In Lastoria's latest edition of Minor Happenings, he reports on a couple of developments with one of the Indians top prospects, Trevor Crowe. Lastoria also breaks down Indians Farm Director John Farrell's latest weekly radio address, and also provides updates on each of the Indians farm teams and other top prospects for the past week.

Minor Happenings" covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system over the course of the past week. Information in this report is collected from the various news outlets that cover each team, some national news, and in some cases from private sources connected to the Indians organization.

Director's Cuts:

Indians Farm Director John Farrell had a lot to say this week about a myriad of players in the farm system. Here is a quick recap of what he had to say:

On Trevor Crowe: To date, Crowe is ahead of the curve somewhat, and is on the fast track to the major leagues. He has a very advanced bat, which allows him to be moved much quicker through the farm system. He is very patient and works counts very well, which makes him a prototypical leadoff hitter for the Indians down the road. Crowe grades out as an above average center-fielder with an above average arm. His swagger is contageous and he is a high energy player. The Indians are still considering moving Crowe to 2B, mostly because when looking at 2B in the system and on the major league team, Crowe is a better fit in the short-term. If a move to 2B will cause any sort of delay on Crowe getting to the major leagues, this will be strongly considered (and likely the idea nixed). Crowe has experience at 2B, and when he is sent to the Arizona Fall League (AFL) in November he may be tested out at 2B at that time.

The feeling in the organization is that at the end of the AFL season they will have a better idea on a potential position change. The thought is if that he is at least average defensively at 2B, his offense at the position will set him apart and make him a good fit there. (My comment: reading between the lines here, it looks all but confirmed that Crowe will play solely at 2B or at least split at 2B and CF in the AFL. More on Crowe below.)

On Jason Davis: The Indians consider him a major league pitcher, and with his dominating performance so far in the short time he has been in Buffalo there is discussion if the proverbial light has gone on. It is understood that there is a huge gap between the quality of hitters at Triple-A versus the quality of hitters at the major league level. His 96-100 MPH fastball is finally showing more consistent location, and the Indians have simplified his delivery to where he exclusively pitches out of the stretch now. The change in having him pitch out of the stretch helps limit the possibility of a breakdown in mechanics with body parts flying around in his normal delivery, as well as provide a more consistent release point and arm movement. As a result, there has been an improvement to the quality of his fastball.

On Ben Francisco: Does nothing but hit. He would be further along, but several disabled list trips over the past few years have somewhat hindered his development. Even so, he still is on the radar for a roster spot in Cleveland very soon. Francisco's bat provides very good extra base hit production, and he is a versatile defender who can play all three outfield positions well. His speed is average, but he is an excellent base-runner as his instincts on the basepaths lead to many of his stolen bases. He is capable of a major league opportunity right now, and may initially break in as a 4th outfielder; however, if his production with the bat carries over into the major leagues he could settle into a full-time role in the outfield.

On Jason Stanford: Stanford is on a progressive pitch count while he recovers from injury, and currently the pitch count is 75-80 pitches. Stanford needs to become more consistent with his command and pitch location, but this is something that should come back as Stanford's arm strength comes back. To date, he has been somewhat disappointing as he was expected to be a little further along in his recovery from Tommy John surgery, even though recovery from such a surgery can be unpredictable. The Indians want to see a little more from him the final 6-8 weeks of the season.

On Franklin Gutierrez: He was sent down so he can continue to get regular at bats. Gutierrez

was very tentative early on after being called up from Buffalo, and tended to be over-selective at the plate and lost his aggressiveness. In addition to his tentativeness at the plate, Franklin's opposite field hitting approach sapped his power which led to very few hard hit balls. However, the organization feel that once he settled in and got regular playing time he put together some quality at bats. The Indians feel that once he gets more comfortable, the power will show. Sort of a hit first and power second approach for now.

On Asdrubal Cabrera: At 20 years old, he is the youngest player in all of Triple-A. He is a very good defensive shortstop. The Indians were surprised they were able to get him in a deal for Eduardo Perez, but a big reason for that was Seattle's aggressiveness in trying to acquire a right-handed bat of Perez's caliber. Cabrera has an inside-out swing from the rightside of the plate, and feels for contact from the leftside of the plate. He provides depth at a position of need in the farm system, and is looked at as an eventual everyday player at the major league level.

