



International League News & Notes



April 16, 2009

BUFFALO BISON (www.Bisons.com)

AS GOOD AS ADVERTISED: The New York Mets' #1 prospect has gotten off to a fast start in Buffalo. Making his Triple-A debut, OF **Fernando Martinez** has collected an International League-best six extra-base hits through the season's first seven games. Martinez has used all fields to rack up four doubles, a triple and a home run. It wasn't until his two-hit performance on Wednesday against Scranton/Wilkes-Barre that Martinez collected his first two singles of the season. Martinez hit 31 extra-base knocks in 86 games with Double-A Binghamton last season.

GREAT PEN WORK: Already this season, RHP **Eddie Kunz** has shown why he made it to the Major Leagues in 2008 in just his second season of professional baseball. Kunz has thrown 6.1 shutout innings over three games for Buffalo this year. He fanned five batters in a three-inning outing on Monday against the Yankees. Right-handed batters have just one hit in 15 at-bats against him so far. A 2nd-round pick of the Mets in 2007, Kunz is rated New York's #10 prospect by *Baseball America*.

OH NELLY: RHP **Nelson Figueroa** gets the start for Buffalo this afternoon against Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. The 34-year old veteran was very impressive in his team debut, tossing seven shutout innings in a 1-0 defeat against Pawtucket on Saturday. In that game, he allowed just two hits and two walks yet erased all those base runners with four double plays. An "innings eater," Figueroa averaged 6.1 innings a start last season for New Orleans.

CHARLOTTE KNIGHTS (www.CharlotteKnights.com)

PODSEDNIK JOINS KNIGHTS: Yesterday the White Sox signed outfielder **Scott Podsednik** to a minor league deal and assigned him to Charlotte. Podsednik may best be remembered for hitting a walk-off home run in Game 2 of the 2005 World Series while with the White Sox. Podsednik had two separate rehab assignments in Charlotte during his first stint with the White Sox. Podsednik played in two games for the Knights in 2005, going 2-9 (.222) at the plate. He played in 20 games for the Knights in 2007, going 21-73 (.288) with 2 stolen bases. Podsednik was an AL All-Star in 2005, leading the AL in stolen bases (59).

LINK OF THE BULLPEN: Charlotte RHP **Jon Link** has pitched well for the Knights through the first five games of the season. Link had another good outing last night, pitching 1.1 innings and allowing no runs on 1 hit with 1 strikeout. Link is making the transition from closer to set up man. He led all Minor Leaguers in saves in 2008 with 35 while with Double-A Birmingham.

CLUTCH CASTILLO: Knights 3B **Javier Castillo** picked up another two-RBI hit in yesterday's game vs. Norfolk. Castillo is 2-2 with runners in scoring position with a double and 3 RBI. Castillo has been one of the bright spots in the Knights lineup. He was a non-roster invitee to spring training by the White Sox and also played for his native country Panama in the World Baseball Classic. The Knights as a team are hitting just .156 (7-45) with runners in scoring position.

COLUMBUS CLIPPERS (www.ClippersBaseball.com)

BULLPEN SHOOTING BLANKS: Through seven games this season, the Clippers bullpen has not allowed an earned run in five of them. Collectively, the seven men to pitch out of the pen for Columbus are 1-1 with two saves and a 3.13 ERA (23.0 IP, 16 H, 9 R, 8 ER, 8 BB, 22 K). The Clippers bullpen is just two pitches away from having a 1.17 ERA, with five of the eight earned runs coming on a 3-run HR allowed by **Ryan Edell** and a 2-run shot given up by **Tony Sipp**. The four right-handers to have come out of the bullpen for the Clippers (**Greg Aquino**, **Vinnie Chulk**, **Matt Herges** and **John Meloan**) have thrown a combined 13.1 IP without allowing a run (one hit).

HOT STARTS FROM THE TOP: Three Clippers have reached base in every game they've played this season. Leadoff hitter **Michael Brantley** has hit .286 (8-28) with a .375 OBP through seven games and #2 hitter **Luis Valbuena** has hit .308 (8-26) with a .419 OBP through seven games. **Michael Aubrey**, the #5 hitter, has hit a League-leading .542 (13-24) with an OBP of .556 through the first week of the season. The #3 hitter, **Wes Hodges**, is currently hitting .321 (9-28) with an OBP of .333 after starting the season hitless through his first 9 AB and the cleanup man, **Matt LaPorta**, has hit .400 (8-20) with a .455 OBP.

