



# International League News & Notes



March 26, 2009

## BUFFALO BISONS

AN ACE WOULD SURE BE NIESE: The New York Mets have optioned LHP **Jonathon Niese** to the Bisons. Niese, 22, was a combined 12-9 with a 3.44 ERA last year with time at Double-A Binghamton, Triple-A New Orleans and the Mets. He totaled 155 strikeouts in 178.0 innings of work. He is rated the Mets #3 organizational prospect by *Baseball America*. This spring, Niese was 0-2 with a 6.75 ERA in three starts with New York (8.0 IP, 6 H, 6 R, 7 BB, 7 K).

MORE PLAYERS HEADED TO HERD: The New York Mets also optioned RHP **Conner Robertson** and C **Robinson Cancel** to the Buffalo Bisons. Robertson, 27, spent most of the 2008 season with Triple-A Tucson before joining the Arizona Diamondbacks. With Tucson, he was 7-4 with a 5.02 ERA in 47 relief appearances (71.2 IP). He pitched in six games out of the Diamondbacks' bullpen and was 0-1 with a 5.14 ERA. Cancel, 32, played 27 games with the Mets last year and hit .245 (12-49) with one homer and 5 RBI. He also hit .346 (18-52) in 15 games with New Orleans.

SPIVEY SIGNED BY METS: The New York Mets signed INF **Junior Spivey** to a minor league contract last week. Spivey, 34, has played in 457 major league games with Arizona, Milwaukee and Washington and has a career .270 average with 48 home runs and 201 RBI. He did not appear in a game last season. Spivey played in 72 games for the Diamondbacks in 2001 and helped the club to a World Series Championship. The following season, he hit .301 with a 16 home runs and 78 RBI in 143 games, all career highs.

## CHARLOTTE KNIGHTS

ROSTER MOVES: RHP **Adam Russell** and RHP **Ehren Wassermann** have both been optioned from the White Sox to the Knights. The upcoming season will be Russell's second in Charlotte. The 6'8" right-hander went 3-2 with a 2.89 ERA in 25 games with the Knights in 2008. Russell had three different stints with the White Sox last season, going a 4-0 with a 5.19 ERA in 22 games and earning a spot on Chicago's playoff roster. Over the previous two seasons with the Knights, Wassermann has gone a combined 5-4 with 12 saves and a 1.86 ERA. He has pitched in 57 games for the White Sox over the past two seasons. The White Sox also announced that INF **Gordon Beckham**, INF **Ben Broussard**, LHP **Aaron Poreda** and INF **Eider Torres** were reassigned to minor league camp.

PLAYER UPDATES: 3B **Dayan Viciedo** hit his second spring training home run yesterday. Viciedo hit an estimated 450-foot home run against the Oakland Athletics Triple-A club... RHP **Lance Broadway** may end up making the White Sox roster as a relief pitcher. Broadway has made only one relief appearance in 87 minor league games. He did make three relief appearances for the White Sox last season.

EGBERT TURNING HEADS: RHP **Jack Egbert** looks like a new man this spring. Egbert had offseason elbow surgery and is now throwing the ball with more velocity and accuracy. Egbert worked hard in the offseason, losing 20 pounds and improving his leg strength. Egbert is 1-0 with a 2.70 ERA in big league camp. Egbert is still in major league camp but will most likely begin the season in the Knights' starting rotation.

## COLUMBUS CLIPPERS

LAFFEY OPTIONED TO COLUMBUS: Cleveland finalized their starting rotation with RHP **Anthony Reyes** and LHP **Scott Lewis** earning the final two spots. That left LHP **Aaron Laffey** as the odd man out and he was optioned to the Clippers yesterday. Laffey was 1-2 with a 6.92 ERA in five starts for the Indians this spring (13.0 IP, 15 H, 11 R, 10 ER, 4 BB, 9 K).

CLIPPER OUTFIELD STILL UP FOR GRABS: With the Clipper roster slowly taking shape over the last few days, the outfield is still yet to come together. The most likely candidates to roam the field at the new Huntington Park are former first round pick, **Trevor Crowe** (2005), and two pieces of the **CC Sabathia** deal, **Matt LaPorta** and **Michael Brantley**. Crowe is currently still in Major League camp, batting .273 (12-44) with a homer and 3 RBI. LaPorta (.361, 13-36, 1 HR, 4 RBI) and Brantley (.313, 10-32, 0 HR, 3 RBI) were reassigned to minor league camp on Tuesday.

