There are some interesting things that have happened in the organization over the last week with Mark DeRosa and John Meloan being traded, Andy Marte on fire in Columbus, and more. Tony checks in today with his thoughts on a potential move of Marte, the puzzling decision to trade Meloan, and recaps a long conversation with Columbus Manager Torey Lovullo. While the big league team's season continues to circle the drain, the emphasis the rest of the season will start to turn more to the young players in the system and who better to guide us through the second half than Tony.

"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.

There are some interesting things that have happened in the organization since last week's farm report. Mark DeRosa and John Meloan have been traded, Andy Marte has been on fire in Columbus, All-Stars at Double-A and Triple-A have been announced, players are bracing themselves for callups as the big league team's season continues to circle the drain, and lots more.

Due to the amount of material to cover, Minor Happenings is being broken up into two installments this week. Today the focus will be on the some of the recent roster moves and a long conversation I had last weekend with Columbus manager Torey Lovullo.

Sometime over the weekend I will post the second half which will be the more traditional mixed bag of updates about all the players and affiliates.

Onto the *Happenings*...

Indians Minor League Player Of The Week
(for games from June 25 through July 1)

Andy Marte (Third Baseman - Columbus)
.520 AVG (13-for-25), 4 R, 4 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 10 RBI, 3 BB, 1 K

Well look who has resurrected himself from the dead.

While he is no longer a prospect, Triple-A Columbus third baseman Andy Marte is still only 25-years old and is in the Indians minor league system. Cast off the 40-man roster in March, he has seemingly turned his career around and is having a fantastic season at least from a statistical perspective. On the season he is hitting .326 with 11 HR, 46 RBI and a .908 OPS, but the more impressive number is just 37 strikeouts in 230 at bats which is good for one strikeout in every 6.2 at bats.

This is a guy who coming into the season in his minor league career had a 4.3 to 1 at bat to strikeout ratio (2576 AB, 603 K), and in his short major league career had a 4.6 to 1 at bat to strikeout ratio (513 AB, 112 K).

So something seems to have clicked so far for him in making more consistent contact.

Marte has just been unbelievably hot of late. In his last ten games he is hitting a blistering .526 (20-for-38) with half of those hits going for extra bases (6 2B, 4 HR).

He also has 14 RBI, five walks, and just two strikeouts over the ten games.

For his efforts, he was named the International League Player of the Week last week for the period from June 22-28.

He hit safely in each of his six games for the week and also had an RBI in five of those games ending the week with a total of eight RBI which was tied for 2nd in the league.

Overall, he is 3rd in the league in hitting (.326), 9th in HR (11), 4th in RBI (46), 3rd in slugging (.548), and 3rd in OPS (.908).

Honorable Mentions:

Jordan Brown (1B - Columbus): .387 AVG (12-for-31), 6 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 4 RBI, 1 BB, 7 K
Nate Recknagel (1B - Lake County): .409 AVG (9-for-22), 6 R, 3 2B, 0 3B, 2 HR, 7 RBI, 4 BB, 4 K
Delvi Cid (OF - Lake County): .400 AVG (12-for-30), 5 R, 3 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 5 RBI, 2 BB, 7 K, 4 SB
Roberto Perez (C - AZL Indians): .389 AVG (7-for-18), 2 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 2 RBI, 2 BB, 6 K
T.J. House (LHP - Lake County): 0-0, 2 games, 0.82 ERA, 11.0 IP, 12 H, 1 ER, 1 BB, 6 K
Clayton Cook (RHP - Mahoning Vy): 0-0, 2 games, 2.45 ERA, 11.0 IP, 11 H, 3 R, 2 BB, 10 K

Previous Winners:

06/18 to 06/24: Nick Weglarz (OF - Akron)
06/11 to 06/17: Trey Haley (RHP - (Lake County)
06/04 to 06/10: Michael Brantley (OF - Columbus)
05/28 to 06/03: Donnie Webb (OF - Lake County)
05/21 to 05/27: Jordan Brown (1B/OF - Columbus)
05/14 to 05/20: Paolo Espino (RHP - Kinston)
05/07 to 05/13: Lonnie Chisenhall (3B - Kinston)
04/30 to 05/06: Nick Weglarz (OF - Akron)
04/23 to 04/29: Matt McBride (1B - Kinston)
04/16 to 04/22: Eric Berger (LHP - Kinston)
04/08 to 04/15: Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP - Kinston)

