As the minor league season winds down, so too is our minor league beat guy Tony. By the end of this weekend the regular season will have ended for five of the Indians six affiliates, leaving only Mahoning Valley a week to play. Next week the playoffs start and Akron and Lake County are already in and Kinston is in a dogfight to get there. Tony shares all the details on that plus talks about 2008 first rounder Lonnie Chisenhall's great season so far, Beau Mills and Carlos Santana winning MVP awards, and more! Be sure to check out Ton's radio show tonight which will be 100% on the Indians farm system.

"Minor Happenings" covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system. While most of the information in this report is from my own research and through interviews I have conducted with organizational personnel, some information in this report is collected and summarized from the various news outlets that cover each team.

In case you missed it, yesterday I posted a special edition of *Happenings* on Lake County . Als o, earlier in the week two player features on
Bo Greenwell
and
Ryan Edell
were posted.

I was in Akron last night for a final visit to talk to a bunch of the guys I had not yet had a chance to speak with this year like Tony Sipp, Kevin Dixon, Wes Hodges, Josh Rodriguez, Matt Whitney, and even Adam Miller who was in town rehabbing. I also had a 10-15 minute conversation with pitching coach Tony Arnold about some of the pitchers on his staff.

So, be on the lookout sometime next week for another special edition of
Happenings
this time on just the Akron guys.

On top of that, I also have some player features on the likes of Joey Mahalic, Stephen Head, and Jonathan Holt which I need to get out there in the next few weeks.

Also, my partner in crime Paul is out of town this week, and without anyone to fill in I'll be going

Han Solo tonight for our weekly radio show. Since I will be alone and we are still learning on the fly with this radio stuff, the show will be an hour from 10:30-11:30 pm EST. The show will be devoted 100% to talking prospects. Expects some bugs and issues since this is just the third show and I am by myself, but also expect lots and lots of sound bites and insight from my visit to Akron last night.

http://www.blogtalkradio.com/TheClevelandFan

And please call! It would help me a ton to have someone to converse with other than my imaginary friend tonight. The show is podcasted and archived so you can check it out anytime.

Indians Minor League Player Of The Week
(for games from August 21st to August 27th)

Wes Hodges (Third Baseman - Akron)
.421 AVG (8-for-19), 5 R, 2 2B, 3 HR, 4 RBI, 1 BB, 4 K

Akron third baseman Wes Hodges is going to need to build an expansion wing to his trophy room this offseason considering the rate at which he is racking up awards this year. Hodges picked up two awards this week as he was the only Akron player named to

the Eastern League postseason All-Star team and he was also named the Eastern League Rookie of the Year. Earlier this season he was named to the Southern Division roster for the annual All-Star game, played for the U.S. team in the Futures Game at Yankee Stadium, and was named as the Bank of America Eastern League Player of the Week for the week ending June 15th. His selection as the Eastern League Rookie of the Year was determined by voting from league managers and coaches, beat writers, and other media personnel. Hodges is the second consecutive Akron player to win the award as first baseman Jordan Brown won it last year.

Hodges is hitting .285 with 16 HR, 91 RBI, an .801 OPS, and leads Akron in home runs and RBI. He has also been a rock in the lineup by playing 128 of Akron's 136 games, and leads the club with 138 hits, 38 multi-hit games and 21 multi-RBI games, and his 91 RBI rank second in the league and are the second-most in single-season franchise history. Hodges also ranks second on the team in runs scored (66) and doubles (25), and is third in walks (52).

Can you say team MVP?

Honorable Mentions:

Brian Bullington (RHP - Buffalo): 1-1, 2.08 ERA, 13 IP, 14 H, 3 ER, 5 BB, 6 K
Matt Brown (OF - Lake County): .368 AVG (7-for-19), 2 R, 1 2B, 0 HR, 5 RBI, 1 BB, 2 K
Russell Young (LHP - Mahoning Valley): 0-1, 2.45 ERA, 11 IP, 7 H, 3 ER, 2 BB, 6 K
Tim Fedroff (OF - Mahoning Valley): .364 AVG (8-for-22), 4 R, 1 2B, 0 HR, 3 RBI, 5 BB, 3 K

Previous Winners:

08/14 to 08/20: Beau Mills (1B - Kinston)
08/07 to 08/13: John Drennen (OF - Kinston)
07/31 to 08/06: Carlos Santana (C - Kinston)
07/24 to 07/30: Matt Brown (OF - Lake County)
07/17 to 07/23: Michael Aubrey (1B - Buffalo)
07/10 to 07/16: Niuman Romero (3B - Kinston)
07/03 to 07/09: Nick Weglarz (OF - Kinston)
06/26 to 07/02: Stephen Head (1B/OF - Akron)
06/19 to 06/25: Trevor Crowe (OF - Akron)
06/12 to 06/18: Chris Gimenez (C - Akron)
06/05 to 06/11: Jim Deters (RHP - Kinston)
05/29 to 06/04: Steven Wright (RHP - Kinston)
05/22 to 05/28: Chris Archer (RHP - Lake County)
05/15 to 05/21: David Huff (LHP - Akron)
05/08 to 05/14: Steven Wright (RHP - Kinston)
05/01 to 05/07: Jeremy Sowers (LHP - Buffalo)
04/24 to 04/30: Jose Constanza (OF - Akron)
04/17 to 04/23: Hector Rondon (RHP - Kinston)
04/10 to 04/16: Wes Hodges (3B - Akron)
04/03 to 04/09: Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP - Lake County)