GIMENEZ DAY-TO-DAY: Catcher **Chris Gimenez** was hit in the head by the bat of **Robinson Diaz** during the 4th inning of Tuesday night's game. The backswing of Diaz caught Gimenez on the top of his head. The Clipper backstop suffered a concussion and a gash that required five stitches.

PLAYOFFS IN APRIL?: In conjunction with the Columbus Blue Jackets making the NHL Playoffs, the Clippers have announced they are moving their games on April 21 vs. Louisville and April 23 vs. Indianapolis up 30 minutes to 6:05 p.m.. The gates will open at 5:00 p.m. The Blue Jackets play at Nationwide Arena, which is just across the street from the Clippers new home, Huntington Park.

DURHAM BULLS (www.DurhamBulls.com)

WALK OFF: The Bulls made it a 6-0 start yesterday, recording a come-from-behind 5-3, 13-inning win over Gwinnett. Down 3-0 in the 8th, Durham tied the game on **Ray Sadler's** three-run homer. **Adam Kennedy** won it with a blast in the 13th after **Chris Richard** singled. The walk-off victory was the second for Durham on the opening home stand. The first came Sunday on **Ray Olmedo's** 9th inning single in a 2-1 win over Norfolk. The walk-off homer by Kennedy was the first for Durham since August 19, 2007 when **Justin Ruggiano's** homer beat Louisville 6-5.

BEST EVER: Durham has made the playoffs in eight of 11 previous seasons, but was never 6-0 to start a season in Triple-A until yesterday's victory.

DEFENSE DOESN'T REST: One reason for the 6-0 start is defense. Durham has committed one error in six games. That defense has helped Durham win several close games. The Bulls have won five of six games by three runs or less.

PITCHING PERFECT: Durham also has received tremendous pitching, allowing just nine runs (eight earned) in six games. On Monday and Tuesday Durham posted back-to-back shutouts (3-0 and 1-0) over Gwinnett. It was the first time that happened for Durham since May 5 and 6 of last year, when the Bulls held Pawtucket scoreless at McCoy Stadium. Durham's veteran bullpen has been terrific, recording eight shutout innings yesterday and allowing just five hits and two walks. The bullpen is 4-0 with three saves in six games, allowing two runs in 30.2 innings (0.59 ERA).

GWINNETT BRAVES (www.GwinnettBraves.com)

WELCOME TO GWINNETT STADIUM: Opening Day is finally upon us. The Gwinnett Braves will play the first-ever game in Gwinnett Stadium on Friday when they host the Norfolk Tides at 7:00 p.m. In the 10 months since the official groundbreaking at Gwinnett Stadium, about 800,000 man-hours and 30,000 equipment hours have been expended to get the ballpark ready for Friday's game. One thousand tons of steel later, the Braves are ready to play in front of a sold-out crowd of 10,427 fans.

GOOD PITCHING, DEFENSE WINS GAMES: Most of the time. The Gwinnett Braves are off to a 3-4 start in spite of solid pitching from their starters and strong support from the defense. In the first seven games of 2009, Gwinnett starters have compiled a 2.49 ERA (36.0 IP, 10 ER). The Braves have been nearly flawless defensively, having committed only 2 errors so far.

BROOKS' BABY: Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. third baseman **Brooks Conrad** on the birth of their 6-pound baby girl, Reese. Conrad has missed the last two games to be home in Spring Valley, California, for the birth of his daughter. The Braves slugger leads the team in home runs (2) and RBI (7), even after missing the last two outings. Conrad will return to the team for Friday's home opener.

INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS (www.IndyIndians.com)

POWELL REMAINS PERFECT: Right-handed reliever **Jeremy Powell** remained a perfect 2-0 after picking up the victory in Monday evening's contest against Columbus. The 32-year-old reliever, who spent the previous eight seasons pitching in Japan, has now picked up the win in both of the Tribe's victories this season. Against the Clippers on Monday night, Powell turned in an impressive performance when he got out of a bases loaded jam in the 4th and went on to strike out six in four scoreless innings of work.

TIME KEEPS ON TICKING AWAY: Indianapolis started the season with six consecutive contests of three hours or more. During that time Indians players compiled 21 hours and 16 minutes of playing time, including Monday's 14-inning, four hour and 19-minute contest against Toledo, which turned out to be the second longest at Victory Field both in time and total innings. The longest game by innings took place on April 19, 2006 when the Indians were defeated by the Ottawa Lynx 4-2 in 15 innings, while the longest game time-wise took place on July 19, 2001, when the Tribe defeated Columbus 6-5 in four hours, 35 minutes.

