Hector Rondon is a name that should be familiar by now to even the most casual followers of the Indians farm system. Rondon is a fast rising pitching prospect, recently promoted to AAA Columbus to "get challenged". So much for that. Rondon threw six no-hit innings, and had to leave the game with the no-no in tact due do hitting his pitch limit. In this week's Minor Happenings, Tony talks Rondon, tells us about another very promising pitching prospect in Mahoning Valley, and covers all the other latest news in the Indians farm system.

"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.

A little different format this week with *Happenings* due to time constraints and other obligations this entire weekend which prevent me from doing the regular format.

Anyway, just a reminder, but be sure to follow me on Twitter for all the latest Indians minor league news. Also, check out yesterday's piece on Jason Smit to see what he has been up to since he signed three years ago as a 16-year old.

Next week I have a busy week planned with a visit to Mahoning Valley on Wednesday, Akron on Friday, and then Lake County on Sunday. Since I am less than two weeks away from my near two week summer excursion with the family, I am getting in some visits to all the affiliates before I take in a couple games during my family trip to see the Kinston Indians play in Kinston and also in Myrtle Beach.

One programming note, I am scheduled to be on STO's "Minor League Magazine" show on Tuesday August 4th, so as that draws nearer I will have more details. Having just returned from Myrtle Beach and seeing Kinston and all the other affiliates in the past month, I should have some fresh views of all the players and look forward to the show.

Onto the *Happenings*...

Indians Minor League Player Of The Week
(for games from July 2 through July 8)

Marty Popham (Right-handed Pitcher - Mahoning Valley)
2-0, 2 games, 0.00 ERA, 13.0 IP, 3 H, 0 R, 1 BB, 15 K, 0.70 BB/9, 10.4 K/9, 0.31 WHIP

Mahoning Valley right-hander Marty Popham has been about as good as you can get in his last two starts. The stat line says it all in his last two outings as in 13.0 innings he has a microscopic 0.31 WHIP, hasn't allowed a run, and has a video game like one walk to 15 strikeouts. He had perhaps the best outing of any Indians starter this season at High-A or below, and only Akron right-hander Jeanmar Gomez's perfect game several weeks ago really tops his outing system wide.

On Wednesday night Popham showcased his low 90s fastball all night, mixing in his solid-average slider and changeup, and threw 6.1 innings of perfect baseball before walking a batter with one out in the seventh inning and then got the next two batters out to end the inning and his night. Right-hander Austin Adams came in for relief in the eighth inning to preserve the no-hitter, but with two outs in the ninth inning he allowed an infield single to second base which ended the dreams for him, Popham, and the rest of the Mahoning Valley team of being a part of a combined no-hitter. Given that most starting pitchers at the short-season Single-A level are on a strict 75-pitch count, there was no way Popham was going back out in the eighth inning to continue his chance at the no-hitter.
The fact he made it through seven innings and came in under his pitch count is a testament to how efficient and great he was on Wednesday night.

In four starts so far at Mahoning Valley, the 6'6" 235-pound Popham is 2-0 with a 1.57 ERA (23.0 IP, 13 H, 4 BB, 23 K). His early success is a byproduct of the work his did in spring training and out in extended spring training on his mechanics.

He also was stretched out from a reliever to a starter, so he worked a lot on developing a routine and the results to date speak for themselves.

Given Popham's age and year of professional experience already, he shouldn't stay in Mahoning Valley for long, especially after his last two performances.

He should be promoted soon to Low-A Lake County or even High-A Kinston.

One note about the honorable mentions below. What a great week of pitching performances in the system from others like Hector Rondon, Josh Tomlin, and Danny Salazar.

Also, from a hitting perspective, outfielder Jordan Henry has been impressive in the early going in Mahoning Valley (looks a lot like Coco Crisp to me both in play and look) and also the mystery third baseman Jesus Brito had a heckuva week stuffing the stat sheet in Arizona.

I say mystery because I don't know a lot (yet) about Brito, but his early performance is something to note going forward.

Honorable Mentions:

Michael Brantley (OF - Columbus): .417 AVG (10-for-24), 7 R, 1 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 3 RBI, 1 BB, 2 K, 2 SB

Matt LaPorta (OF/1B - Columbus): .435 AVG (10-for-23), 3 R, 4 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 7 RBI, 3 BB, 3 K
Hector Rondon (RHP - Columbus): 1-1, 2 games, 2.25 ERA, 12.0 IP, 4 H, 3 R, 3 BB, 16 K
Josh Tomlin (RHP - Akron): 1-1, 2 games, 1.59 ERA, 14.0 IP, 12 H, 3 R, 3 BB, 9 K
Danny Salazar (RHP - Lake County): 1-0, 2 games, 0.75 ERA, 12.0 IP, 6 H, 1 R, 3 BB, 11 K
Nate Recknagel (INF - Lake County): .346 AVG (9-for-26), 3 R, 0 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 6 RBI, 4 BB, 4 K
Jordan Henry (OF - Mahoning Valley): .417 AVG (10-for-24), 9 R, 2 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 2 RBI, 6 BB, 4 K, 5 SB
Jesus Brito (3B - AZL Indians): .435 AVG (10-for-23), 10 R, 2 2B, 2 3B, 2 HR, 7 RBI, 4 BB, 6 K, 2 SB

Previous Winners:

06/25 to 07/01: Andy Marte (3B - Columbus)
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)

Director's Cuts

Lots of different comments from Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins this past week regarding a potpourri of players in the Indians system:

On Juan Lara: "[His story] really has been impressive. Moving from our initial expectations that he would potentially never pitch again to let's see how he can recover from surgery and physically maintain and manage the torque it takes to throw a fastball