Marte Decision Looms

A decision on Marte may be coming very soon, one where the often polarizing figure among fans may soon get one final shot in a callup to Cleveland, or be sent packing in a trade. His value is at an all-time high right now, at least since he was acquired by the Indians in January 2006.
Ever since his acquisition his stock has continued to plummet to the point where when he was designated for assignment this past spring he went unclaimed by every other organization in baseball and returned to the Indians on a minor league deal at the end of spring training.

He's worked hard to get back to being an offensive force and did some soul searching, and to date it has paid off. The numbers have been impressive so far as in his last two games he is 7-for-8 with three doubles, two home runs, and four RBI. Marte's recent ten game tear, placement in several league top ten hitting categories, and Player of the Week award are noted above, so life is good right now for him.

It remains to be seen if those numbers can translate at the major league level and whether he truly has figured some things out or is just a maturing player who is simply just feasting off Triple-A pitching. He still has the same holes in the swing where he is very susceptible to the low and away breaking ball from right-handers or low and away changeups from left-handers, and his plate coverage on the outer third of the plate is still lacking. But with the numbers he is putting up and the consistency he has

shown since taking over the every day third base duties in Columbus in early May, maybe he has figured a few things out.

The reason a decision with Marte may be looming is because third baseman Wes Hodges is nearing a return to the Columbus lineup. Also, with what happened with first baseman Michael Aubrey last week when first baseman/outfielder Stephen Head was activated off the disabled list, they could possibly make another minor trade sending Marte elsewhere (or call him up) in order to make room for Hodges. Hodges is currently

in the midst of a rehab assignment at Low-A Lake County and could be activated by the end of the weekend.

Hodges was the opening day third baseman for Columbus and struggled offensively the first five weeks of the season to hit .275 with 1 HR, 15 RBI and a .689 OPS in 27 games before being sidelined with a wrist and shoulder injury on May 6th. He was recently assigned to Lake County on June 26th on a return to play program where his game load would be progressively increased each outing to ease his shoulder and wrist back into everyday action.

On June 26th he played three innings at third base, sat out the next game to rest, then the next night (June 28th) he played three innings again at third base.

He sat out another game and then this past Tuesday (June 30th) he was ramped up to six innings at third base and instead of sitting him the next night he played the entire game as the designated hitter (Wed July 1st).

Last night he was back in the lineup for the third straight night and again played just six innings at third base.

He is expected to play one or two full games at third base for Lake County over the weekend, and once he does so he will be activated and brought back up to Columbus by the start of next week.

Once Hodges is brought back to Columbus he will move back to the regular third base slot playing there seven to eight games of every ten game set. This would only leave Marte two to three games every ten game stretch for playing time at third base. The Indians have had discussions with Marte about getting him playing time at first base and the outfield, and there could be some at bats at designated hitter. However, considering that Matt LaPorta, Trevor Crowe and Michael Brantley will get the lion's share of playing time in the outfield with Stephen Head and Jordan Brown filling in, Brown and LaPorta splitting time at first base with Head filling in there as well, and whichever of the five between Brown, Brantley, LaPorta, Head and Crowe who is not in the outfield or first base likely in the lineup at designated hitter, it looks like Marte is really going to be squeezed for regular playing time.

This is a reason why first baseman Michael Aubrey was moved last week since they needed his at bats to go to recently activated first baseman/outfielder Stephen Head, a player they still have some development time left with and want to get a better read on. The same fate Aubrey had could happen to Marte when Hodges is activated, and it would make sense as this is probably

the highest value Marte will have in any trade. Once relegated to a backup role, that trade value (if any) would start to take a hit.

