Tony Lastoria's not one of those guys that brings the golf clubs down to spring training with him every March. He spends a couple days with the family, and then spends two weeks living at the baseball diamonds with his notebook in hand and his video camera over his shoulder. And he's been peppering us with some great stuff each day. Today he hits on former top prospect Dan Cevette's comeback as well as a myriad of random notes from Winter Haven.

Cevette Working His Way Back Onto Indians Radar

A little over two years ago, left-hander Dan Cevette was considered one of the top young hurlers in the Indians farm system. In fact, some believe he still is. But these days, Cevette is trying to work his way back from injury and into the big picture he seemed so clearly in just a few short years ago.

Cevette was drafted by the Indians in the third round of the 2002 Draft out of high school (PA). After a few good showings in Burlington and Mahoning Valley in 2002 and 2003, Cevette burst onto the scene in 2004 when in 16 combined starts for Mahoning Valley and Lake County he compiled a 5-0 record with an amazing 1.91 ERA over a total of 80 innings pitched and struck out 80 while walking only 20.

He used the 2004 season as a springboard into 2005 where in 17 starts he went 5-4 with a 2.73 ERA and in 82.1 innings had 85 strikeouts and gave up 30 walks.

But, while Cevette had a very good year in 2005 at Lake County, things started to take a turn for the worse as he was sidelined early in the season for two months with a broken thumb after trying to field a groundball with his bare hand. He came back from that injury well, but the most devastating injury occurred at the end of the season where he suffered a torn labrum in his

pitching shoulder and had to have surgery in the offseason to correct the issue.

Cevette rehabbed almost the entire 2006 season in extended spring training in Winter Haven, and made three starts late in the year at Lake County totaling five innings. He continued his rehab through the offseason and went into the 2007 season ready to get going again, but halfway through the season his shoulder flared up on him.

"I rehabbed all offseason and came into the 2007 season feeling good to go, and the Indians had me as a starter again," said Cevette in a late afternoon interview on Tuesday.

"I was throwing a lot and the volume was still high, and at the middle of the season I just crashed again.

They sent me up to Cleveland to have me looked at, and the doctor said I need to be a low volume guy (innings pitched) and be a reliever."

Reportedly, the bullpen is exactly where Cevette will now need to learn to earn his keep, although the Indians still feel there is a possibility of him returning to a starting role because of his solid three pitch mix of a fastball that consistently sits around 88-91 MPH and tops out at 92, a very good changeup, and a slider that is still a work in progress.

Working out of the bullpen, it is not known if there will be any restrictions with Cevette's pitch count or how often he makes an appearance, but in any case he is excited with how he feels.

"I am not sure how they are going to do it," said Cevette. "I am just excited with how I feel, and excited about this season.

My expectations are through the roof."

Cevette has every right to be excited about his potential this season as he feels he is at least back to or better than he was before his injury two years ago. He is a pitcher where his fastball is deceptive and can get in on hitters quickly because of his real easy and loose delivery.

He also has a quirk in his delivery where he cocks the ball behind his head, which can make it hard for opposing hitters to pick up the ball.

"I think the Indians have been great with me as they have been patient and let me work things out," said Cevette. "Right now I feel I could compete at any level, and I don't care where you put me, I know I can go out there and get guys out.

But, I would say I am back and stuff-wise as good and better as I ever was.

I am definitely a more intelligent pitcher now."

The confidence is brimming with Cevette, but along the road to recovery it has been rough where he has experienced several ups and downs.

"I'll tell you, being hurt since the end of 2005 has been tough," said Cevette. "I t is like a roller coaster with a lot of peaks and valleys, and you are thinking you are good then you are feeling terrible.

You really sit back and have a lot of time to analyze and think about things and what you really want to do.

I sat back and just decided that I am going to go 150% at this until I know I can't pitch, and until I can't compete at a good level I want to do this.

I have never gone out there and felt over-matched, even when I was hurt.

I think that is the key, to stay confident.

No matter what people are saying, like when they say "you are off the radar" or whatever.

You have to stay confident not to let that stuff bother you or it can spiral down from there."

Right now, it looks like Cevette is pegged for a bullpen role at either Akron or Kinston. Heck, who knows, he could even be one of those guys on the bubble as a candidate to be released.

But, the way things look, Cevette should stick around in the Indians organization awhile longer.

That said, after this season Cevette will be a six year minor league free agent and will be able to sign with any team he chooses. As a result, if the Indians keep him it is probably in their best interest to have him get considerable time in Akron this year so they can properly see what they have in Cevette before they run the risk of losing him after the season.

Wherever Cevette lands in 2008, he knows what his strengths and weaknesses are and what he has to do to improve. One of his best attributes is his confidence and how he goes right after hitters. He is not afraid to pitch inside, and his nasty changeup can make hitters look foolish at times.

"I think I can throw pretty good inside and then my changeup away is definitely my out pitch," said Cevette. "It moves a lot. One of the guys who was hitting against me this year said the changeup never does the same thing.

Sometimes it goes away, sometimes it goes down, sometimes it stays straight.

It is a very deceptive pitch.

Throwing in hard to righties, and then throwing something away soft can get ‘em diving a little

bit."

While his changeup is his bread and butter pitch, Cevette still needs a lot of work on his breaking ball to be more successful. He has worked hard to try and develop his slider into a more consistent pitch, but is still having problems with it.

"I need a consistent breaking ball," said Cevette when asked about what he needs work on the most. "The higher up you get, if you are in the pen a two pitch combination is good but if one of those pitches is not working one day they are going to sit on you.

So, I need a consistent breaking ball.

