With minor league opening day barely over 48 hours away, Tony will be providing us with team previews for all the Indians full-season minor league affiliates through the end of this week. Today, we kick off the team previews with the Single-A Lake County Captains. No one knows the minors like Tony. And no one covers the Cleveland Indians organization from top to bottom better than Sportstime Ohio and TheClevelandFan.com.

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In the Captains debut season in 2003 they took the Northeast Ohio area by storm winning just short of 100 games and getting to the Championship Series of the South Atlantic League playoffs. However, since then they have failed to make the playoffs, and in some cases (like 2006 for example) the team lacked a lot of talent and almost appeared to be an afterthought by the Indians organization.

Things changed some last year, as while the Captains missed the playoffs for the fourth straight season, the product put on the field was impressive with the likes of Matt Whitney (1B), Beau Mills (3B/1B), Nick Weglarz (OF), Carlos Rivero (SS), Jared Goedert (3B/2B), Matt McBride (C), Hector Rondon (RHP), Jeanmar Gomez (RHP), Paolo Espino (RHP), and Luis Perdomo (RHP). There were some impressive individual offensive performances before players changed zip codes to Kinston, and the very young starting rotation started slow but turned itself around by the second half of the season.

This year, the team looks like it will be very competitive and their strength will be in the pitching department. In fact, the starting rotation and bullpen are both loaded with intriguing prospects with power arms, good stuff, and lots of projection as quality major league players. Offensively, the Captains may struggle a little from the outset. Except for Chris Nash there is very little pop in the lineup, but the team will have a lot of speed. Fans are likely to see a lot of National League style baseball at the corner of Vine Street and Rt. 91 where new manager Aaron Holbert gets creative with stealing bases, hitting and running, bunting, and so on to create scoring opportunities.

Even though the team is young and inexperienced, they have promise. Most importantly, the roster has many legit "prospects" who should be exciting to see and watch develop over the course of the season. When it gets down to it, the wins and losses don't matter much as it is all about evaluating individual talent and how they perform over a 140 game season.

Minor League Affiliates

Buffalo Bisons (AAA)
Akron Aeros (AA)
Kinston Indians (High A)
Lake County Captains (Low A)
Mahoning Valley Scrappers (Short Season A)
GCL Indians (Rookie)

Coaching Staff

Manager: Aaron Holbert
1st season as Lake County manager, 1st season in Indians organization

Hitting Coach: Jim Rickon
3rd season as Lake County coach, 10th season in Indians organization

Pitching Coach: Ruben Niebla
3rd season as Lake County pitching coach, 8th season in Indians organization

Roster and Rotation

Pitchers (12):
Christopher Archer (RHP)
Garrison Campfield (RHP)
Dallas Cawiezell (RHP)
Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP)
Santo Frias (RHP)
Jonathan Holt (RHP)
Josh Judy (RHP)
Kyle Landis (RHP)
Ryan Miller (LHP)
Ryan Morris (LHP)
Vinnie Pestano (RHP)
Mike Pontius (RHP)

Catchers (2):
Doug Pickens
Michael Valadez

Infielders (7):

Jeff Hehr
Jansy Infante
Chris Nash
Dustin Realini
Karexon Sanchez
Mark Thompson
Matt Willard

Outfielders (4):
Matthew Brown
Lucas Montero
Roman Pena
Adam White

Rotation:
Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP)
Santo Frias (RHP)
Ryan Morris (LHP)
Ryan Miller (LHP)
Chris Archer (RHP)

Players to Watch

Matt Brown - Outfielder

Age: 23 Height: 6'1" Weight: 183 Bats: Left Throws: Right

				OPS
2007 Mahoning Valley	.250	63	224	22

The Indians 13th round pick in 2007, coming out of college last year Brown's biggest challenge was developing better plate discipline. He is an intriguing outfielder who offers a great package of overall tools, one of the best in the 2007 draft. He was the 184th best prospect in the 2007 draft according to Baseball America and that publication predicted he could have gone as high as the 3rd or 4th

round so he is a very good late round pick by the Indians. He has good bat speed, raw power, good arm strength, is an average runner and his defense is a major strength for him right now. He is an all-out player which is good in the field, but he takes that attitude to the plate with him which presents a problem at times, so the Indians will continue to work as they did in the Fall Instructional League to get him to shorten his long, maximum-effort swing.