There is a small chance Marte could be activated and called up to Cleveland, though with Jhonny Peralta entrenched at third base as well as the first base and designated hitter duties maxed out with the likes of Victor Martinez, Ryan Garko, Chris Gimenez and Travis Hafner, it seems unlikely. The Indians need to use the entire second half of the season to get a long extensive look at Peralta playing third base, as well as Asdrubal Cabrera at shortstop and Luis Valbuena at second base. Playing Marte at third base would impede that, so if Marte is brought up it would likely be as a role player on the bench filling in for Peralta from time to time at third as well as getting some at bats at first base and designated hitter.

Making Sense Of Meloan Deal

Many of you who got word yesterday of the news where Triple-A Columbus right-hander John Meloan was traded to Tampa for right-hander Winston Abreu were probably left scratching your head and saying "huh?" when it was announced. Almost 24

hours after the trade, I am sure many people still are scratching their heads as they try to make sense of why the Indians would send away a 24-year old prospect with a good arm and some upside still for a 32-year old journeyman who pitched in Japan last year.

But, to steal a tagline from this summer's movie blockbuster *Transformers 2*, as far as this trade goes there is "more than meets the eye."

Abreu is really yet another veteran reliever GM Mark Shapiro has picked up off the scrap heap this year. He had been signed to a minor league contract by Tampa on February 4th with a non-roster invitation to spring training. He pitched most of this season at Triple-A Durham where he went 3-0 with 10 saves and a 1.41 ERA (32.0 IP, 14 H, 5 R/ER, 10 BB, 49 K)

in 23 appearances. He was recalled to Tampa on June 14th and appeared in 2 games (2.45 ERA, 3.2 IP, 3 H, 1 R/ER, 2 BB, 3 K) before being designated for assignment on June 27th.

Abreu was a perfect 10-for-10 in save opportunities at Durham and limited hitters to a .128 (14-for-109) average including a mark of .061 (4-for-66) against right-handed hitters.

He spent 2008 pitching in Japan, and last appeared in the majors in 2007 with the Washington Nationals.

He owns a career Major League record of 0-1 with a 6.43 ERA (42.0 IP, 50 H, 32 R, 30 ER, 17 BB, 35 K) in 35 career games with Baltimore (2006), Washington (2007) and Tampa Bay.

Abreu's 2009 numbers are certainly impressive, but again, we are talking about Triple-A numbers and those don't necessarily

translate to the big leagues. Plus, does anyone remember right-handed closer Rick Bauer at Buffalo last year? In 22 games from April through early June he was 0-0 with a 1.54 ERA and had 15 saves (23.1 IP, 17 H, 4 R/ER, 10 BB, 30 K), was then called up to Cleveland, made just four appearances in Cleveland before being designated for assignment, and has not pitched a game since and is out of baseball.

That all said, why would the Indians make such a trade to send away Meloan for the rights to Abreu? While Meloan's stock in the organization had noticeably fallen, he still had value. Even though I wrote earlier in the week
how he'd been passed over numerous times for a call to Cleveland
, his good June showing had him on the radar to potentially finally get that call to Cleveland.

In eight games in June, Meloan was 0-0 with a 2.70 ERA (13.1 IP, 12 H, 4 R/ER, 3 BB, 10 K).

The reasoning behind why they were willing to give up Meloan and cash to make this deal is uncertain at this point, but it is expected to be revealed soon as additional moves will be made

to the 25-man and 40-man roster in the coming days/weeks. Also, I am hearing that this trade was not necessarily a stand alone trade as this may be connected in some way to a larger deal that may be coming down the pipeline soon.

So, while the first reaction on this move is to question Shapiro's sanity, it appears the trade may become more justified in the coming days once more is revealed.

Stay tuned.

Coaches Corner: Torey Lovullo

I was in Columbus over the past weekend to take in a game at Huntington Park, and before the game I was able to talk to manager Torey Lovullo about a lot of players and hot topics surrounding the team this season. We also talked extensively on right-hander John Meloan who was just traded and those comments can be found in the article I did on him this past Tuesday
.

On handling the anxiety many players go through as they await "the call": "We ll, what I tell the guys is we are a holding tank for the Cleveland Indians.

Whether you are the starting first baseman or the 25th guy on the roster, you are going to have an opportunity at some point this season to go help the Indians because they don't go out and trade for people and sign free agents to help fill gaps that way, they come directly to this level and pull guys from this level.

