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**AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW WITH
MINOR LEAGUE
PRESIDENT
PAT O'CONNER**

**AMERICAN
LEAGUE
CENTRAL
TOP 10
PROSPECTS**

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NO. 1 IN THE
TWINS' SYSTEM**



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Leading Off

JANUARY 12-26, 2018 VOLUME 38, ISSUE 3

"I don't have 12 cities on a list that I can, in my wildest dreams, make up."

MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PRESIDENT PAT O'CONNER ON THE PROSPECT OF FINDING AFFILIATES FOR AN EXPANDED MLB, PAGE 29



RON VESELY-GETTY IMAGES

Righthander Michael Kopech would rank as the No. 1 prospect for many organizations, but the White Sox have outfielder Eloy Jimenez stationed at the top.

INSIDE THE GAME

TOP 10 PROSPECTS

Our signature Top 10 Prospects rankings continue with the American League Central. An overview of all five systems..... **8**

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ON DECK: Last but not least, the American League West Top 10 Prospects issue finds towering righthander Forrest Whitley atop the Astros' collection of minor league talent.

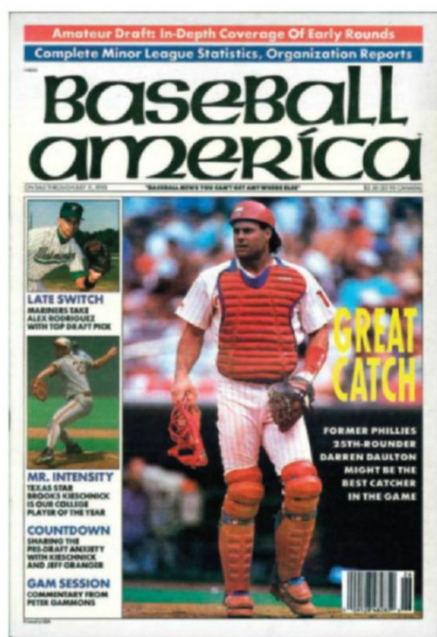
Leading Off

JANUARY 12-26, 2018 VOLUME 38, ISSUE 3

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

BROOKS KIESCHNICK PULLED OFF WORKING AS A TWO-WAY PLAYER FOR THE 2003 BREWERS

BY RON MORRIS



JULY 1993

A two-way player at Texas, Brooks Kieschnick was named BA College Player of the Year after hitting .374 with 19 homers and going 16-4, 3.25 in 150 innings.

Brooks Kieschnick is the last player before Shohei Ohtani to attempt to play regularly as both a hitter and a pitcher in the big leagues. For the 2003 Brewers, he hit seven home runs in 70 at-bats and made 42 relief appearances.



JOHN WILLIAMSON; JONATHAN DANIEL

There is no bigger fan of Shohei Ohtani than Brooks Kieschnick. “I hope he comes over here and just dominates. I think it’s going to be a great thing for baseball. It’s something exciting,” Kieschnick said of the 23-year-old two-way Japanese star who signed with the Angels in December. “You had the Cubs win the World Series (in 2016), then you had the Astros (in 2017), so baseball is in a really, really good place right now. I want it to keep it going that way, and I think this will definitely be a step in the right direction for him coming over and providing another spark for our game.”

Kieschnick is the last player to both hit and pitch regularly in the same major league season, doing so for the 2003 Brewers with a modicum of success. The lefthanded batter hit .300 with seven home runs over 70 at-bats that season—he started three games in left field and four at DH—while recording a 5.26 ERA in 42 appearances as a righthanded reliever.

Today, Kieschnick is married with two young children. He owns Dispersion Group, a medical device distribution company in San Antonio.

Kieschnick clubbed a program-record 43 home runs and compiled a 34-8 record as a starting pitcher for the University of Texas from 1990-93. He was the Baseball America College Player of the Year in 1993. An online poll in 2002 recognized Kieschnick as the best player in Texas program history. He was one of the inaugural inductees into the College Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006 and had his No. 23 jersey retired by the Longhorns in 2009.

Major league organizations faced

much uncertainty when evaluating Kieschnick out of college. Most were not certain whether he fit better hitting or pitching, and if either talent merited him being a first-round selection.

The Cubs took Kieschnick with the 10th overall pick in 1993 and signed him as a two-way player for \$650,000.

He toiled in the minor leagues as an outfielder/DH before reaching the major leagues in brief stints with the Cubs in 1996 and '97, the Reds in 2000 and the Rockies in 2001. Then Milwaukee general manager Doug Melvin and manager Ned Yost threw their support behind Kieschnick two-way project for the 2003 season.

“I went to spring training and figured out how to work it,” Kieschnick said. “I would DH a few games and pinch-hit in a few games, and spend a lot of time on the mound. I was having the most fun playing baseball since the first time I signed.”

Benefiting from having two players in one, the Brewers effectively extended their roster to 26 players in 2003. The following season for Milwaukee, an injury limited Kieschnick to pitching and pinch-hitting only, so he wasn’t getting a chance to step in the batter’s box on a regular basis.

“I guess I’ll never know,” the 45-year-old Kieschnick said when asked if he might have extended his career by concentrating on one aspect of the game.

“I’ll never know because there wasn’t the opportunity to fail. I put so much pressure on myself to get two hits in one at-bat, instead of just going up there and having fun.”

Now the fun for Kieschnick will be in watching to see if Ohtani can pull off being a two-way player. ■

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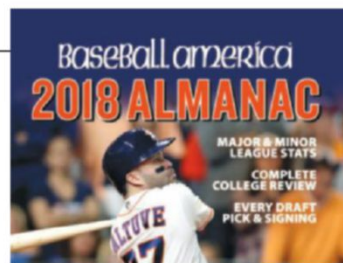
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Q How will fantasy leagues handle Shohei Ohtani since he can pitch and hit?

—TRAVIS JENKINS, OVERLAND PARK, KAN.

A Baseball America has done some digging on this subject, and, as a matter of fact, one company, Yahoo!, has already announced it plans to treat Shohei Ohtani as two players—a pitcher and a hitter. That means if you're a member of one of Yahoo!'s leagues, you can draft Ohtani twice, or even trade Ohtani for himself.

For months, Yahoo! employees waded through possible solutions—eventually settling on three main choices: Give Ohtani dual eligibility and let users toggle him back and forth, disregard his hitting stats entirely and label him solely as a pitcher, or the two-Ohtanis idea.

Yahoo! product director Guy Lake explained that while two Ohtanis wasn't necessarily a solution that would appease everyone, it was the most practical solution they could find.

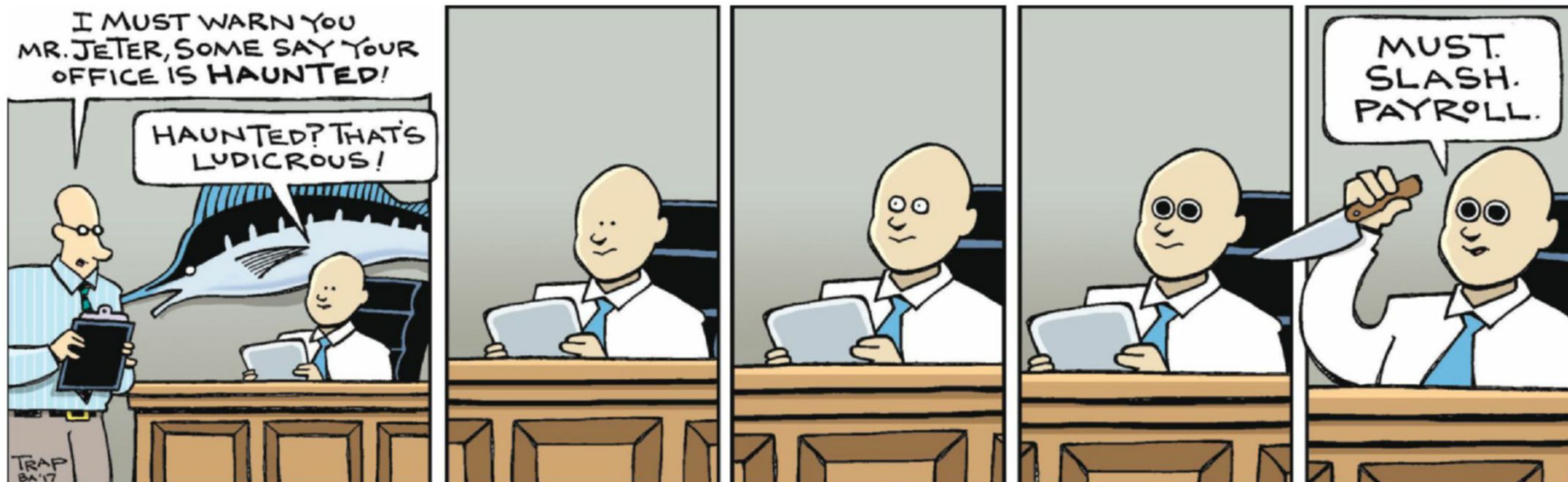
"That's the best gloss I can put on it," Lake said. "I would love it if we could say, 'No problem' (and encompass all of Ohtani's value into one draftable player). If it were easy, there would be one. Let's be clear about that: It's not easy, but we've come up with what we think is the best from a set of imperfect choices."

