Talk about jumping onto the prospect radar.

Low-A Lake County left-handed starting pitcher Matt Packer had a heck of a month of June where in five starts he went 4-0 with a 1.19 ERA. In 30.1 innings he allowed just four runs on 29 hits, 4 walks, and had 31 strikeouts. His super effort bumped him above a trio of Triple-A Columbus players in third baseman Jared Goedert, infielder Josh Rodriguez, and outfielder Michael Brantley for Player of the Month honors.

Packer, 22, is a recent addition into the Cleveland Indians organization who has some upside as a possible future big league bullpen option. Even though the Indians selected him in the 32nd round out of the University of Virginia last year, he came highly regarded. The Indians spent last summer watching him pitch in the Cape Cod League and negotiating a signing bonus with him and wound up signing him just before the August 15th signing deadline.

"I was [considering going back to Virginia]," said Packer in a recent interview for the IPI. "I struggled my last year at Virginia and it was just a rough year. The Indians had seen me the year before and still thought I had something so they decided to follow me over the summer and they liked it so it worked out. I am loving [pitching professionally]. It is just like college baseball with out the school and it is win-win as you play baseball and get to earn a little money."

After signing, Packer was immediately assigned to short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley where he finished the last few weeks of the season there and made five appearances out of the bullpen going 0-0 with 1 save and a 2.38 ERA (11.1 IP, 8 H, 1 BB, 13 K). He then went to the Fall Instructional League out in Arizona and unofficially pitched four innings and did not allow a

run and gave up four hits, no walks and had four strikeouts.

Packer's good showing late last year has carried over to this season where in 19 appearances at Low-A Lake County he is 6-4 with a 1.86 ERA (63.0 IP, 51 H, 8 BB, 61 K). He initially opened the season in the bullpen where he was very good in 11 appearances as he was 2-1 with a 2.37 ERA (19.0 IP, 14 H, 2 BB, 17 K), but the Indians were so impressed with his stuff they shifted him to the rotation and he has been outstanding as in eight starts he is 4-3 with a 1.64 ERA (44.0 IP, 37 H, 6 BB, 44 K).

"What happened was when he was in the pen he showed us four good pitches, so he has a chance to start being a lefty and is doing a great job," said Lake County pitching coach Mickey Callaway. "He can really pitch off his offspeed stuff a curveball, slider and changeup, and has a decent fastball with sink. He has a good arsenal to have as a starter."

Packer is excited for the opportunity to start, though is happy to be in any role the Indians decide to put him in.

"I am not sure as they just told me one day I was moving into the starting rotation," said Packer. "I throw a lot of pitches that have sink on them and I stay low in the zone and throw a lot of strikes. That's really where my success has been and that's what I try to do when I pitch. My fastball has some sink to it, and my changeup, slider and curveball all go down too, so they are good pitches to have."

Packer is not very big at 6'0" 190 pounds, but he makes up for the lack of size by being a strike thrower and having some good deception with his delivery. His fastball consistently comes in at 89-92 MPH and he complements it with a curveball and changeup, the changeup being his best pitch. He has even seen a small velocity bump as he has touched 93 MPH a few times this year. He is a versatile left-hander who has shown he can start or relieve, but the Indians appear intent on focusing on him as a reliever as a professional, and perhaps a lefty specialist down the road.

"His changeup really has a lot of deception and depth to it as it really dives," noted Callaway. "If he can pitch off the changeup which is his main weapon and sneak the fastball in there and mix in the curve and slider, he can do a good job. He has been up to 93 MPH, and sitting 90-91 MPH which is pretty good for a lefty. I think he is more of a guy who needs to locate as I don't see a lot of swing and misses because he is throwing a ball by a guy, he gets a lot of swing and misses on his offspeed stuff."

As a college pitcher pitching in Low-A, Packer is a little more advanced for the league he is pitching in. His true test as a prospect will come when he eventually gets to High-A Kinston or even Double-A Akron. In the meantime, though, his focus is mostly on improving the mental part of his game as a pitcher rather than anything mechanically.

"I'm not really doing anything mechanically; just more how to pitch," said Packer. "How to call a

game and what's going through your mind when you are pitching. There are a few things every once in awhile where I am pulling out too quick and that we work on that week, but nothing really big. It is mostly how to pitch certain guys and hitting the spots."

With the second half of the year underway and Packer pitching so well there is a good possibility he could be on the move to Kinston at some point before the end of the season. Where he goes or where he ends up this season is not a concern to him as he just wants to continue to prove his value to the organization as a very reliable and consistent left-handed pitching option.

"I just want to stay consistent," said Packer. "I am pitching well, but I want to keep it going the rest of the year just so I can have a whole season being a reliable pitcher all year. That's my goal, to be reliable the entire year."

June Player of the Month Honorable Mentions:

Jared Goedert (3B – COL): .287 (29-101), 18 R, 7 2B, 0 3B, 10 HR, 22 RBI, 9 BB, 26 K, 1.002 OPS
Michael Brantley (OF – COL): .353 (36-102), 18 R, 5 2B, 1 3B, 2 HR, 15 RBI, 10 BB, 9 K, 7 SB, .893 OPS
Josh Rodriguez (INF – COL): .397 (31-78), 21 R, 5 2B, 0 3B, 5 HR, 16 RBI, 14 BB, 17 K, 4 SB, 1.138 OPS
Jerad Head (UT –AKR): .343 (24-70), 14 R, 8 2B, 0 3B, 4 HR, 13 RBI, 8 BB, 17 K, 1.046 OPS
Jason Kipnis (2B – AKR): .330 (32-97), 21 R, 7 2B, 0 3B, 5 HR, 12 RBI, 11 BB, 20 K, 1.002 OPS
Jeremie Tice (3B – LC): .328 (22-67), 10 R, 6 2B, 0 3B, 4 HR, 14 RBI, 9 BB, 18 K, 1.022 OPS
Alex White (RHP – AKR): 2-3, 6 G, 1.59 ERA, 34.0 IP, 25 H, 6 ER, 11 BB, 23 K, .197 BAA
Bryce Stowell (RHP – AKR): 1-0, 6 S, 9 G, 0.00 ERA, 13.2 IP, 6 H, 0 ER, 4 BB, 23 K, .130 BAA
Joe Gardner (RHP – KIN): 3-2, 5 G, 2.43 ERA, 29.2 IP, 15 H, 8 ER, 6 BB, 30 K, .153 BAA
Clayton Cook (RHP – LC): 2-0, 5 G, 1.38 ERA, 26.0 IP, 19 H, 4 ER, 6 BB, 26 K, .200 BAA
Tyler Sturdevant (RHP – LC): 2-0, 1 S, 7 G, 0.00 ERA, 15.2 IP, 7 H, 3 BB, 24 K, .137 BAA

2010 Player of the Month Previous Winners:

May: Chun Chen (Lake County)
April: Bo Greenwell (Lake County)