From a numbers perspective, Lake County Captains pitcher Trey Haley has had a so-so year, going 4-7 with a 5.43 ERA in 17 appearances (14 starts). He has held opponents to a .237 average allowing just 61 hits in 69.2 innings. The most eye-catching stat of all his numbers is only 45 strikeouts but 60 walks allowed in those 69.2 innings. But there is a lot more to Haley's struggles on the mound this year than meet the eye. Tony had a chance to speak with him in a recent trip to see the Captains play.

When asked about what he thinks about his numbers and season so far, 19-year old right-handed pitcher Trey Haley didn't hold anything back.

"No, I am not satisfied at all," said Haley in a recent interview at Classic Park. "I try not to look at them, but in my mind I know I can do a lot better."

From a numbers perspective, the fireballin' Texan has had a so-so year at Low-A Lake County this year going 4-7 with a 5.43 ERA in 17 appearances (14 starts). He has held opponents to a .237 average allowing just 61 hits in 69.2 innings. The most eye-catching stat of all his numbers is only 45 strikeouts but 60 walks allowed in those 69.2 innings.

But there is a lot more to Haley's struggles on the mound this year than meet the eye.

Yes, Haley is young and raw, so the inconsistent performance and issues with command are expected for a kid fresh out of high school pitching against a lot of

hitters themselves fresh out of college or out of Latin America with several years of pro experience behind them already.

However, with Haley the focus with him is not only reworking some of his mechanics and learning to adapt to those changes, but also primarily pitching with his third and fourth best pitch every night in order to get used to throwing and developing them.

"Right now I am really working on a four-seam fastball and changeup," said Haley. "I have never thrown a four seam fastball before I got here and in Instructs [last year]. I used to just throw a two-seamer, but now they want to establish a four-seam fastball and kind of took the two-seam away. That is kind of their philosophy though to work on establishing command of the four seam fastball and then add the two-seamer back in eventually."

Haley's two-seam fastball and curveball are his bread and butter pitches, both considered plus pitches in his arsenal. His two-seamer sits 91-94 MPH and touches 95 MPH, and his curveball has good depth and is a true weapon for him. Being extremely limited in how often he uses these pitches, if at all, is almost like him going into a fist fight with one hand tied behind his back.

"My curveball has always been good," said Haley. "My two-seamer I think is my best pitch, but the curveball is my #2 pitch. I am just working on that four-seamer, and the changeup I think is coming along really well. In [a recent] outing I think I only had one walk and threw my changeup six out of eight times for strikes."

For a young pitcher like Haley who lacks a polished approach and is still growing on the mound and gaining maturity, learning to live with sub par results is surely frustrating. Haley had so much success in high school and in national showcases just raring back and firing with little thought of where it would go. He probably feels his numbers and performance would greatly improve if he were to do that now.

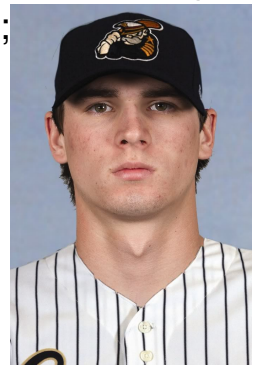
But, when it comes down to it he understands that in order to develop into a complete pitcher and be able to get hitters out at higher levels, he needs to have all of his pitches working well in his repertoire. That is why mastering his changeup and the four-seamer is such a key. The 60 walks in 69.2 innings is a large byproduct of such inconsistent command with those pitches, but if he can learn to harness the command of them it will only vault up his pitching ability.

"I just think I need to go out there and stop thinking [so much]," said Haley. "That's my main thing. In high school it is so easy in showcases as you just go out there and pitch and that is why I did so well, even against the top kids in the nation for the draft. Just go out there and pitch. Now that they are working on stuff I am out there pitching, but it is hard to go out there and actually pitch like I want to when they are changing things up. In the long run, I just think once something clicks it is going to be good."

Since Haley's call to Lake County on May 18th, Lake County Pitching Coach Tony Arnold has been the one most directly responsible with implementing the organization's plan to develop Haley's secondary offerings. The addition of the four-seamer would help give him a different look with his fastball. It would still be hard but have little movement as compared to his two-seamer which has good sink and run.

Arnold likes what he has seen so far in the growth of Haley this season.

"He has gotten better with each outing," said Arnold in a recent interview. "The whole thing with him is he has a live body. He is loose, tall, and lanky, so it is just a matter of him maintaining the tempo and rhythm within his delivery so that his body and arm work at the same speed. When he does that [like has recently], he is gonna be fine. If he can do that consistently he could come quick. His stuff is electric, and he has a good feel for a curveball and his changeup will come. When you stand behind him you see the makings of a good changeup, and with his velocity all he has to do is throw something offspeed that he can command consistently down in the zone."



In addition to developing his secondary offerings, another area of focus for Haley has been with his mechanics since he has a tendency to overthrow. Coming out of high school he has had trouble maintaining his velocity and being consistent with his fastball, so the Indians have tinkered with his mechanics and delivery so he can become much more consistent with his fastball velocity and command.

"I have just been working on a lot of stuff in my bullpens mechanics-wise," said Haley. "I have been working on getting out front and staying over the rubber. Keeping my stride on, and they have been working on my hands a lot. Just a lot of stuff I have been focusing in on."

Some may view Haley's comments as a young kid who is not happy with where he is and who may be having second thoughts about signing with the Indians out of high school. That's not the case at all. He was ready to get his career started and is excited about where he is currently as a professional. He also understood because he is so raw that when he signed the first few years would be tough and that it would take some time to mold himself into a very good pitching prospect for the Indians.

"Yeah, it's fun and I like it," said Haley about being a professional baseball player. "It is not bad as I would rather be here than doing school work in college. Plus going to college I would just delay the process three years. If I went to college I would probably only be starting out in High-A in three years. I just turned 19 [recently], so if I went to college I would be 21 [when I start my professional career]. I hope by the time I am 21 I am up [in the big leagues]."

Arnold thinks Haley could someday realize that potential down the road of being a big leaguer.

"To me he is a treat to work with, he is a good kid," said Arnold. "He is like everybody where he is getting into a routine which is helping him to improve and get better each day. It is fun to watch, and hopefully we are watching something special."

Lake County's playoff hopes are slim at best, so their season will end in about two weeks. No matter what happens with their playoff fate, Haley has two or three more outings before the end of the season. A strong finish could provide a nice stepping stone for next season, one where he will likely return to Lake County in 2010 to start the season as the ace of the staff, but with a chance to move up around midseason to High-A Kinston if he pitches well.

"I just [want to] maintain my focus on the fastball and lowering the walks," said Haley. "That's about it. I know my stuff is good enough, and most of the time when people score on me is when I put people on and then they will get a hit. [Their batting average against] me as far as them getting a hit is

really low. It is just the walks. That is the main thing that kills me."