After an inaugural campaign in 2003 where they won almost 100 games and lost in the South Atlantic League Championship Series to Rome, the Captains missed the playoffs the last two seasons even though they finished over .500 (73-66 in 2004, and 72-66 in 2005).

The Captains roster is loaded with 2005 returnees, as only a handful of players from last year's short-season squads in Burlington and Mahoning Valley were moved up. Contrary to the previous three seasons, the 2006 Captains version will not feature very many Tribe top prospects. In fact, the Captains will only have one Baseball America Top 30 Indians prospect (John Drennen), while last year they started the season with seven top 30 prospects.

Other more high profile players who are still in Winter Haven for extended Spring Training such as Justin Hoyman and Cody Bunkelman could join the team a month or two into the season. Nick Weglarz and Carlton Smith could be up later in the year, most likely for the second half of the season if the Indians don't assign them to Mahoning Valley. It is also possible the highly touted JD Martin could get a few rehab starts at Lake County sometime in May/June as he recovers from Tommy John surgery.

Here is the actual lineup and starting rotation as released by the Captains website:

Starting Lineup:

1. Jose Constanza LF

2. Niuman Romero SS
3. Mike Conroy DH
4. Fernando Pacheco 1B
5. Chris Gimenez C
6. PJ Hiser RF
7. John Drennen CF
8. Nick Petrucci 3B
9. Matt Fornasiere 2B

Starting Rotation:

Kevin Dixon
Jim Deters
Ryan Edell
Jorge Riera
Albert Vargas

LF: Jose Constanza

The Indians signed Constanza as an undrafted free agent in 2003. After an impressive year in the Dominican Summer League in 2004 in which he led the league in numerous categories such as average (.444) and hits (115), he started the year with Lake County in 2005 and struggled by hitting only .236 with 0 HRs and 4 RBIs in 23 games. In June, when short-season leagues started, he was sent to Mahoning Valley where he put together a good season, hitting .263 with 0 HRs, 24 RBIs and 24 stolen bases. He was named to the NY-Penn All Star team, and was second among Indians farmhands with 26 stolen bases on the year. Constanza can bounce around in the outfield and play all three positions, and will be the table-setter in the Captains lineup.

CF: John Drennen

Drennen was drafted in the 1st round of the 2005 Draft out of high school. The 19-year old is the only player on the Captains roster to be ranked in the Indians Top 30 list by Baseball America, and comes in at #12 on that list. Last year, in 51 games at rookie level Burlington, Drennen impressed with a .238 average with 8 HRs, 29 RBIs and 6 stolen bases. The left-handed hitting Drennen was one of the most coveted bats in the 2005 draft, and has plus bat speed with good power. He should grow into his body more (5’11” 185 lbs) as his minor league career plays

out, and being that he has a below average arm, it is expected that he will eventually play himself out of CF and move to LF.

RF: PJ Hiser/Juan Valdez

Hiser should bounce around between 1B, RF, LF and DH, but will primarily be in a RF platoon with Juan Valdes. Hiser was a 29th round pick in the 2004 Draft from the University of Pittsburgh, and in 63 combined games at Burlington and Mahoning Valley last year hit .299 with 17 HRs and 54 RBIs. His performance at Burlington led him to being named to the Appalachian League Post Season All Star team. He has shown big power potential, but at 25 and in Lake County, he is nothing more than an organizational player at this point. Valdez was selected in the 5th round of the 2003 Draft out of high school, and this will be his third season with the Captains. Being the cousin of Carlos Beltran, Valdes opened some eyes in 2004 when he stole a combined 41 bases at Burlington and Lake County. Last year, Valdes had a disappointing season with Lake County by hitting only .220 with 8 HRs, 47 RBIs and 12 stolen bases. Valdes, a switch-hitter, should be in the lineup often as he will spell each of Constanza, Drennen and Hiser often in his 4th outfielder role.

1B: Fernando Pacheco

Taken out of high school in the 4th round of the 2002 Draft, Pacheco has put together two decent seasons the last two years. In 2004, Pacheco hit .253 with 5 HRs and 37 RBIs in 60 games for Mahoning Valley, and then last year hit .235 with 11 HRs and 68 RBIs at Lake County. Pacheco is another Captains holdover from 2005, and hopefully a repeat at Low A results in increased production and development from him. Also, since Hiser is a right-handed hitter, Pacheco will sit from time to time when facing a tough southpaw.

2B: Matt Fornasiere/Marshall Szabo

Fornasiere was a 12th round selection out of the University of Minnesota in the 2005 Draft. Last year at Mahoning Valley, Fornasiere put together a solid season hitting .256 with 1 HR and 28 RBIs in 67 games. His performance led him to being named to the New York Penn League All Star team. Szabo was taken in the 17th round of the 2004 Draft from the University of Georgia, and returns to the Captains in 2006. Last year at Lake County, Szabo hit .249 with 6 HRs and 35 RBIs in 105 games. Szabo is a switch-hitter, and should split time at 2B with the

left-handed hitting Fornasiere.