Roman Pena - Outfield

Age: 21 Height: 6'0" Weight: 190 Bats: Left Throws: Left

2007 Lake County	.240	123	455	58
Career	.259	179	660	91

The Indians drafted Pena out of high school in the 9th round of the 2005 Draft, and after not playing professionally in 2005 he made his professional debut in 2006 with the GCL Indians. That season, in 205 combined at bats in the GCL and Lake County, Pena hit .302 with 7 HRs and 26 RBIs. Pena is an exciting left-handed hitter who has line-drive power to all fields. He has average range in the outfield, but has a very strong arm due to his experience as a pitcher in high school where he consistently clocked in at around 85-88 MPH. With his power arm and electric bat, he projects as a good right fielder; however, he is lacking in size. Going forward, Pena will need to work on his approach at the plate, namely his plate discipline where in 660 career at bats he has struck out 205 times, which is about once every three at bats. This will be Pena's second season in a row at Lake County, and he will be counted on as one of the main run producers in the lineup.

Mark Thompson - Shortstop

Age: 23 Height: 5'9" Weight: 165 Bats: Right Throws: Right

2007 GCL Indians	.281	11	32	3

Chris Nash - First Baseman

Age: 21 Height: 6'5" Weight: 230 Bats: Right Throws: Right

2007 GCL/Mahoning	.303	63	228	32
Career	.303	63	228	32

The Indians selected Nash in the 24th round of the 2006 Draft out of Johnson County Community College (KS). Nash came out last year and had a really good extended spring, played well in the Gulf Coast League and Mahoning Valley, and did really well in the instructional league this offseason. He is a huge first baseman who should continue to fill out as he matures. His big frame, strength, and size at 6'5" 230 at 21 years of age make him very projectable to be a big power hitter. Last year, in 238 at bats he only hit three home runs, but he piled up 20 doubles which is a clear sign that the power is there and may be on the verge of emerging as he matures and becomes more accustomed to the feel of wood bats. Nash is an intelligent kid who handles himself really well and is a hard worker. Even with his enormous size, Nash is very athletic and moves very well around the bag at first base. He made a lot of progress in the instructional league and during the year at first base and has become a solid defender at the position. After a very good debut season last year, Nash has put himself in a position where he has been noticed and for people to look at him. His progression this year should be interesting, and he is one of the top candidates to have a breakout campaign in 2008.

Kelvin De La Cruz - Left-handed Pitcher

Age: 19 Height: 6'5" Weight: 187 Bats: Left Throws: Left

	W	L	WHIP	
2007 GCL/Mahoning	5	4	3.11	15
Career	9	9	3.90	37

De La Cruz was signed as a non-drafted free agent out of the Dominican Republic in December of 2004. Last year, De La Cruz showed much improved arm strength as his fastball velocity jumped up to 88-92 MPH and topped out at 93 MPH, where the previous year it was only 84-86 MPH. His fastball velocity could still increase because he is still young and getting bigger and stronger. He compliments his fastball with a curveball and changeup. The changeup has the makings of a plus pitch and has swing and miss value and depth. His curveball is a 12-6 hammer with the makings of an average breaking ball. He has the size, the pitches, and the intelligence to grow a lot in the coming years. He projects as a future starter, showing an aggressive approach on the mound where he challenges hitters and pounds the strike zone. He is very athletic and fields his position well. He has good attention to detail, and is a student of the game. At 6'5", he is a very tall kid, and as he matures he should get bigger and stronger as he fills into his frame.

Santo Frias - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 20 Height: 6'3" Weight: 190 Bats: Right Throws: Right

	W	L	WHIP	
2007 GCL/Lake	2	3	2.24	11
Career	6	7	1.77	22

Frias was signed as a non-drafted free agent in December of 2005 and made his stateside debut in 2007 pitching for the rookie level GCL Indians and later at Single-A Lake County. When Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins was heading up the Latin Operations in 2006 he was a big fan of Frias, and he still is. Frias continues to improve, is a strike-thrower and has a big frame that he is still growing into. He reminds some in the Indians organization of Fausto Carmona because of his big frame, big back, room to put on weight, and loose arm. Frias has a good three-pitch mix with an 88-92 MPH fastball, slider and changeup. The slider is his best secondary pitch and has the potential to develop into a good major league pitch. He has the

frame and the pitches, and still is only 20-years old. The Indians feel that as he fills out and matures his fastball has the potential to add velocity and become a big weapon. He also has a very low home run rate (0.32 HR/9 career). Frias' performance in the GCL (2-3, 1.88 ERA, 9 starts) and Lake County (0-0, 4.32 ERA, 2 starts) was impressive to where he now is a legit pitching prospect in the Indians system.