On Andy Marte: The key to his turnaround is an adjustment to his hand position with his stance, as well as his setup at the plate. Previously, his hands were held more at chest level which caused him to fall back on his heels when he swung. This resulted in him being unable to handle pitches on the outside of the plate. Marte can be streaky with his power, but with the adjustments to his stance at the plate his swing path has become more consistent and has resulted in him showing more consistent power.

On Tom Mastny: He has an average major league fastball as far as velocity goes, but he is above average in terms of deceptiveness and is a strike thrower. Farrell likened him to David Riske (his style and approach).

More From Kline

This week, I conducted a mid-season Q&A with Baseball America's Chris Kline:

http://www.swerbsblurbs.com/article_detail.php?id=595

Kline's comment in the Q&A about Adam Miller being the biggest disappointment in the system this season, seemed to ruffle a few feathers. I've received a few e-mails on the subject, and some posters on Tribe message boards have voiced their displeasure with Kline's comment. When informed of the feedback to his comment, Kline requested I provide this addendum to the Q&A to explain his thought process a little more on the comment:

CK: You can go on numbers all you want. And yes, his velo is back. I love how everyone throws around the 100 mph thing like he used to do it all the time. That's a joke. He hit 101 mph . . . TWICE. But his slider only shows flashes of being what it once was, and his changeup is below average because he still doesn't use it enough. Is he young? Yes. Will not having solid secondary stuff translate in Triple-A? Maybe. But you need three quality pitches to be a frontline starter in the big leagues--which is what I've said he is for the last two years--and he simply doesn't have them. If he doesn't develop the changeup, then ultimately, what is he? For me, I gave you the guy who personally disappoints me the most. Yes, the numbers are good--but how much has he really improved in terms of overall development of his pitches? Sure, there are other guys you could point to and say they're disappointing and I totally could have walked the line and said Whitney or Aubrey or gone a little more obscure and threw Nathan Panther out there. I went with a guy who I figured would be controversial, but people really need to see why I picked who I did.

Crowe Sidelined

After just returning to action a few weeks ago from a strained oblique muscle, Crowe injured his foot this week sliding into 2B. The injury is unfortunate, as Crowe was playing great in his Akron debut as in only 7 games he was hitting .379 (11-29) with 0 HRs, 2 RBIs, and 9 stolen bases. X-rays were negative for any broken bones, but any possible ligament damage will not be known until the swelling goes down and they can run more tests. Right now, the word is he has a severe ankle sprain, and that he'll be out 4 - 6 weeks. Crowe's injury caused a flurry of promotions yesterday as Kinston outfielder Brian Barton was called up to replace Crowe on the Akron roster, Lake County outfielder John Drennen was called up to replace Barton on the

Kinston roster, and Mahoning Valley outfielder Mike Butia was called up to replace Drennen on the Lake County roster. It should be noted, in addition to what Farrell alluded to above, there is also a strong rumor that as Crowe comes back from the injury he will get some work in at 2B at Akron.

More Position Switching?

Not only might the Indians experiment with Trevor Crowe at 2B, but the Indians are also toying with the idea of trying 3B Kevin Kouzmanoff at 1B and LF. With Andy Marte entrenched at 3B for the Indians for the foreseeable future, for Kouzmanoff to get any consideration at the major league level he will need to become a more versatile player and be able to play multiple positions. Prior to suffering his second hamstring injury in June, reportedly the Indians were about to get him some game action at 1B and LF. Dan Hickling from the Providence Journal recently spoke with Kouzmanoff on the subject and Kouzmanoff verified the reports saying "there's been some word that I may play some first, and some left field, too." To date, Kouzmanoff is still hitting a blistering .408 with 13 HRs, 49 RBIs and a ridiculous 1.142 OPS in 60 games at Akron (218 at bats).

Quietly Having a Great Season

Crowe and Kouzmanoff probably are getting the most pub for their outstanding seasons, mostly because Crowe is a high profile draft pick and Kouzmanoff has been hitting over .400 all year. But, the player in the system you rarely hear about who might be having just as great a season as those two is outfielder Ryan Goleski. He has been healthy all year, and has just been an RBI machine. To date, his combined numbers at Kinston and Akron are: .316 avg, 19 HRs, 75 RBIs and a .998 OPS. These totals are in just 84 games and 297 at bats, and if you project them to a full minor league season (about 500 at bats), he could end up with 32 HRs and 126 RBIs which is outstanding at the minor league level.

