



International League News & Notes

April 9, 2009



BUFFALO BISONS

NIESE GETS THE BALL ON OPENING DAY: New Bisons Manager **Ken Oberkfell** will give the ball to LHP **Jonathon Niese** today to get Buffalo's 2009 season underway. Niese, 22, is coming off a spectacular 2008 season where he was given the Mets' Sterling Organizational Pitcher of the Year Award, emblematic of the top pitcher on the Minor League level. The southpaw went a combined 11-8 with a 3.13 ERA in 29 starts at Double-A Binghamton and Triple-A New Orleans before getting a September promotion to the Mets for his Major League debut.

THE YOUNGEST OF STARS: OF **Fernando Martinez**, the Mets #1 prospect by *Baseball America*, will begin the 2009 season in a Bisons uniform. He will be the youngest Bisons player in over 15 years. At 20 years and 178 days old, Martinez is the youngest player since C **Angelo Encarnacion**, who was 20 years and 135 days old when he played for the Bisons on September 1, 1993. Other recent Bisons 20-year olds include INF **Asdrubal Cabrera** (20 y, 234 d), RHP **Fausto Carmona** (20 yr, 273 d) and INF **Jhonny Peralta** (20 yr, 310 d). INF **Brandon Phillips** made his Bisons debut in 2002 on his 21st birthday.

MAJOR LEAGUE EXPERIENCE: The 2009 Bisons Opening Day roster will feature as many as 18 players who have played in the Major Leagues during their career. Additionally, 13 of those players appeared in a big league game last year. INF **Rob Mackowiak** leads the club with 856 big league games while RHP **Elmer Dessens** leads all Bisons pitchers with 360 Major League appearances. Three players, OF **Bobby Kielty** (BOS), OF **Cory Sullivan** (COL), and RHP **Kyle Snyder** (BOS) were on rosters for the 2007 World Series between the Red Sox and the Rockies.

CHARLOTTE KNIGHTS

RETURNING PLAYERS: The Knights return 9 players who played for last season's club. The group consists of five pitchers (**Lance Broadway**, **Jack Egbert**, **Adam Russell**, **Ehren Wassermann**, **Wes Whisler**), two catchers (**Cole Armstrong**, **Donny Lucy**), one infielder (**Javier Castillo**) and one outfielder (**Jerry Owens**). The Knights roster also has two Triple-A rookies in **Jon Link** and **Justin Cassel** (DL).

CLOSER BY COMMITTEE: Manager **Chris Chambliss** has said that the Knights aren't sure who will be the team's closer. His three main options are pitchers **Jon Link**, **Adam Russell** and **Ehren Wassermann**. Link led all of the Minor Leagues in saves last year with 35 at Double-A Birmingham. Russell and Wassermann are proven Triple-A arms who were used in critical situations last year while with the White Sox. Wassermann has allowed just one home run in 124.1 innings over the last two seasons.

OWENS MAKING THIRD KNIGHTS OPENING DAY START: OF **Jerry Owens** is scheduled to make his third Opening Day start for the Knights. The third Opening Day start ties Owens for the most in franchise history. Owens ties the mark with former Knights OF **Joe Borchard** (2003-05), C **Jamie Burke** (2003-05) and 3B **Josh Fields** (2006-08). Owens was waived by the White Sox organization towards the end of spring training.

ONE YEAR LATER, LOOK WHO'S STARTING: Three of last season's opening day starters for the Knights were opening day starters for the White Sox this year. **Chris Getz** (2B), **Josh Fields** (3B), and **Dewayne Wise** (CF) all started in the White Sox season opener Tuesday.

COLUMBUS CLIPPERS

KICKING IT OFF: The Clippers are 19-13 (.594) all-time on opening day, having won three of the last four (1-game winning streak). They are 7-8 (.467) in road openers and 1-2 against Louisville (all on the road). The last time the Clippers started the season against Louisville was in 2001, a 5-4 loss at Louisville Slugger Field. The largest margin of victory for Columbus in the season's opening game was 12 runs in a 13-1 victory vs. Scranton/WB in 2006, while the most lopsided loss came at Richmond in 1992 (10-1). The Richmond Braves have opposed the Clippers the most times on opening day (eight). With three openings against Columbus, Louisville is tied for the 2nd most (Charlotte, Indianapolis, Maine and Pawtucket).