Yahoo!'s decision will also be the standard they use for all future two-way players. So if Rays prospect Brendan McKay makes it as a two-way player, he'll also be draftable as both a hitter and a pitcher.

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REBUILDING IS ALL THE RAGE

The cyclical nature of baseball has put the Indians and the Twins in excellent position as the 2018 season nears. The Tigers and Royals are just starting what look to be lengthy rebuilding processes of thin farm systems. The White Sox are further along in their push to return to the playoffs but still a year or more away.

So that leaves a two-team race. The Twins will try to reap the benefits of a young, talented crop of position players that arrived in 2015 and 2016. The Indians will have the best talent in the division, as well as enough on the farm to either give the lineup a boost or to trade.

ORGANIZATION TALENT RANKINGS Last Three Years

Team	2017	2016	2015
Chicago White Sox	5	23	20
Cleveland Indians	18	16	23
Detroit Tigers	25	26	30
Kansas City Royals	26	21	13
Minnesota Twins	21	10	2

WHITE SOX

NOTABLE GRADUATIONS: 2B Yoan Moncada (1), RHP Lucas Giolito (2), RHP Reynaldo Lopez (3) and C Omar Narvaez (30).

TRENDING: ◀▶ After acquiring Eloy Jimenez from the Cubs, the farm system is still just as strong this year.

INDIANS

NOTABLE GRADUATIONS: OF Bradley Zimmer (1) and 3B Yandy Diaz (11).

TRENDING: ▼ Graduations and a few trades have diminished the depth in the system.

TIGERS

NOTABLE GRADUATIONS: OF JaCoby Jones (6) and SS Dixon Machado (14).

TRENDING: ▲ The Tigers have more pitching depth than they have had in years.

ROYALS

NOTABLE GRADUATIONS: OF Jorge Bonifacio (9).

TRENDING: ▼ Royals fans have endured rebuilds before. At least this time the front office has a track record of success as a proof of concept.

TWINS

NOTABLE GRADUATIONS: LHP Adalberto Mejia (6).

TRENDING: ▲ The system is deep in future big leaguers with a great topper in Royce Lewis.



Lucas Giolito

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS: The top of the system is among the best in the game, with outfielder Eloy Jimenez, righthander Michael Kopech and Cuban import Luis Robert each having extremely high ceilings. The rest of their Top 10 is very talented as well, and could be further improved with strong first full seasons for their top picks from the 2017 draft, third baseman Jake Burger and first baseman Gavin Sheets.

WEAKNESSES: Once you get past the top 15 prospects, the list drops off quickly into players with more marginal futures. Those same players, however, could significantly raise their stock with rebounds from injuries or tough seasons. Outfielders Luis Alexander Basabe and Alex Call, for example, battled injuries for most of the season and could rise on next year's version of the list with strong 2018 seasons.

PROJECTED 2021 LINEUP

Listed with 2021 season age

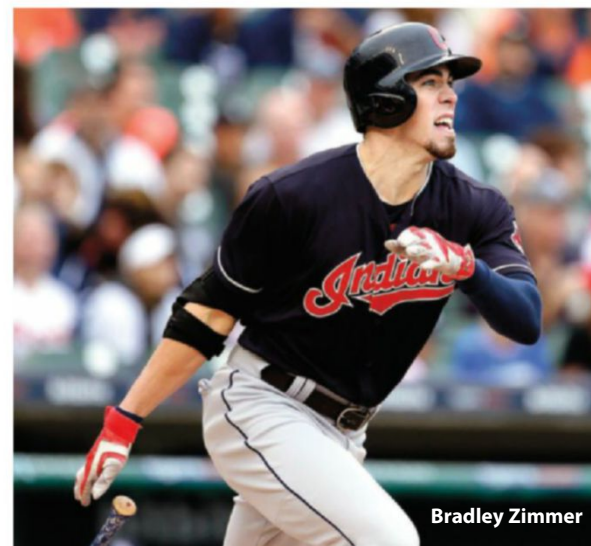
C Zack Collins	26	SP Michael Kopech	24
1B Gavin Sheets	24	SP Carlos Rodon	28
2B Yoan Moncada	25	SP Lucas Giolito	26
3B Jake Burger	24	SP Reynaldo Lopez	27
SS Tim Anderson	27	SP Alec Hansen	26
LF Eloy Jimenez	24	CL Zack Burdi	26
CF Luis Robert	23		
RF Avisail Garcia	29		
DH Jose Abreu	34		

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Gio Gonzalez	LHP	Nationals	26.3
2009	Gordon Beckham	SS	Mariners	5.7
2010	Jared Mitchell	OF	Atlantic Lge	—
2011	Chris Sale	LHP	Red Sox	37.2
2012	Addison Reed	RHP	Red Sox	6.8
2013	Courtney Hawkins	OF	White Sox	—
2014	Jose Abreu	1B	White Sox	16.9
2015	Carlos Rodon	LHP	White Sox	4.3
2016	Tim Anderson	SS	White Sox	3.7
2017	Yoan Moncada	2B/3B	White Sox	1.5

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Gordon Beckham	SS	Mariners	5.7
2009	Jared Mitchell	OF	Atlantic Lge	—
2010	Chris Sale	LHP	Red Sox	37.2
2011	Keenyn Walker (1st supp)	OF	Frontier Lge	—
2012	Courtney Hawkins	OF	White Sox	—
2013	Tim Anderson	SS	White Sox	3.7
2014	Carlos Rodon	LHP	White Sox	4.3
2015	Carson Fulmer	RHP	White Sox	—
2016	Zack Collins	C	White Sox	Top 10
2017	Jake Burger	3B	White Sox	Top 10



Bradley Zimmer

CLEVELAND INDIANS

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS: The Indians have a bevy of exciting young hitters throughout the system, stretching from Francisco Mejia and Greg Allen on the cusp of the big leagues all the way to Nolan Jones and Will Benson at the short-season level. They also remain adept at developing middle infielders, with Yu-Cheng Chang, Willi Castro and Erik Gonzalez all in the upper levels.

WEAKNESSES: Triston McKenzie looks like he'll give the Indians a homegrown starter, but they don't have as much pitching depth in the minors. It is a departure from recent years, when the system regularly churned out impact arms such as Cody Allen and Danny Salazar or trade pickups Corey Kluber and Carlos Carrasco. Righthander Shane Bieber took a big step forward in 2017, but the same can't be said for pitchers at lower levels, such as Brady Aiken or Juan Hillman.

PROJECTED 2021 LINEUP

Listed with 2021 season age

C Francisco Mejia	25	SP Corey Kluber	34
1B Bobby Bradley	24	SP Triston McKenzie	23
2B Jose Ramirez	28	SP Trevor Bauer	30
3B Nolan Jones	22	SP Mike Clevinger	30
SS Francisco Lindor	27	SP Shane Bieber	25
LF Tyler Naquin	29	CL Cody Allen	32
CF Greg Allen	28		
RF Bradley Zimmer	28		
DH Yu-Cheng Chang	25		

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Adam Miller	RHP	Did not play	—
2009	Carlos Santana	C	Indians	24.5
2010	Carlos Santana	C	Indians	**
2011	Lonnie Chisenhall	3B	Indians	8.8
2012	Francisco Lindor	SS	Indians	15.8
2013	Francisco Lindor	SS	Indians	**
2014	Francisco Lindor	SS	Indians	**
2015	Francisco Lindor	SS	Indians	**
2016	Bradley Zimmer	OF	Indians	1.5
2017	Francisco Mejia	C	Indians	Top 10

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Lonnie Chisenhall	3B	Indians	8.8
2009	Alex White	RHP	Amer. Assoc.	-0.4
2010	Drew Pomeranz	LHP	Red Sox	11.3
2011	Francisco Lindor	SS	Indians	15.8
2012	Tyler Naquin	OF	Indians	0.9
2013	Clint Frazier	OF	Yankees	-0.4
2014	Bradley Zimmer	OF	Indians	1.5
2015	Brady Aiken	LHP	Indians	—
2016	Will Benson	OF	Indians	Top 10
2017	Quentin Holmes (2nd rd)	OF	Indians	—



Miguel Cabrera

DETROIT TIGERS

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS: The Tigers have targeted pitchers at the top of each of the past three drafts, and it's paid off with Alex Faedo, Matt Manning and Beau Burrows. Add in trade acquisition Franklin Perez and the organization has its best group of arms in years. Detroit now has future starters to go with its always deep group of potential power relievers.

