I've been out in Goodyear, Arizona the past three days for the Fall Instructional League which wrapped up on Wednesday and the Arizona Fall League which started up on Tuesday.

Compared to previous years, the Instructional League is much more interesting this year due to the presence of so many young players with upside that I have never seen. Here are some thoughts, observations, and updates on players from the two days of action I was present in Instructional League. In the coming days, I will have several feature articles on players like Adam Miller, Tony Wolters, LeVon Washington, Matt Packer, Tony Dischler, and more.

I will have a separate notebook in the coming days recapping my visit to the Arizona Fall League with updates on the Indians players participating in that high profile prospect league.

Indians manager **Manny Acta** was been on hand for the Instructional League games since the end of the Indians season last weekend. He was also at the Arizona Fall League game on Thursday. This is actually pretty impressive to see that he is watching these games even though they involve a high percentage of players he will never coach on the big league team. But he knows that for this team to ever have a chance to win, the talent will need to come from within and that it is important for him to get some looks at the talent when he can. A quick

glance in the dugout of the Reds and White Sox - the two opponents for the Indians on Tuesday and Wednesday - and there was no Ozzie Guillen or Dusty Baker sighting. I don't know what this means, if anything, but it's good to see nonetheless.

There was absolutely no question that **Travis Fryman** was the man in charge during the morning practices. He is not afraid to push the players and be a little hard on them, but is also quick to openly give props when a player does well. He seems to have the proper mix of baseball intellect and understanding of the game, passion, and ability to relate to players, a mix that is not easy to find. It remains to be seen how much longer he will stay coaching on the minor league circuit, but he appears to really like it (and prefer it). That said, I think somewhere along the line he is going to get a job on a major league coaching staff, and possibly manage someday. If the Indians ever sour on Manny Acta, I would be surprised if Fryman was not his successor.

I was able to sit down and talk to right-handed pitcher **Adam Miller** for roughly 20-25 minutes on Wednesday, and will have a detailed article on him very soon recapping everything we talked about. In the meantime, two very positive developments for him came from Instructional League: 1.) he has had no injury setbacks and is pretty close to 100% and 2.) he has resigned with the Indians (he was a minor league free agent). He is not pitching anywhere this offseason, and all signs point to a big league invite to spring training, and if he can prove healthy by the end of spring training he has an excellent chance to make the Indians opening day roster.

Right-handed pitcher **Bryce Stowell** is recovering well from the right elbow strain he had at the end of the season. When the injury occurred in late-August there was some concern it could be more serious, but the Indians have maintained he will be fine and that he is expected to pitch at the start of next season. That looks like the case at the moment as his arm feels good and he is scheduled to begin a throwing program on Monday.

Outfielder **Nick Weglarz** is currently out in Arizona rehabbing from the thumb injury which sidelined him in August and for the rest of the season. He has been out in Arizona for about six weeks and the rehab is going well. He expects to be in Arizona another one or two weeks before going home to Canada for a short bit and then on to Venezuela to play winter ball.

Right-handed pitcher **Alexander Perez** is working out at the complex attempting to come back from Tommy John surgery he had in May. He is still in the early stages of his rehab and likely

will not be back until the second half of next season, though even then will be on a restricted throwing program. Two other rehabbing pitchers I saw at the complex working out who are recovering from serious injuries were right-handers **Hector Rondon** and **Santo Frias**. Frias has actually been throwing as he recently threw a sim-game. Rondon is coming off Tommy John surgery just a few weeks ago, and probably won't start any kind of throwing program until sometime next spring.

Left-hander **Drew Pomeranz** finished off his Instructional League campaign with three shutout-hitless innings on Wednesday. He walked two and struck out seven, though was a little off with his command as he needed 66 pitches to get through his three innings of work. He was once again up to 95 MPH and averaged 93 MPH with his fastball, and even though his command was off he used his stuff to overpower an inexperienced lineup. He looks primed and ready to go for his official pro debut next season at High-A Kinston.

Outfielder **LeVon Washington** to me was one of the two or three position players to really stand out on the field for the Indians. I have no idea what the future holds for him, but he is going to be exciting to watch with his power/speed combination. He turned on a couple of balls and roped them into the right-center gap and down the right field line and showed some nice ability running the bases. His arm will always be the weakest part of his game, but you can really see the raw tools and athleticism the Indians like in him. He wore No. 26 in camp, but I swear based strictly on physical resemblance and batting stance/swing he looked a lot like good 'ole No. 7 who used to patrol center for the Indians in the 90s and early 00s. Hopefully down the road Washington can make it and play in the big leagues like No. 7 too.