HISTORICAL CLIPPERS FOE JOINS TEAM: RHP **Juan Salas** was one of five players optioned to Columbus on March 19. Clippers fans might remember Salas, acquired from Tampa Bay on February 19 for INF **Isaias Velasquez**, as the closer in Durham's 4-1, no-hit win vs. Columbus on July 16, 2006. Salas (0.2 IP) combined with **Jason Hammel** (8.1 IP) in completing the second no-hitter against the Clippers in Columbus history. Toledo's **Felipe Lira** is the only other player to no-hit the Clippers, doing so on May 4, 1994.

## DURHAM BULLS

ROTATION TAKING SHAPE: With arguably baseball's top prospect **David Price** optioned yesterday to Durham, the Bulls rotation is nearly set. Price will more than likely be rejoined by righties **Mitch Talbot** and **Wade Davis**. Former major leaguer **Carlos Hernandez**, who is coming back from shoulder troubles, is expected to join Triple-A newcomer **James Houser** in the Bulls starting five. If this turns out to be Durham's rotation, three of the five starters to begin the year will be lefties.

PEN PERFECT: The bullpen certainly has the ability to be one of Durham's strengths to start 2009. The following pitchers were in major league camp and have been either optioned to Durham or assigned to minor league camp: **Winston Abreu**, **Jason Childers**, **Randy Choate**, **Dewon Day**, **Julio DePaula**, **Chad Orvella**, and **Dale Thayer**. Every member of that group has either MLB experience or is currently on the Rays 40-man roster.

IN THE FIELD: The following players are still in MLB camp with the Rays, but are expected to be part of Durham's roster: **Michel Hernandez**, **Chris Richard**, **Ray Sadler** and **Jon Weber**. **Reid Brignac**, **John Jaso**, **Elliott Johnson**, and **Justin Ruggiano** were optioned to Durham yesterday, along with Price.

WELCOME BACK: Bulls Manager **Charlie Montoyo** returned to camp late last week. Montoyo was a coach on Team Puerto Rico in the World Baseball Classic.

### GWINNETT BRAVES

THE DEFINITES: The Atlanta Braves trimmed their roster by eight players March 16, four of which were optioned to Gwinnett. Right-handed pitchers **Steve Marek**, **James Parr**, **Todd Redmond** and **Luis Valdez** will all begin the year with the G-Braves. Marek allowed no earned runs (4.0 IP) in four appearances in the Grapefruit League. Parr allowed no earned runs (6.1 IP) in three appearances. Redmond allowed three earned runs (4.2 IP) on eight hits in four appearances. Valdez allowed one earned run (1.2 IP) on one hit in two appearances. Also cut was **Francisley Bueno**, who, though he has not been officially assigned to Gwinnett, spent much of 2008 season at Triple-A Richmond. Bueno allowed two hits and no runs in four appearances (5.0 IP) this spring.

THE DEFINITE MAYBES: **Tommy Hanson** is one step closer to becoming a G-Brave. The organization's top prospect pitched 5.0 scoreless innings with a walk and eight strikeouts for Double-A Mississippi in an intrasquad game against Gwinnett Tuesday. Hanson is 1-0 with 14 strikeouts and four earned runs allowed (14.2 IP) in four Grapefruit League appearances. He moved to the backfield with the return of **Javier Vasquez** and **Jorge Campillo**, who both participated in the World Baseball Classic. Also up in the air is Atlanta's outfield. **Gregor Blanco**, **Josh Anderson** and **Jordan Schafer** are all in competition for the center field job. Anderson is out of options, but Blanco and Schafer are not. At least one of them will likely join the G-Braves on opening day. Blanco batted .400 (6-15) with two triples and a double for Venezuela in the World Baseball Classic. Schafer has batted .273 with five extra-base hits and five stolen bases in Grapefruit League action.

THE MAYBE-NOTS: The Atlanta Braves have a surplus of pitchers including a bullpen that's beginning to get a little crowded with right-handers. **Buddy Carlyle**, **Jorge Campillo** and **Jeff Bennett** all have Major League experience and will likely serve as long relievers out of the bullpen either in Atlanta or elsewhere. Speculation has been floating around that Atlanta might move some pitchers to supplement other positions. If Atlanta decides to retain the surplus, Gwinnett could obtain a formidable pitching staff for its inaugural season.

MEDIA DAY: Media Day is scheduled for April 7. The very first Gwinnett Braves roster will be introduced to the media and season package holders prior to the team's first workout in Gwinnett Stadium. Details are available at [www.GwinnettBraves.com/Media](http://www.GwinnettBraves.com/Media).

### INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS

INDIANS LET FANS SELECT FIELD DESIGN: The Indianapolis Indians have created a brand new online poll that allows fans to choose what mowing pattern will appear on the Victory Field playing surface for the Tribe's Thursday April 9 season opener. Indians fans can vote for one of four different patterns including the Diamond Cut, Angels Cut, Big Little Cut and the Checkered Board Cut. The poll is currently active on the Indians homepage. Voting for the "Opening Night Mowing Pattern" poll will end Friday April 3.

TIME FOR ROSTER MOVES: The Pittsburgh Pirates have made 11 roster moves within the past month. LHP **Dave Davidson**, 3B **Neil Walker** and LHP **Tom Gorzelanny** were optioned to Indianapolis on March 18. Two days earlier RHP **Jimmy Barthmaier** was optioned to the Indians while RHP **Daniel McCutchen**, 2B **Shelby Ford** and RHP **Juan Mateo** were all reassigned to Minor League camp. In the first moves of the month of March, LHP **Daniel Haigwood**, INF **Pedro Lopez** and C **Miguel Perez** were all reassigned to Minor League camp and RHP **Romulo Sanchez** was optioned to Indianapolis.

TRIPLE-A SPRING TRAINING GAMES: The Indians own a 2-4-1 record through seven Triple-A spring training games. The Tribe faced the 2007 American League Cy Young Award winner **C.C. Sabathia** and 2008 World Series Champion **Jamie Moyer** in back-to-back games this week. Indianapolis tagged Sabathia for seven hits and one run in his five innings this past Sunday, while they handed Moyer the loss after he allowed three runs on 10 hits in 5.2 innings on Monday.

### LEHIGH VALLEY IRONPIGS

WHO'S HOT: The Phillies' Triple-A spring training team is off to a decent start, going 4-3 in the first seven exhibition games. The biggest impacts have been made by INF **Kevin Mahar** and RHP **Drew Carpenter** (see below). Others off to a hot start are: SS **Ozzie Smith Chavez** (.462, 6-13, 5 R, 1 RBI), INF **J.J. Furmaniak** (.417, 5-12, 2B, RBI), OF **Javon Moran** (.462, 6-13, 3 RBI), LHP **Antonio Bastardo** (0-0, 0.00, SV, H in 3 G, 3 IP, 1 H, 5 K) and RHP **John Ennis** (1-0, 0.00, H in 3 G, 7 IP, 5 K).

KENDRICK OPTIONED TO LEHIGH VALLEY: Coming into spring training, the Phillies had a battle for the last spot in their rotation with pitchers RHP **Kyle Kendrick**, LHP **J.A. Happ**, RHP **Chan Ho Park** and RHP **Carlos Carrasco** leading the way for a chance to start for the defending World Champs. While being called the favorite to win the spot at the beginning of camp by Phillies pitching coach **Rich Dubee**, Kendrick struggled (1-3, 9.20 ERA in four Grapefruit League starts) and was optioned to Lehigh Valley on March 23, leaving Happ and Park as the front runners. Kendrick, who won the first-ever game at Coca-Cola Park in the exhibition game between Philadelphia and Lehigh Valley on March 30, 2008 (W, 5.0 IP, 4 H, 0 R, 1 BB, 7 K), finished last season 11-9 with a 5.49 ERA in 31 appearances (30 starts). However, Kendrick struggled down the stretch – going just 1-4 with a 10.48 ERA (28.1 IP, 33 ER) in his last 8 G, 7 GS – and was left off the Phillies' postseason roster.

KEVIN MAHAR-D HITTIN': Possibly overlooked coming into 2009 camp, OF **Kevin Mahar** has been hitting very well in Triple-A spring training games and is making a strong case for an IronPigs roster spot. Mahar, who appeared in seven games with the Texas Rangers in 2007, is enjoying a breakout spring (8-16 .500-2-5, 2 2B, 3B, and a 4-4 game on March 24). A native of Pontiac, MI, Mahar was signed by Philadelphia to a minor league deal on July 18, 2008, and played the rest of the year with the Clearwater Threshers (Advanced-A), finishing .277-2-11 (31-112) in 34 games. He started last year with the independent Kansas City T-Bones, where he batted .297-9-27 in 56 G prior to his return to affiliated baseball.