WEAKNESSES: Paced by Miguel Cabrera and Victor Martinez, the Tigers' lineup has been potent for years. The foundation of the next great lineup isn't here yet. Detroit does have some up-the-middle prospects who could be big league regulars, but there are few players in the system who project as potential above-average hitters. Outfielder Christin Stewart is the best slugger in the system but most of the team's top positions prospects lack star power.

PROJECTED 2021 LINEUP

Listed with 2021 season age

C Jake Rogers	25	SP Michael Fulmer	28
1B Jeimer Candelario	27	SP Franklin Perez	23
2B Isaac Paredes	22	SP Alex Faedo	25
3B Dawel Lugo	26	SP Matt Manning	23
SS Jose Iglesias	31	SP Daniel Norris	28
LF Christin Stewart	27	CL Beau Burrows	24
CF Daz Cameron	24		
RF Nick Castellanos	29		
DH Miguel Cabrera	38		

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Rick Porcello	RHP	Red Sox	16.2
2009	Rick Porcello	RHP	Red Sox	**
2010	Jacob Turner	RHP	Nationals	-1.8
2011	Jacob Turner	RHP	Nationals	**
2012	Jacob Turner	RHP	Nationals	**
2013	Nick Castellanos	3B/OF	Tigers	1.3
2014	Nick Castellanos	3B/OF	Tigers	**
2015	Steven Moya	OF	Tigers	—
2016	Michael Fulmer	RHP	Tigers	8.3
2017	Matt Manning	RHP	Tigers	Top 10

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Ryan Perry	RHP	Did not play	0.3
2009	Jacob Turner	RHP	Nationals	-1.8
2010	Nick Castellanos (1 supp)	3B	Tigers	1.3
2011	James McCann (2nd rd)	C	Tigers	3.4
2012	Jake Thompson (2nd rd)	RHP	Phillies	0.3
2013	Jonathon Crawford	RHP	Reds	—
2014	Derek Hill	OF	Tigers	—
2015	Beau Burrows	RHP	Tigers	Top 10
2016	Matt Manning	RHP	Tigers	Top 10
2017	Alex Faedo	RHP	Tigers	Top 10



Raul A. Mondesi

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS: The top three prospects in this system—Nick Pratto, Khalil Lee and Seuly Matias—all have the potential to be impact bats in a few years. They're all many years away, but provide tantalizing glimpses of hope for a strong future in Kansas City.

WEAKNESSES: The top arms in this system, Eric Skoglund and Josh Staumont, have struggled with their command. Staumont in particular took a step back, walking nearly 8 batters per nine innings in 2017. They've also had a very rough run in the draft, with their top picks from 2011 through 2016 struggling with either performance or injuries. Two of those picks—lefty Brandon Finnegan and righty A.J. Puckett—have already been traded. Their top pick in 2015, righty Ashe Russell, has taken a leave of absence from baseball after early struggles in his pro career.

PROJECTED 2021 LINEUP

Listed with 2021 season age

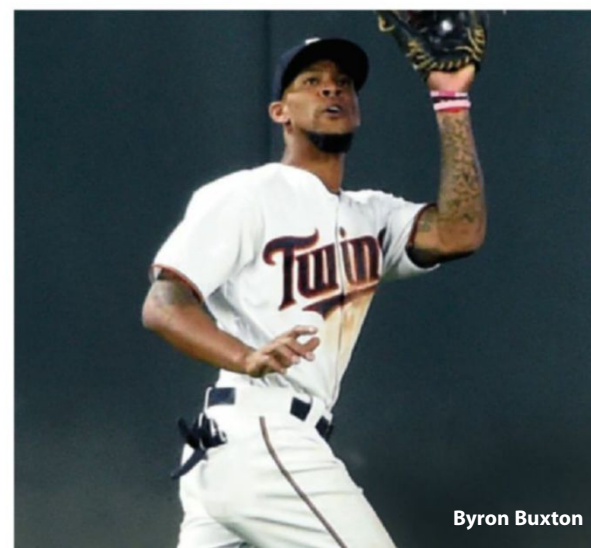
C Salvador Perez	31	SP Danny Duffy	32
1B Nick Pratto	22	SP Jake Junis	28
2B Nicky Lopez	26	SP Josh Staumont	27
3B Cheslor Cuthbert	28	SP Eric Skoglund	28
SS Raul A. Mondesi	25	SP Foster Griffin	25
LF Seuly Matias	22	CL Kelvin Herrera	31
CF Khalil Lee	23		
RF Jorge Bonifacio	28		
DH Hunter Dozier	28		

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Mike Moustakas	SS	Royals	11.4
2009	Mike Moustakas	3B	Royals	**
2010	Mike Montgomery	LHP	Cubs	4.9
2011	Eric Hosmer	1B	Royals	14.1
2012	Mike Montgomery	LHP	Cubs	**
2013	Kyle Zimmer	RHP	Royals	—
2014	Kyle Zimmer	RHP	Royals	—
2015	Raul A. Mondesi	SS	Royals	-1.1
2016	Raul A. Mondesi	SS	Royals	**
2017	Josh Staumont	RHP	Royals	Top 10

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Eric Hosmer	1B	Royals	14.1
2009	Aaron Crow	RHP	Did not play	2.4
2010	Christian Colon	SS	Marlins	1.8
2011	Bubba Starling	OF	Royals	—
2012	Kyle Zimmer	RHP	Royals	—
2013	Hunter Dozier	SS	Royals	Top 10
2014	Brandon Finnegan	LHP	Reds	3.1
2015	Ashe Russell	RHP	Royals	—
2016	A.J. Puckett (2nd round)	RHP	White Sox	—
2017	Nick Pratto	1B	Royals	Top 10



Byron Buxton

MINNESOTA TWINS

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS: Bolstered by a strong early showing from No. 1 overall pick Royce Lewis, the lower levels of the Twins' system are bursting with talent. In addition to Lewis, shortstop Wander Javier and righthander Brusdar Graterol both have the talent to break onto the national radar in 2018. Brent Rooker also showed impressive power in his pro debut, swatting 18 home runs to rank second in their system in just half a season. If all goes well, they could be the second wave of talent that leads a renaissance in Minnesota.

WEAKNESSES: The Twins' system is very strong, but it does lack an immediate answer at shortstop, which has been a black hole in Minnesota for a few years. Jorge Polanco has been untrustworthy at the position, and Nick Gordon looks like a second baseman. That leaves the job for Lewis and Javier, who are years away.

PROJECTED 2021 LINEUP

Listed with 2021 season age

C Jason Castro	34	SP Jose Berrios	27
1B Brent Rooker	26	SP Stephen Gonsalves	26
2B Jorge Polanco	27	SP Brusdar Graterol	22
3B Wander Javier	22	SP Fernando Romero	26
SS Royce Lewis	22	SP Adalberto Mejia	28
LF Eddie Rosario	29	CL Tyler Jay	27
CF Byron Buxton	27		
RF Max Kepler	28		
DH Miguel Sano	28		

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Nick Blackburn	RHP	Did not play	3.3
2009	Aaron Hicks	OF	Yankees	5.8
2010	Aaron Hicks	OF	Yankees	**
2011	Kyle Gibson	RHP	Twins	5.3
2012	Miguel Sano	3B/SS	Twins	5.4
2013	Miguel Sano	3B	Twins	**
2014	Byron Buxton	OF	Twins	7.2
2015	Byron Buxton	OF	Twins	**
2016	Byron Buxton	OF	Twins	**
2017	Nick Gordon	SS	Twins	Top 10

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player	Pos	2017 Org	WAR
2008	Aaron Hicks	OF	Yankees	5.8
2009	Kyle Gibson	RHP	Twins	5.3
2010	Alex Wimmers	RHP	Twins	—
2011	Levi Michael	SS	Twins	—
2012	Byron Buxton	OF	Twins	7.2
2013	Kohl Stewart	RHP	Twins	—
2014	Nick Gordon	SS	Twins	Top 10
2015	Tyler Jay	LHP	Twins	Top 10
2016	Alex Kirilloff	OF	Twins	Top 10
2017	Royce Lewis	SS	Twins	Top 10

FROM LEFT: JAMES SABAU; RICH SCHULTZ; PATRICK SMITH. ALL GETTY IMAGES

CHICAGO WHITE SOX TOP 10 PROSPECTS

MEGADEALS HAVE MADE THE SYSTEM ONE OF THE BEST IN BASEBALL, ESPECIALLY AT THE TOP

BY JOSH NORRIS



1. ELOY JIMENEZ, OF

BORN: Nov. 27, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 205.

