In the weekly new recap of the happenings in the Indians farm system, we find out that Adam Miller may be on the verge of a callup to AAA Buffalo. Also, Michael Aubrey is injurred once again and likely out for a long time, Trevor Crowe is racing up the prospect rankings, the Indians add a new minor league affiliate, and much, much more.

(for games from Thursday May 25 through Wednesday May 31)

Director's Cuts:

Indians Farm Director John Farrell commented on the following players in his weekly radio interview:

On Adam Miller: Farrell stated that Miller's start this past Tuesday night (7 IP, 1 R, 4 H, 8 Ks, 1 BB) was his best start since the 2004 season. Farrell was in attendance for the game, and was impressed with the aggressiveness Miller displayed to attack every hitter. Miller was also touching 96 MPH still in the 7th inning. Right now, there is no predetermined timeframe of when Miller may get a callup to Buffalo, but Farrell was quick to say "he will get AAA innings this year." He also went on to hint that if Miller continues to be impressive in his next 3-4 starts, he could be moved up (along with Rafael Perez).

On Kelly Shoppach: The need to get him more consistent at bats was the main reason he was optioned to Buffalo. With Victor Martinez in Cleveland, he only gets to play one day a week at most, and as a result his skills were eroding and he wasn't staying sharp. In Buffalo, for now he will play every other day until he gets back into regular game shape, and then he will play 5 days a week. (Note: Farrell's comments here seem to imply that since they don't want Shoppach in Cleveland as a 1-day-a-week backup catcher, that he could very well be trade bait this season or next offseason.)

On Jason Dubois: Throughout his minor league career, he has had above average production offensively. He handles balls well down in the strike zone, but struggles with pitches up in the zone. One of the biggest problems with Dubois that the Indians are working on is that he tends to get stiff with his lead arm when swinging, which results in a long bat swing path and makes him very susceptible to velocity.

On Brad Snyder: The organization decided to move him up in the lineup to the leadoff spot from his normal 3-4 spot in the order to get him to see more fastballs and protect him for the time being from seeing multiple pitch types each at bat. This shift in the lineup will help in the organization's continued efforts to work with Snyder on his two-strike approach, and since the shift in the order the results have been favorable. They have been working extensively with Snyder on controlling his front hip and shoulder since he has a habit of pulling it too soon, which results in an incorrect bat path.

On Chuck Lofgren: He was projected to go much higher in the draft, but fell due to signability concerns. The Indians feel they found a gem. Farrell threw out comparisons to a young Al Leiter as Lofgren's stuff,

presence and approach is nearly identical. Lofgren also has a knack for kicking it into a second gear on the mound when he has to pitch with runners in scoring position. To Farrell's knowledge, Lofgren is the youngest (or close to it) player in the Carolina League.

Prospect Profile:

Ben Francisco, Outfielder- Buffalo

Francisco's dazzling minor league season in 2005 combined with his outstanding showing in the winter leagues this past offseason put him into the Tribe's immediate plans in the outfield. After he missed almost the entire first two months of the season in 2005 with a sprained ligament in his left thumb, in a combined 87 games at Akron and Buffalo he hit .316 with 7 HRs, 49 RBIs and had 16 stolen bases. He then went on to hit .296 with 13 HRs and 31 RBIs in 60 games in the Mexican Winter League.

Listed at 6'1" and 190 pounds, Francisco is one of the Indians top outfield prospects, and he figures into the team's immediate plans in the outfield. His ability to play

any outfield position to go along with his speed and nice pop from the right-hand side of the plate could make him an attractive 4th outfielder option for the Indians. Coming into this season, in four career minor league seasons from 2002-2005 (358 games), Francisco had a .293 avg with 36 HRs, 191 RBIs, 74 stolen bases, and .818 OPS. To date, Francisco has had a so-so season at Buffalo, hitting only .243 with 6 HRs and 22 RBIs with 12 stolen bases. But, his somewhat disappointing numbers seem to be a team-wide problem shared by every player since the entire lineup is not performing to expected levels.