SS: Niuman Romero/Chris De La Cruz

Romero was signed as an undrafted free agent in 2002, and spent his first two seasons in the Dominican and Venezuelan Summer Leagues. Last year, he played at rookie level Burlington and hit .275 with 2 HRs and 29 RBIs in 63 games. He will likely split time with Chris De La Cruz, who pretty much has stuck as a regular with the Captains. This year will be Cruz's fourth year with a stop in Lake County, and he is coming off a season last year where he combined to hit .236 with 0 HRs and 26 RBIs at Kinston and Lake County.

3B: Nick Petrucci

Petrucci was an 11th round draft pick in the 2005 Draft out of the College of the Canyons (in CA). With Petrucci's arrival, he adds to what already is becoming a good, deep collection of talent at 3B in the system. Petrucci could be on his way to being grouped with the likes of hot prospect Andy Marte in Buffalo, and other highly touted 3B prospects Kevin Kouzmanoff in Akron and Matt Whitney in Kinston. Last year, at Burlington, Petrucci hit .246 with 8 HRs and 29 RBIs in 58 games. Drennen, and the right-handed hitting Petrucci should be two players Captains and Indians fans pay special attention to this year at the plate.

C: Chris Gimenez/Omar Casillas

Gimenez was taken in the 19th round of the 2004 Draft from the University of Nevada, and this season is making a position switch from 3B to catcher. He returns to Lake County after hitting .234 with 13 HRs and 66 RBIs for the Captains in 2005. Down the road, Gimenez might be in line for a super utility role as he has played every position in the outfield, and also can play catcher, third base and first base. At Mahoning Valley in 2004, he hit .300 with 10 HRs and 38 RBIs, and led the league in doubles (23), extra base hits (36), and slugging percentage (.527). With his flexibility to play multiple positions and potent bat he should be in the starting lineup every night. Casillas will backup Gimenez, and with Gimenez's ability to play multiple positions should play often. Last year at Mahoning Valley he hit .286 with 1 HR and 16 RBIs in 43 games, and was also named to the New York Penn League All Star team.

DH: Mike Conroy

Conroy has been a disappointment for the Indians since being drafted in the 1st round of the 2001 Draft from Boston College. His progress has been very slow, and the 2006 season could be a turning point in deciding how much longer the Indians stick with him. Conroy had an okay season in 2004 with Lake County as he hit .268 with 5 HRs and 52 RBIs, and he also led the organization in triples with 10. In 2005, he hit .241 with 9 Hrs and 38 RBIs at Kinston in 61 games. For 2006, the left-handed hitter takes a step back to Lake County, and with this being his 6th season in the organization may be his last chance to salvage what once looked like a promising career. Conroy should play often in the outfield as well, but will probably be the primary DH.

SP: Kevin Dixon

Dixon is a solid looking right-hander at 6'3" 225 lbs who was selected in the 5th round of the 2005 Draft from Minnesota State University. Last year at Mahoning Valley, he went 3-6 with a 4.53 ERA in 14 starts for the Scrappers. Not an overpowering pitcher, his fastball ranges between 90-94 MPH and he only fanned 31 batters in his 57.2 innings of work. He starts this season in a less than impressive Captains rotation, of which could be changed dramatically when Hoyman and/or Bunkelman are added to the rotation, or even JD Martin or Dan Cevette return in a rehab assignment.

SP: Jim Deters

Deters was taken in the 7th round of the 2005 Draft out of Calvin College. He impressed in Mahoning Valley last year, going 3-4 with a 2.97 ERA in 14 starts. He is a tall (6'4") and lanky (180 lbs) right-hander, and is not an overpowering pitcher but has very good command and can locate his fastball, curve and changeup well. Deters is one of three 2005 draft picks in the Captains rotation, and the staff as a whole is very inexperienced as all of them have only one season of professional ball at Burlington or higher.

SP: Ryan Edell

Edell was taken in the 8th round of the 2005 Draft from the College of Charleston, and signed for $90,000. After going 8-2 with a 3.67 ERA in 2005 with the College of Charleston, Edell continue his success at Mahoning Valley as the lefty was 3-4 with a 2.95 ERA in 11 starts (14 games total). He also only allowed 65 hits in 64 IP, while striking out 62.

SP: Jorge Riera

Riera was signed as an undrafted free agent in 2003, and spent the 2003 and 2004 seasons in the Dominican and Venezuelan Summer Leagues. His two years in the Summer Leagues he combined to go 9-5 with a 1.97 ERA in 29 games and 128 IP. Last year at Burlington, the right-handed Riera was impressive as he went 3-2 with a 3.10 ERA in 6 starts (13 appearances total). In 52.1 IP he only allowed 45 hits, and struckout 38.

SP: Albert Vargas

The right-handed Vargas is another non-drafted free agent signing, who signed in October 2001.The 21-year old Venezuelan native spent his first three years in the Venezuelan and Dominican Summer Leagues from 2002-2004, going a combined 10-1 with a 1.49 ERA in 26 games and 109 IP. Last year, he pitched at Burlington and Mahoning Valley and went a combined 3-3 with a 2.97 ERA, giving up 41 hits in 39.1 IP and struckout 29.