While the early returns from the Indians 2009 Draft have been so-so to date - largely because their top three picks have yet to play - one player in particular has been very impressive through his first month of play for short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley. That player is Jordan Henry, a scrawny, lightning quick outfielder who has been a catalyst at the top of the Mahoning Valley lineup all season. Tony had a chance to sit down with him this week.

While the early returns from the Indians 2009 Draft have been so-so to date - largely because their top three picks have yet to play - one player in particular has been very impressive through his first month of play for short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley. That player is Jordan Henry, a scrawny, lightning quick outfielder who has been a catalyst at the top of the Mahoning Valley lineup all season.

Henry is in the midst of a 10-game slump where he is hitting just .162 (6-for-37), so his overall batting average has taken a hit, but he is still hitting .294 (35-for-119) with 0 HR, 11 RBI, and a .789 OPS in 34 games. The more impressive numbers are his 12-for-13 stolen base success rate, 30 walks to just 14 strikeouts, and a .436 on-base percentage.

It has been a good start to his professional career, one that began when the Indians took Henry out of the University of Mississippi with their 7th round pick in the draft this year.

"It has been going great," said Henry in a recent interview at Eastwood Field, home of the Mahoning Valley Scrappers. "I have been getting used to everything, and with my host family it's been good there too. I'm just coming up here and getting used to playing everyday.

It's been fun."

The biggest adjustment for any player coming out of college is always adjusting to the professional game where you are playing everyday versus just three or four times a week in college. Transitioning from aluminum to wood bats also takes some time for players to get a good feel for.

"The wood bats and everything are a lot different," said Henry. "Also you see a lot more competitive pitching everyday on a consistent basis, and just the fact of playing everyday as we play at the most five days a week in college. So, just being able to have that mentality everyday to come in and play everyday."

Being a junior at Ole Miss, there was some concern that when the Indians drafted Henry that he would opt to return to college; however, he made it pretty clear from the get-go when he talked to scouts that he was ready to get his professional career going.

"It wasn't a tough decision," said Henry. "We talked about it, and we were able to decide on something where there was not any question I would take it and come here. I was ready to move onto the next level and play pro ball, and I thought it was a very good time to go."

Jordan also was able to draw from the experience of his older brother Justin who is in the Detroit Tigers farm system and was drafted a couple years ago. Justin has been playing for a couple years and is all the way up to the High-A level, and given his tenure playing in the minors he was able to give his younger brother some pointers on what to expect and the benefits of signing and getting that professional career started as soon as possible.

Jordan understood from his brother's experience that the minor league lifestyle is hardly glamorous and that the road through it is a tough one.

"Yeah, he has mentioned stuff like that to me," said Jordan about some of the advice his older brother Justin has shared with him. "He told me it's a long season and you can't get down on yourself too easily because there are so many games to be played.

Not get too up or down as you just gotta be patient and keep consistent throughout it because it is a long season and you just have to prepare yourself each day for it."

Speed is Henry's greatest asset, and he profiles as a top of the lineup hitter. He has all the qualities a team looks for out of a leadoff hitter with his ability to battle opposing pitchers by working counts, putting the bat on the ball at a very high rate, drawing walks, stealing bases, and playing excellent defense in the outfield.

He has been timed in the 60-yard dash in 6.5 seconds and is in a league of his own defensively at the short-season Single-A level.

He goes back on balls in the outfield effortlessly and glides and tracks down balls in the gap with ease.

His approach at the plate is something he has always had, but he continues to refine it since he understands and knows his game is based on speed and making consistent contact and that he will never be a power hitter.

"Yeah, it is something I have mostly always had," said Henry about his approach at the plate. "A lot more this past year in at Ole Miss than the two years before that. But I just go up there with the approach to just try to get on base and be patient and see a lot of pitches.

I am not a guy who will hit a lot of home runs or anything or go up there hacking, so I just try to see a lot of pitches and work the pitcher and get good at bats in and when I get a good pitch just try to put it in play and make something happen."

His excellent hand-eye coordination is a byproduct of his exposure to the game of tennis growing up. He split his time between baseball and tennis as a child and into his teen years experiencing a lot of success in both sports. He was a nationally ranked junior tennis player, but had to forego playing tennis at 16 years old so he could concentrate on just playing baseball and possibly making a career out of it.

"I used to play tennis all the time [when I was a kid]," said Henry. "I was a big tennis player back in the day as I used to go all over the country and play.

When I was 16 I was like 15th in the country in the USTA and junior amateurs.

I was big time in it and we used to always travel for it.

It got tough with that and baseball, and I kind of grew out of it and would rather do the baseball thing.

But I think the tennis has a lot to do with the hand-eye coordination.

A lot of people say I swing the bat like a tennis racket sometimes, so I don't know if that plays into it or not.

But I think in the long run it has helped me out a lot."

While he is barely a month into his first professional season, Henry is already looking at areas of his game to fine tune. His stolen base rate has been very good so far, but he wants to improve that area of his game.

"With me I would say a big part of my game is running and speed," said Henry. "I just want to learn different ways to steal bases and everything as you can always learn more about it.

I felt good doing that the past year, but I am coming to a different level and you have to learn different ways.

I also want to get better at driving balls and turn on a lot more pitches.

I am really patient at the plate, but at the same time if I can find good spots to be aggressive and everything it [will help keep the defense honest].

With about five weeks left in the season, Henry wants to finish on a positive note to provide a stepping stone into a busy offseason and his first full season next year.

"At the end [of this season] I just want to feel good about myself, and feel like I did the things I am good at doing by getting on base and help the team win in that kind of way," said Henry. "Just be patient and not look too far ahead. One step at a time."