Miller Time

A big reason why some Indians fans took exception to Kline's comments about Miller is due to his recent surge. Miller was shutdown for 12 days from July 1-13 to rest him and keep his innings pitched total down this season, and since his return on July 13th Miller has dominated. In his two starts since July 13th, he is 1-0 with a 0.00 ERA and allowed only 8 hits in 12 innings pitched while striking out 8 batters. He actually has a string of three excellent starts going as when he was shutdown on July 1, his last start he had gone 7 innings without allowing a run and only giving up 3 hits. He currently has a 19-inning shutout streak, and Indians General Manager was in attendance on July 13th to see Miller firsthand. On the season, he is 9-5 with a 3.33 ERA with 99 strikeouts in 108 IP.

Mr. No Decision

Kinston left-handed starter Scott Lewis, drafted out of college from THE Ohio State University, continues to put together a very good season at Kinston. To date, Lewis is 1-1 with a 1.45 ERA in 18 games (17 starts) with 83 strikeouts in 74.2 IP and a very healthy 0.95 WHIP. Lewis hasn't figured into very many decisions because he is on a strict 70-pitch count mandated by the Indians because he is still recovering from Tommy John surgery in 2003 and bicep tendonitis which has plagued him since last season. As a result of his pitch limit, he usually doesn't pitch long enough to factor into a decision. His longest outing of the year is 5.2 innings (which is his only win), and he has been lifted sometime in the 5th inning almost everytime this year (13 of 17 starts). In games he pitches, Kinston is 12-6.

Not Impressive

Here is a quick peek at the minor leaguers Indians GM Mark Shapiro has acquired this season in trades:

Ramon Alvarado (OF-Burlington): .181 avg (13 for 72), 3 HRs, 10 RBIs, .579 OPS

Jeff Stevens (SP- Lake County): 3-1, 5.81 ERA, 26.1 IP, 20 Ks, 1.44 WHIP

Asdrubal Cabrera (SS- Buffalo): .231 avg (12 for 52), 0 HRs, 4 RBIs, .562 OPS

Alvarado was acquired for Kaz Tadano, Stevens for Brandon Phillips, and Cabrera for Eduardo Perez. Cabrera still gets a pass, though. He is the youngest player in Triple-A, and actually has started hitting of late after a bad start with the Bisons.

Moving Up

JD Martin's rehabilitation assignment ended at Mahoning Valley this week as he was moved up to Lake County. Martin was on a strict pitch count at the Valley as he recovers from Tommy John surgery, and in 6 starts he pitched 18 innings compiling a 1.50 ERA and 0.677 WHIP. He likely will only make a start or two at Lake County as his pitch count is moved up some, and then rejoin the Akron rotation in early August.

Award Winners

Buffalo 3B Andy Marte was named the International League Player of the Month for June, leading the league with 10 HRs and 22 RBIs for the month. This is the second Player of the Month award in a row for the Bisons as Jeremy Sowers won the award for May…. Mahoning Valley Scrappers right-handed pitcher Luis Valdez won Pitcher of the Week honors after he went 2-0 on the week and allowed only 1 hit and 0 runs in 10 innings….Lake County catcher

Chris Gimenez was tabbed the South Atlantic League Player of the Week after he hit .444 (8-18) with 1 HR and 4 RBIs.

Parting Shots

Buffalo left-handed starter Jason Stanford was impressive in his last start on Wednesday night going 7 innings and not allowing a run on 6 hits while striking out 4 batters…. Lake County Captains relief pitcher Cody Bunkelman was promoted to Kinston. At Lake County, he worked exclusively out of the bullpen and was 1-2 with a 2.82 ERA in 24 appearances. Right-hander Christopher "Doodle" Hicks was demoted from Kinston to Lake County to make room for Bunkelman…. Buffalo activated infielder Jake Gautreau from the disabled list and released reliever Ben Howard. Howard was 2-1 with a 3.98 ERA and had 11 saves....The Indians traded Buffalo reliever Mike Adams to San Diego for relief pitcher Brian Sikorski who was 1-1 with a 5.65 ERA in 13 appearances with San Diego….CF John Drennen had a modest 12 game hitting streak snapped this past Sunday…Akron right-handed starter Bear Bay recently was moved to the bullpen. Whether this is a temporary change, or a permanent one is unknown at this time….To make room for Franklin Gutierrez when the Indians optioned the outfielder back to Buffalo last week, Buffalo placed right-handed pitcher Hyang-Nam Choi on the disabled list….Lake County Captains relief pitcher Dustin Roddy retired from baseball after 2 1/2 seasons in the minors.