STREAKING SEASON: Third baseman **Neil Walker's** five game hitting streak came to end on Monday evening. Walker had at least one hit in each of the Indians' first five games going a combined 8-23 (.348) with three runs, one HR, three RBI, 2 BB and 2 SB. Neil also came through in the clutch on Sunday against Toledo, when he drove a deep double to left field that scored SS **Brian Bixler** and gave the Tribe their first victory of the season. The Indians third baseman has also made several fantastic plays, including a long reaching grab that flipped him over the rail into the Indians' dugout in this past Sunday's game against Toledo.

FORD'S FIELD: 2B **Shelby Ford** put on quite a show in his first career Triple-A contest on Monday evening against Columbus. The Pittsburgh Pirates number eight prospect according to *Baseball America* not only belted a three-run long ball in just his third career Triple-A at-bat, but also accounted for all of the Tribe's four stolen bases and played sound defense all night long at second base.

LEHIGH VALLEY IRONPIGS (www.IronPigsBaseball.com)

CARR-ACE-SCO: Going back to 2008, RHP **Carlos Carrasco** has a 12.0 IP scoreless streak and hasn't allowed an earned run in 18.1 IP (3 GS). In fact, he has still yet to allow an earned run at Coca-Cola Park in five career starts, going 2-0, 0.00 (21.2 IP, 7 R, 0 ER, 35 K). In just seven overall Triple-A starts, he is 2-2, 1.48 (42.2 IP, 7 ER) with 3 would-be wins blown by the bullpen.

PROTECT AND CERVE: INF **Mike Cervenak** has hit safely in the first six games of 2009 (8-24, .333-1-2, 2B, 3B). Going back to 2008, Cervenak has an International League hitting streak of 12 games (15-47, .319-2-6, 4 2B). He led all IronPigs in 2008 with his franchise-record 18-game hitting streak from May 16 to June 3 (.423-2-13), which was the seventh longest in the International League last season.

KYLE CAN-DRICK: RHP **Kyle Kendrick** won his first Triple-A game in just his second career Triple-A start on Wednesday, going seven strong innings in an 11-4 pounding of Syracuse (W, 7.0 IP, 7 H, 2 R, 2 ER, 1 BB, 4 K). So far this season in two starts, Kendrick is 1-0, 1.64. In his professional career, he has appeared in 51 games (50 starts) in the Major Leagues with Philadelphia and gone 21-13 with a 4.78 ERA.

BACON BITS: With wins against Syracuse Monday and Wednesday, the 'Pigs have won back-to-back games for the first time since July 29-30, 2008 at Norfolk (a span of 37 games)... Tuesday, the 'Pigs climbed out of the North Division cellar for the first time in 2009. LHV spent the first 5 days of this season in last place after starting in the cellar their first 70 days of 2008... With three more double plays turned behind RHP **Kyle Kendrick** on Wednesday, the 'Pigs lead the IL with 10 DP this season... One time through the rotation, the 'Pigs starters are 1-1, 3.08 (26.1 IP, 29 H, 14 R, 9 ER, 6 BB, 17 K)... RHP **Justin Lehr** earned the team's first win of 2009. In his IL career, he's now 7-2, 2.04 (70.2 IP, 16 ER) in 17 G, 9 GS... The IronPigs are just 5-28 during the month of April in franchise history.

LOUISVILLE BATS (www.BatsBaseball.com)

RED HOT ROSIE: INF **Adam Rosales** is off to a hot start, hitting safely in five of his first six games in 2009. Already, **Rosales** is hitting .350 (7-20) with one double, two homers, seven RBI and five runs scored. His sacrifice fly in the bottom of the 7th inning during game two of Saturday's doubleheader won it for the Bats, as they defeated the Clippers 5-4.

THEIR FIRSTS: There were a few firsts during Sunday's game versus the Columbus Clippers with three of the Bats young players. INF **Chris Valaika** collected his first Triple-A hit on a 2-run home run, INF **Danny Dorn** singled for his first Triple-A hit and C **Craig Tatum** blasted his first Triple-A homer, a 3-run shot. Tatum played in 10 games with the Bats last season and hit .179 (7-for-39).