I KNOW YOU...: Of the 24 players on the Clipper roster, 14 played in the Cleveland organization last year (10 have played their entire career with Cleveland). Of the 10 newcomers to the system, several have ties to each other from outside of the Cleveland organization. **Tomo Ohka** and **Rich Rundles** were involved in the same trade, as both were sent from Boston to Montreal for **Ugeth Urbina** in 2001. Ohka and **Matt Herges** played a full season together with Montreal in 2002 (Herges picked up the save in two of Ohka's winning starts). **Jack Cassel** and **Wilson Valdez** played together for three months in 2005 with the Portland Beavers (San Diego, Triple-A). Valdez then played with **John Meloan** for the Las Vegas 51's in July and August of 2007 and then both received September promotions to Los Angeles (NL). Last season, **Michael Brantley** and **Matt LaPorta** played with each other at Huntsville (Milwaukee, Double-A) until LaPorta was traded to Cleveland for **CC Sabathia** in early July (Brantley was the PTBNL in the same deal).

I KNOW YOU.... PART II: In addition to the professional ties among the current Clippers, many of them have knowledge of each other through college. The winningest team in Tulane University history (2001) featured **Andy Cannizaro** (1998-2001) and **Michael Aubrey** (2001-03). They saw their season end in the College World Series to Cal State Fullerton and **Kirk Saarloos** (1998-2001). The Arizona Wildcats saw **Jordan Brown** (2003-05), **John Meloan** (2003-05) and current Indian, **Trevor Crowe** (2002-05), on the same diamond. A trio of Clippers played together in the SEC, with **Jeremy Sowers** at Vanderbilt (2002-04), **Stephen Head** at Ole Miss (2003-05) and **Matt LaPorta** at Florida (2004-07). In the ACC, two Clippers were adversaries with **Tony Sipp** at Clemson (2004) and **Wes Hodges** at Georgia Tech (2004-06). **David Huff** was part of the same pitching staff with **Jack Cassel's** younger brother, Justin, at UC Irvine in 2004 and in a case of what could have been, **Aaron Laffey** had committed to attend Virginia Tech in 2003, where he would have been a teammate of **Wyatt Toregas** (2002-04), but he opted to sign with Cleveland instead.

DURHAM BULLS

WELCOME BACK: Eight players who were with Durham last year during the entire playoff run are on Durham's opening day roster. In the field, **Elliot Johnson**, **Chris Nowak**, **Chris Richard**, and **Jon Weber** are back with the Bulls. **Dale Thayer** is the lone bullpen returnee, to go along with starters **Wade Davis**, **David Price** and **Mitch Talbot**. In addition, **Jason Cromer** traveled with Durham during the playoffs, and catcher **Michel Hernandez** played in the first round. Beyond this group, **Reid Brignac**, **Alex Jamieson**, **John Jaso** and **Justin Ruggiano** were with Durham last year. **Jason Childers** and **Chad Orvella** have pitched previously for the Bulls. Of the current roster, only three position players and five pitchers have never played for Durham. Each of those players has had Major League time. All but pitcher **Carlos Hernandez** and infielder **Adam Kennedy** have played in the International League before this year. New hitting coach **Dave Myers** has had Major League time as a coach with Seattle, and has spent the past two years in the International League with the Buffalo Bisons.

STARTING WITH EXPERIENCE, AND A TWIST: The top three members in the Bulls rotation - **Mitch Talbot**, **David Price** and **Wade Davis** - started for Durham at the end of the last season. Durham begins 2009 with three left-handed starting pitchers: Price, **Carlos Hernandez** and Cromer. It's the first time the Bulls have had three lefty members of the team's rotation under manager **Charlie Montoyo**.

