For Indians first base prospect Jordan Brown, he couldn't wait to get the 2009 season going after a slightly disappointing 2008 campaign coming off back-to-back MVP seasons with High-A Kinston in 2006 and Double-A Akron in 2007. So far, that is showing as he is hitting a blistering .338 with 3 HR, 12 RBI and .956 OPS in 21 games with Triple-A Columbus this season. In a recent trip to the new Huntington Park in Columbus, Tony had a chance to sit down and talk with Brown, which he outlines in this piece.

For Indians first base prospect Jordan Brown, he couldn't wait to get the 2009 season going. So far, that is showing as he is hitting a blistering .338 with 3 HR, 12 RBI and .956 OPS in 21 games with Triple-A Columbus this season.

His good start to the season is a lot better than the start he got off to last year with then Triple-A affiliate Buffalo where he eventually finished the season hitting .281 with 7 HR, 51 RBI and a .754 OPS in 109 games. It was a solid season from a statistics standpoint, but considering he was coming off back-to-back MVP seasons with High-A Kinston in 2006 and Double-A Akron in 2007 it did not come close to living up to the expectations set on him by the fans, media and Indians themselves.

After his so-so 2008 campaign, Brown's disappointment rolled right into and through the offseason. In a conversation with him in the offseason on the radio show Smoke Signals he was noticeably upset with the decision made by the Indians to not roster him, and he felt like even after he was not rostered that he may go Rule 5 to someone. After he went

unpicked in the Rule 5 Draft, it was a hard dose of reality for him, and he viewed it as not a wakeup call but more of a rallying point for him to focus in on and prove everyone wrong for the decisions they made in the offseason.

Be it the fans for giving up on him, the Indians not rostering him, or other clubs not taking him in the Rule 5 Draft, his focus in 2009 is not only about getting himself back on the track to the big leagues. At the same time, he carries a pretty big chip on his should and is looking to prove everyone wrong and gain a little bit of retribution in the process.

"It is kind of like starting my career over from scratch is how I look at it," said Brown in a recent interview at Huntington Park in Columbus. "What I have done in the past is in the past. It is the only way to look at it. I can't harp on what has happened as it is only going to make it tougher.

It really is tough because things are different, but the only thing you can really do is continue to have good at bats.

The way everything transpired [in the offseason], you can't wait to get a chance to prove everybody wrong and really show what you can really do on the field, off the field, on the basepaths, and defensively.

It has been good so far, almost like therapy."

Fans and various media seemingly forgot overnight all the things that made Brown a two-time MVP and why many had him ranked as one of the Indians top five prospects going into the season. The Indians loaded up on a lot of big prospects in trades last year and had a very good draft, so Brown's fall in regard to his standing was expected, but he tumbled out of many Top 25-30 lists this season as a result. The icing on the cake was when the Indians decided not to put him on the 40-man roster, something that seemed like a lock going into last season.

Brown understands it is a "what have you done for me lately" mentality when it comes to how the media portrays him and how the fans perceive him as a player. Even after his two very good seasons in 2006 (.290, 15 HR, 87 RBI) and 2007 (.333, 11 HR, 76 RBI), many people focused on his poor start to his 2008 campaign where he hit .267 with a .710 OPS the first half of the season.

It should be noted that many people seem to ignore his second half of last season when he hit

.311 with an .848 OPS.

His second half performance nearly matched his career numbers coming into the season, yet people still focused mainly on his sub par first half performance.

"It is the business," noted Brown. "As quickly as people jump off, they jump back on.

Quite often people tend to look at the box scores and make judgments on a player based on that data alone; however, many fans are not privy to seeing what actually happened in the game since most minor league games are not televised. One of the most important stats the Indians keep is hard hit percentage, which is something you won't really find on any website.

Hard outs may go down in the box score just like another other out, but it is tracked internally by the Indians and valued highly when evaluating a hitter.

Brown did well in this category last year.

Sometimes hits in certain pitch counts are more telling as well.

