Some news and notes from my Tribe notebook…

****

Right-handed pitcher **Adam Miller** is officially back in action this fall and pitching in the Arizona Parallel League. He is expected to make a handful of appearances there and then the rest of his offseason will be determined on if he will be shut down or pitch winter ball somewhere.

The Indians are in a tough spot here as they need to make a decision on whether to add Miller back to the 40-man roster or risk losing him in the Rule 5 Draft this December. If he is back pitching, scouts will definitely notice as many teams have dispatched scouts to all the fall leagues (even Instructional League) to see players. If he is healthy and even just 80% of the pitcher he once was, I don't see any way a team passes on the chance to take him in the Rule 5 Draft. This will be an interesting development to follow the next several weeks as the Indians make their roster decisions by the November 20th roster deadline.

By the way, for those wondering, the Parallel League is a new upstart league that teams have put together to complement the Arizona Fall League (AFL) and Instructional League to give additional time to their players. Typically the AFL is for the highly rated or near-ML ready prospects while Instructs is for a lot of the new, young prospects, so all of the guys in between were without a league, especially after the Hawaii Winter League folded two years ago, so this is where the idea for the Parallel League was born last year.

****

Major League Baseball officially announced changes to the free agent process on Thursday. At first glance it would appear to be just some minor calibrations to the offseason process, but actually this announcement means a huge change has been implemented which has yet to really be talked about. The really big change is this little nugget from the link above:

"[Teams and agents] will be prohibited from publicly disclosing the value and length of offers before an agreement, and they may not publicly speculate on the terms of offers or a free-agent's value."

This is a huge game changer with regards to the way baseball free agency is reported by the media and thus followed by the fans. What this means, is no contact between the media and the teams or agents at any point in the free agent process for information regarding contract details and/or interest in a player. In other words, lots of media personnel are going to be getting a "no comment" from agents and team executives this offseason, and it looks like the media circus at the Winter Meetings is going to come to an end (or close to it).

In the day and age of social media and an ESPN-ized world with news showing breaking every rumor or move involving teams, this will be interesting to follow this offseason with baseball and how the media giants are affected by this. As many saw with the NBA free agent period, a lot of the rumors and hype was ridiculous and well beyond overkill. So, maybe MLB is trying to get that under control and just flat out eliminating it all to where the negotiation process between team, player and agent is exclusively through them and not carried out through the media like it has been for a long time now.

Bottom line, teams and agents have been given the gag order and can no longer talk about

deals to the media before they have been agreed to. When it comes to any rumors this offseason, it means the media is really going to have to dig and do their work to get the scoop on things. Of course, I will believe it when I see it, as I just can't see the media being shut out completely. But, as I understand it, supposedly this will be enforced in a big way. Stay tuned.

****

Considering the less than appealing options that appear to be available this offseason in free agency, the Indians are searching the far reaches of the globe for a much needed right-handed bat. One of the Indians' main goals, if not only goal this offseason will be to add a right-handed bat to the lineup, preferably in the outfield where they are very left-handed heavy with expected starters next year Shin-Soo Choo, Grady Sizemore, and Michael Brantley all hitting left-handed. Add in that Jordan Brown and Nick Weglarz both hit left-handed and Trevor Crowe is a switch-hitter (but struggles from the right side), and the need is very obvious.

One place the Indians are looking is Japan. They have dispatched scouts and are looking at several different options and 33-year old Japanese right-handed hitting outfielder **Hitoshi Tamura** is someone they have their eye on. He has had some injury problems in his career, but this past season was pretty healthy and hit .324 with 27 HR, 89 RBI and a .924 OPS for the Fukuoka Softbank Hawks. He is not an impact player by any means, but could be some much needed punch from the right-side to complement a very left-handed heavy hitting lineup in the outfield.

Even though the Indians have shown some interest in Tamura, it is unlikely they will sign him as he would prefer to sign for a West Coast team. Reports indicate that the San Francisco Giants and San Diego Padres are looking at him, so they would certainly fit that West Coast requirement. The Arizona Diamondbacks and Texas Rangers have also reportedly expressed interest. For the Indians to have any shot at signing him they would likely have to overpay, which does not appear likely to happen.

****

I've been getting a lot of questions about what player the Indians will receive from the Yankees to complete the trade for right-handed reliever **Kerry Wood**. At the time of the deal it was

announced that the Yankees were sending cash and/or a player to be named later for Wood and that the deal would be finalized by October 15th. Since joining the Yankees, he has been awesome where in 23 games he is 2-0 with a 0.36 ERA (25.0IP, 14H, 15BB, 29K).

What this means though is that since Wood has pitched so well, the Yankees will simply just be picking up more of the pro-rated portion remaining on his contract. At the time of the deal it was reported the Indians received $1.5M in cash from the Yankees to pick up some of the pro-rated portion of his remaining contract. If Wood pitched well, the Yankees would send another $500K, which after his performance to date certainly looks like this will be the case. The Indians will not be getting a player back though, as this was a straight cash dump.

****

The Indians officially added right-handed pitcher **Travis Turek** and catcher **Roberto Perez** to the Arizona Fall League roster this week. Since the roster was unveiled about two to three weeks ago, the Indians had two spots on the roster they had yet to confirm. A big reason for this is because catcher **Chun Chen** was slated to go to the AFL if he did not make the Taiwan National team this offseason to play in the Asian Games, but since Chen made the Taiwan team last week the Indians put Perez on the team instead.

As it turns out, Chen playing for Taiwan is a good thing as his two year military service with his country has now been cut to 12 days. In Taiwan you only need to make the team to have the cut in military service time, while other countries like Korea require you win a Gold Medal.

****

The Indians completed a (very) minor trade this past week where they shipped out outfielder/first baseman **Roman Pena** to the Los Angeles Dodgers for outfielder **Preston Mattingly**.
Pena was a 2005 5

th

round pick who played five seasons for the Indians reaching as high as High-A Kinston, and in his career hit .244/.332/.379 with 34 HR and 214 RBI in 421 games. He only played 21 games this season for Kinston before going down for the season with a knee injury.

Mattingly is a former 1st round pick in 2006 for the Dodgers, but has struggled in five seasons hitting just .232/.275/.334 with 20 HR and 146 RBI in 410 games. He has some experience playing second base and shortstop, so he may fill a utility need at Kinston or Double-A Akron next year. And yes, he is the son of former Yankee legend and new Dodgers manager Don Mattingly. As Ben Kenobi once said, “Move along, nothing to see here”….or something like that.

****

Left-handed pitcher **Drew Pomeranz -** the Indians’ first round pick in this year’s draft - is off to a good professional start out in Instructional League. He did not pitch for an affiliate this year since he signed so late, and while the stats don’t count he has looked very strong in his first two appearances. In two starts so far he has posted a 1.80 ERA (5.0IP, 2H, 2R/1ER, 1BB, 9K) and has been up to 95 MPH.

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 .