

Goleski was drafted in the 24th round of the 2003 draft from Eastern Michigan University, and after his 2004 season looked like he was on his way to being one of the biggest steals in the late rounds of that draft. Goleski had a sensational 2004 campaign in Lake County where he hit .295 with 28 HRs and 104 RBIs, and the 28 Hrs and 104 RBIs led the entire farm system. Unfortunately, Goleski turned out to be one of the

biggest disappointments in 2005, hitting only .212 with 17 HRs and 67 RBIs at Kinston. Goleski has a cannon for an arm and big power, but he returns to Kinston due to the depth in the outfield in the upper levels in the system, and to try and get him back to his 2004 form.

LF: Jordan Brown

Brown was drafted in the 4th round of the 2005 Draft from the University of Arizona. A hand injury cut his 2005 season at Mahoning Valley short at 19 games, but he still managed hit .253 with 3 HRs and 7 RBIs. The left-handed hitting Brown not only can play the outfield, but also can play 1B, which could make him very useful down the road having such versatility. Brown might be one to keep an eye on this season, and is a possible breakout player candidate.

DH: Brian Barton

Barton was an undrafted free agent signing who came out of nowhere last year, and hit .326 with 7 HRs, 64 RBIs, and 20 stolen bases in 99 games at Lake County and Kinston. He caught the eye of many in the organization with his blistering debut performance at Lake County by hitting .414 with 4 HRs and 32 RBIs in 133 at bats. He will bounce around between all three outfield positions, and when not in the outfield will most likely be the DH.

1B Stephen Head:

The Indians drafted Head in the 2nd round of the 2005 Draft out of the University of Mississippi. Head jumped onto the prospect scene with an impressive 10-game stint in Mahoning Valley last

year where he hit .432 with 6 HRs and 14 RBIs. Overall, in a combined effort at Mahoning Valley and Kinston, Head hit .308 with 10 HRs and 50 RBIs in 57 games. Head comes into the 2006 season ranked as the Indians 9th best prospect, and is viewed as a solid defender with 30 HR potential. This season will be Head's first full professional season, and a lot should be found out over the course of a 140-game minor league season. In any case, along with fellow 1B Ryan Garko, Michael Aubrey and Ryan Mulhern, the 1B position is one of the largest areas of depth in the farm system.

2B Argenis Reyes:

Indians Farm Director John Farrell considers Reyes a potential super utility player with his ability to play anywhere in the outfield, and also at second base and shortstop. Reyes hit .312 for Mahoning Valley in 2004, but is more a contact/slap hitter at this point as he hits for very little power (3 HRs in 995 career minor league at bats). In 2004, he led the NY Penn League in hits (101) and runs (53), and was fifth with his .312 average. In addition, his 27 steals were fourth in the league. Last year, he split the season at Lake County and Kinston, combining to hit .297 with 3 HRs, 49 RBIs and 24 steals. While Reyes is penciled into 2B, he will continue to play some outfield and other positions on the field to groom him for that super utility role. Micah Schilling should also

get some time at 2B.

SS: Bryan Finegan/Brandon Pinckney

This position could very well be a platoon with Brandon Pinckney, but at the outset Finegan should get the lion's share of playing time. Finegan was drafted in the 15th round of the 2004 Draft from the University of Hawaii-Manoa, and is considered a very good defensive shortstop. In 2004, he chipped in with a .255 average and 3 HRs and 34 RBIs for Mahoning Valley in 69 game, and after a very slow start last year in Lake County, he ended the season hitting .292 with 9 HRs, 60 RBIs, and 16 steals in 115 games. Pinckney was drafted in the 12th round of the 2003 Draft from Sacramento Community College, and came out of nowhere in 2004 to hit a combined .333 with 5 HRs and 55 RBIs for Lake County and Akron. He was a disappointment in 2005, though, as he finished the year hitting .260 with 2 HRs and 26 RBIs in only 87 games.

3B: Matt Whitney

Whitney is a former Top 10 prospect who was slowed down by injuries the past two seasons. Whitney was taken in the 1st round out of high school in 2002, and at 18 showed exceptional

power in rookie level Burlington where he hit .286 with 10 HRs and 33 RBIs in 45 games. His rookie campaign had Indians scouts excited, but then prior to the 2003 season he broke his leg and missed the entire season. Whitney came back in 2004 in Lake County and primarily DHed because he was still recovering from the injury, and because Kevin Kouzmanoff was a monster at 3B. Whitney's return in 2004 was encouraging as he hit .256 with 5 HRs and 31 RBIs in 55 games. Last year, he returned to Lake County and actually got on the field and played 3B, hitting .242 with 6 HRs and 27 RBIs in 74 games. He comes in ranked as the Indians 29th best prospect, and according to scouts Whitney looks "awesome" and 100% healed this season, which may mean he could be in for a big comeback season.