CARPENTER WIDDLING OPPONENTS: One player who figures to be a key contributor to the IronPigs rotation in 2009 is RHP **Drew Carpenter**. Carpenter, a member of Philadelphia's 40-man roster, spent the 2008 season bouncing between Clearwater (Advanced-A), Reading (Double-A), Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia, where he made his ML debut on August 27, tossing a scoreless inning of relief against the New York Mets. The Phillies' second-rounder in 2006 appeared in one game with Lehigh Valley last season and pitched very effectively in a 2-1 loss August 31 in Pawtucket (7.0 IP, 6 H, 2 ER, 3 BB, 5 K) – allowing just a two-run home run to **Joe Thurston** in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning.

## LOUISVILLE BATS

**BATS HOT IN SPRING PLAY:** Seven games into the spring season the Bats have reeled off a 5-1-1 record. In yesterday's 5-3 win over the Rochester Red Wings, **Wes Bankston** connected on a two-run home run in the 9<sup>th</sup> to break the tie. Bankston finished with two home runs and accounted for all five runs batted in. Their lone defeat was an 8-2 setback against the Durham Bulls on March 24.

**STRONG ROTATION:** The Bats look to take advantage of the pitching depth within the Reds' organization. Louisville's rotation this season could be as strong as it has ever been, especially with LHP **Adam Pettyjohn**, LHP **Matt Maloney**, RHP **Ramon Ramirez**, and RHP **Daryl Thompson** all likely destined for Louisville.

**KELCH AND ANDREWS PARTICIPATE IN MARCH MADNESS:** Both **Jim Kelch** and **Matt Andrews**, Louisville's play-by-play tandem for the last seven years, got an opportunity to participate in basketball's March Madness. Kelch, who is entering his 21<sup>st</sup> season with the organization, is also the play-by-play voice for the University of Louisville women's basketball team. The Lady Cardinals defeated No. 6 seeded LSU, 62-52, on Tuesday to advance to the Sweet 16. Andrews, who joined Kelch on the Bats' radio team in 2003, became a member of the Morehead State basketball team at the start of the 2008-09 season. He served as the play-by-play voice for the women and the color analyst for the men's team. The men defeated Austin Peay on March 7 to claim the OVC Championship. They then defeated Alabama State in the Opening Round of the NCAA Tournament before falling to No. 1 Louisville in the first round.

## NORFOLK TIDES

**HARBOR PARK SET TO HOST ORIOLES AND NATIONALS APRIL 3:** On Friday, April 3 at 3:30 p.m., Harbor Park will once again host the Baltimore Orioles and Washington Nationals in the Bank of the Commonwealth Classic. The exhibition game will be the second meeting between the clubs at Harbor Park in three years, as Baltimore and Washington previously met prior to the start of the 2007 season, with the Orioles defeating the Nationals 6-5 in front of a sell-out crowd of 12,408 fans. The 2009 contest is nearly sold out as well, as merely a couple hundred tickets remain available.

**SPRING IN THEIR STEPS:** Due to outstanding offensive production, several potential Tides hitters are making it difficult for the Orioles to send them to Norfolk for the start of the season. Leading the charge is infielder **Jolbert Cabrera**, who has hit .433 (13-30) with three RBI in 15 games for the O's this spring. Also having a strong spring are catcher **Matt Wieters** (.343, 1 HR, 5 RBI), infielder **Scott Moore** (.317, 3 HR, 6 RBI) and outfielder **Lou Montanez** (.318, 4 doubles, 7 RBI). Infielder **Justin Turner** (.342, 3 HR, 10 RBI) and outfielder **Nolan Reimold** (.321, 4 HR, 8 RBI) both had outstanding springs with the O's before being sent to minor league camp.

**STARTERS MAKING THEIR PITCH:** With the end of spring training fast approaching, the Orioles have still not decided on their starting rotation after RHP **Jeremy Guthrie** and RHP **Koji Uehara**. Several pitchers are still in the mix for the final three rotation spots, including RHP **Adam Eaton**, LHP **Mark Hendrickson**, RHP **Brian Bass**, RHP **Alfredo Simon**, RHP **Hayden Penn**, RHP **Radhames Liz** and RHP **David Pauley**. Simon, Penn and Liz combined to make 37 starts for Norfolk last season, while Pauley went 14-4 with a 3.55 ERA in 25 games started for Pawtucket a year ago.

