Four weeks from Sunday Tribe fans. That's when pitchers and catchers report to Winter Hav ... errr ... Goodyear, AZ. Which means it's almost Tony Lastoria season as well. Tony's started counting down his Top 100 2009 Indians Prospects, which we'll be running here on the site starting this week. And in this edition of Minor Happenings, he talks about that, his book, he and Paulie's radio show, and which Indians will be involved in the Winter Development Program which starts up this week at Progressive Field.

Here is another rundown of the week that was in the Indians minor league system....pitchers and catchers report four weeks from Sunday (wow)!

*** No official roster yet, but here are some of the unofficial names who will be in the Winter Development Program which starts up this week at Progressive Field: Matt LaPorta, Beau Mills, David Huff, Michael Brantley, Adam Miller, Wes Hodges, Frank Herrmann, Josh Rodriguez, Hector Rondon, Carlos Santana, Erik Stiller, Neil Wagner, Luis Valbuena, and Steven Wright

Those names are pretty much locks. It is also likely that Chris Gimenez, Wyatt Toregas, and a few others round out the roster which typically is just 15-20 players.

*** Special thanks to Jeff Stevens, John Gaub and Chris Archer for coming on my show Smoke Signals on Thursday . As many know, all three were traded to the Chicago Cubs for infielder Mark DeRosa. Each player called in and talked for 10-15 minutes about the trade and offered up their initial thoughts to the trade, how they reacted, how they were told, where they go from here, and more. It was certainly nice to get some perspective of some of the things players go through and think about when they are traded. It sure is bittersweet to say good bye, but best of luck to all three with their new teams.

For this week's show outfielder Nick Weglarz was scheduled to come on, but can't because of another committment, so he will be on sometime later in February. We actually may have a very special guest on this week, one that many Cleveland fans would enjoy. More on that later this week if their appearance is confirmed. If not, one of several minor leaguers will be on instead, but I will also provide more details on that later as well. The following show on Thursday January 22nd right-hander Frank Herrmann will be on as a guest.

*** Indians.com beat writer Anthony Castrovince actually brought this up earlier in the week, but left-hander Zach Jackson will be given a 4th option year this season. I had previously wrote an entry in November talking about how Michael Aubrey was set to get a 4th option year
and explained how Tony Sipp would likely get one down the road as well, but never thought to look into Jackson.

In a nutshell, you have to have less than five professional seasons and be out of options to be credited with a 4th option year. A season does not count unless you are on the active roster for 90 or more days, so short-season leagues don't count. Jackson was drafted and signed in 2004, but the season does not count because he was on the active roster for less than 90 days (short-season). His 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 seasons count which is only four, so this is why he qualifies for the 4th option year.

*** I just uploaded a ton of videos I had left from the 2008 season. These videos will be used and inserted on the prospect page for the according player once my scouting reports start posting next week. I also have lots more videos on my You Tube link
. When viewing the videos below, be sure to click on the "view in high quality" link just to the bottom right of the video and it will be crystal clear.

Shawn Nottingham
Ryan Goleski
Roman Pena
T.J. McFarland
Ryan Blair
Robbie Alcombrack
Rafael Vera
Michael McGuire
Lurvin Basabe
Lonnie Chisenhall
Josh Rodriguez

Kelvin De La Cruz
Isaias Velasquez
Jose Constanza
Jeremie Tice
Matt Willard
Donnie Webb
Delvi Cid
Clayton Cook
Chun-Hsiu Chen
Chris Gimenez
Brock Simpson
Abner Abreu
Bo Greenwell
Angel Rodriguez
Adam White
Adam Abraham

*** My 2009 Indians Top 100 Prospect Rankings start up this week. I am still trying to figure out how best to do it, but I will be at least posting two scouting reports a day until we get to #50. I like taking the time to post each player rather than post all 100 in one week. One, it obviously helps keep consistent content on the site during a very slow time. Two, and most importantly, it should allow people to digest and focus on each player rather than breezing through everyone at once. Anyway, I will have an intro piece on Sunday, and then it starts with #100 and #99 on Monday, #98 and #97 on Tuesday, etc. I may bump it up to three a day, but not sure yet.

*** With the prospect rankings finally getting going, I can now focus 100% of my attention on completing my book. Already this week I have been doing a lot behind the scenes securing 100 high quality pictures, one for each ranked player. This coming week I have to complete the stats setup which is a big undertaking with 100 guys, and once that is done I can finally start formatting it and dressing it up. I hope to be wrapping it up here sometime in the next 7-14 days, so it looks like it will definitely hit the press sometime later this month unless some unfortunate snag crops up.

Thanks for all who have expressed interest in receiving a copy of the book. As mentioned previously, the book will be nearly twice as big as last year's edition and will have full scouting reports for 100 players as listed on this site, but as a bonus will have scouting reports for 25-30 more players who will not be listed on the site at this time. The bonus scouting reports will be much shorter than the Top 100, but still anywhere from 5 to 15 sentences in length.