SIGNED: Dominican Republic, 2013.

SIGNED BY: Jose Serra/Carlos Reyes (Cubs).

TRACK RECORD: The Cubs signed two of the best prospects in the 2013 international class in Jimenez and shortstop Gleyber Torres. Four years later, both have been traded away. The Cubs dealt Torres to the Yankees at the 2016 trade deadline for closer Aroldis Chapman. Jimenez, who signed for \$2.8 million, was sent to the White Sox in 2017 as the grand prize in a four-player package (which also included righthander Dylan Cease) for lefthander Jose Quintana. Jimenez showed standout tools at every stop with the Cubs, played in two consecutive Futures Games and went viral on Twitter in 2017 with a home run in the high Class A Carolina League home run derby that blasted a light tower in left field, a la Roy Hobbs in "The Natural". As far as games that counted, Jimenez missed time with shoulder and hamstring injuries at high Class A Myrtle Beach but returned to star form after his mid-July trade to the White Sox.

SCOUTING REPORT: Scouts who saw Jimenez last season used words like "man-child," "mutant" and "Superman." More specifically, Jimenez is an intimidating, strong-bodied prospect with a whip-quick bat capable of massive home runs. More than his raw

➤ Projected Future Grades On 20-80 Scouting Scale

HIT: 60. **POWER:** 70. **SPEED:** 40. **FIELD:** 45. **ARM:** 45.

power, which approaches the top of the scale, he is a diligent, dedicated worker. One manager recalled seeing Jimenez strike out multiple times during a game, then saw him on the field early the next day for tracking drills. Rival managers lamented not being able to find many holes in his swing, even when they pitched him backwards. And here's the scary part: Jimenez might not be done developing physically. He played all of 2017 at 20 years old and still has room to sculpt his body and add more strength, possibly becoming a perennial 40-home run threat. Jimenez has spent his career flipping back and forth between right and left field, with left his likely eventual home because of his below-average arm. He's also a tick below-average runner. Defense and speed were never expected to be selling points of his game, however. Jimenez is a hitter, period, with a mix of power and ability to get to it to change a game.

THE FUTURE: Jimenez will likely begin 2018 back at Double-A Birmingham. With a rare mix of plus hitting ability, massive power potential and the work ethic to make it all click, Jimenez projects as foundational, middle-of-the-order hitter for the White Sox.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (3 teams)	.312	.379	.568	333	54	104	22	3	19	65	35	72	1



2. MICHAEL KOPECH, RHP

BORN: April 30, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 205. **DRAFTED:** HS—Mount Pleasant, Texas, 2014 (1st round).

SIGNED BY: Tim Collinsworth (Red Sox).

TRACK RECORD: Kopech has long reigned as one of the hardest-throwing starters in the minors, and the White Sox acquired him as part of

the trade for Chris Sale at the 2016 Winter Meetings. Kopech had a couple of incidents mar his development—a 50-game suspension for amphetamines and a broken hand sustained in a fight with a teammate—but he's still become an elite prospect.

SCOUTING REPORT: Kopech's calling card is his top-of-the-scale fastball, which sits in the upper 90s and regularly touches 100 mph with armside run and downhill plane. It's an elite pitch, but he overthrows it at times. The White Sox asked Kopech to add a two-seam fastball to induce more grounders and help teach him not to overthrow. He boasts a slider that projects as a future plus pitch, as well as an average low-90s changeup the White Sox encouraged him to throw more. Kopech still needs to iron out his delivery in order to improve his below-average command and control.

THE FUTURE: Kopech likely will begin 2018 at Triple-A Charlotte, where he finished 2017, with a good shot to make his big league debut during the year. If he can tame his arsenal, he can be a top-of-the-rotation starter.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	9	8	2.88	25	25	0	134	92	6	65	172	.193



3. ALEC HANSEN, RHP

BORN: Oct. 10, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-7. **WT.:** 235. **DRAFTED:** Oklahoma, 2016 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Clay Overcash.

TRACK RECORD: Considered a candidate to go first overall in the 2016 draft, Hansen had a disastrous junior season at Oklahoma and got bumped from the rotation as well

as the first round. The White Sox snatched him up in the second round and signed him for \$1.2 million. Chicago started Hansen in Rookie ball in 2016 to regain his confidence against less experienced hitters, and he began 2017 at low Class A Kannapolis, ultimately finishing second in the minors in with 191 strikeouts.

SCOUTING REPORT: Hansen starts his arsenal with a mid-90s fastball that peaks at 98 mph. He gets downward plane on the pitch, and the White Sox made mechanical tweaks—namely keeping his shoulders even throughout his delivery—to help keep his fastball life consistent. Hansen couples his fastball with a hard curveball that flashes plus potential. He improved his changeup from a show-me pitch at Oklahoma to one with heavy sink and average potential. He's also working to develop a slider. Hansen's imposing size gives him an intimidation factor on the mound but also contributes to inconsistent command and control.

THE FUTURE: Hansen will return to Double-A Birmingham in 2018 and has a No. 3 starter ceiling.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (3 Teams)	11	8	2.80	26	26	0	141	114	8	51	191	.216



4. LUIS ROBERT, OF

BORN: Aug. 3, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 185. **SIGNED:** Cuba, 2017. **SIGNED BY:** Kenny Williams/Marco Paddy.

TRACK RECORD: Robert built an impressive track record in Cuba, where he put up an .895 OPS as a 15-year-old against older competition on the island's 18U league.

Robert, who had heaps of international success, signed with the White Sox for \$26 million in May, setting a franchise record for an international signee. He impressed scouts in the Dominican Summer League in 2017 despite a few nagging injuries.

SCOUTING REPORT: While Eloy Jimenez is farther along, Robert's tools are just as impressive. He boasts a strong, lean frame and his swing is compact and simple, producing well above-average bat speed. He's got plus raw power and slugged three homers in limited time in the DSL. Robert tends to swing and miss on elevated fastballs, but it's not a huge ding on his record. He graded as an above-average to plus runner as an amateur, but reports indicate his speed has increased as he matures. The White Sox believe Robert will be able to maintain enough speed and range to stay in center field, though his bat will profile in a corner if necessary.

THE FUTURE: After spending 2017 in the DSL mainly for tax purposes, Robert likely will join a crowded outfield at high Class A Winston-Salem in 2018.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
DSL White Sox (R)	.310	.491	.536	84	17	26	8	1	3	14	22	23	12

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average: Eloy Jimenez. **Best Power Hitter:** Eloy Jimenez. **Best Strike-Zone Discipline:** Zack Collins. **Fastest Baserunner:** Logan Taylor. **Best Athlete:** Luis Robert. **Best Fastball:** Michael Kopech. **Best Curveball:** Alec Hansen. **Best Slider:** Zack Burdi. **Best Changeup:** A.J. Puckett. **Best Control:** Dane Dunning. **Best Defensive Catcher:** Nate Nolan. **Best Defensive Infielder:** Yeyson Yrizarri. **Best Infield Arm:** Zach Remillard. **Best Defensive Outfielder:** Luis Alexander Basabe. **Best Outfield Arm:** Micker Adolfo.



5. DANE DUNNING, RHP

BORN: Dec. 20, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** Florida, 2016 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Buddy Hernandez (Nationals).

TRACK RECORD: The White Sox targeted Dunning in the 2016 draft, but the Nationals took him at the end of the first round before Chicago

had a chance to grab him. Six months later, the White Sox acquired Dunning from the Nationals along with Reynaldo Lopez and Lucas Giolito for Adam Eaton.

SCOUTING REPORT: Dunning operates primarily with a sinker and a slider, but he has a changeup as well. He sits in the low to mid-90s, peaking at 96 mph. When his delivery is clicking, Dunning features heavy sink and will coax hitters into beating the ball into the ground. He struggled at times to get out over his front side, which had a flattening effect on his stuff and resulted in an elevated—and out-of-character—home run rate of 1.1 per nine innings at high Class A Winston-Salem. Dunning's slider and changeup, both thrown in the low to mid-80s, have at least above-average potential. To maintain consistency and crispness on his pitches, he needs to stay tall through his delivery.