## PAWTUCKET RED SOX

**WHO'S NEXT?:** The Pawtucket Red Sox head into this season hoping to find the next **Kevin Youkilis & Jonathan Papelbon** (from 2005), **Dustin Pedroia** (from 2006), **Manny Delcarmen & Jon Lester** (from 2006-07), **Clay Buchholz & Jacoby Ellsbury** (from 2007), and Jed Lowrie & Justin Masterson (2008) – all former PawSox who have been significant contributors to the Boston Red Sox over the past several years. Buchholz, despite an excellent showing during spring training with the Red Sox, may begin the year in the PawSox rotation. He could be joined by 22-year-old RHP **Michael Bowden** (rated as Boston's #2 prospect by *Baseball America*) who won his Major League debut with the Red Sox last August in his only big league appearance thus far. Another of the "Killer B's" expected to be on the PawSox staff is fire-balling closer **Daniel Bard** (the #4 prospect and former North Carolina standout) who possess a 100 MPH fastball and has been unhittable in spring training with the Red Sox. Two members of the 2008 IL All-Star team are battling for the final roster spot with Boston as the 2008 IL MVP **Jeff Bailey** (1B/OF) has been among the Red Sox leading hitters this spring while OF **Chris Carter** leads the Red Sox with 6 HR.

**"MALZY" AND "MONTY" ON THE MENU:** The Pawtucket Red Sox, in conjunction with the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, invite all PawSox fans to the Annual Pawtucket Red Sox "Welcome Home" Luncheon that will be held on Wednesday, April 8 at noon at Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln, RI. The entire 2009 PawSox team will be in attendance just one day before they open the season in Buffalo. **Frank Malzone**, a member of the inaugural Boston Red Sox Hall of Fame class in 1995, will be the featured guest speaker as he will chat with former Red Sox catcher and current PawSox television color commentator **Bob Montgomery**. Malzone, who presently serves as a Player Development Consultant with the Red Sox, spent 11 seasons with Boston (from 1957-1967) and was an 8-time American League All-Star as well as a 3-time Gold Glove award winner at third base.

## ROCHESTER RED WINGS

**SPRING TRAINING:** The Rochester Red Wings are in the midst of a 15-game spring training schedule leading up to their 2009 regular season opener vs. the Syracuse Chiefs on Thursday, April 9 at 2:00 p.m. at Alliance Bank Stadium. Rochester has won two of their last three games this spring, with a 3-4-1 overall record.

**MOVES, MOVES AND MORE MOVES:** The following players have been sent to minor league camp from big league camp and most are expected to be with the Red Wings: RHP **Rob Delany**, LHP **Ben Julianel**, RHP **Armando Gabino**, LHP **Mike Gosling**, RHP **Kevin Mulvey**, RHP **Anthony Swarzak**, INF **Steve Tolleson**, INF **Trevor Plouffe**, INF **Matt Macri**, INF **Danny Velencia**, INF **Luke Hughes**, OF **Dustin Martin**, and OF **Luis Matos**. Rochester had 10 players from their 2008 roster leave as minor league free agents so the 2009 roster will likely be very different.

**BATTLE FOR A BULLPEN SPOT:** LHP **Brian Duensing** is battling LHP **Jose Mijares** to be the left-handed reliever in the Twins bullpen. Duensing seems to have the inside track with a 0-0 record and a 0.82 ERA in seven games. Mijares, who played with the Twins last September, has struggled going 0-1 with an 11.25 ERA in nine games this spring.

### SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE YANKEES

YANKEES HOST THIRD ANNUAL SPRING FEST: The Yankees will host their third annual Spring Fest from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 4, giving fans a chance to purchase single-game tickets, meet a former Yankee and get a “taste” of the new concessions at PNC Field. Former Yankees outfielder **Darryl Strawberry** will be on hand to greet fans and sign autographs from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Fans will also be treated to a behind-the-scenes look at the Yankees beautiful locker room, photos with mascot Champ, fun in the Frontier Fan Zone, and an exciting sneak peak into Legends Hospitality Management’s new concession menus as well as the latest merchandise items in the Team Store.

MEET THE YANKEES: Fans in Northeast Pennsylvania will have their first chance to meet the 2009 Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Yankees at the annual “Meet the Yankees” to be held at PNC Field on Wednesday, April 8 from 3:45 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Those attending will get the chance to see the Yankees on the field during the team’s final workout before the season opener at Lehigh Valley on Thursday, April 9. At 5:00 p.m. the venue will shift to the PNC Field Restaurant for a cocktail reception. The Yankees players and field staff will arrive at 5:30 p.m. for mixing, mingling and autograph signing. Special edition 2009 Meet the Yankees baseballs and t-shirts will be available for player’s signatures. All proceeds go to the SWB Yankees Kids Night Out Charity.