POSTSEASON EXPERIENCE: Of the current group Price is the only one who saw action with Tampa Bay in last year's ALCS. **Adam Kennedy** knows a thing or two about the postseason as well. In 2002 he was the ALCS MVP for the World Champion Angels.

HOME SWEET HOME: Durham opens the season with eight home games, four against Norfolk, and four against the Gwinnett Braves. The team's first 20 games are against division foes. Durham hosts Columbus on April 30, the first game outside the South Division.

GWINNETT BRAVES

OPENING DAY: The last time the Atlanta Braves' Triple-A affiliate opened the season against a team from the International League South Division was in 2003 when the Braves faced today's opponent, Charlotte. The Knights won the '03 opener 7-6. The only other season that Richmond opened the year against Charlotte was in 1998 when the Knights defeated the Braves 7-3 in Richmond. Richmond was 1-4 against the South Division in season openers. The only victory was a 5-3 win vs. Durham in 2002. Richmond last won its opening day game in 2006 at Buffalo. Since 1966, the Triple-A Braves were 15-28 in opening day games.

WELCOME TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE: When the Gwinnett Braves take the field today, they will do so with 11 players born outside the United States. **Francisley Bueno** and **Vladimir Nunez** were born in Cuba; **Gregor Blanco**, **J.C. Boscan** and **Alvin Colina** are from Venezuela; **Mariano Gomez** was born in Honduras; **Manny Acosta** is from Panama, and **Diory Hernandez**, **Barbaro Canizares**, **Luis Valdez** and **Juan Perez** all hail from the Dominican Republic.

YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART: There are 11 players who are 25 or younger, seven of which are pitchers. There are only three players who are older than 30. The average age of the G-Braves player is 26.46. At 22, **Tommy Hanson** is the youngest Brave while **Vladimir Nunez** has played the most seasons and is at the age of 34. There are six Braves that will make their Triple-A debut with Gwinnett, including Hanson. Nine of the current G-Braves saw action in a Major League game during the 2008 season, including Nunez. Nunez pitched 32.2 innings with Atlanta last year. He has tabulated 441.0 IP at the ML level and has 21 wins and 21 saves. He first broke through in 1998.

INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS

WHO ARE THE PITCHERS?: Indianapolis will begin the 2009 campaign with four right-handers in the starting rotation. **Jason Davis** will pitch the opener vs. Toledo. **Jimmy Barthmaier**, **Daniel McCutchen** and **Virgil Vasquez** will also be in the mix while **Tom Gorzelanny** will enter the Tribe's rotation as the only lefty starter. The Indians will begin with five right-handed relievers -- **Denny Bautista**, **Chris Bootcheck**, **Evan Meek**, **Jeremy Powell** and **Brian Slocum**. **Dave Davidson** and **Corey Hamman** will be the two southpaws rounding out the Tribe's bullpen.

IN THE FIELD: Indianapolis will start the 2009 season with six infielders -- **Brian Bixler**, **Jason Delaney**, **Anderson Machado**, **Steve Pearce**, **Andy Phillips** and **Neil Walker**. There will be three left-handed outfielders -- **Larry Broadway**, **Garrett Jones** and **Jeff Salazar**. **Andrew McCutchen** will be the outfield's only right-handed bat and will begin the year in the Tribe's centerfield for the second straight season.

DIAMONDS ARE A FANS BEST FRIEND: The Indianapolis Indians have just gathered the results from the first annual "Opening Night Mowing Pattern" poll. Victory Field's opening night design will be the "Diamond Cut", as voted on by 335 out of the total 1,023 fans (33%). The pattern will create a series of side-by-side diamonds on the field. This was the pattern used in last year's Major League postseason by the World Series Champion Philadelphia Phillies. The other design choices for the poll were the "Angels Cut" (333 votes, 31%), "Checkered Board Cut" (203 votes, 20%) and "Big Little Cut" 163 votes (16%).