PROSPECTS APLENTY: The Bats have two of *Baseball America's* top 10 Reds prospects on the team this year, OF **Drew Stubbs** (#3) and INF **Chris Valaika** (#4). Stubbs, who hit a combined .277 (130-470) with Single-A Sarasota, Double-A Chattanooga and Triple-A Louisville last season, is off to a slow start this season with the Bats. Manager **Rick Sweet** calls Stubbs a potential five-tool player. Early in the 2009 season he is hitting .188 (3-16) with a double and no RBI. Valaika was named the 2008 Minor League Player of the Year a year ago, after hitting a combined .317 (163-514) with Sarasota and Chattanooga. He also connected on 18 home runs and knocked 81 runs. In his first season at the Triple-A level he is hitting only .136 (3-22) but hit his first Triple-A home run on Sunday, April 12 vs. Columbus and has shown great glove work at shortstop.

MUD HENS ONE-HIT BATS: On Tuesday Night, the Bats were one-hit by Toledo's **Chris Lambert** and **Freddy Dolsi** in a 5-0 loss. Lambert carried the no-no into the 8th inning, before it was snapped by **Wes Bankston's** double to left field to lead off the inning. The last time the Bats were one-hit in a game was last season (April 22 at Indianapolis). Lambert also struck out 11 Bats' hitters. The last time an opposing pitcher struck out at least 11 against Louisville was also last season (**Les Walrond**, 17 K, July 6 at Lehigh Valley).

NORFOLK TIDES (www.NorfolkTides.com)

SWEET LOU: With another hit in yesterday's win, **Lou Montanez** is now hitting .462 (12-26) in six games with the Tides, an average that ranks 4th in the International League. Montanez has multiple hits in four of six games thus far and has hit safely in each of his last 25 Minor League games, as the 27-year-old collected a base hit in each of his final 19 contests with Double-A Bowie last season before he was promoted to Baltimore on August 5. Montanez won the Eastern League's Triple Crown and was named the league's Most Valuable Player a year ago after hitting .335 with 26 home runs and 97 RBI.

MAKING THEIR PITCH: Through six games this season, Norfolk's starting rotation of **Brad Bergesen**, **Chris Waters**, **David Hernandez**, **Chris Tillman** and **David Pauley** have held opposing batters to a .165 average against (17-103). Making the feat more impressive is that the average age of the starting rotation is just 24 years old. This has helped Norfolk post a 2.84 ERA through six games, good for 4th-best in the International League. Tides pitchers have registered 42 strikeouts while yielding just 35 hits in 50.2 innings pitched thus far.

HOMER HAPPY: In six games this season, Norfolk has hit five home runs (0.83 homers a game). This is in stark contrast to a year ago, when Norfolk did not hit its first homer until the ninth game of the season and hit just 11 home runs in 25 games in April (0.44 homers a game). The trio of **Lou Montanez** (29 homers), **Matt Wieters** (27 homers) and **Nolan Reimold** (25 homers) combined to hit 81 home runs last year, while the 2008 Tides hit a total of 66. Norfolk may also hit more long balls at Harbor Park this season, as the right field fence has been moved in 20 feet to accommodate a party deck that was constructed this year.

PAWTUCKET RED SOX (www.PawSox.com)

A ROUNDTRIP FLIGHT TO NOWHERE: PawSox relief pitcher **Hunter Jones** recorded the final two outs of Pawtucket's 6-5 loss in Rochester on Tuesday night. He soon thereafter fell asleep in his Rochester hotel a little after midnight not realizing what would soon transpire. At about 3:00 a.m., PawSox manager **Ron Johnson** called Jones' cell phone with good news – only Jones did not answer. So R.J. put on his slippers and went to Jones' room. After banging on the door for several minutes, Hunter finally emerged to hear the news from R.J. – he was being promoted to Boston. His first trip to the big leagues would soon be a journey he would never forget. Sixteen hours, one bus ride, two flights, and three time zones after he awoke in Rochester, Jones finally arrived in Oakland – just in time to board another cross country flight back to Boston! Here in a nutshell, is a time line of what transpired on a memorable Wednesday for the 25 year-old Florida native who was summoned to replace Red Sox RHP **Daisuke Matsuzaka** (placed on the 15-day DL with a mild right shoulder strain after going just one inning as the starter on Tuesday night in Oakland). Jones, who was 0-0, 0.00 in 3 RA this season for the PawSox (3.2 IP, 2 SO), made it to the Rochester airport at about 4:45 a.m. He flew out at 6:00 a.m. for a short trip to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York. That was the easy part. His next flight was scheduled to leave at 9:15 a.m. for Oakland, however, that plane was delayed in Richmond due to high winds. Jones could not change to another flight, but finally at about Noon his plane headed for Oakland where the Red Sox were playing an afternoon game (3:30 p.m. Eastern time). Because the Red Sox had played 12 innings (11 of which were pitched by the bullpen) on Tuesday night, Jones was a potentially needed arm – even though his delays meant he would be a late-game arrival. But, as fate would have it, Boston starter **Tim Lincecum** tossed a complete game gem (7.1 no-hit innings) as the Red Sox beat Oakland, 8-2 in a game that lasted just 2 hours and 13 minutes. So, by the time Jones arrived in the Red Sox clubhouse at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum (at approximately 6:00 p.m. Eastern time), his new Red Sox teammates were already putting on their suits for their cross country charter flight back to Boston. When asked what he might do on his second cross-country trip of the day, Jones said wearily, "I don't know – I might try to sleep."