"If you get deep into counts and have good at bats, it will translate," said Brown. "If you get ahead 2-0 and they leave a slider up and you hook a ball down the line and get a double out of it, that doesn't make you as good hitter.

It means you got away with a lucky hit, and got into a lucky count.

What makes you a good hitter is if you get two good pitches and you are down 0-2, you battle back to see several pitches or hit a line drive.

I don't care if it is an out, that is a good at bat.

That is what translates and carries over.

I don't think a lot of people see that, and that is what is important."

Brown is quick to note that the traditional statistics do matter; however, his main goal is to be a

consistent offensive performer.

"Numbers do count, because they don't lie," said Brown. "But there is more to it. Consistency is the key.
That is something I have always tried to do.

That is what is frustrating to me is people jumped off after I had two bad months [last year] early on when it was freezing and my knee felt terrible.

But the rest of the year I hit like .320."

One of the things going for Brown is the weather in Columbus is a lot better in April and May than it is in Buffalo. While hitting in bad weather is something all players have to deal with, it was something that affected him early in the season last year at Buffalo to the point it started to play with his mind a little bit.

"[The weather is] a lot different here," said Brown. "Buffalo is cold and windy, and was just a tough place to play.

I don't know how to put it as it is the same for everybody, but day in and day out it messes with your mind a little bit and you have to just be strong and get over it.

I just did not do a good job with that last year."

Not only was Brown distracted mentally dealing with the conditions in Buffalo, but almost all of last season he battled through a left knee injury. The knee injury first cropped up in 2007 at Akron where scar tissue and bone chips in his knee were causing him pain, but he played through it the last four months of the season and then had offseason arthroscopic surgery.

The knee acted up again

early last season in Buffalo where he missed almost three weeks with patellar tendonitis, and when he came back it hindered him the rest of the year as he lost some of the power in his swing because he could not sit on his back leg when he swung and consistently drive the ball.

Brown, being the straight shooter he is, is quick to note that while the weather and knee issues he battled with last year did not help the situation, the onus falls on him as he just did not perform like he knows he can.

"It was tough to sit back on [my knee]," said Brown. "Honestly, though, I am not going to blame my mediocre season on my knee.

But it didn't help.

I think a lot of it was my mental state.

Every year you always see good hitters start slow in the big leagues and you wonder how that is possible.

It is a tough game, and when you start making things more difficult it makes it hard getting back to the way things used to be.

Hits sometimes come in bunches, and sometimes they don't.

It just matters how you are swinging it. Usually things even out unless you get really pissed off because it doesn't even out when you really try to force it.

Every good player has a rough spell at some point."

While Brown is looked to reestablish his value to the Indians organization and around baseball, he is quick to point out that he will not be making any significant changes to his approach at the plate. He has made a few minor changes and adjustments, but nothing that different from what he has done his previous four years in the organization. Most of his focus is on improving the little things in the game.

"One of my goals is to improve the little things because everybody knows I can hit," said Brown. "I want to get better defensively, get better jumps, be better on the basepaths, and be better in the clubhouse. Those are the kind of things I am really trying hard to notice and be better at."

Brown has been rotating at Columbus between designated hitter, first baseman and left field. He has played a handful of games in the outfield, which is a position he has not really played since his MVP season in Kinston in 2006.

The fact that he is back in the outfield some shows that his knee is finally at 100%, something that he himself even acknowledged.

"I like left, I like it a lot," said Brown. "The only thing is it is a little different because you are not as involved in as many plays.

2006 was my first year playing there.

I played there and it was kind of an experiment because Stephen Head was on the same team at that time they tried me out there. I didn't play out there in 2007 because they wanted me to play first base that year and that was it.

Then that changed this year.

The Indians have Brown moving around a little on the diamond to allow for some versatility, which is something he fully endorses. He knows the ability to play more than one position will only increase his value to the Indians, and maybe potentially get him on that big league roster.

"At some point," said Brown, "I'm going to consistently impress the right people."