Jonathan Holt - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 22 Height: 6'2" Weight: 210 Bats: Left Throws: Right

2007 Mahoning Valley	2	3	4.32	16

The Indians selected Holt in the 5th round of the 2007 Draft from the University of Tampa where he was their closer. He was described in scouting reports as being durable with good fastball movement and a two pitch mix - fastball and slider although his changeup has the potential to be a good pitch against lefthanders which is something he probably needs to be a late inning guy and not just a specialist. He doesn't break 90 MPH with his fastball very often, pitching at 88 MPH mostly, but like real estate, it's all about location and his fastball has good arm side run. He is a strike thrower as evidenced by his 27:4 K/BB ratio in 33 innings last summer. His numbers were a bit skewed as the Indians used him four times as a starter. This proved disastrous to his stats as he had a 9.00 ERA in 12 innings as a starter and a 1.69 ERA and a 0.90 WHIP in 21.1 innings as a reliever. Many think that Holt has a chance to move fast as a reliever and potentially be the first Indians' 2007 draftee to reach the majors. Holt projects to be a good 6th or 7th inning guy, or if he overachieves, a major league setup man maybe in the mold of Rafael Betancourt.

Ryan Miller - Left-handed Pitcher

Age: 21 Height: 6'0" Weight: 195 Bats: Left Throws: Left

2007 GCL/Mahoning	4	4	3.83	12
Career	4	4	3.83	12

[redacted]

Ryan Morris - Left-handed Pitcher

Age: 20 Height: 6'3" Weight: 175 Bats: Left Throws: Left

2007 GCL/Lake	3	2	3.89	14
Career	4	7	4.23	23

The Indians selected Morris in the 4th round of the 2006 Draft out of high school (Charlotte, NC). Morris is a fierce competitor on the mound, and his makeup is off the charts. He features a four-seam fastball that consistently clocks in at 87-91 MPH, and has natural sink. He also throws a curveball and changeup, with his changeup being the better of the two at this time. His curveball has good tilt and a lot of separation from his fastball, which creates a lot of deception and he has shown some ability to get some swing and misses with it. Morris saw a significant increase in his velocity going into his draft year, and saw it increase some again last year with the Indians. At 6'3" 175 pounds, he has a projectable body where as he matures and fills out he should also get stronger and add more velocity to his fastball. Going forward, Morris will continue working on refining his control and command. The 2006 Draft is looking like one of the Indians best drafts in years, and if some of the young pitchers like Morris develop as hoped it would be a no-brainer. Morris is a left-handed pitcher to keep an eye on this season to see his growth not only physically, but as a pitcher as well.

Mike Pontius - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 20 Height: 6'2" Weight: 235 Bats: Right Throws: Right

2007 GCL/Lake	0	3	5.03	20
Career	0	3	5.03	20

The Rest

Chris Archer (RHP): At 19 years of age, Archer should be one of the youngest players in the South Atlantic League. Archer was drafted in the 5th round of the 2006 Draft out of high school, and this season will be a true test as he struggled the last two years in the minors (1-10, 6.37, 21 games, 77.2 IP, 80 H, 42 BB, 75 K) where he mainly was in the Gulf Coast League. Archer has a live arm where he gets his fastball up to 92 MPH, and as he matures the velocity is expected to increase. His best pitch is a slider with good bite that sits in the low 80s.

Dallas Cawiezell (RHP): The Indians selected Cawiezell in the 40th round of the 2007 Draft out of Valparaiso. He is a bit of a project, but at 6'6 and over 250 pounds he is an intimidating presence on the mound. To top it off, he throws good heat where his fastball sits around 93-95 MPH. He throws a decent slider and splitter, but both pitches need more work. He has some control issues, which may be a result of his very unorthodox delivery. In eight relief appearances at Mahoning Valley last year, Cawiezell was 0-1 with a 3.46 and in 13 innings allowed 12 hits and 5 walks while striking out 13.

Kyle Landis (RHP): The Indians selected Landis in the 18th round of the 2007 Draft out of the University of Pittsburgh. At Pittsburgh, Landis was a dominating reliever where he went 4-4 with a 2.12 ERA in 51 innings pitched. He carried that over to his professional debut in Mahoning Valley where in 20 relief appearances he was 1-0 with a 0.33 ERA and in 27.1 innings allowed 17 hits and 10 walks while striking out 37. Landis excels at throwing strikes and has good command of his fastball.