Shortstop **Tony Wolters -** the Indians 3rd round pick in this year's draft - was everything I expected to see. He is still raw with the bat and it will take some adjustments and maturity before his potential as an offensive player can be reached, but he is oozing with all the intangibles and good fundamentals to be a very good player down the road. He just looks like a ballplayer out there with his on field actions and demeanor which are all very advanced for his age. On way play on Tuesday he made a very impressive scoop, hop, and throw while fielding a ball in the hole between shortstop and third base. I know Derek Jeter is a horrible defensive comp (and a hated Yankee), but Wolters "looked" like a young Jeter who had that unique looking hop and throw against his body while falling toward the third baseline.

Right-hander **Jason Knapp** was pitching in Instructional League to makeup for some lost time

this year. He pitched just one inning on Tuesday and looked strong (1.0 IP, 0 H, 0 R, 0 BB, 1 K). Even though Instructs are over and everyone is going home for the offseason until spring training in March, Knapp will be remaining in Goodyear until December. The reason is not to rehab or anything, but because he is taking some classes at a local college in the Phoenix area. While he is attending classes he will be using the Goodyear facility to work out four days a week. He was set to play for North Carolina out of high school and is actually still enrolled there and plans to attend the school someday when his baseball career is over, and in the meantime is taking advantage of a unique scenario where all his courses at the Phoenix area school will transfer to North Carolina.

Left-hander **Elvis Araujo** made another appearance in Instructs on Wednesday (1.1 IP, 1 H, 2 ER, 1 BB, 1 K). He looked strong and was up to 96 MPH with his fastball. He is making his way back from Tommy John surgery, one which has taken longer than normal due to a couple of unexpected setbacks during his rehab over the summer. He could be an option to open the 2011 season in the rotation at Low-A Lake County, though since he will likely be on a restricted inning/pitch count next year he will probably open the season in extended spring training and then join Lake County a month or two into the season.

17-year old right-handed pitcher **Felix Sterling** is an impressive physical specimen on the mound standing in at 6’3” 200 pounds (he looks bigger than 200 pounds). In his outing on Tuesday he showed a lot of raw ability and performed well (3.0 IP, 2 H, 1 R, 1 BB, 4 K). He is very rough around the edges and will certainly be a project for the Indians the next few years. On one play he cost himself a run when the hitter hit a groundball in the hole between first and second base that first baseman Chase Burnette made a sensational diving play on, but when Burnette got up to flip the ball to the pitcher who should be covering first base on the play, Sterling was nowhere to be found. Sterling also missed big with a lot of his pitches, though this is something a lot of the younger pitchers in Instructs do since they are not as advanced as most players.

Shortstop **Jorge Martinez** had a rough first year with the bat, but the 17-year old infielder continues to impress with his ability in the field. For a player of his size (6’2”) he shows a lot of range and a strong, accurate arm. On one play during the game on Wednesday he ranged far to his left on a ball hit sharply up the middle and extended his left arm to pick a ball that looked certain to go into center field. He scooped it up and fired the ball to first base. The Indians were very happy with his defense this year, now it’s time for his bat to take a leap next year.

I got my first glimpses of Latin infielders **Erik Gonzalez**, **Robel Garcia** and **Juan Romero**. You can see the potential that Gonzalez and Garcia have, and you also come away impressed

with the way the ball explodes off of Romero's bat. These three are long projections, and Romero is clearly the best prospect of the three, but these will be three players I know I will be following closely next season. I'd expect all three to be in extended spring training and rookie-Arizona next year, though Romero has an outside shot at landing a spot on the Low-A Lake County or short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley roster at some point.

Right-hander **Jose Lopez** was a disaster on the mound on Tuesday (1.1 IP, 1 H, 3 R, 4 BB, 1 K). His line score doesn't do it justice on how bad of an outing he had. He threw just two first pitch strikes to the 11 batters he faced and hit two batters in addition to the four walks. He also allowed base-runners to have a field day taking bases on him either by steal because he was not paying attention or via one of his half a dozen or so wild pitches.

During morning practice on Wednesday, the Indians' coaching staff and instructors put the hitters through an hour situational hitting drill. They split the players into two teams, one team hitting in the cage and one team running the bases. Teams got points if they correctly produced as a hitter or runner according to the situation given by the coaches, and in cases where the hitter or runner made a mistake they lost a point. They worked on just about every situation you can come up with. The toughest situation was good execution of a sacrifice bunt where the coaches set up cones about halfway between the mound and home plate. As long as the bunted ball reached the grass on the infield and stayed inside the cones, it was considered a successful bunt. If it rolled past the cones, then it was not successful. It was a friendly game to close out the Instructional League morning practice sessions, with "Team Aguilar" coming on top over "Team Burnette" by a net score of 9-6.

Follow Tony and the Indians Prospect Insider on Twitter @TonyIPI . His latest book the 2010 Cleveland Indians Top 100 Prospects & More is also available for purchase on his site for a special year end closeout sale of $10.00 (including shipping and handling).