Triple-A Columbus wrapped up their regular season yesterday, and most of the players have now gone home for the season. It was expected that first baseman/outfielder Jordan Brown would go north and play in Cleveland for the remainder of the season, but in a surprise move Brown was not promoted and utility infielder Niuman Romero was called up instead. Brown will not join the big league club in September. The decision not to callup the two time league MVP and 2009 International League batting champion is a puzzling one, and Tony has the details on why he was not called up.

Triple-A Columbus wrapped up their regular season yesterday, and most of the players have now gone home for the season. It was expected that a player or two would go north and play in Cleveland for the remainder of the season, and this happened when catcher Lou Marson was recalled yesterday; however, it was a surprise to learn that not only was first baseman/outfielder Jordan Brown not coming north but that infielder Niuman Romero was going instead.

The decision to not callup Brown left many fans and even Brown himself puzzled with the Indians' decision not to call him up. As a hitter he was more than deserving of that callup as he hit .336 with 15 HR, 67 RBI, and put up a .913 OPS in 111 games this season at Columbus. He won the International League batting title by a comfortable five points, and his .913 OPS was 5th in the league and just 14 points below the league leader.

With those kinds of numbers, the Indians are certainly excited about his potential in their big league lineup. They would love to give him the opportunity now, but with so many players already in Cleveland occupying first base and left field the

opportunity was not there to call him up.

"Plate appearances is what it comes down to," said Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins when asked about Browns non-September callup. "With Andy Marte, Matt LaPorta and four catchers on the roster, there just weren't plate appearances for Jordan. That is the most important aspect of the decision."

The news obviously did not sit well with Brown. When asked about his roster status on Saturday, he did not feel a call to Cleveland was in the cards. His premonition proved correct as less than 24 hours later Columbus manager Torey Lovullo broke the news to him that he would not be called up to Cleveland this year.

"I haven't heard anything as far as getting a call, and if I haven't gotten it by now I probably won't get it," said a frustrated Brown on when asked about his roster status. "That is not a knock on their part as they have their own agenda and they have their own plans, but I am not sure if I fit into their agenda and plans. I think they have their own ideas and goals they want out of certain players, and sometimes guys are more of a priority than others. So hopefully I am a priority for them, and I guess only time will tell."

It's hard not to feel for what Brown is going through. He's proven to be a good player offensively with very good bat-to-ball ability that would be a nice complement to a Cleveland lineup often heavily laden with strikeout prone players. He is a tough out and is very comfortable hitting when behind in the count. With two strikes on him he digs in and does everything he can to put the ball in play. If that means poking a ball over the infield and dumping it into left field, so be it.

Just two years ago when spring training opened up before the start of the 2008 season Brown was widely regarded as a top five prospect in the Indians system. He was coming off back-to-back MVP seasons, having won the Carolina League MVP with Kinston in 2006 and the Eastern League MVP with Akron in 2007. He was participating in his first big league spring training camp and was strongly being considered as a big league option in left field or first base at some point that season.

Fast forward to today, almost two years later Brown is still waiting for that big league opportunity. That is what frustrates him the most. His major league dream

seemed so close, yet it has been so far away as he has now gone two seasons without a big league opportunity coming his way.

However, it is not Brown's bat that is holding him back, it is his defense. According to several sources outside the Indians organization who have seen Brown play many times this year, his glove work at first base still needs a lot of work and he is still slowly adapting to becoming even just an adequate defender in the outfield. Even with the lack of plate appearances at the moment in Cleveland, had there been playing time available his callup still would have been questionable because of the value the Indians put on players being as close to ready as possible in all facets of the game when they get that initial callup.

"When we make decisions on who is ready to contribute to our major league team, we always evaluate the complete player and their ability to make an impact offensively, defensively, base-running, and with their decision making," said Atkins. "Jordan has clearly been very productive offensively, but we still think there is development in the defensive area."

It is surely a tough pill for Brown to swallow. How do you tell a player with two league MVP awards and now a Triple-A batting title that he is not getting the call because he needs more work in an area often glossed over by the fans and media?

"We are evaluating the complete player and not just the offensive stat line," said Atkins. "When evaluating defense there are many things that don't end up in a box score. At all positions, but especially first base and left field, you must rely on observations that are not as well documented as errors."

Brown knows he needs to work on his defense, though feels he has come a long way.