Jeff Hehr (3B): Hehr was drafted in the 20th round of the 2007 Draft out of Eastern Michigan University. Hehr is also a local kid, as he graduated from high school at Youngstown Cardinal Mooney. He is an athletic and a very reliable defensive player, and has average tools across the board. His bat is questionable, but he did have a good camp this spring in Winter Haven and could be one of those sleeper players who puts up a solid season this year in Lake County. Last year at Mahoning Valley, Hehr hit only .234 with 0 HR, 18 RBI and 4 stolen bases in 167 at bats.

Josh Judy (RHP): The Indians drafted Judy in the 34th round of the 2007 Draft out of the Indiana Institute of Technology. The 6'4" 200-pounder is yet another power arm who will be in the Captains bullpen. Judy consistently throws in the 91-93 range, topping out as high as 95 MPH. He also throws a good slider and displays very good composure on the mound. Although he signed late last year he pitched well in limited time with the Indians as he was 1-2

with a 0.36 ERA, and in 25.1 innings allowed 18 hits and 11 walks while striking out 21 in 13 combined appearances (1 start) at Mahoning Valley and the GCL.

Lucas Montero (OF): Montero was signed in January 2004 out of the Dominican Republic. He is a versatile outfielder who can play all three outfield positions, and has a nice speed/power combo at the plate and on the bases. In 2006, Montero made his stateside debut in the GCL and hit .263 with 6 HR, 26 RBI, and 23 stolen bases in 171 at bats. Last year he only played in 37 combined games at Lake County and Mahoning Valley because of various injuries.

Vinnie Pestano (RHP): The Indians took a shot in the dark drafting Pestano in the 20th round of the 2006 draft out of Cal-State Fullerton. Pestano had undergone Tommy John surgery after blowing out his arm earlier in the year and was just starting his rehab, but the Indians liked his potential and drafted him anyway. Pestano is still on the road to recovery, but may end up being a risk that pays big dividends for the Indians. He is a confident pitcher with good mound presence who goes after hitters, and will be one of the main late inning relievers for the Captains. His fastball sits in the low 90s, but as he continues to regain health he is expected to add another 2-3 MPH on his fastball. In his professional debut last year, in 21 games at Mahoning Valley he was 1-1 with a 3.57 ERA and in 22.1 innings allowed 17 hits and 7 walks while striking out 27.

Doug Pickens (C): Pickens was the Indians last pick in the 2007 Draft, as the Indians selected him in the 50th round out of the University of Michigan. Pickens is a good line drive hitter his will be the leader to help guide this young Captains pitching staff this season. His has a strong arm and is a solid receiver with good makeup. This season will be Pickens debut as a professional as he did not play last year after being drafted.

Dustin Realini (1B/3B): Realini was drafted in the 28th round of the 2006 Draft out of Santa Clara University. At 6'2" and 200 pounds, he has good size and will be one of the few bats in the Captains lineup capable of putting up some solid home run totals. He will most likely split time at first base and third base, but should get most of the playing time at first base early in the season while fellow first baseman Chris Nash recovers from a lat injury. In the last two seasons, Realini has hit .243 with 21 2B, 2 3B, 6 HR, and 53 RBI in 374 combined at bats in Mahoning Valley, Lake County, and Kinston.

Adam White (OF): White was taken in the 9th round of the 2007 Draft out of West Virginia University. The 5'10" 195-pounder was considered one of the fastest players available in the draft after he ran the 60 yard dash in under 6.5 seconds, and was graded out as an 80 on the scouting scale for speed (80 is the highest mark). While defense and speed are his hallmarks, his bat is questionable and will decide how far in the system he can go. When you watch him, he looks and plays a lot like major leaguer Dave Roberts in the way he blazes around the bases and goes after balls in the outfield. Last year at Mahoning Valley, White hit .260 with 1 HR, 10 RBI, and 22 stolen bases in 219 at bats.

Others: Jansy Infante (3B/SS/2B), Garrison Campfield (RHP), Karexon Sanchez (3B/2B), Michael Valadez (C), Matt Willard (3B/SS/2B).

On Deck

Previews for Kinston, Akron, and Buffalo are coming the rest of this week, with Akron up next tomorrow.

All photos courtesy of Carl Kline, John Setlzer and Tony Lastoria