Fellow prospects Franklin Gutierrez or Jason Dubois would probably get the first call if the need for an outfielder arises this season for the Indians because they are already on the Indians 40-man roster, while Francisco is not. In any case, over the course of the next few months the Indians will need to make a decision on Francisco. There likely will be only one outfield spot available next season on the Indians roster (4th outfielder), of which at this point it looks like Francisco will have to contend with Gutierrez and Dubois for that spot. Trades and roster moves could affect that outlook of course, but

before such a competition can take place Francisco will need to be added to the 40-man roster since he is almost a slam dunk to be taken in the Rule 5 Draft if he is left unprotected.

Minor Notes and Transactions:

Buffalo (AAA): Jeremy Sowers was ranked #1 on *Baseball America's Hot Sheet* this week. The Hot Sheet is a weekly snapshot of which prospects are currently riding the biggest hot streaks….Franklin Gutierrez suffered a grade one left ankle sprain Monday, and has not played since. He is listed as day-to-day…. Eddie Mujica has not allowed a run in 26.2 innings this season between Buffalo and Akron….. Guthrie has allowed just two runs this season and has blanked the opposition in five of his six starts at Buffalo….Brian Slocum has been moved back into the starting rotation.

Akron (AA): After only a week at Akron, 1B Michael Aubrey went down with another injury last Friday. Aubrey has said that he heard a "pop" in the knee and has been placed on the disabled list with a right knee strain, although an MRI taken Wednesday morning indicates it is more serious than expected. The plan is to give the knee more time for the swelling to go down, and then they will re-evaluate the knee....Outfielder Ryan Goleski was promoted to Akron on Saturday, and he will take Aubrey's roster spot. Goleski's torrid May in Kinston also had a lot to do with the callup (.446 avg, 8 HRs and 37 RBIs)…..Kevin Kouzmanoff returned to the lineup on Sunday after missing three games with a strained left hamstring….Kouzmanoff also got some love in the *Baseball America Hot Sheet*
, coming in ranked at #4…. The Aeros placed Tony Sipp (left elbow inflammation) and Nick Pesco (right shoulder inflammation) on the disabled list Friday, and called up Kyle Collins and Aaron Laffey from high Class-A Kinston to

replace them on the roster….Outfielder Nathan Panther's left hand injury healed enough to activate him from the disabled list last week, and in turn catcher Armando Camacaro was put on the disabled list with a right calf strain.

Kinston (A+): Trevor Crowe was ranked #9 in this week's *Baseball America Hot Sheet*, and *Baseball Prospectus* also mentioned this week in an article that Crowe has been a "revelation" and that by season's end "Crowe could be pushing for honors as the top positional prospect in the Cleveland system"….Scott Lewis was the Carolina League Pitcher of the Week after he posted 9 innings of shutout ball in two games, and only gave up 4 hits and 1 walk while striking out 11….Lefthander Mariano Gomez made a spot start to fill in for regular starter Kevin Dixon. Gomez was recently received

from extended spring training last week after rehabbing a torn ACL……Dixon's suffered a mild hamstring strain Sunday while running. According to team officials, he will not go on the disabled listed, but he will miss another start or two....Kinston has not been swept in a series all season…. SS Brian Finegan will be out for six to eight weeks with a broken first metatarsal in his left foot. Finegan suffered the injury when he fouled a ball off his foot on Monday….Jose Constanza was called up from Lake County on Wednesday to replace Finegan. In his debut Wednesday night, Constanza singled, doubled, drew three walks and scored three times…..Pitcher Wyatt Allen also joined Kinston from extended spring training.

Lake County (A-): No specific news or transactions to report in Lake County, but the Indians did add another low level minor league affiliate last week. An official announced was

made that the Indians will field a team in the Gulf Coast League, starting this season. The home for this new team will be Winter Haven's Chain of Lakes Park. Play begins June 21st, and admission and parking will be free. This is a short-season rookie level team, and they will play a 54-game schedule. The actual roster won't take shape until after the June Amateur Draft, but should be made up of mostly high school draftees and young kids from the Dominican affiliate being exposed to the US for the first time.