PAW PRINTS: The PawSox won their first three games of the season (last week in Buffalo) and then lost three in a row to begin this week (one in Buffalo and two in Rochester) before getting back on the winning track with a 4-2 victory in Rochester last night. The Sox conclude their season-opening 8-game roadtrip this afternoon in Rochester. They play their home-opener at McCoy Stadium on Friday night vs. Lehigh Valley to begin a 6-game homestand (four vs. the IronPigs and two more vs. the Red Wings)... The PawSox have been involved in a host of player moves over the past few days. Monday INF **Gil Velazquez** was recalled to Boston as the Red Sox placed INF **Jed Lowrie** on the DL. PawSox OF **Brad Wilkerson**, who left the team on Saturday after playing in just two games, has been placed on the temporarily inactive list. LHP **Chris George** joined the PawSox Monday night. The former Kansas City Royal starter from 2001-2004 has a 14-20 record in the majors with a 6.48 ERA in 47 games. On Tuesday the PawSox placed RHP **Devern Hansack** on the 7-day disabled list with a right shoulder strain and added both RHP **Rocky Cherry**, who made 18 RA with Baltimore last season (0-3 with a 6.35 ERA) and 28 RA with Norfolk (0-1 with a 2.89 ERA) along with INF **Travis Denker** who was claimed off waivers from San Diego (after beginning this season with Double-A San Antonio).

ROCHESTER RED WINGS (www.RedWingsBaseball.com)

OH WHAT A RELIEF! The Red Wings bullpen has been spectacular the first seven games of the season, going 5-0 with two saves and a 1.91 ERA. In 33.0 innings of work, the relievers have allowed just eight runs (seven earned) on 26 hits while striking out 24. Since 2005, the Red Wings bullpen has a 125-83 record with 166 saves.

THIS TRIPLE-A STUFF IS A PIECE OF CAKE: Red Wings outfielders **Dustin Martin** and **David Winfree** are off to nice starts at the plate in their first Triple-A seasons. Martin is batting .375 (9-24) with one home run and three RBI while Winfree is batting .318 (7-22) with four doubles, one home run and three RBI. Martin has hit safely in all seven games he's played while Winfree has hit safely in all five games he's played in.

SMALL BALL: After hitting four home runs in the first eight innings of the season, Rochester has gone 53 straight innings without hitting a long ball. This doesn't mean the Red Wings aren't scoring runs or winning games. Rochester has been scoring their fair share of runs (31) in those 53 innings and has won four of the six games they haven't homered in.

STEALING THEM BLIND: The Red Wings are currently 2nd (Toledo is first with 13) in the International League with 12 stolen bases. Rochester has nine stolen bases the last three games, including six stolen bases in Monday night's game vs. Pawtucket. It was the first time the Red Wings had six stolen bases in a game since August 21, 1992 when they stole seven bags in a 13-8 win at Toledo. The last time Rochester led the IL in stolen bases was 1992 when they stole 152 bases. **Luis Mercedes** led the 1992 team with 35 stolen bases.

SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE YANKEES (www.SWBYankees.com)

TWO YANKEES CONTINUE STREAKING: **Angel Berroa** and **Juan Miranda** each picked up hits on Wednesday to remain the only two players on the roster to have hit safely in all seven Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Yankees games in 2009. Berroa went 2-3 with a single and an RBI double, picking up his third multi-hit game of the season. During his streak, Berroa is hitting .333 with three doubles and five runs batted in. After hitting .474 against Lehigh Valley, Miranda has cooled down hitting just .231 against Buffalo with three hits in three games, but it has been enough to keep his streak alive. The slugger, who leads the IL with 12 runs batted in, extended his streak on Wednesday with his third home run of the season.