THE FUTURE: Dunning will likely join Alec Hansen atop a talented rotation at Double-A Birmingham in 2018. With three quality pitches and a clean, repeatable delivery, Dunning has mid-rotation potential.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 Teams)	8	8	2.94	26	26	0	144	127	15	38	168	.232



6. ZACK COLLINS, C

BORN: Feb. 6, 1995. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 220. **DRAFTED:** Miami, 2016 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Jose Ortega.

TRACK RECORD: Collins earned a reputation as one of the best offensive catchers in the country at Miami and was drafted ninth overall by the White Sox in 2016. He signed for

\$3,380,600 and finished his first full season at Double-A.

SCOUTING REPORT: Collins is a divisive prospect, but everybody sees his nearly unmatched batting eye and pole-to-pole power. However, not all scouts are convinced he'll hit for average, especially after he hit .224 in 2017. Collins wraps his bat at the beginning of his swing, which diminishes his ability to get to hard fastballs. He retooled his swing in instructional league, making it quieter to get in a better position to hit. Collins worked diligently on his defense throughout the 2017 season and needs to continue. He struggles to receive velocity and presents pitches poorly, turning strikes into balls. He has improved his blocking technique but has work to improve his agility. Collins' arm ranges from average to plus on throws to second base, and improved footwork would make his arm play up.

THE FUTURE: Collins will return to Double-A Birmingham to start 2018 and continue working to improve his contact skills and defense. He could be an offensive-minded everyday catcher.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 Teams)	.224	.370	.445	375	80	74	20	3	19	53	87	129	0



7. JAKE BURGER, 3B

BORN: April 10, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 210. **DRAFTED:** Missouri State, 2017 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Clay Overcash.

TRACK RECORD: Burger raked for three years at Missouri State and emerged as the top power prospect in the 2017 draft. He swatted

47 home runs his sophomore and junior seasons and earned a spot on USA Baseball's Collegiate National Team and was first-team All-America as junior. The White Sox jumped on Burger with the 11th overall pick and signed him for \$3.7 million.

SCOUTING REPORT: Burger's power is prodigious, and his leadership-oriented makeup is legendary, but scouts have concerns about his body. At 6-foot-2 and a thick, bottom-heavy 210 pounds, he stayed in Arizona over the winter to work on his conditioning. Scouts see a solid-average hitter with above-average power potential, and the plate discipline to get to it in games as a pro. Burger's body opens the door for questions about his defense, but he has worked hard to improve his footwork and range to stay at third base. He has more than enough arm to stay at the position and the power to profile there. He's a well below-average runner.

THE FUTURE: Burger will head to high Class A Winston-Salem in 2018, where he'll get to show off his power in the hitter-friendly confines of BB&T Ballpark.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 Teams)	.263	.336	.412	194	25	51	10	2	5	29	14	30	0



8. BLAKE RUTHERFORD, OF

BORN: May 2, 1997. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** HS—Canoga Park, Calif., 2016 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Bobby DeJardin (Yankees).

TRACK RECORD: The Yankees were ecstatic Rutherford fell to them at No. 18 in the 2016 draft, and they signed him for \$3.282 million. But

after a middling start to his first full season at low Class A Charleston in 2017, the Yankees traded Rutherford in mid-July to the White Sox as the headliner of a four-player package for relievers David Robertson and Tommy Kahnle and third baseman Todd Frazier.

SCOUTING REPORT: Rutherford's sweet lefthanded swing and disciplined approach makes scouts believe he'll be an above-average hitter, but questions about his power potential linger, especially after he hit just two homers in his full-season debut. Rutherford likely will move off center field, so the emergence of power will be key to his profile as a big leaguer. Evaluators with both the Yankees and White Sox saw average power potential—so long as he works to add muscle. Because of his below-average speed and arm, Rutherford appears destined for left field.

THE FUTURE: Rutherford likely will be part of a crowded outfield picture at high Class A Winston-Salem in 2018. He will rotate between center and left field, and whether his power begins to play in games will be key.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 Teams)	.260	.326	.348	396	52	103	25	2	2	35	38	76	10



9. GAVIN SHEETS, 1B

BORN: April 23, 1996. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 230. **DRAFTED:** Wake Forest, 2017 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Abe Fernandez.

TRACK RECORD: The son of former Orioles slugger Larry Sheets, Gavin hit 11 home runs combined his first two seasons at Wake Forest

but erupted for 21 as a junior in 2017. His power burst carried the Demon Deacons to Super Regionals, and the White Sox grabbed him with their second-round pick and signed him for \$2 million.

SCOUTING REPORT: After a long college season, Sheets was a bit fatigued when he made his pro debut, which he spent mostly at low Class A Kannapolis. Still, he showed impressive hitting ability. Sheets has a leveraged swing with plus raw power, but evaluators note he will have to be more selective with pitches in the zone to find ways to do damage. He rarely chases out of the zone and posts promising strikeout-to-walk marks for a power hitter. Defensively, Sheets moves well for a big man and is a solid defender at first base with average range and an average throwing arm.

THE FUTURE: Some scouts see Sheets as a hitter in the mold of Lucas Duda at the highest level. He will move to high Class A Winston-Salem in 2018 and try to continue slugging in one of the better hitter's parks in the country.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 Teams)	.279	.365	.397	204	19	57	12	0	4	28	23	34	0



10. DYLAN CEASE, RHP

BORN: Dec. 28, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 190. **DRAFTED:** HS—Milton, Ga., 2014 (6th round). **SIGNED BY:** Keith Lockhart (Cubs).

TRACK RECORD: Cease had Tommy John surgery as a senior in high school, but the Cubs saw enough in his younger years to draft him in the

sixth round in 2014 and sign him for \$1.5 million. After he spent a year recovering, Cease debuted in 2015 and was traded to the White Sox in July with Eloy Jimenez and two others for Jose Quintana.

SCOUTING REPORT: Cease's best pitch is a hard mid-90s fastball that reaches 98 mph and has tickled triple digits in the past. Its elite velocity plays up with sink as well. Cease couples his fastball with a hard 12-to-6 curveball that he uses to get swinging strikes and projects as a plus pitch. His changeup has made progress, but it's still a distant third pitch. Cease's below-average command and control have improved, but he still walked 4.2 batters per nine innings at low Class A in 2017.

THE FUTURE: Because of his two dominant pitches, Cease might have more success as a high-leverage reliever. It's too early for that move now and the White Sox will continue developing him as a starter. He will head to high Class A Winston-Salem in 2018, where his main goals will be to sharpen his fastball command and improve his secondary pitches.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 Teams)	1	10	3.28	22	22	0	93.1	74	3	44	126	.221

CLEVELAND INDIANS TOP 10 PROSPECTS

FRANCISCO MEJIA AND TRISTON MCKENZIE LEAD A SYSTEM HEADED BY HIGH-UPSIDE TALENT

BY TEDDY CAHILL



1. FRANCISCO MEJIA, C

BORN: Oct. 27, 1995. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 5-10. **WT.:** 175. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2012. **SIGNED BY:** Ramon Pena.

TRACK RECORD: Mejia's precocious talent has been apparent since the Indians signed him out of the Dominican Republic in 2012 and sent him to make his pro debut in the Rookie-level Arizona League the following season. He had an eventful path through the minors that included a historic hitting streak and nearly being included in a blockbuster trade before making his major league debut in September 2017 as a 21-year-old. Mejia broke out in 2016 and authored a 50-game hitting streak at two Class A levels that is the longest in the modern era of the minor leagues (dating back to 1963). He kept hitting in 2017 as he advanced to Double-A Akron. He finished the year in the Arizona Fall League, where he was one of the circuit's leading hitters.

SCOUTING REPORT: Mejia has long been known for his hitting ability, and the switch-hitter consistently makes hard contact from both sides of the plate. He has matured as a hitter to use the whole field to hit, instead of relying on the pull-oriented approach he had when he was younger. His bat speed gives him more raw power than his lean 5-foot-10 frame would suggest, but he more typically drives balls into the gaps than over the fence. He has an aggressive

➤ Projected Future Grades On 20-80 Scouting Scale

HIT: 60. **POWER:** 45. **SPEED:** 40. **FIELD:** 50. **ARM:** 80.

approach and doesn't walk much, but his excellent feel for the barrel means he also doesn't strike out much and is comfortable working behind in the count. Mejia has made strides defensively, has elite arm strength and has become a good receiver. He has gotten comfortable speaking English, a key skill for him to work with his pitchers, and has developed more consistency behind the plate. For all his progress defensively, however, Mejia's bat remains ahead of his glove. Because his bat isn't far off from being ready for the big leagues, and because the Indians have Yan Gomes and Roberto Perez, a pair of excellent defensive catchers, in Cleveland, Mejia went to the AFL to get experience at third base. He is naturally still learning the position but he will continue to see action at the hot corner in 2018.