STEW’S BACK ON: **Chris Stewart** was arguably as valuable a player as the SWB Yankees had in 2008. The catcher, who was signed by New York to a minor league contract just days before the ’08 opener after being released by Texas, began the season as the SWB backup. Stewart found himself as the everyday catcher after **Jorge Posada’s** shoulder injury caused incumbent **Chad Moeller** getting the call to the big leagues. Stewart hit safely in 45 of 86 games for the Yankees batting .279 with two homers and 24 RBI and threw out International League best 41.3% of would-be base stealers. He signed a free agent contract in the offseason with the Chicago White Sox, the team that originally drafted him. New York made the move on March 22 to bring Stewart back to the Yankees organization, reacquiring him from Chicago for future considerations. Stewart will battle **Kevin Cash**, a free agent signing in the offseason, for the potential third catcher’s spot in the Bronx, with the odd man out likely to start behind the plate for SWB.

### SYRACUSE CHIEFS

CATCHING POSTION OVERCROWDED: The Washington Nationals signed catcher **Josh Bard** last week to a minor league contract. Bard is expected to back-up **Jesus Flores**, leaving prospect **Luke Montz** and veterans **Wil Nieves**, **Gustavo Molina**, and **Javier Valentin** to battle for two (maybe three) spots in Syracuse.

BALESTER, ZIMMERMAN AND MARTIS BATTLE FOR FINAL TWO SPOTS: With **John Lannan**, **Daniel Cabrera**, and **Scott Olsen** set in Washington, two spots remain with **Colin Balester**, **Jordan Zimmerman**, and **Sharion Martis** batting in the final ten days of spring training. It is likely one of these pitchers will start the season in Syracuse.

CROWDED OUTFIELD IN SYRACUSE TOO: With seven outfielders still in major league camp, the Chiefs outfield situation isn’t any less crowded. Currently, **Leonard Davis**, **Roger Bernadina**, **Justin Maxwell**, **Mike Vento**, and **Jorge Padilla** are all possible Chiefs.

### TOLEDO MUD HENS

SHORT DEPTH: MLB.com recently looked at depth in key spots for each major league organization. The Tigers’ key spot is at shortstop, as the article lists **Cale Iorg**, **Brent Dlugach**, and **Danny Worth** as the franchise players of the future. These players are expected to compete for starting spots for the Mud Hens in 2009. In addition, middle infielders **Michael Hollimon**, **Scott Sizemore**, **William Rhymes**, and **Don Kelly** are also expected to be in the mix for Toledo’s middle infield. Of these seven, Iorg (2) and Sizemore (7) are rated as Top 10 Prospects of the organization by *Baseball America*. It seems that there will be no shortage of options at shortstop this season.

TAKING SHAPE: Toledo is starting to get an idea of who to expect for the season. The Tigers are making cuts from the Spring Training roster and sent three hard-throwing back-end of the bullpen relievers to the Hens. RHP **Casey Fien** and RHP **Freddy Dolsi** along with LHP **Fu-Te Ni** from the Chinese Professional Baseball League will headline a Toledo bullpen not lacking in firepower. Fien and Dolsi regularly touched the mid-90’s last season. Fien spent most of the year with Erie before impressing in Toledo for 12 games (15.0 IP, 4 ER, 17 K). Dolsi spent most of the year with Detroit, appearing in 42 games. Toledo also will return starter RHP **Chris Lambert** (co-leader with 12 wins last year) and 2B/SS **Michael Hollimon** (15 HR in 2008).

TOUGH CALL: With only two roster spots available on the Tigers’ bench, five are vying for the reserve roles before camp breaks. OF **Marcus Thames** seems to be the front-runner for the fourth outfielder spot as 1B/OF **Jeff Larish**, OF **Clete Thomas**, OF **Brent Clevlen**, and OF **Ryan Raburn** will battle for what looks like the only remaining spot. The Tigers are mostly in need of a center fielder reserve for **Curtis Granderson**. Raburn and Clevlen have filled that spot before and the fact they are both out of minor league options may make them more likely to stay with the club. However, they also both hit from the right side, which is all too common for Detroit’s righty-stacked offense. Thomas does play center and filled the role last year as well. The fact that he hits left-handed makes a stronger case, however, he has options remaining and is coming off of “Tommy John” surgery. Another lefty is Larish, whose power gives him an edge, even though he cannot play center field. He, like Thomas, has options remaining.