ONE DOWN AND ONE ON HOLD: With his apparent injury on Wednesday, **Kevin Russo's** seven game hitting streak came to a close with an 0-2 performance before he was lifted from the game. **Austin Jackson's** hitting streak remains at six despite not getting a base hit during the game on Wednesday. Jackson was hit by a pitch in his first plate appearance and was later removed without having an official at bat, keeping his streak in tact.

FIRST IS FUN: Scranton/Wilkes-Barre has been atop the International League North over the last 36 regular season days dating back to the 2008 season. SWB was in first place for 79 of the first 81 days of 2008 before dropping to second. The Yankees re-took first place from the Pawtucket Red Sox on August 4 and held the spot for the final 29 days of the regular season and have now been on top of the IL North for the first seven days of 2009.

CELEBRATION TIME: Following the season opening eight day, eight game road trip, the Yankees 2009 home opener will take place Friday night at PNC Field vs. the Rochester Red Wings. The night will feature a pre-game ring ceremony for the 2008 Governors' Cup Champions, the raising of the championship flag and the unveiling of the 2008 Governors' Cup Championship wall banner, complete with the Governors' Cup trophy on hand. Former New York Yankee outfielder **Roy White** will be in attendance to throw out the ceremonial first pitch and following the game the skies over PNC Field will be illuminated with fireworks.

SYRACUSE CHIEFS (www.SyracuseChiefs.com)

MILLEDGE JOINS CHIEFS: OF **Roger Bernadina** was recalled by Washington earlier this week and outfielder **Lastings Milledge** was optioned to Syracuse. Milledge, a former first-round draft pick of the New York Mets, was 2-14 (.143) with 1 home run and 1 RBI in four Major League games this season. Milledge was acquired by Washington in November 2007 in exchange for outfielder **Ryan Church** and catcher **Brian Schneider**. Bernadina appeared in 26 games for the Nats last season.

VETERAN REPLACES VETERAN ON STAFF: RHP **Josh Towers** was placed on the disabled list this week and replaced on the active roster by **Dave Williams**. Williams, who had been in extended spring training, is a veteran of 82 career big league games – 55 less than Towers, but more than every other hurler on the Syracuse staff other than **Kip Wells**.

TOLEDO MUD HENS (www.MudHens.com)

CHASING RECORDS: **Mike Hessman**, who already owns some, is chasing several other Mud Hens modern era records, as is teammate **Ryan Raburn**. Hessman is the Hens' all-time home run leader with 119, an astonishing 52 more than the next closest player. Raburn entered this season tied for 6th on the all-time list, but his four during opening week has moved him into 4th. Hessman will look to add to his modern day team RBI record (302). Raburn's 219 is good for 6th overall, though he's just 16 away from 2nd on the list. Hessman, with six runs so far on the young season, has a career total of 274, surpassing **Wayne Comer** (273) for most runs scored in Hens' modern day history. An interesting race to watch this season between Hessman and Raburn will be for that of most career doubles (modern era). Both currently have career totals of 75, 19 shy of the overall record.

PITCHING'S THE KEY: The Hens have averaged six runs per game during their 6-1 start to the season, but perhaps more impressive has been the dominance of the starting pitching. The Hens' starting pitchers have allowed just nine runs in 40 innings through seven games, good for a 2.03 ERA. The pitching staff has an overall ERA of 2.67.

GOOD START: The Hens current record of 6-1 is better than the start of the 2008 team, which was 5-2 through seven games. The Hens finished last season 75-69, the fourth straight year the club has had a winning record. So far this season the Mud Hens have taken three of four in Indianapolis and swept the Louisville Bats in a three-game series. Last season, the Hens had just six wins in eleven tries in Indianapolis and three wins in ten games at Louisville.

OPENING DAY: The Hens open their home schedule today as they take on the Columbus Clippers at Fifth Third Field. The team is 5-2 in home openers since the ballpark opened in 2002, including wins in each of the past two seasons. **Ron Chiavacci**, who also pitched with the Mud Hens in 2007 (12-6, 3.39 ERA in 26 games), gets the start for Toledo.