THE FUTURE: Mejia will open 2018 at Triple-A Columbus, and if he continues to hit the way he has throughout his career, he will find his way into the big league lineup during the summer. His long-term future remains behind the plate, but his added defensive versatility will help him as he breaks into the majors.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Akron (AA)	.297	.346	.490	347	52	103	21	2	14	52	24	53	7
Cleveland (MLB)	.154	.214	.154	13	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	3	0



2. TRISTON MCKENZIE, RHP

BORN: Aug. 2, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 165. **DRAFTED:** HS—Royal Palm Beach, Fla., 2015 (1st round supplemental). **SIGNED BY:** Juan Alvarez.

TRACK RECORD: McKenzie continued to build on his track record of success in 2017 and ranked second in the minors with 186 strikeouts. He presents the same challenge to evaluators today that he did as an amateur: His track record is unimpeachable and he has impressive stuff, but he is listed at a rail-thin 6-foot-5 and 165 pounds.

SCOUTING REPORT: McKenzie's fastball can get up to 95 mph and averaged about 92 in 2017. He held that velocity throughout the season, and while it would dip during starts, he also showed the ability to reach back for more at the end of his outings. His fastball plays up and gets swings and misses thanks to the extension in his delivery and the high spin rate on the pitch. He also has a feel for spinning his curveball, which can be an out pitch. His changeup isn't as advanced but has the potential to be above-average. McKenzie needs to improve his routines and physique to allow him to manage a starter's workload.

THE FUTURE: McKenzie is speeding toward the big leagues and has the upside to be a frontline starter. He will advance to Double-A Akron in 2018 for his first taste of the upper minors.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Lynchburg (Hi A)	12	6	3.46	25	25	0	143	105	14	45	186	.203



3. BOBBY BRADLEY, 1B

BORN: May 29, 1996. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 225. **DRAFTED:** HS—Gulfport, Miss., 2014 (3rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Mike Bradford.

TRACK RECORD: Bradley has been one of the most productive players in the Indians' farm system since they drafted him. He won the Rookie-level Arizona League triple crown in 2014 by hitting .361 with eight home runs and 50 RBIs. He led the Midwest League with 27 home runs in 2015 and the Carolina League with 29 home runs in 2016. He fell short of making it four straight home run crowns, however, when he ranked sixth in the Eastern League with 23 homers at Double-A Akron in 2017.

SCOUTING REPORT: Bradley's raw power is the best in the system, and he has shown he is adept at getting to it in games. He has a strong, physical frame and creates excellent bat speed that allows him to drive the ball out to all fields. That power comes with a lot of swing and miss, but he cut his strikeout rate in 2017 from 29 percent to a much more manageable 22 percent. Bradley is a well below-average runner with an average arm, limiting him to first base.

THE FUTURE: Bradley will advance to Triple-A Columbus in 2018, where he could take advantage of Huntington Park's hitter-friendly dimensions. He has the potential to become a middle-of-the-order hitter.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Akron (AA)	.251	.331	.465	467	66	117	25	3	23	89	55	122	3



4. NOLAN JONES, 3B

BORN: May 7, 1998. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** HS—Bensalem, Pa., 2016 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Mike Kanen.

TRACK RECORD: Jones was regarded as one of the best prep hitters in the 2016 draft class, but he slipped to the second round, where the

Indians were happy to take him at No. 55 overall. He got back to his elite hitting in 2017 at short-season Mahoning Valley, where he led the New York-Penn League with a .912 OPS as a 19-year-old.

SCOUTING REPORT: Jones has an easy lefthanded swing and uses the whole field to hit. He is a patient hitter who led the NYP in with 43 walks. He reduced his strikeout rate, but his patience means he works many deep counts and will always strike out a fair amount. He has proven to be an advanced hitter but also has above-average raw power that he is still learning to get to consistently in games. As he physically matures, he projects to hit for plus power. Jones fits the third-base profile, but he still has work to do to ensure he can stick at the hot corner. He has plus arm strength but needs to improve his glove work and infield actions. If he moves, his athleticism and average speed will play in right field.

THE FUTURE: Jones provides plenty of upside. He will get his first taste of full-season ball in 2018 when he opens the year at low Class A Lake County.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Mahon. Valley (SS)	.317	.430	.482	218	41	69	18	3	4	33	43	60	1

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average: Francisco Mejia. **Best Power Hitter:** Bobby Bradley. **Best Strike-Zone Discipline:** Nolan Jones. **Fastest Baserunner:** Quentin Holmes. **Best Athlete:** Will Benson. **Best Fastball:** Julian Merryweather. **Best Curveball:** Triston McKenzie. **Best Slider:** Aaron Civale. **Best Changeup:** Eli Morgan. **Best Control:** Shane Bieber. **Best Defensive Catcher:** Logan Ice. **Best Defensive Infielder:** Erik Gonzalez. **Best Infield Arm:** Nolan Jones. **Best Defensive Outfielder:** Greg Allen. **Best Outfield Arm:** Jonathan Rodriguez.



5. SHANE BIEBER, RHP

BORN: May 31, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** UC Santa Barbara, 2016 (4th round). **SIGNED BY:** Carlos Muniz.

TRACK RECORD: Bieber took over as UC Santa Barbara's ace in 2016 and led the Gauchos to their first appearance in the College World Series. He

made a smooth transition to pro ball and excelled in 2017, his first full season, by reaching Double-A Akron.

SCOUTING REPORT: Bieber came to pro ball with a reputation for relying more on his command than his stuff to succeed. He has continued to show above-average control as a professional, and his walk rate of 0.5 per nine innings in 2017 led all full-season minor leaguers. But Bieber is starting to outgrow the command-and-control label, because his stuff made a jump in 2017. His fastball, which sat around 90 mph in college, now sits 92-94 and touched 96. His curveball got sharper and more consistent, developing into his best secondary pitch. He also throws a slider and changeup, which can both be average offerings. He has a clean, easy delivery and has shown he can handle a heavy workload—his 173.1 innings led all minor leaguers in 2017.

THE FUTURE: Bieber made one of the biggest jumps in the Indians' system in 2017 and now profiles as a potential No. 3 starter. He will advance to Triple-A Columbus in 2018 and could pitch his way into the big league mix.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (3 teams)	10	5	2.86	28	28	0	173.1	185	8	10	162	.274



6. YU-CHENG CHANG, SS

BORN: Aug. 18, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 175. **SIGNED:** Taiwan, 2013. **SIGNED BY:** Allen Lin/Jayson Lynn.

TRACK RECORD: Chang was a prominent prep player in Taiwan and was one of the top amateur free agents to sign out of Asia in 2013. His profile has risen in 2016 and 2017 as his power has developed.

SCOUTING REPORT: Chang has solid all-around offensive tools and is now tapping into his raw power. He has produced 104 extra-base hits in the last two years, more than half his total hits (205) in that time. His swing is still geared to hit line drives, but he has done a better job of incorporating his lower half into his swing and understanding what pitches he can drive. He is a patient hitter, but his willingness to work deep counts leads to an elevated strikeout rate, which spiked to a career-high 26 percent in 2017. Chang's tools are good enough to play at shortstop, though his future as an everyday player may be elsewhere. He is an average defender with average or better speed and arm strength.

THE FUTURE: Chang has exclusively played shortstop in full-season ball, but that will likely change at Triple-A Columbus in 2018. With Francisco Lindor holding down shortstop in Cleveland, and with the Indians' predilection for versatility, Chang will likely begin gaining exposure to other infield positions.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Akron (AA)	.220	.312	.461	440	72	97	24	5	24	66	52	134	11



7. WILLI CASTRO, SS

BORN: April 24, 1997. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 165. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2013. **SIGNED BY:** Ramon Pena/Felix Nivar.

TRACK RECORD: The Indians have pushed Castro since signing him out of the Dominican Republic in 2013, and he had been the youngest player

on his team at every stop of his pro career until 2017, when he was edged by Triston McKenzie and had to settle for being the youngest position player. Despite his youth, Castro has held his own at every level and had a breakout 2017 season at high Class A Lynchburg.

SCOUTING REPORT: A switch-hitter, Castro sprays line drives from both sides of the plate. He started coming into his power more in 2017, when he hit 11 home runs to more than double his previous career total. He is an aggressive hitter, limiting his walks, but he controls the strike zone well and makes a lot of contact. He has above-average speed and is a threat on the bases. Defensively, he has an above-average arm, good hands and sound infield actions at shortstop. He still has to work on his consistency after making 25 errors in each of the last two years, but his tools and instincts give him a good chance to stay at shortstop.