MINOR LEAGUE MILESTONES: INF **Garrett Jones** will be approaching five career milestones this season; he is 34 games away from 1,000, 29 runs away from 500, 99 hits away from 1,000, four home runs away from 150, and 20 RBI away from 600. INF **Andy Phillips** is also approaching career milestones in 2009; he is 20 hits away from 900 and 11 RBI away from 500.

LEHIGH VALLEY IRONPIGS

TRIPLE-A SPRING TRAINING RECAP: The Phillies' Triple-A Spring Training team finished the exhibition season in Florida with a 6-8 record. The team batted .306 with 8 HR and 66 runs scored. The pitching staff had a combined 4.99 ERA. INF **J.J. Furmaniak** batted .429-0-4 (15-35), C **Lou Marson** hit .429-0-2 (9-21), OF **Rich Thompson** hit .357-1-3 (10-28), RHP **Drew Carpenter** went 2-0, 1.04 ERA in 2 GS (8.2 IP, 6 H, 1 R, 1 BB, 8 K), RHP **John Ennis** finished 1-0, 0.00 with a HOLD in 3 G (7 IP, 3 H, BB, 5 K), RHP **Rodrigo Lopez** went 1-1, 2.16 in 3 GS and LHP **Jake Woods** was 1-0, 0.00 with a HOLD in 4 G (6 IP, 3 H, 0 BB, 3 K).

2009 ROSTER BY NUMBERS: The IronPigs Opening Day roster consists of 13 pitchers, 2 catchers, 6 infielders and 3 outfielders. 19 players have Major League experience. The most tenured player is INF **Pablo Ozuna** (6.055); the most tenured pitcher is RHP **Rodrigo Lopez** (5.036). The average ML service time is 1.104. The team has a combined 6,823 days of ML service. The average age is 28.8. The youngest IronPig is RHP **Carlos Carrasco** (turned 22 on March 21). The eldest IronPig is 1B **Andy Tracy** (turned 35 on December 11). 19 players (79%) were born in the United States, 3 were born in Venezuela (12.5), one was born in the Dominican Republic (4%) and one was born in Mexico (4%). Six players (25%) were originally drafted or

signed by the Phillies, one player (4%) was acquired via trade, one player (4%) was claimed off waivers and 16 (67%) were signed as minor league free agents. Five players (21%) are on the Phillies' 40-Man roster. 16 players (67%) have previously played in the International League (INF **Jorge Velandia** has now played for 8 teams).

TOP PROSPECTS: According to *Baseball America*, three of the top 4 prospects in the Phillies' system will start in Lehigh Valley: the returning 22-year-old RHP **Carlos Carrasco** (#2), a three-time member of the World Team's Future Game roster and a pair of 2008 Olympians, C **Lou Marson** (#3) and SS **Jason Donald** (#4). Carrasco made his Triple-A debut last August, continuing a rapid ascension through the Minor League ranks, and proceeded to dominate IL hitters. In six August starts, the Venezuela native went 2-2 with a 1.72 ERA. Marson, also 22, has made a steep system-wide climb which was culminated by a September promotion to Philadelphia last season. His breakout 2008 campaign included an appearance for Team USA in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing and a start behind the plate for the U.S. Team in the 2009 Futures Game. The native of Scottsdale, AZ batted .314 with five home runs and 46 RBI in Reading and was named both a midseason and postseason Eastern League All-Star. Donald, 24 (identically to Marson) played for Team USA in the 2008 Summer Olympics, appeared in the 2008 Futures Game and was honored as an EL midseason and postseason All-Star. The Clovis, CA native was initially selected by the Phillies in the 3rd round of the 2006 draft and has been named an All-Star each of his first three professional seasons in addition to being named to the 2008 Arizona Fall League's Top Prospect Team.

