"Minor Happenings" is a weekly column which covers the important developments and news in the Indians farm system. While most of the information in this report is from my own research and through interviews I have conducted with organizational personnel, some information in this report is collected and summarized from the various news outlets that cover each team.

Small update today with some last minute cuts from Farm Director Ross Atkins and some injury updates. As an FYI, I will be posting a very lengthy Q&A with Atkins on Tuesday or Wednesday this week sort of wrapping up the season, so be sure to look out for that.

Then, starting on Thursday, I will start to unveil the 2010 Tony Awards. I'll give it the typical year end awards treat where a different award is announced each day rather than lumping them all into one gigantic post. Over the course of eight days I will name the Hitter of the Year, Pitcher of the Year, Reliever of the Year, Comeback Player of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Biggest Breakthrough, Biggest Disappointment, and the All Tony Team. These year end awards are just for fun, and just a way to reward and acknowledge these players 100% on performance.

About the time the Tony Awards wrap up, I will be getting ready to go out to Goodyear, AZ for the Fall Instructional League and Arizona Fall League and will have lots of firsthand information from my five day visit there.

Last, congrats again to the Triple-A Columbus Clippers and Low-A Lake County Captains on winning their respective league titles. Hopefully the other affiliates can join in on the fun next year.

Onto the *Happenings*…

Director's Cuts

Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins was out of pocket this week at the Farm Director's Meetings in Colorado. He did take some time to look back on the accomplishments of both Triple-A Columbus and Low-A Lake County:

On Columbus and Lake County winning league titles: "I really couldn't be happier for Mike Sarbaugh and Ted Kubiak. Sarbaugh's team pretty much dominated the playoffs and had incredible offensive displays and incredible bullpen and starting pitching. Ted Kubiak's team in Lake County just grinded through the playoffs and in some cases beat some lineups where on most days they probably had no business beating, but they really pitched well and really grinded through a tough playoff schedule and format. So I am very happy for those staffs and of course all the players. There is no question, no matter where it is when you do it or how you do it, when you are the last team standing and get to put a ring on your finger, there is a reason they jump around and spray champagne on each other because it is a lot of hard work and perseverance to get there."

On the Triple-A National Championship: "I think it is certainly more impressive to win a five game series as usually the best team wins in a five game series. Not to take anything away from the National Championship, but on any given night in baseball anything can happen but over the course of a five game series really the stronger team is going to end up on the better side of that. It certainly is a good accomplishment, and how they did it was in dominate fashion. But if I had to choose the more impressive accomplishment, it would be the International League [title].

On Jason Kipnis: "If nothing else, [his performance with Columbus] certainly makes him feel a lot more confident about being in Triple-A to start the season, which is most likely where he will be [next year]. He really handled himself great from a mental standpoint with how well he handled Triple-A pitching in a tough environment when the games are on the line. Hitting for the cycle that night was impressive, and the home run was way out of the ballpark. He was the catalyst and the power that night, and was fun to watch from a player in his first full season."

On Kipnis' affect on roster decisions going forward: "You always have to [think about that], as you always have to think about where every piece of the puzzle fits and what is the best way for them to [come together]. We can't operate inside a vacuum with these guys. We have to factor in where they are gong to play and who they are going to play next to and when they are going to transition. So absolutely his progress will ultimately at some point impact the progress of another player. It is one of the unique things about professional sports, and certainly in baseball as sometimes you are playing along side of someone that you are competing with where the ultimate goal is to get to the major leagues."

On Lake County: "We took their best starter, their best reliever, and took their best offensive player roughly at the midpoint of the season, and then someone just stepped up and filled in those roles and became the next best starter, the next best reliever and the next best offensive player. You couldn't write it up any better when it happened that way. And then the pieces around like the Preston Guilmet's, Brett Brach's, Vidal Nuno's and of course Giovanni Soto and

what he did this year, they really stepped up to the plate. They really got incredible performances from players in their first professional season and those in their first introduction into pro ball like Chase Burnette and Tyler Holt as those guys stepped right into the middle of the lineup and performed well. I think when you create a positive environment where guys are working hard and working toward one common goal, in the end it is one of the most beautiful things in minor league baseball. They are ultimately all playing to try to get to the next level and make it to the major leagues, but that night and in those series' at the end of the season they are playing together and for one another to win a ring. Watching those young players celebrate in Lake County was really cool, and they had a ton of fun with it and a lot of emotion was involved."

Infirmary Report

I've been getting a lot of questions on right-hander **Adam Miller** of late. Everyone wants to know how he is doing, and what the plans are for him this offseason. Well, what I can say right now is he is still doing very well in his rehab and has had no setbacks since the one he had in the spring. He has worked extremely hard to get where he is, and is back on the mound pitching again. It is now not as much of a long shot as it seemed five months ago to consider him a pitching option for the big league team sometime next year, though he still has a long way to go. The Indians have not determined what his offseason plans will be, something they have to be careful with how they structure and approach since he is a minor league free agent and also a Rule 5 Draft candidate. Definitely good news, but again, a long way to go, and some other obstacles the Indians potentially have to hurdle (free agency and Rule 5 Draft).

Moving on to other players, Triple-A Columbus **Nick Weglarz** is recovering well from the sprained ligament in his right thumb and will be playing winter ball this offseason for Caracas out in Venezuela. Triple-A right-handed pitcher
Bryce Stowell
is recovering well from the right elbow soreness he suffered at the end of the season, and is expected to be fine for next season. Rookie-level left-handed pitcher
Elvis Araujo
is still making his way back from Tommy John surgery last year. The recovery has not gone as smoothly as it normally does, but he will pitch in the Parallel League in Arizona this fall.

Follow Tony and the Indians Prospect Insider on Twitter @TonyIPI . His new book the 2010 Cleveland Indians Top 100 Prospects & More is also available for purchase on Amazon.com or his site .