Something I can throw for a strike.

At times it is there, it is where it needs to be, but other times it is like I have never thrown a breaking ball before.

It has been the hardest pitch for me to be consistent with.

It is tough because I worked extremely hard at it in the offseason, and I worked a lot to get it down and even neglected some of my other stuff to work extra on the breaking ball but it just has not really gotten there.

Sometimes it is great, but other times it looks like a high school guy pitching.

I tend to fall away from it and go just to my fastball or changeup and sometimes I can get in trouble where the changeup may be flat that day and they can sit on the fastball.

But, for the most part, most of my outings have been fastball first, changeup second, and then the breaking ball to show something different."

Outside of baseball, Cevette has become quite the accomplished recording artist and even has his own recording studio. He listens to a lot of alternative music and Christian rap, and was inspired by Eminem's "Infinite" album a few years ago to do some hip-hop recordings at his recording studio in his house where he worked with several big names on some recordings.

"Being left-handed, I guess I am a little more artsy than most people," joked Cevette.

"I actually play piano and a pretty good guitar.

I play in bars back at home and do acoustic sets, and the hip-hip thing came about as I can't sing well but I can rap and put a rhythm to the stuff I know and I understand the word schemes."

As for the recording studio, it is something Cevette is very serious about. So much so,

whenever his playing days end he plans to make a career out of it.

"The recording studio is something I build on every year," said Cevette. "I have a few guys back home I work with, and also some of the bigger guys in the industry who have passed through my town.

I did some work with Bone Thugs-n-Harmony, Blackchild, and Tony Yayo from G-Unit.

It is just something fun to do, and I don't take it real serious right now.

Although, when I do finish up with baseball I do want to own my own recording studio.

I am really good at the engineering side of it, and I do my own producing and recording."

For now, Cevette is working his way back onto the Indians radar as a top pitching prospect in the system. So his recording career can wait.

Notebook

- Buffalo was on the road yesterday and lost to Round Rock 8-2. Offensively, they were lead by outfielder Nathan Panther who was 2-for-3 with a solo home run and third baseman Wes Hodges who also had a solo home run.

Buffalo only had five hits in the game.

On the pitching front, Fausto Carmona got the start as it was his regular day to pitch but the Indians were off, and he allowed three unearned runs on six hits in five innings of work while striking out five.

Left-hander Shawn Nottingham and right-hander Neil Wagner combined to pitch the final three innings, with Nottingham struggling (5 runs, 4 hits, 3 walks) and Wagner impressing (0 runs, 2 hits, 0 walks).

- Left-hander David Huff looked to be in mid-season form yesterday. He was brilliant in three innings, allowing no runs or walks and by my count only one hit while striking out one.

There is a real difference when you see him pitch compared to the others in the Kinston and Lake County group, and you can see how much more of a polished pitcher he really is.

He has excellent composure on the mound, looks like a big league starter already, and looks like he indeed is on the major league fast-track.

Because of the logjam of starters at Buffalo and Akron, he is expected to start the season in the Kinston rotation.

Click on his hyperlink to see a video of him in action yesterday.

- With roster cuts looming, right-hander Joanniel Montero may have punched his ticket out of Cleveland with an awful showing yesterday. He was bombed in about two innings or work and showed little command or the ability to get anyone out.

- Right-hander Luis Valdez looked solid, and is in a battle with what seems like 30 guys for a bullpen spot in Kinston and Lake County.

- Right-hander Paolo Espino looked strong yesterday, and looks like he could be a very good reliever down the road, although there still is no word whether he will stick in the rotation this year or move to the bullpen.

- Right-hander Steven Wright pitched in a Mahoning Valley scrimmage, and was okay. Click on the hyperlinks for Valdez, Espino and Wright to see videos of them in action yesterday.

- Apparently, left-handed reliever Rich Rundles has been wowing Tribe officials in major league camp. As a result, he has jumped onto the bullpen scene, and is now a depth option for the Indians possibly as the first left-hander they would turn to if Aaron Fultz or Rafael Perez go on the disabled list.

- The talk around camp is that it is all but a done deal where the Indians will move their Triple-A affiliate from Buffalo to Columbus next year. While no deal has been officially made through a press release, supposedly it is but a formality at this point and an official announcement will be made sometime during the season.

- In regard to my report yesterday about the Indians signing Edward Salcedo, I got a lot of e-mails on the subject and just wanted to clarify what I was told. This did not come from an Indians official, but from someone with ties to the Indians international dealings.

I can't say more than that, as you have to keep a source in confidence.

Hopefully an official announcement is made soon.

- First baseman Chris Nash has been bothered by a muscle strain of some sort in his right rib cage area and has not played the past few days. He has been working out, and is expected to be back in action soon.

- First baseman Jordan Brown and right fielder Steven Head stayed behind in Winter Haven yesterday while their Akron and Buffalo teammates went on the road to play in Kissimmee. Bot h have some nagging injuries they are trying to recover from and played a short scrimmage with Mahoning Valley.

- Today is a camp day for the minor leaguers. No games are scheduled, just drills and a couple of short inter-squad scrimmages. The big league club will once again be on the road today, but six pitchers will throw in the minor league scrimmages, namely Jake Westbrook, Rafael Betancourt, Joe Borowski, and Aaron Fultz.

I'll be back with a short update tomorrow because of the short camp day today. I have an interview with outfielder Nick Weglarz ready to go, so be on the lookout for that.

Also, sometime in the next few days I will post a photo gallery of all the pictures of players from camp.

Also, thanks to Ken Carr for the photo assistance with the picture for Dan Cevette in this article.