Chisenhall Is King Of The Valley

Mahoning Valley shortstop and 2008 first round pick Lonnie Chisenhall has put forth a very good showing in his professional debut this year. At only 19 years of age, Chisenhall has held up well in the NY-Penn League where most players are 21 to 22 years of age, and seems poised to break or at least finish in the top five of several Mahoning Valley hitting records. Through 58 games, Chisenhall is hitting .299 with 5 HR, 44 RBI and has an .816 OPS.

"Things are going pretty good," said Chisenhall in a recent interview at Eastwood

Field. "I have started to swing the bat good although I am hitting balls right at people. As long as you barrel it up there is nothing else you can really do.

I am happy with what is going on."

Chisenhall is still adjusting to the daily grind of being a professional baseball player and adjusting to wood bats. He was supposed to play in the Cape Cod League last year to get some experience with wood bats, but decided not to so this is his first experience in games with using a wood bat. He has messed around with wood bats at times in batting practice in the past, but never really used one in a game until he came to the Indians organization this year.

"Those balls you think you hit hard you really don't," said Chisenhall. "Metal bats sort of give you a false sense of success sometimes.

You get jammed with a metal bat you may still hit it hard, but here you'll break it in half.

As long as you barrel it up you should be okay.

There is a different sweet spot on the bat, so you have to learn how to hit with that and hit balls out front."

Chisenhall did not have to wait long this past June to be taken in the draft as he was taken in the first round by the Indians at the bottom of the round. Still, with the draft's first round now being aired on television it takes several hours longer than it used to get through the first round.

The long drawn out first round can be nerve-wracking for a player who expects to go in the first two rounds, and because of how slow it is he did not find out until two picks before the Indians selected that they were going to take him.

"It is kind of nuts," said Chisenhall. "I don't like the first round now. I went through the draft my senior year in high school and they just shot them out every thirty seconds or so. This year was long, and I was kind of more experienced and just waited and didn't get too excited because I know anything can happen on draft day.

I just waited to hear my name, and I was excited to go in the first round."

The Indians have Chisenhall playing shortstop for Mahoning Valley, but at this point still have plans to move him to third base in the offseason. To help him with the transition from shortstop to third base, Mahoning Valley manager Travis Fryman is the best teacher Chisenhall could have since Fryman himself went through the same position change.

"It is great having Fryman here," said Chisenhall. "I think they really like that I am here with him. He made the same transition as he was a shortstop all the way until his first day in the big leagues when they

told him he was going to play third.

He has really helped me and knows a lot.

He has been there and knows how it works."

The Indians did not burden Chisenhall with the position move right out of the gates mostly to just allow him to go out and play this year and not make too many changes at once. The transition to the everyday grind of professional baseball is enough for a young player such as Chisenhall to endure, but he has held up well so far.

"Being at the ballpark all day is the toughest adjustment for me," said Chisenhall. "I mean, I get here at lunch time and usually it is a ten hour day and you leave here at 11 o'clock or so.

It takes a toll on you, but it is better than a real job though."

Mills Wins MVP

Kinston first baseman Beau Mills was named the Carolina League MVP on Tuesday. Mills' selection as the Carolina League MVP comes off the heels of what has just been an outstanding second half for him.

After hitting just .268 with 9 HR, 47 RBI and an .821

OPS in the first half, Mills has been incredible in the second half of the season hitting .327 with 12 HR, 43 RBI, and a .962 OPS. The former 2007 first round draft pick currently leads the league in home runs (21) and RBI (90), is eighth in hitting (.293), and is also second in the league in extra base hits (58), third in hits (141), and fifth in slugging percentage (.506) and runs scored (78). Mills is the seventh Kinston player to win the MVP award, and the first since first baseman Jordan Brown won the award in 2006.

Other previous winners are:

Victor Martinez (2001), Richie Sexson (1995), Casey Webster (1987), Terry Whitfield (1973), and Jim Price (1963).

Mills has lived up to the hype as one of the best power hitters in the 2007 Draft, and has shown an advanced approach at the plate which will only help him as he moves up the minor league

ladder. The problem with Mills will always be his defense. His shoulder issues from last season were enough for the Indians to abandon Mills at third base this year, and while he has shown much improvement at first base since the beginning of the year he still needs a lot of work over there to become even just an adequate defender.

He has a below average glove and has had some problems with moving around the bag.

His footwork has been sloppy and he has had a hard time getting good jumps on balls.

