Sometimes it is better to be late than never show up at all. One can make the case that this applies exactly to Double-A Akron outfielder John Drennen.

Drennen, who turns 24 years old later this month, was a high profile supplemental first round draft pick for the Indians out of high school in 2005. He made a splash at rookie-level Burlington in 2005 hitting .238 with 8 HR, 29 RBI and a .759 OPS in 51 games, and then in 2006 at Low-A Lake County hit .321 with 6 HR, 30 RBI and an .880 OPS in 67 games before being promoted to High-A Kinston halfway through the season.

Once Drennen arrived in Kinston at the midway point in 2006 his career began to stall as he hit .239 with 0 HR, and a .656 OPS in 31 games there the rest of the season. He came back to Kinston in 2007 and had an okay season where he hit .254 with 13 HR, 77 RBI and a .727 OPS, but then bottomed out when he returned there for a third straight year in 2008 when he hit .235 with 3 HR, 39 RBI, and a .631 OPS.

Drennen in some ways had become an afterthought going into last year where at the start of the season he was assigned to Double-A Akron for the first time in his career. His once and bright shining star had faded, and it had all but gone out after he started the season in Akron hitting

.191 with 1 HR, 10 RBI and a .601 OPS in 21 games.

Seemingly as a last resort and to serve a wakeup call to get Drennen back on track, the Indians reassigned him to Kinston in May of 2009 for the fourth time in his career. Whatever message was sent, he received it loud and clear.

Things suddenly began to click for him while he was in Kinston again. Whether it was a reality check or not, he maintained a positive attitude and hit the cages hard to become better at making consistent contact, maintain a consistent approach at the plate, and even his bat path. After liking what they saw, the Indians promoted him back to Akron at the beginning of June and in 72 games there the rest of the year responded by hitting .296 with 7 HR, 30 RBI and an .819 OPS. In 13 combined games in September including the regular season and playoffs he hit .377 with 6 HR and a 1.174 OPS.

Drennen has used that successful finish to his 2009 season as a springboard into this season as he has followed it up with a good year this season in a return trip to Akron. He was a mid-season Eastern League All Star and to date is hitting .293 with 5 HR, 47 RBI and a .764 OPS in 93 games.

"I am just trying to stay consistent and keep getting better," said Drennen in a recent interview for the IPI. "Just keep working and compete every pitch and not take an at bat off and work on things and take them into the game."

When Drennen was drafted back in 2005 there was the thought he would show more power as he matured. While he has shown slight improvement with his slugging numbers over the years and at times unleashes some booming home runs with his sweet swing, his power numbers are not quite up to their potential because he is concentrating more on making more consistent contact at the plate.

"I have been focusing more just being consistent in making good contact and not worrying about the long ball," said Drennen. "I am just going up there trying to get a pitch to hit and square it up and focusing on seeing the baseball. It is pretty much what they talk about a lot, so I have just been trying to stick with that and not worry about too much mechanically and just go compete."

Drennen's big league future is unknown as when looking realistically at his situation there are a lot of 24-year old players with the same numbers and abilities. That said, given that he is a former supplemental first round pick he will be given ample opportunity to make good on the potential the Indians and others once saw to consider him so high in the draft.

Drafted as a centerfielder, Drennen is now more relegated to the corner outfield positions, though his versatility in the outfield may help him down the road in making the big leagues as a fourth outfielder some day.

"I have been on the corners [for awhile]," said Drennen. "I can play center, but wherever they throw me out there in the outfield is fine as long as I am out on the field. I just focus on being ready every pitch and try to work in BP to get good jumps on balls. I may boot one here every now and again, but that's the game. But I will play hard."

To get away from the game, Drennen likes to spend any time he can on the water. He is an avid fisher, and he spends a lot of time in the offseason at the abundance of lakes surrounding the San Diego area.

"I do a lot of fishing, and when I do have time I will go out and do a little body boarding," said Drennen. "I definitely love it and it helps me take my mind off the game. There are actually quite a lot of lakes around there. There are some big reservoirs, but they do produce a lot of big bass which is cool."

Time is no longer on his side as he is in his sixth year in professional baseball. He is deserving of a promotion to Triple-A Columbus, though because of such a ridiculous amount of outfield depth in Cleveland and Columbus he likely will not make his Triple-A debut until the start of next season. Next season will also be his last year under the Indians' control as he will be eligible for minor league free agency after the 2011 season.

With all that in mind, Drennen knows he can't control where he goes and that he just needs to go out and keep playing and be able to look back on this season and know he left it all on the field.

"Personally I want to look back at the end and say I did what I could do each and every day," said Drennen. "If I make sure I am focused, at the end things will pan out. That's the approach I am taking every day."

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