THE FUTURE: Castro is a confident player whose approach to the game has matured in the last year. He will advance to Double-A Akron in 2018.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Lynchburg (Hi A)	.290	.337	.424	469	69	136	24	3	11	58	28	90	19



8. GREG ALLEN, OF

BORN: March 15, 1993. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 175. **DRAFTED:** San Diego State, 2014 (6th round). **SIGNED BY:** Ryan Thompson.

TRACK RECORD: Allen got off to a strong start in 2017 at Double-A Akron before breaking the hamate bone in his right hand. The injury

sidelined him for two months, but he played well enough upon his return to get called up to Cleveland in September to make his major league debut. He made the playoff roster and appeared in two games.

SCOUTING REPORT: Allen's game is built around his plus speed. He has good on-base skills, is a disciplined hitter and has walked about as often as he has struck out in his career. His approach at the plate is geared toward making contact, limiting his power potential and some of his offensive impact. He is a good baserunner and is always a threat to steal. Allen's speed also plays well in center field, where he is a plus defender. He takes good routes, has an above-average arm and has the speed to cover plenty of ground.

THE FUTURE: Allen doesn't fit the typical corner outfield profile, but with Bradley Zimmer set to man center field in Cleveland, that may be where the Indians ask him to play. He will open 2018 either in Cleveland or at Triple-A Columbus.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Akron (AA)	.264	.344	.357	258	37	68	16	1	2	24	22	55	21
Cleveland (MLB)	.229	.282	.343	35	7	8	1	0	1	6	2	8	1



9. GEORGE VALERA, OF

BORN: Nov. 13, 2000. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 5-10. **WT.:** 160. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2017. **SIGNED BY:** Jhonathan Leyba/Domingo Toribio.

TRACK RECORD: The Indians took advantage of their recently revamped international scouting department and the rule changes

in the latest Collective Bargaining Agreement to make a splash on the international market in 2017. Valera, the fifth-ranked player in the class, was their top target, and he signed a deal worth \$1.3 million. He was born in New York and lived there until his family moved to the Dominican Republic when he was 13.

SCOUTING REPORT: Valera was one of the best hitters in the international class and drew comparisons with Nationals outfield prospect Juan Soto. He has a loose, compact swing and keeps his bat in the hitting zone for a long time. His feel for the barrel, bat-to-ball skills, pitch recognition and discipline all help him to make consistent, hard contact and give him the kind of hitting ability the Indians look for. He has above-average raw power and gets to it in games, though he has more of a hit-over-power profile. Valera profiles as a corner outfielder with average speed and arm strength.

THE FUTURE: Valera will make his pro debut in the Dominican Summer League in 2018 as he begins his path to reaching his considerable ceiling.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Did not play—Signed 2018 contract													



10. WILL BENSON, OF

BORN: June 16, 1998. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 215. **DRAFTED:** HS—Atlanta, 2016 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** C.T. Bradford.

TRACK RECORD: Benson was a two-sport star in high school and, as a senior, was a member of the USA Baseball team that won the 2016 18U World Cup in Japan.

SCOUTING REPORT: Benson produces elite bat speed thanks to his strength and quick hands, and he turns that bat speed into tremendous raw power, rivaling Bobby Bradley for the best in the system. He is learning to get to that power more consistently and in 2017 led the short-season New York-Penn League in home runs (10). His power comes with a lot of swing-and-miss, however, and he has struck out in one-third of his plate appearances. He has frequently tinkered with his swing but seemed to be more comfortable in the second half. Those adjustments, as well as his ability to work a walk, led to some optimism that he will cut down his strikeout rate. He is an excellent athlete who runs well for his size, particularly once he is underway. He has a plus arm and is a solid defender in right field.

THE FUTURE: As a physical, athletic, lefthanded-hitting outfielder from Atlanta, Benson is often compared with Jason Heyward. Benson has a long way to go to reach his ceiling and will advance to full-season ball when he opens 2018 at low Class A Lake County.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Mahon. Valley (SS)	.238	.347	.475	202	29	48	8	5	10	36	31	80	7

DETROIT TIGERS TOP 10 PROSPECTS

TRADES AND SMART DRAFT PICKS HAVE REVITALIZED A ONCE-BARREN SYSTEM
BY J.J. COOPER



1. FRANKLIN PEREZ, RHP

BORN: Dec. 6, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 197.
SIGNED: Venezuela, 2014.

SIGNED BY: Oz Ocampo/Oscar Alvarado (Astros).

TRACK RECORD: When he was training with Carlos Guillen as an amateur, Franklin Perez was a strong-armed third baseman. But in reality, he was a pitcher who just hadn't found his true home yet. When he moved to the mound, Perez quickly showed a delivery and an aptitude that seemed somewhat remarkable. He surpassed more experienced pitchers from the 2014 international amateur class, and his clean delivery and ability to work in the strike zone made Perez stand out. He signed with the Astros for \$1 million in 2014 and, despite missing a month with a knee injury, he reached Double-A Corpus Christi before his 20th birthday in 2017. The Tigers made him the signature acquisition in the Justin Verlander trade with Houston, though the Aug. 31 deal came late enough in the season that Perez never got into a game with the Tigers.

SCOUTING REPORT: The Tigers have pitching prospects with higher ceilings than Perez, but not one who combines stuff and feel like Perez. While he is less likely to be an ace, Perez also is about as safe a bet as a teenage pitcher can be to become a big league starter. For a young pitcher, he already understands many of the finer details of his craft. He responds

➤ **Projected Future Grades On 20-80 Scouting Scale**
FASTBALL: 60. **CB:** 60. **SL:** 45. **CHG:** 50. **CONTROL:** 60.

quickly to instruction and shows an aptitude for adjustments. After working on a new grip for his slider in just one side session, he successfully took it into his next game. Perez generally sits 92-94 mph, though he can touch 96. Some scouts believe he may end up throwing a little harder in his 20s because his delivery is clean and he has plenty of athleticism. What's most notable is that Perez commands all four of his pitches. His 75-80 mph curveball is his best secondary pitch. He has long had an ability to spin it with 12-to-6 break, and he has shown he can loosen it as an early-count strike or tighten it up as a swing-and-miss out pitch. His changeup is a potentially average pitch as well, with more deception than late fade. His newly-added slider comes in at 88-89 mph with late movement.

THE FUTURE: Perez doesn't blow hitters away like a future No. 1 starter, but he also doesn't have much to refine to be a future mid-rotation starter. He had knee problems in 2017 that are worth keeping an eye on, but he has present above-average stuff and advanced control for his age. He'll head to Double-A Erie in 2018 but could be only a year away from Detroit.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	6	3	3.02	19	16	3	86	71	6	27	78	.220



2. ALEX FAEDO, RHP

BORN: Nov. 12, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 225. **DRAFTED:** Florida, 2017 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** R.J. Burgess.

TRACK RECORD: The Tigers never imagined when the 2017 college season began that Faedo, the Florida ace who ranked as the top collegian available, might be on the board

when they picked at No. 18. After knee surgery during the fall, Faedo got off to a slow start and started sliding down draft boards, but just as quickly, he began to dominate again. He was the Most Outstanding Player of the College World Series after posting a 0.32 ERA with 44 strikeouts in 27.1 innings to lead the Gators to the title.

SCOUTING REPORT: At his best, Faedo has three plus pitches. He manipulates his 90-94 mph fastball and can cut it, sink it or make it run. His low-80s slider was among the best in the college class, and he can toy with its bite and depth. His changeup falls off at the plate, giving him another swing-and-miss pitch. His stuff was not as firm early in the 2017 college season, and he can get too reliant on his slider, but overall he offers a well-honed three-pitch package. While Faedo has a long arm action, he has average to above-average control.

THE FUTURE: The Tigers held Faedo, who projects as a strong No. 3 starter, out of games in 2017 after a long, eventful college season. He probably will make his pro debut at high Class A Lakeland in 2018.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Did not play												



3. MATT MANNING, RHP

BORN: Jan. 28, 1998. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-6. **WT.:** 190. **DRAFTED:** HS—Sacramento, 2016 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Scott Cerny.

TRACK RECORD: The son of an NBA player, Manning could have gone to Loyola Marymount to pitch and play basketball. The Tigers convinced

him otherwise with a \$3.5 million bonus after taking him ninth overall in 2016. They held him back in extended spring training in 2017 before sending him to the short-season New York-Penn League.

