It has been a season of disappointment for the Cleveland Indians and their fans. While there are still well over 90 games left in the season, the Indians could be on the verge of pulling the plug on their season and start re-shuffling the deck for next year. If this happens, several of the Indians young players in the minors will get extended looks in Cleveland the last three months of the season in what would be an open audition for jobs going into 2009. One such player who may fall in this category is Buffalo first baseman Jordan Brown. Tony talked to him this past week.

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What this would mean is several of the Indians prospects in the upper levels of the system in Double-A Akron and Triple-A Buffalo would get a shot to not only make their major league debuts this year, but get extended playing time and show whether they are someone the organization wants to include in their plans to right the ship and get back to contention in 2009 and beyond. One such player who may fall in this category is Buffalo first baseman Jordan Brown.

Brown embodies exactly what the Indians lineup needs. While the Indians could use a little more thump in the lineup with a big power bat, probably their biggest need is for a hitter that hits around .300 who can consistently put the bat on the ball.

Brown has impeccable bat-to-ball ability, and with the strikeout laden lineup card manager Eric Wedge writes out every night, Brown would be a welcomed addition to it.

Coming into this season, in Brown's career he had low strikeout totals where he struck out only once every 8.5 at bats and had a 1:1 walk to strikeout ratio.

But, first things first. Brown has to get to Cleveland.

Right now, Brown is still working his way to the big leagues and is at the final rung on the minor league ladder in Triple-A Buffalo. After winning MVP awards in each of the last two seasons at advanced Single-A Kinston (2006) and Double-A Akron (2007), the adjustment to Triple-A has come slow for Brown (.287, 1 HR, 15 RBI), although he is learning and improving every day.

"There are a lot of things that I think in my mind that are different [here in Buffalo]," said Brown in a phone interview late last week. "The atmosphere is different just because a lot of the guys are older guys and veterans and know what to expect.

It is a little more laid back, which I am is sure more like the big leagues.

I think the pitchers execute their pitching and location a little better too.

They will throw a lot of off-speed stuff in hitter's counts and they will throw it whenever they want because they can throw strikes with it.

That is a tough thing to learn how to get used to, and you have to learn the hard way really."

Brown had arthroscopic surgery on his left knee in the offseason to clean up some bone chips in his knee that was causing pain. Brown thought the knee issue was behind him, but this year he has been slowed by tendonitis in the knee. It has been more than an annoyance as the pain at times is unbearable, and it has taken away some of the power in his swing to where he cannot sit on his back leg when he swings and consistently drive the ball.

"This year, the knee injury is different," said Brown. "Last year I could mask the pain better because it was scar tissue.

This year it is tendonitis, which is tougher to mask the pain.

I am starting to feel a lot better now.

I was on the DL for awhile, which was rough.

It was my back knee, same spot.

So it makes it tough to hit and tough to hit off-speed pitches.

But, overall I think I have done a good job of getting back on the field and a great amount of that is because of the training staff and them knowing what is good for me."

Brown spent about three weeks on the disabled list in May with patellar tendonitis in his left knee. He finally hit his first home run of the season last night, but still the knee injury has clearly affected his ability to really drive the ball. In spring training he hit several home runs in minor league games, and he even had a three home run game late in camp.

But, as the season has worn on the knee became more of a bother to where the Indians finally shut him down the first week of May.

After some time off to rest the knee, Brown is back and feels a lot better.

Even though Brown's home run total is down, it should be noted he is not a big home run guy. He projects to hit at most 20-25 home runs a year in the big leagues and is more a gap hitter who will pile up doubles.

In only 167 at bats this year in Buffalo, Brown has 18 doubles which leads the team and fourth in the International League even though he has missed about 20 games due to the knee injury.

The high doubles count shows he is just off with the power, and the home runs should come eventually.

"I think it definitely has [affected my power]," said Brown. "I have hit a lot of doubles this year, and a lot of time I will hit them at the wrong times and wrong places.

The other day, I hit a ball about as good as I could hit it right into a 30 MPH wind and it held up on the track.

To tell you the truth I could easily have four or five right now, and no one would ask me any questions.

Because if I sat on four or five every 130 at bats that is a different home run number if I hit for a high average.

I do expect to hit more as the season goes on as I get streaky with that kind of thing.

But, I am not going to blame it on the injury, because a lot of it has to do with pitch selection."

Buffalo is also not one of the most friendly hitting environments, especially in April and May when the weather is typically cold and a stiff wind blows into Dunn Tire Park from right field. It is not a setup that is conducive to hitting, particular left-handed hitters trying to hit the long ball.

In fact, last week Buffalo just had their first home game where the weather was finally nice, two months into the season.

"The thing that makes Buffalo so tough is you always have the wind chill right on the lake," said Brown. "If it is cold, the wind is blowing which is never a good thing as it is always blowing in from the right side. I'm starting to get used to that. The one good thing is if you can hit in this weather, you can hit in most places."

There is no question Brown can hit. The only question at this point is how the Indians are going to get him up to Cleveland. With Ryan Garko the everyday first baseman for the Indians, and others like Victor Martinez, Travis Hafner, and Casey Blake filling in as needed, there is not much of a need for a first baseman at this point.

Also, Buffalo teammate Michael Aubrey is ahead of Brown on the depth chart mainly because he is already on the 40-man roster.

So, for Brown to get a shot at first base there would need to be a rash of injuries, or even a trade.

One that may even involve him going to another team.

"I do understand there are a lot of people who play this position," said Brown. "There are a lot of very good players.

I may not end up at first base with the Indians as I could be traded in a month or two, or someone else could be traded which opens up a spot.

I try not to look at those kind of things as it is another variable to derail your performance.

It is easier for me to figure out what I need to do to improve as a player and as a first baseman and help my team win.

I know if I do those things that eventually I will get my shot as an everyday first baseman.

That's what kind of player I am and what good players do."

Brown has become a very good defensive first baseman, which is a testament to his strong work ethic. He moves well around the bag, has good footwork, and reacts well to balls hit to him.

"[Before 2006], I was always a first baseman," said Brown. "I was terrible, but I worked my ass off and I have become a pretty good first baseman.

I did a lot of extra work.

That is where I expect to be in the big leagues, but if my ticket up there is in left field I will definitely welcome the idea."

With Brown road blocked at first base, another possibility for him to break into the big leagues may be to play left field. If not as an everyday left fielder, at least with the ability to split time in the outfield and first base and show some versatility so the Indians can use him more effectively on the roster. The Indians moved Brown to the outfield in Kinston in 2006, and while Brown handled it well, the Indians moved him back to first base last year in Akron. Still, being able to play left field could end up being the advantage Brown needs to get to the big leagues.

"It is up to them whatever their need is or where they want to try me," said Brown. "It is something I have thought about, but I try to just do what they tell me.

I think I definitely could play left field, and it is a definite possibility for me as long as I am healthy.

That is the main issue.

Am I comfortable?

Yeah, I felt comfortable at the end of the year in Kinston.

It was a battle as I had never done it before.

It would really take a lot of reps for me to get comfortable again.

I definitely feel I can make a difference at first base where I can change a game defensively if I am focused and healthy, where in the outfield I think I can make routine plays.

So there is a difference."

Buffalo is more of a veteran team with few prospects on the roster. Some of this is by design as to a fault the Indians like to stockpile depth with major league experience at as many positions as possible in the event they need an arm or a bat for the big league club.

Some of it also has to do with a big gap in worthy upper level prospects in the system, particularly in the infield.

Brown is one of the few actual prospects in Buffalo, and he often talks to several of the veterans on the roster for pointers and advice.

[redacted]