KYLE KENDRICK'S TRIPLE-A DEBUT TONIGHT: 24-year-old RHP **Kyle Kendrick** returns to the Minor Leagues after compiling a 21-13 record and a 4.78 ERA in 51 games (50 starts) with the Phillies over the last two seasons, but will be making his first appearance in Triple-A after jumping from Double-A Reading to Philadelphia on June 13, 2007. The Houston native posted impressive numbers to begin last season (8-3, 4.47 ERA in 19 starts before the All-Star break), but went just 3-6 with a 7.59 ERA in 11 starts thereafter. It was two seasons ago when he led all National League rookies in wins (10) while finishing 3rd in ERA (3.87). In 97 career Minor League games, Kendrick compiled a 26-44 record and a 4.28 ERA. Kyle Kendrick started and won the first game at Coca-Cola Park (5-3) in Philadelphia's exhibition game vs. the IronPigs on March 30, 2008 (5 IP, 0 R, 7 K).

LOUISVILLE BATS

HOMER ON THE HILL: RHP **Homer Bailey** is starting tonight for the second straight Opening Day for Louisville. Last season in Syracuse (April 3), Bailey threw a gem, but was the tough-luck loser as he gave up five hits in 7.0 innings; the only run he allowed was a solo homer in the 4th inning. In 19 games with Louisville last season, he went 4-7 with a 4.17 ERA. He struck out 96 and walked 46. He also made eight starts for the Cincinnati Reds, finishing 0-6 with a 7.93 ERA.

BARKER BLASTING THRU RECORDS: 1B **Kevin Barker** is blasting his way through the Louisville Bats' record books. Last season, he broke **Brandon Larson's** all-time RBI (260) and extra-base hits (151) marks and tied Larson for most multi-home run games in a career. This season, **Barker** is eyeing the all-time records for home runs (67, 2nd), runs scored (221, 4th), doubles (75, 6th), at-bats (1,304, 7th) while moving up the top five ladder in hits.

2008 FRANCHISE RECORDS: The Bats set numerous franchise records last season, including wins in a season (88), saves (56), strikeouts (1,027 - pitching), strikeouts (1,178 - batting) and triples (60). It was also the team's fourth West division title and first since 2003.

OPENING DAY: The 2009 Opening Day roster has some familiar faces from last year's April 3 roster. RHP **Homer Bailey**, LHP **Bill Bray**, LHP **Matt Maloney**, LHP **Adam Pettyjohn**, 1B **Kevin Barker** and IF **Adam Rosales** all started 2008 with the Bats. Also making appearances for Louisville at some point last summer were: RHP **Carlos Fisher**, LHP **Ben Jukich**, RHP **Justin Mallett**, RHP **Robert Manuel**, RHP **Ramon Ramirez**, RHP **Josh Roenicke**, C/IF/OF **Wilkin Castillo**, C **Craig Tatum**, IF **Luis Bolivar**, IF **Danny Richar**, OF **Norris Hopper** and OF **Drew Stubbs**. The Bats have two of *Baseball America's* top 10 Reds prospects on the team this year in Stubbs (#3) and IF **Chris Valaika** (#4).

NORFOLK TIDES

OPENING DAY ROSTER: The Tides opening day roster features 17 players who have appeared in the Major Leagues, including 15 that played in the Major Leagues in 2008. The roster includes players born in the United States (12 different states), Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela. 11 players have previously played with the Tides, and eight players on the roster (**Brad Bergesen**, **Blake Davis**, **David Hernandez**, **Nolan Reimold**, **Carlos Rojas**, **Chris Tillman**, **Justin Turner** and **Matt Wieters**) will be making their Triple-A debuts.

PROSPECT WATCH: Norfolk's opening roster features four players who were ranked among the Orioles top 10 prospects by *Baseball America* prior to the season. Leading the way is 2008 *Baseball America* Minor League Player of the Year **Matt Wieters**, who is rated as the top prospect in all of Minor League Baseball entering the season. The 22-year-old catcher combined to hit .355 with 27 home runs and 91 RBI between Class-A Frederick and Double-A Bowie last year. Another highly rated prospect is 20-year-old pitcher **Chris Tillman**, who is rated as the #2 prospect in the O's system and the #22 prospect in all of Minor League Baseball. Tillman was 2nd in the Eastern League with 154 strikeouts and 5th in the League with a 3.18 ERA last season. Outfielder **Nolan Reimold** is rated as the #5 prospect in the O's system after hitting .284 with 25 homers and 84 RBI at Double-A Bowie a year ago. Right-handed reliever **Kam Mickolio** is rated as the #10 prospect in the Orioles organization after he combined to go 3-2 with a 3.95 ERA and 71 strikeouts in 66.0 innings between Bowie, Norfolk and Baltimore last season.