"The last month or so I have really started to get comfortable out there," said Brown. "When I am running after a ball I used to feel like, ‘oh God I hope I get there and if I get there I hope I don't mess it up'. But now it is like ‘I am going to get there and if I am close I am still going to get'. It is a mentality thing. I run out there and there is no anxiety as I know what to do, I have good pre-pitch setup, I have a good idea how to get to balls, and I can read balls off the bat a lot better. When I hit, I feel comfortable. Now when I go out to the

outfield I feel comfortable, and when you feel comfortable it is a lot easier to make routine plays, think clearly, hit your cutoff man, throw to the correct base, and those kind of things."

It is important to note that Brown is not the only player that had a very good season who is not getting a callup this year. Contrary to what fans may have been lead to believe, September callups are not about rewarding players for good performance. A player is not just called up to be called up because the roster can be expanded to 40 players. They have to be ready, and if significant development opportunities are still there they normally will not call the player up.

"He wasn't on our roster as Carlos Santana and Hector Rondon are," said Atkins. "All three had incredible years, and none of them are in Cleveland. We are not in the business of giving reward callups. So, you just tell the player that there are not opportunities, you had a great year, now go have a productive offseason and here are the things you can work on to get better."

Even though the Indians do not hold it against him, Brown's sub par performance the first half of the 2008 season at Triple-A Buffalo certainly affected a decision on a potential callup to Cleveland early in the 2008 season. He battled through a lingering knee issue and some mental issues handling the weather as he hit .267 with 4 HR, 27 RBI and a .710 OPS the first half of that season. Once he settled down and got healthy, he was the Jordan Brown of old the rest of that season as he hit .311 with 3 HR, 24 RBI and a .848 OPS in the second half.

"I think last year I got into a mental funk," said Brown. "I really only had two bad months early in the year when it was freezing and I just got dominated. I would come to the yard and I was not happy and I just mentally was not there. I think this year I had a good chance to work with Jon Nunnally, he is really good at what he does and he knows your swing better than even you do. So I figured out a few things with him. But I think what has made me good throughout my career is I have never really [been up and down with my performance] as I am kind of consistent [month to month]. I think this year is a good example of that."

Brown's standing in the organization has also been affected by the C.C. Sabathia a year ago. In that trade, the Indians acquired two near-ready major league players in outfielder Michael Brantley and outfielder/first baseman Matt LaPorta.

With the pickup of both Brantley and LaPorta, they immediately became the Indians "future" in left field and first base, the two positions Brown seemingly was first in line to get a call on going into the 2008 season.

And don't forget about infielder Andy Marte, as his re-emergence this season has been another blow to Brown. With Marte now in the mix at first base and his clock with the Indians close to expiring, when he started to finally hit in Columbus they needed to get him to Cleveland and see if his newfound success at the plate could translate at the big league level. Marte has always been viewed as an above average defender, so once he started hitting he got a chance because his play in the other phases of the game were considered of big league quality.

Even with so many players now in the mix in Cleveland at first base and left field, the Indians still very much value Brown. It is also important to note that a roster decision on Brown does not need to be made until the roster deadline in mid-November. So, just because he was not a September callup it does not mean he will not be rostered in November. This was the case last year when right-handed pitcher Jeff Stevens, catcher Chris Gimenez, outfielder Trevor Crowe and others were not September callups but were November roster additions.

"Jordan is absolutely a part of this organization and one we want to help have individual success and hopefully help us have major league team success," said Atkins. "Jordan has clearly made this organization better."

With Brown's season over, he will go home and spend some time with his family for about a month before heading out to Venezuela to play winter ball. The short time off will do wonders for the minor shoulder injury he came down with in early August, though it should be noted shutting him down to rest the shoulder was not a reason he was not called up. When he finally gets to Venezuela, he will use the opportunity to get more time in the outfield so he can better position himself as an option for the big league team next season.

"I will go out there for six weeks," said Brown. "I'll get extra at bats and work in the outfield. [Columbus Hitting Coach Jon] Nunnally will be out there, so I will have more time to work with him and I will have [Indians Minor League Field Coordinator] Dave Hudgens there too as he will be the manager. It will be good and a lot of competition out there. I will be down in November, so I will take a month off and get back it at and feel fresh and be ready."

"And then once spring training rolls around hopefully win a spot."