So, that is their chance and their opportunity to go out there and make that decision for us,

because really what they do they make the decision for us.

The players that are playing and doing their job to be a good teammate make that decision for us.

I think they are all on edge and they all are ready, and at times that can be distracting, but the best ones will separate themselves from the rest of the guys. They can't be distracted by it, the player just has to put faith in us as a player development group in our system to get them to the big leagues as soon as possible.

And that is as a group, it is not anything I am inventing or anybody else, it is a collective effort [by the entire organization] to get them there."

On managing the rapid roster turnover: "That is definitely the challenge of this level. It is easily the most challenging level that I have managed at because of [all the roster moves].

You have players coming and going so rapidly, and chemistry is such a big part of having success at this level.

I think my toughest challenge is to continue to go over signs and to continue to go over rules, ideas, and my expectations of what I expect us to play like.

It is an ongoing effort by the week having meeting after meeting with guys to say this is what my expectations are because they have not heard it as you are getting a new batch of guys week in and week out.

It is challenging, but very rewarding."

On Frank Herrmann: "Every time he comes into the game I am very comfortable. Everyt hing slows down and he throws strikes.

He very rarely beats himself, and he very rarely beats himself period.

I feel good about where he is at in his career.

I know that he switched from being a starter to coming out of the bullpen and his fastball as a result has played up.

He is working on a split-fingered fastball and I think if he ever masters that like he throws his fastball and slider he could be a real special big leaguer.

It is just up to him how he wants to continue to develop it, and with the two-pitch mix he has

right now he could go up there and get the job done, but I think he wants to be the elite type of relief pitcher that we are all expecting him to be.

He is challenging himself to master that split-finger."

On Chuck Lofgren: "He has looked very good, and I have been very encouraged with what he has offered at this level. He needs to keep it going and he needs to challenge himself to keep it going. He pitched into the 8th inning in his last start, which is something that is probably new to him.

Each outing is a learning experience, and each time he takes the ball he is growing as a pitcher.

I know he had a frustrating year last year and he battled through some things, and he has done a really good job turning the page and getting himself to the big leagues.

I think really what happens with him [getting tired late in a game], it is a challenge for a young pitcher to understand how to go out and finish your inning and walk off the mound with them making the third out rather than your manager coming out and going to the bullpen.

That is something that he needs to continue to work on, and he is a young pitcher so he will get the feel for that.

His last start was a great learning experience for him as he had pitches left, he was into the 8th inning and we wanted to get him back in the dugout trailing 2-1 with a chance to win the game.

A couple things faltered, and he learned a couple things from that outing."

On Matt LaPorta: "He is doing good. The rotation is 50/50, so he is going to get half the games at first base and the other half in the outfield between left field and a little bit of right field.

He has been fine as we feel like he is a more than capable outfielder, but for the need of the Cleveland Indians right now they want him to be familiar at first base in case they need the versatility he can offer.

He needs to understand that.

I think he gets frustrated because he thinks we are making the position change because he can't play the outfield.

But that's far from the truth, he is a great outfielder, we just want to give him a chance to make it to the big leagues as a first baseman as well because it is right now that the Indians may need that versatility.

It is hard for a young player to understand that as he only sees things in black and white right now.

That's okay, that's fine.

Really, [the players] need to leave the rest of it up to us and trust us that we are trying to do the best thing for them to get them up to the big leagues as fast as possible."

On Michael Brantley: "He got off to a great start as he was probably hitting in the first five or six games something like .550, and then he started to slow down. I don't know if it was the weather or maybe a little bit his hamstring injury, but he hit a little bit of a rough patch for about two weeks and he has been playing catchup ever since.

But, true to the form we all think he can maintain he has picked himself up and had a steady progression over the course of the year.

From the end of April until right now he has had great weeks, and his average has gone from .200 to whatever it is right now.

He is a special kid, he has great focus and passion for this game, and he is going to be a great big leaguer for a lot of years.

As a staff here, I think we all feel the same way.

He understands where he is at right now, he is a young kid and is still learning a lot of the minutia of the game, and I think in time he will get his opportunity [in Cleveland].

Check back over the weekend with the second installment of this week's Happenings. Have a Happy 4th everyone and be safe!