HOMER HAPPY?: On paper, Norfolk looks to have the potential to hit more home runs in 2009. The trio of outfielder **Lou Montanez** (29 HR), catcher **Matt Wieters** (27 HR) and outfielder **Nolan Reimold** (25 HR) combined to hit 81 home runs last year, while the 2008 Tides hit a total of 66.

PAWTUCKET RED SOX

PAWSOX ROSTER RECAP: The Pawtucket Red Sox will unveil an Opening Day roster that is highlighted by the return of both the 2008 International League Most Valuable Player 1B/OF **Jeff Bailey** (.301/25/75 last season) and the 2008 IL Most Valuable Pitcher RHP **Charlie Zink** (14-6, 2.84 last year). In addition, the PawSox staff will feature three of the best pitching prospects in the minor leagues as starter **Michael Bowden** (#2 according to *Baseball America*), fireballing reliever **Daniel Bard** (#4 by B.A.), and starter **Clay Buchholz** (who is not rated by B.A. due to his Major League service time) are all expected to be major contributors in Boston. Furthermore, the PawSox welcome nine newcomers to the organization (three pitchers and six position players who all have Major League experience). Finally, the three players who will be making their Triple-A debuts this season – Bard, lefty starter **Kris Johnson**, and OF **Zach Daeges** – are all coming off terrific seasons for Double-A Portland last year. Manager **Ron Johnson** (back for his fifth season at the helm) is joined once again by pitching coach **Rich Sauveur** and hitting coach **Russ Morman** (both back for their second season with the club). Trainer **Greg Barajas** (fifth year) and new strength and conditioning coach **Mike Jones** round out the PawSox field staff.

MORE ON THE PITCHERS: The PawSox starting staff consists of Opening Day starter RHP **Enrique Gonzalez**, who pitched for both Triple-A Portland and San Diego last year, along with righties Buchholz, Bowden, & Zink, and lefty Johnson. The bullpen features impressive closer Bard (10.1 scoreless innings with 14 SO during Major League action this spring with the Red Sox), returning righties **Devern Hansack**, **Marcus McBeth**, and **Jose Vaquedano** as well as lefty **Hunter Jones** (7-2, 3.02 for the PawSox last season), along with newcomers **Fernando Cabrera** (formerly of Norfolk and Baltimore) and southpaw **Billy Traber** (who was with Scranton/WB and the NY Yankees last year).

MORE ON THE HITTERS: The catching corps includes **Dusty Brown** (a .290 hitter with the PawSox last season) and veteran **Carlos Maldonado**, who has played with Indianapolis and Pittsburgh the last few years. The PawSox infield features 1B Bailey (who can also play the outfield) coming off his MVP season last year and both a fine September with the Red Sox last season (.280 in 27 games) and a superb spring with the Sox last month (.356 in 23 games). Jeff will be joined at 1B by **Paul McAnulty**, the former San Diego Padre, who will also DH and play the outfield. The rest of the PawSox infield is versatile as returnees **Gil Velazquez** and **Jeff Natale** can play anywhere in the infield while free agent signees **Angel Chavez** and **Ivan Ochoa** have had tremendous success in Triple-A. The outfield spots will be manned by two players who have spent much time in the big leagues – **Brad Wilkerson** (Montreal, Washington, Texas, Seattle, and Toronto) and **Chip Ambres** (Kansas City and San Diego) – along with youngsters **Zach Daeges** (a .307 hitter last season with 34 doubles for Portland) and **Jeff Corsaletti** (who split time with Portland and Pawtucket last year). IL All-Star OF **Jonathan Van Every**, who led the PawSox with 26 HR and did not commit an error in 119 games in CF last season, begins the year on the Red Sox disabled list (ankle sprain) but is expected to return to action on April 17 for Pawtucket's home-opener at McCoy Stadium.