It should be noted, though, that Mills is still learning how to play first base as last year when he came into the Indians organization it was his first experience at the position.

So, as he becomes more comfortable the hope is he will improve to where he can be at least a reliable defender there.

Santana California Dreaming

Kinston catcher Carlos Santana was named the California League MVP on Monday. Santana has not played in the California League for over a month, yet his announcement on Monday as the league MVP shows just how ridiculous his numbers were there

prior to the Indians acquisition of him on July 25th in the Casey Blake trade. Santana had a breakthrough season for former Dodger affiliate Inland Empire hitting .323 with 34 2B, 4 3B, 14 HR, and 96 RBI in 99 games, and has a chance to win the league batting title since he had enough plate appearances to qualify for it prior to being dealt to the Indians.

Santana also still leads the league in on-base percentage (.431) and is in the top five in RBI, slugging percentage (.563) and runs scored (88).

In 26 games at Kinston, Santana is hitting .354 with 5 HR, 17 RBI and a 1.030 OPS.

Scouts view Santana as an everyday big-league catcher with excellent potential offensively and some upside defensively. Santana has been widely mentioned as just an offensive catcher, but he clearly has the work ethic and untapped talent to become a good defensive backstop.

He has an excellent arm, but he needs a lot of work on his throwing mechanics as well as working behind the plate with receiving the ball, blocking balls, and calling games.

He is also very athletic and is not a base-clogger, and combined with his offensive talent and

upside defensively he is one heck of a talent the Indians were able to pry away from the Dodgers.

Frank The Tank

This past Thursday Akron right-hander put forth one of his best outings of the season retiring 21 of the first 23 hitters he faced while carrying a one-hit shutout into the eighth inning. The native of Rutherford, NJ retired the first nine hitters of the game, got a double play to get out of a mini-jam in the fourth, and then set down 11 in a row before a one-out double knocked him from the game in the eighth. In all, he went 7.1 innings and allowed one run on two hits, one walk and struck out seven.

The win was his 10th of the year and had tied him with right-hander J.D. Martin for the team lead until Martin won his 11th on Tuesday night.

This is the second straight year Herrmann has reached double-digit victories as he won 11 games for Kinston last season. Herrmann turned in his fifth straight quality start, and has allowed just nine runs in his last seven starts since making a pair of spot starts for Class AAA Buffalo July 5th and 10th, going 2-3 with a 1.94 ERA over that span. Opponents are hitting just .207 against him since his return. In Buffalo he was sensational in two starts going 0-2 with a 1.38 ERA, and in 25 combined starts this year between Kinston, Akron and Buffalo he is 10-8 with a 4.06 ERA.

Herrmann is someone I am a big fan of in the Indians organization. He is not sexy on the mound where he throws 98 MPH heat or throws two devastating wipeout pitches, but the guy is smart, durable, and knows how to pitch.

He may not have the best stuff, but he is an innings eater and just seems to get stronger in games where his velocity tends to peak in the 6th or 7th inning.

He is a legitimate depth starting option for the Indians possibly at some point late next year.

That said, he is Rule 5 Draft eligible after the season so it will be interesting to see if the Indians roster him or not.

If he is not rostered he almost definitely will be taken by another club.

Finally On The Mark

Lake County shortstop Mark Thompson has enjoyed a late season resurgence which has helped salvage what otherwise was an awful season offensively. The 2007 8th round pick out of Lewis-Clark State College got off to a rough start in April hitting just .096 (7-for-73) and only hit .177 with a .543 OPS in 56 games in the first half of the season.
Since the All-Star break things have slowly started to trend upward for Thompson where he is hitting a more respectable .269 with a .707 OPS in 60 second half games. In 116 games overall Thompson is hitting .227 with 5 HR, 43 RBI, has 19 stolen bases and a .632 OPS.

Thompson has really caught on lately since being inserted into the leadoff spot in the batting order. There was really no rhyme or reason why Lake County manager Aaron Holbert inserted the struggling Thompson into the role earlier this month, but he is looking like a genius because since the move Thompson is hitting .341 in his last ten games and .290 in the month of August. Holbert rationalized the move by saying that Thompson's at bats had been consistently improving over the course of the season, was making solid contact, and was doing a very good job working counts.

It appears this may just be a case of Thompson being moe comfortable hitting leadoff as that was where he hit all throughout college.

Many fans probably wondered why given his offensive struggles he continued to be in the everyday lineup and was given a much longer leash than most other prospects would be given to perform. The reason for that is simply due to the fact that Thompson is an incredible defensive middle infielder. He is without a doubt the best fielding middle infielder on the team if not in the entire Indians system.

At only 5'9" and 165 pounds Thompson has little to hang his hat on, but his hallmark will always be his defense.

There have been several comparisons made between him and John McDonald, and they are definitely there with the run through a wall play style, extraordinary defense, but questionable bat.

Aubrey Finally Healthy

Buffalo first baseman Michael Aubrey is finishing up what has been a monumental season for him health-wise. With just five games

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