The Cleveland Indians short-season Single-A affiliate Mahoning Valley had a very good season in 2009, anchored by a starting pitching staff which had four regulars in the rotation with an ERA at or under 2.79 on the year. The lone exception to the dominance that was the starting staff in Mahoning Valley was right-hander Preston Guilmet who finished the season 6-6 with a 4.09 in 15 starts ... but the numbers don't tell the whole story. Tony does in his latest.

The Cleveland Indians short-season Single-A affiliate Mahoning Valley had a very good season in 2009, anchored by a starting pitching staff which had four regulars in the rotation with an ERA at or under 2.79 on the year.

The lone exception to the dominance that was the starting staff in Mahoning Valley was right-hander Preston Guilmet who finished the season 6-6 with a 4.09 in 15 starts, and in 70.1 innings he allowed 70 hits, 16 walks, and had 62 strikeouts.

While Guilmet's overall numbers were not impressive, delving deeper into his stat line it looks like he may have been fatigued at the end of the season. Earlier in the year in his senior season at the University of Arizona he made 15 starts going 6-5 with a 3.74 ERA and threw 91.1 innings. Combined with his time in Mahoning Valley he finished 2009 throwing 161.2 innings between college and the minors, and it may help explain some of his late season struggles where in his final three starts of the season with Mahoning Valley he was 0-3 with a 10.80 ERA (14 ER, 11.2 IP). In his 12 starts prior to those he was 6-3 with a 3.26 ERA.

In any case, like many of the players from the draft Guilmet used the 2009 season

at Mahoning Valley as a learning experience and a barometer to get an idea of what to expect down the road.

"It was very interesting and different, and very cool to get out there and start playing [professionally]," said Guilmet in a recent interview. "After doing college for four years it [was] nice to have a change in pace and go somewhere else, with a new team, and a new program."

Guilmet features a four-seam fastball that consistently sits at 87-89 MPH and at times touches 90 MPH with some decent run. His fastball may be average, but what makes it effective are two above average secondary pitches a slider and splitter, with the splitter being his best pitch in his arsenal. He has good command of all of his pitches, but what really makes him interesting is his exaggerated over-the-top throwing motion. It is very non-conventional and allows him to hide the ball well, which helps create deception on all of his pitches. The different angle in his throwing motion mostly helps in that it allows him to get a little more downward angle to his pitches and get good two-plane action on his fastball.

Upon signing with the Indians, Guilmet used the summer with Mahoning Valley to use his fastball more and working it inside and out on hitters. The Indians did not immediately make any changes to his mechanics as they have a 30-day rule with new players in the organization where they let them settle in, observe them, and then once the period is up approach them with any mechanical changes. Near the end of the season they talked about some subtle changes to his mechanics to carry through the rest of the season and into the offseason.

"We talked a little bit about mechanics with my front side just because I am unique [with my throwing motion] and keeping it a little more relaxed," said Guilmet. "Other than that really no big adjustments, and it was just something I was given to work on and think about and see how it goes."

As a senior signing out of college the odds are stacked against Guilmet to become a notable prospect in the Indians organization, but some people around the game and with the Indians think he could potentially show more value down the road. Prior to his slide at the end of the season with Mahoning Valley, he had put together a very good season and one that got him noticed as a legit prospect.

"I don't know if I had a break through year or anything like that," said Guilmet. "It definitely was nice to go out there the first few starts and do well

and make adjustments and kind of figure things out. A lot of it was just getting out there and getting with a new team. You pitch a different way [in the minors] than in college, so I worked into the flow of that. Really it was nice to get into a short season to get my feet wet and it makes you real eager to get to spring training and start next year."

As to what Guilmet's focus will be this offseason?

"For me personally just get stronger all around, nothing bulky, but just get in the weight room and get back in shape and add five pounds," said Guilmet. "You get in shape before every season and then through the season you focus so much on baseball I think you lose the physical shape a little bit. Take two or three weeks off and relax, and then get back into it and get ready for spring training."