ROCHESTER RED WINGS

SHOWTIME: 10 of the 24 players on the Red Wings Opening Day roster have appeared in the Major Leagues (5 position players and 5 pitchers). Five of those players have enjoyed Big League time with the Twins. 16 of the players on the Minnesota Twins 2009 Opening Day roster have worn a Red Wings uniform although **Nick Punto** played for the Red Wings on an injury rehab assignment. Of the 12 pitchers on the Twins Opening Day roster eight pitched for Rochester. In the first six years (2003-2008) of the affiliation, 73 different players have played for both the Red Wings and the Twins (47 different players in the last three seasons).

YOUTH WILL BE SERVED: The Red Wings feature a young team to open the 2009 season. Of the 24 players on the Opening Day roster, 21 are 27 years old or younger including 11 of the 12 position players. 12 of the 24 are 25 or younger. However, 20 of the 24 roster members have at least some Triple-A experience. RHP **Armando Gabino**, catcher **Drew Butera**, outfielder **Dustin Martin** and outfielder **David Winfree** have never played above Double-A.

JUST WIN BABY: The Red Wings finished the 2008 season with a 74-70 record, their fifth consecutive winning season. It's the first time Rochester has had five consecutive winning seasons since 1966-1976 when Rochester had a franchise record 11 consecutive winning seasons. The Red Wings finished the 2008 season with a 46-26 home record, its best home record since 1997 (49-22 record). Rochester has reached the 40-win mark at Frontier Field four consecutive seasons and holds a 170-116 record (.594) at 1 Morrie Silver Way since 2005. Rochester is 243-185 (.568) at home during the Twins era.

STAN THE MAN: Manager **Stan Cliburn** enters the 2009 season with a 235-205 record as manager of the Rochester Red Wings. Since 1963 only **Joe Altobelli** (1971-76, 502 wins), **Marv Foley** (1995-98, 2000, 363 wins), and **Greg Biagini** (1989-91, 237 wins) have compiled more wins than Cliburn.

SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE YANKEES

WAITING ON THE WAIVER WIRE: The spring training injury to **Alex Rodriguez** did more than shake up the Yankees infield at the Major League level; it trickled down to the Yankees pitching staff in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. With Rodriguez on the DL, **Cody Ransom**, who was slated to be the NY Yankees utility infielder is now the starter at third base. **Ramiro Pena** made the Major League squad forcing the Yankees to make room for him on the 40 man roster. **Dan Giese** was designated for assignment on April 4 and waited to see if he would clear waivers. If Giese cleared waivers he would join the SWB Yankees opening day staff and one pitcher already in town would get reassigned to Double-A Trenton. Wednesday afternoon, Giese found out his fate as he was claimed off the waiver wire by the Oakland Athletics and placed on Oakland's 40 man roster. The all time appearances leader for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre with 150 was optioned by the Athletics to Triple-A Sacramento.

LOOKING FOR TWO IN A ROW: In 2008, the Yankees opened up the season with a 4-0 shutout win over the Lehigh Valley IronPigs, snapping a eight game season opening losing streak. Prior to the win over the IronPigs, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre was zero for the decade, having last won on opening day in 1999 with a 7-0 shutout over the Pawtucket Red Sox. The last time that SWB won back-to-back games on opening day was a three game winning streak from 1997-1999. In 20 opening day games, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre has an all-time record of 6-14.

OPENING DAY EXPERIENCE: **Jason Johnson** will get the opening game start for the Yankees at Lehigh Valley Thursday night. Johnson, who split time between Las Vegas (PCL) and Los Angeles (NL) went 11-5 with a 3.82 in 20 games (16 starts) for the Triple-A 51's and posted a 1-2 record with a 5.82 ERA with the Dodgers in 16 games (two starts). The Yankees are the ninth different organization for Johnson, who heading into his 18th season has amassed 56 wins at the Major Level and has won another 49 games in the Minor Leagues.