C: Caleb Brock/Armando Camacaro

Brock and Camacaro should split time at catcher for the Kinston Indians. Both are not considered highly touted prospects, and may end up as nothing more than organizational

filler. In 2004, Brock hit a combined .248 with 6 HRs and 39 RBIs as he split time between Lake County and Kinston. Last year, Brock hit .236 with 6 HRs and 48 RBIs in 87 games for Kinston. Camacaro drops a level this season after backing up at Akron last year where he hit .257 with 3 HRs and 13 RBIs in 34 games.

SP: Chuck Lofgren

Lofgren was taken in the 4th round of the 2004 Draft out of high school, and is a raw and intriguing prospect who will be a project as the Indians look to harness his excellent potential. Ranked as the 11th best Indians prospect by Baseball America, as a left-handed pitcher with the ability to throw hard (fastball tops at 96 MPH), he is a valuable commodity. Last year at Lake County, Lofgren went 5-5 with a 2.81 ERA with 89 strikeouts in 93 IP. He just turned 20 years old in January, and is in line to become the next great pitching prospect after the Big Three of Jeremy Sowers, Fausto Carmona and

Adam Miller.

SP: Jensen Lewis

Lewis was drafted in the 3rd round out of Vanderbilt in the 2005 Draft, and comes in ranked as the Indians 19th best prospect in 2006. In his professional debut at Mahoning Valley last year, in 13 games he went 4-2 with a 3.20 ERA and struckout 59 hitters in 59 IP. While he is right-handed, Lewis is in the same mold as his former teammate at Vanderbilt Jeremy Sowers in that he is a very smart pitcher, and has excellent command. He tops out in the low 90s, but usually hovers in the high 80s when he pitches and projects as a 3rd or 4th starter in the big leagues.

SP: Scott Lewis

Lewis is a left-handed pitcher who is rated as the Indians 28th best prospect by Baseball America, and was drafted in the 3rd round of the 2004 Draft from THE Ohio State University. As a sophomore at Ohio State in 2003, Lewis went 9-1 with a 1.61 ERA and struck out 127 batters in just 84 innings pitching. After his sensational sophomore performance, and winning Big Ten Pitcher of the Year in 2003, he was pegged on a lot of draft boards to go in the first round; however, he later suffered a severe arm injury that resulted in him missing a lot of the 2004 season. His injury problems have followed him to the minor league circuit, limiting him to only a total of only 21 IP in 2004 and 2005 at Mahoning Valley, going 0-3 with a 4.71 in 10 games over those two seasons. After being

shutdown with tightness in his bicep last year, Lewis looks to prove he can stay healthy this season and that he was worthy of a 3rd round draft pick and the $460,000 the Indians signed him for.

SP: Joe Ness

The right-handed throwing Ness was taken in the 6th round of the 2005 Draft out of Ball State. At 6’5” and 230 pounds, he is a big and strong pitcher with a fastball that hovers in the low to mid 90s. Last year at Mahoning Valley, Ness went 4-2 with a 1.67 ERA and piled up 68 strikeouts in 59.1 IP, and was also named to the NY-Penn League All-Star team. Ness will skip Lake County and start at Kinston, which is not unusual as most college pitchers taken in the draft

are considered more polished and therefore most often start their first full professional season in High A.

SP: Aaron Laffey

The Indians drafted the left-handed throwing Laffey out of high school in the 16th round of the 2003 Draft. After an impressive start in 2004 at Mahoning Valley in which he was 3-1 with a 1.24 ERA in eight starts, he was called up to Lake County. Unfortunately, Laffey did not enjoy the same success at Lake County in 2004 like he had in Mahoning Valley as he went 3-7 with a 6.53 ERA in 19 appearances (15 starts). Laffey

enjoyed much more success in a return trip to Lake County in 2005, going 7-7 with a 3.22 ERA. It is likely that Laffey will swing between the bullpen and starting rotation.

SP: Reid Santos

Santos was selected in the 13th round of the 2002 Draft out of Saddleback College, and adds to the plethora of left-handed pitching in the lower levels of the Indians minor league system. In 2004 at Burlington, he went 3-5 with a 3.07 ERA and was named Appalachian League Co-Pitcher of the Year. Last year at Lake County, Santos went 5-8 with a 4.94 ERA and

struckout 127 batters in 147.2 IP. After a rocky start the first month of the season, Santos settled in the rest of the season and actually had an ERA under 4.00 the rest of the way. Like Laffey, he should swing back and forth between the bullpen and starting rotation.