Well, another minor league season has come and gone covering the Indians farm system, and with that it is time to put the wraps on the season with the third annual Minor League Tony Awards. Tony gives us his players of the year, his biggest breakthrough and disappointment players, and also names his all-minor league team for the Tribe. It's a fantastic piece T pens every year to wrap up the season. It's The Tony Awards.

Well, another minor league season has come and gone covering the Indians farm system, and with that it is time to put the wraps on the season with the third annual Minor League Tony Awards. While this is the final edition of *Minor Happenings* for this season, look for intermittent editions between now and the spring on TheClevelandFan.com to recap all the developments and news over the course of the offseason, and daily updates on my blog the
Cleveland Indians Minor League Insider
all offseason.

Also, with the 2008 season coverage now complete, work has already begun on the 2009 season as I have started to put together my Top 100 Indians prospect rankings for next year. I'l l start to unveil the Top 100 in late November or early December and countdown the list from #100 to #1 by the time spring training starts.

I will be issuing a book again with the prospect scouting reports, rankings, depth charts, and more goodies sometime in December.

For more details on that, check out
my blog
for updates throughout the offseason.

Thanks to everyone for reading, and again, a special thanks to Ken Carr and Carl Kline for all the help with the photos this year.

Offensive Player Of The Year

The Nominees: Abner Abreu (3B - GCL Indians), Lonnie Chisenhall (SS - Mahoning Valley), Trevor Crowe (OF - Akron), Chris Gimenez (C - Buffalo), Wes Hodges (3B - Akron), Beau Mills (1B - Kinston), Cord Phelps (2B - Mahoning Valley), Carlos Santana (C - Kinston)

The Skinny: Chisenhall (.290, 5 HR, 45 RBI, .794 OPS) and Phelps (.306, 2 HR, 22 RBI, .811 OPS) had great campaigns at Mahoning Valley to start their careers and should be two bats we talk about in the system a lot the next few seasons as they move along in their minor league careers. Santana flat out raked in 29 games at Kinston after being acquired in the Casey Blake trade hitting .352 with 6 HR, 19 RBI and a 1.043 OPS. He also won the California League MVP, a league he didn't even play in for the final five weeks of the season!

Gimenez showed an advanced approach at Akron this year (52 BB, 33 K) and had an excellent 1.024 OPS in 55 games before moving up to Buffalo.

Crowe was arguably the best player in minor league baseball for the month of June when he was unconscious and hit .400 with 4 HR, 24 RBI and had a 1.100 OPS.

Mills (.290, 21 HR, 90 RBI, .880 OPS) was the Carolina League MVP, and after a slow first half start (.222 AVG, .714 OPS in April) he hit .327 with 12 HR, 43 RBI and a .962 OPS after the All Star break and finished the season ranked in the top five in the league in many categories. Hodges set the Akron franchise single-season RBI record and was a steady offensive performer all year (.290, 18 HR, 97 RBI, .821 OPS). Abreu piled up 11 home runs in just 51 games.

And the Tony Award goes to: **Beau Mills**

While they deserve consideration for the award, Chisenhall and Phelps only played half a season and to win it they would have needed to put up eye-popping numbers because of the low amount of games played and they just didn't do that. The same goes for Santana who only played a total of 31 games in the Indians system this year.

He may have the best overall numbers (.321, 21 HR, 117 RBI, .999 OPS), but considering two-thirds of his playing time was in another organization it is hard to give him the award over someone else who was with the Indians all year.

Gimenez and Crowe were just not consistent enough all season and aside from a one month hot streak both put up pedestrian numbers at best the rest of the time.

Hodges excelled with driving in runs, but his poor finish where he hit .238 and had a .728 OPS after the All-Star break were a hit to his final numbers and caused his prospect standing to tumble some.

Mills on the other hand was impressive just about all season. There were some concerns the Indians reached when they took him with their first round pick last year, but he has now cemented himself as one of the top first base prospects in all of minor league baseball.

His excellent power is showcased on a nightly basis as he put up 21 home runs in the pitcher friendly Carolina League, and his 34 doubles show that there is more power to come.

There is no question Mills is a top five prospect in the Indians system and has a power bat the team needs.

He is an impact bat on the horizon for the Indians possibly as soon as sometime in 2010.

Pitcher Of The Year

The Nominees: Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP - Lake County), David Huff (LHP - Buffalo), Scott Lewis (LHP - Akron), J.D. Martin (RHP - Akron), Hector Rondon (RHP - Kinston), Josh Tomlin (RHP - Kinston)

The Skinny: De La Cruz dominated the South Atlantic League circuit where in 18 starts he was 8-4 with a 1.69 ERA before a call up to Kinston in July. In 27 combined starts he was 12-6 with a 2.98 ERA, which is outstanding for a big 20-year old power-armed lefty in his first full season pitching at three different levels.

Huff went 5-1 with a 1.92 ERA for Akron earlier this season before moving up to Buffalo in June where he continued to roll going 6-4 with a 3.01 ERA in 16 starts.

His combined ERA of 2.52 at Akron and Buffalo led the entire system, and his 143 strikeouts ranked second.

Lewis missed most of the first half of the season recovering from a lat injury he suffered at the end of spring training, but when he came back he was impressive going a combined 8-4 with a 2.40 ERA in 17 starts at Akron and Buffalo.

Martin was 100% healthy all year, finished strong, and had an outstanding season going 12-3 with a 2.41 ERA in 35 combined appearances at Akron and Buffalo.

Rondon took part in the Futures Game and

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