SYRACUSE CHIEFS

CHIEFS ROTATION YOUNG: The Syracuse Chiefs rotation to start the season includes super pitching prospect **Jordan Zimmermann** along with **Collin Balester**, **Craig Stammen**, and **Marco Estrada**. Veteran **Kip Wells** will also start as well as **Josh Towers** when and if Zimmermann goes to Washington as expected after his second start on April 14.

OPENING DAY 2009: The Syracuse Chiefs open their 95th season of baseball in the International League and their 120th in organized baseball this afternoon. Weather forecast for Opening Day in Syracuse is for clear skies and 55 degrees at game time.

FORMER CHIEFS RETURN: Former Syracuse Chiefs pitchers **Gary Glover** and **Josh Towers** made the Chiefs final roster and are in Syracuse once again. Glover begins his third season in Syracuse after spending the 1999 and 2000 season with the Chiefs as a young pitching prospect. Towers last pitched for the Chiefs in 2006. He also spent parts of the 2003-2004 seasons in Syracuse as well.

TOLEDO MUD HENS

STARTING ROTATION: The Mud Hens starting rotation is set with **Chris Lambert** getting the nod on Opening Day. Acquired from St. Louis for **Mike Maroth** in 2007, the righty went 12-8 with a 3.50 ERA in 26 starts with Toledo last season. **Scot Drucker** (8-3, 2.56 with independent Grand Prairie and Double-A Erie) takes the #2 spot, followed by **Ron Chiavacci** (6-12, 6.23 with Round Rock and Lehigh Valley), **Lucas French** (9-11, 4.02 with Erie) and **Ruddy Lugo** (7-12, 5.36 in the PCL with New Orleans).

MIDDLE INFIELD: Though **Mike Hessman** and **Ryan Roberson** appear poised to handle 3B and 1B, respectively, four middle infielders will be competing for playing time at the 2B and SS positions. **Brent Dlugach**, **Don Kelly**, **William Rhymes** and **Danny Worth** all seem deserving of playing time. Dlugach missed most of the 2008 season after suffering a right shoulder injury in 2007. The 6th round draft pick of the Tigers in 2004 missed most of the previous season because of the injury as well, but hit .256 with five homers and 52 RBI for Single-A Lakeland in 2006, finishing 5th in the League with six triples. Kelly is back with Detroit's organization after spending the 2008 season with Tucson (Arizona) and 2007 with Indianapolis. Kelly is a career .282 hitter and finished last season at a .275 clip with eight HR and 55 RBI. Kelly played for the Mud Hens in 2005 and 2006 and had been a part of the Tigers' organization since being selected in the 8th round of the 2001 draft. Last year, he appeared in games at 1B (once), 2B (63), 3B (23), SS (34) and OF (6), so his versatility could prove to be an asset to the Hens this season. Rhymes spent most of the 2008 campaign with Double-A Erie before a late season promotion where he played in six games for the Mud Hens. Rhymes led the Eastern League in hits with 158 en route to hitting .306 in 131 games. His batting average was good for 6th in the League and he was 3rd in runs scored with 76. He added 60 RBI and 17 SB for the Sea Wolves. Worth was the Tigers 2nd round selection in the 2007 draft and spent most of 2008 with Erie before a sore right shoulder ended his season in late July. He hit .254 with five homers and 33 RBI in 79 games.

POWER POTENTIAL: The Hens started the 2008 season on a tear offensively, mashing a total of 56 home runs through their first 36 games. The Hens hit 58 homers during the month of May alone. The team cooled down eventually and finished with 172 on the season. This season the Hens roster features power hitters **Mike Hessman** (39 HR combined between Toledo and Detroit in 2008), **Ryan Roberson** (25 with Erie), **Brent Clevlen** (22 with Toledo), **Ryan Raburn** (21 between Toledo and Detroit in 2007), **Wilkin Ramirez** (19 with Erie) and **Dusty Ryan** (19 between Erie, Toledo and Detroit).