I urged Tony to steap away from the keyboard and detox, after seven great months of producing his phenomenal farm report column for us. Dude can't stay away from the keyboard. I'm not complaining. He was reinspired upon hearing a very interesting radio interview with Tribe Farm Director John Farrell, in which he dropped a couple bombshells. Tony reviews those developments in his latest.

On Tuesday, I posted what I thought would be my final Minor Happenings piece of the season when I posted **my year-end Tony Awards** . But, after Indians Farm Director John Farrell made some interesting comments in his final minor league report yesterday, and with some of the developments involved with a likely move of the Indians Spring Training operations to Arizona, I felt the need was there for one final brief report. Again, thanks for reading this year.

Director's Cuts

With the minor league season complete, Farrell and the Indians have turned their attention to the offseason and winter league play.

On the Florida Instructional League: The Florida Instructional League started last Monday and runs four weeks until October 21st. The league is primarily used for 1st and 2nd year players, and is a four week program where the organization can hone in on specific areas that players need improvement on. Also, the league allows the organization to artificially extend the season by one month so as to help the young players become more accustomed to the longer schedule that lies ahead for them in more advanced levels of the minors, as well as the majors.

On the Arizona Fall League: The Arizona Fall League starts on October 10th and runs until right around Thanksgiving. Only players who were on Double-A rosters or higher prior to July 1st are eligible; although, there is a one-time exception that can be used to add a Single-A player.

On the winter leagues in general: Other leagues like the Dominican, Venezuelan, etc start soon as well. When determining who goes to these offseason leagues, generally the Indians like to use the leagues as make up time for players who may have missed a lot of at bats or innings pitched because of an injury during the season. Of note, for the winter leagues there is a workload threshold in place where a major league club has the right to deny pitchers from participating. Any pitcher who made 55 or more appearances, or pitched 160 or more innings can be denied permission from playing in the winter leagues. This applies to all Latin and American players. Some players of note who will be sent to the Dominican Winter League are Jim Ed Warden, Jeremy Guthrie and Ryan Garko. Garko and Guthrie will only play half the winter league schedule.

On why they send players to the winter leagues: In addition to getting at bats for position players and innings for pitchers, the Indians like the winter leagues so they can expose players to foreign environments. The Indians feel that being in such an environment and dealing with the cultural barriers they encounter helps the players focus more. Also, players learn to deal with bigger stadiums that have third decks, play in a major league atmosphere, deal with the media, etc.

On Fausto Carmona: Carmona will go to the Dominican Winter League as well to pitch and accrue more innings. Because of his bullpen experiment this season, he'll fall well short of the innings they wanted him to pitch this year as he will finish with just over 100 innings pitched combined at Buffalo and Cleveland. The Indians feel he could pitch 180-200 innings in 2007, and would like the increase in innings to be much smaller from 2006 to 2007 by going from 150-160 innings this year to 180-200 next year, rather than if he did not pitch winter ball and went from 100-120 innings this year and basically doubled it to 180-200 next year.

On Ryan Garko: Garko will exclusively play 1B in the Dominican Winter League, and is there to primarily work on his defense. The Indians want more in-game experience at 1B for Garko to improve on basic techniques, fundamentals, positioning, and in-game decision making.

Minor League Affiliate Changes After 2008?

2008 is two years away.....but with the potential move of Spring Training to Arizona combined with the Yankees pulling out of Columbus, you could very well see 2-3 of the Indians six minor league affiliates move after the 2008 season.

If the looming deal with Goodyear goes through to add the state of the art Spring Training complex just outside of Phoenix, the Indians plan to use the facility year round to rehab players, get extra work in, etc. With the move of operations from Winter Haven, FL to Phoenix, AZ after the 2008 season, it would almost be a certainty that the Indians new Gulf Coast Team (GCL) they started up this year to play at Winter Haven would have to be scrapped after the 2008 season. With operations in Arizona, the Indians would most likely drop out of the GCL and add a rookie level team in the Arizona League.

Also, there is no secret that with the Yankees pulling out of Columbus a few weeks back, that the Indians could be serious players to move out of Buffalo and move their Triple-A affiliate to Columbus. The Washington Nationals recently signed on, but at the request of Columbus only signed a two year deal through 2008 since the Indians and Reds Triple-A agreements expire after the 2008 season. Reportedly, Columbus wants to be available for either the Indians or Reds to move there, and they are set to unveil a new state of the art stadium which could be a very attractive selling point to the Indians and Reds.

Logistically, Columbus would be about an hour closer to team headquarters at Jacob's Field, and put four of their six minor league teams in the system in the state of Ohio and within about two hours driving time of one another. In addition, from a fan perspective, a move from Buffalo to Columbus would be ideal for the Indians. Let's face it, Columbus is in Ohio and Buffalo is in

New York, and it goes without saying the Indians would tap into a key market in the Buckeye state's capital.

Last, it is possible a third team could be moved: Kinston. With the Indians intent on localizing their minor league affiliations either at the team headquarters in Jacob's Field or Spring Training headquarters in Arizona, the Indians could very well pull out of Kinston, NC after 2008 as well. Currently, the Indians deal with Kinston runs through 2008, which puts them right in line for a possible move closer to their Arizona complex by adding a team in the California League.