SCOUTING REPORT: When his mechanics are synced, Manning can dominate, but as with many tall pitchers, that's not always the case. His arm slot varied in 2017 from over the top to more of a high three-quarters delivery. He also varied from being direct to the plate to throwing across his body. He struggled at low Class A West Michigan late in 2017, but when he put it together showed a plus 92-93 mph fastball that touched 96. His fastball has riding life up in the zone and can also be located down and away to righthanders. His above-average 12-to-6 curveball looks like a second future plus pitch. It's a late-count weapon that he doesn't consistently throw for strikes. His changeup is below-average.

THE FUTURE: Manning has ace potential, but if his control and changeup don't advance, he could end up in the bullpen. He's ready to return to West Michigan.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	4	2	3.18	14	14	0	51	41	0	25	62	.218



4. BEAU BURROWS, RHP

BORN: Sept. 18, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Weatherford, Texas, 2015. (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Chris Wimmer.

TRACK RECORD: After being taken 22nd overall out of high school in 2015, Burrows blitzed through the high Class A Florida State League in

2017, leaving plenty of helpless hitters in his wake. He earned a spot in the Futures Game, where he struck out a pair of hitters in a clean inning. Burrows' less-developed secondary offerings allowed Double-A hitters to look for his fastball.

SCOUTING REPORT: Burrows has a better fastball than any of the Tigers' other top starting pitching prospects. He can blow hitters away with consistent 94-95 mph heat. Burrows throws a high-spin fastball that has late hop and generates swings and misses. But if he's going to avoid eventually being moved to the bullpen, he'll need to improve his trio of below-average offspeed pitches. Neither his slider nor curveball are consistent enough, and they sometimes blend together, suggesting he should focus on one or the other. His loopy curve is a little ahead of his slider, showing 12-to-6 break. His changeup needs more separation and deception.

THE FUTURE: Burrows will be just 21 in 2018, so he has plenty of time to work on his offspeed pitches at Double-A Erie.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	10	7	3.20	26	26	0	135	124	8	44	137	.249

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter For Average: Mike Gerber. **Best Power Hitter:** Christin Stewart. **Best Strike-Zone Discipline:** Sam McMillan. **Fastest Baserunner:** Derek Hill. **Best Athlete:** Derek Hill. **Best Fastball:** Beau Burrows. **Best Curveball:** Franklin Perez. **Best Slider:** Alex Faedo. **Best Changeup:** Sandy Baez. **Best Control:** John Schreiber. **Best Defensive Catcher:** Jake Rogers. **Best Defensive Infielder:** Sergio Alcantara. **Best Infield Arm:** Dawel Lugo. **Best Defensive Outfielder:** Derek Hill. **Best Outfield Arm:** Jose Azocar.



5. JAKE ROGERS, C

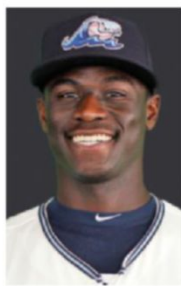
BORN: April 15, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 190. **DRAFTED:** Tulane, 2016 (3rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Justin Cryer (Astros).

TRACK RECORD: Rogers was seen as one of the best defensive catchers in the 2016 college draft class, but he also was an easy out at the plate for most of his Tulane career. He was a key part of the trade that sent Justin Verlander to the Astros in August 2017.

SCOUTING REPORT: At the plate, Rogers looks to drive the ball. He has a big leg kick to start his swing, and takes a ferocious cut with a pull-heavy approach. When his swing works, he has the power to deposit pitches in the left-field bleachers. When it doesn't, he rolls over ground outs or hits a number of harmless pop outs. Evaluators generally see Rogers as a below-average hitter with a lot of swings and misses and average bat speed. But his power-heavy approach also gives him a chance to hit 20-plus home runs. Combine that power with his plus arm (he threw out 46 percent of basestealers in 2017) and his defensive skills and Rogers could be a valuable big leaguer. He moves well behind the plate and has a strong left hand, giving him chance to be an above-average defender.

THE FUTURE: Rogers is at least a big league backup catcher. If he can make semi-consistent contact, he could be a regular. He'll jump to Double-A Erie in 2018.

2017 Club (Class) AVG OBP SLG AB R H 2B 3B HR RBI BB SO SB
Minors (3 teams) .261 .350 .467 422 60 110 25 4 18 70 54 102 14



6. DAZ CAMERON, OF

BORN: Jan. 15, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 189. **DRAFTED:** HS—McDonough, Ga., 2015 (1st round supplemental). **SIGNED BY:** Gavin Dickey (Astros).

TRACK RECORD: The son of long-time big league center fielder Mike Cameron, Daz slid in the 2015 draft because of his asking price. He landed a \$4 million bonus from the Astros, matching that of Houston first-round pick Kyle Tucker. He wasn't ready for the low Class A Midwest League in 2016, and a finger injury ended his season early. He was much better in 2017, impressing the Tigers enough to make sure he was included in the Justin Verlander trade with Houston.

SCOUTING REPORT: Cameron has a good understanding of his strike zone and recognizes pitches to hit, but early in his career he would fail to consistently square hittable pitches. His swing path proved to be too steep. Cameron has worked to keep his bat through the zone longer and it has paid off with better contact. Optimistic projections see Cameron as an average hitter, but that should be enough to be a regular because he has the strength and bat speed to hit 15-20 home runs in his prime. Cameron is an above-average defender in center field with an average arm and above-average speed.

THE FUTURE: Cameron lacks a truly exceptional tool, but he's a hard worker and has a well-rounded skill set. He's ready for high Class A Lakeland.

2017 Club (Class) AVG OBP SLG AB R H 2B 3B HR RBI BB SO SB
Minors (2 teams) .271 .351 .463 454 80 123 29 8 14 74 48 112 32



7. ISAAC PAREDES, SS/2B

BORN: Feb. 18, 1999. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 5-11. **WT.:** 175. **SIGNED:** Mexico, 2015. **SIGNED BY:** Sergio Hernandez/Louie Eljaua (Cubs).

TRACK RECORD: Overshadowed by Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Fernando Tatis Jr. in the low Class A Midwest League in 2017, Paredes was notable in his own right as an 18-year-old shortstop who hit 11 home runs, drew walks and didn't strike out much. Along with Jeimer Candelario, he was acquired from the Cubs for lefthander Justin Wilson and catcher Alex Avila.

SCOUTING REPORT: Even if his stats don't indicate as such, Paredes was one of the better pure hitters in the MWL. He showed a consistent ability to square balls, while showing pitch recognition, a whole-field approach and the plate discipline of an older, more experienced hitter before wearing down in August. He should be at least an above-average hitter and has a chance to hit 15-20 home runs per season. Defensively, there's much less consensus. Often, players with Paredes' build end up moving to second or third base. With an above-average arm, soft hands and good instincts, he should stick at either spot if he stays in shape.

THE FUTURE: Paredes' ceiling depends on how his body develops. If he doesn't get much thicker, he could stick at a premium defensive position, where his well-rounded offensive tool set will make him an asset.

2017 Club (Class) AVG OBP SLG AB R H 2B 3B HR RBI BB SO SB
Minors (2 teams) .252 .338 .387 452 65 114 28 0 11 70 42 67 2



8. DAWEL LUGO, SS/3B

BORN: Dec. 31, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT:** 190. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2011. **SIGNED BY:** Marco Paddy/Hilario Soriano (Blue Jays).

TRACK RECORD: One of the top signees in the Blue Jays' 2011 international class, Lugo has gotten used to the realities of pro baseball after

being traded twice in the past three seasons. In 2017, the D-backs included him in the trade that also sent Jose King and Sergio Alcantara to the Tigers for J.D. Martinez.

SCOUTING REPORT: Lugo is a solid defensive third baseman, but he'll have to get to his power more often to really fit the profile there. Scouts are less confident he can be an average defender at second base, where he began playing at Double-A Erie after the trade. His above-average bat and average power would be a better fit at second. Lugo has plenty of bat speed and above-average hand-eye coordination. He recognizes pitches quickly and has steadily turned himself into a tough out. He has above-average raw power, but he has a hit-first approach in games. Lugo has a plus arm, which plays at third base, and good hands, but his first-step quickness is modest. He's a below-average runner.

THE FUTURE: Lugo isn't far away from competing for a big league job. The former shortstop could end up at second or third base. He doesn't have exceptional upside, but he has a good chance at a solid career.

2017 Club (Class) AVG OBP SLG AB R H 2B 3B HR RBI BB SO SB
Minors (2 teams) .277 .321 .424 516 58 143 27 5 13 65 33 72 3



9. CHRISTIN STEWART, OF

BORN: Dec. 10, 1993. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 205. **DRAFTED:** Tennessee, 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Harold Zonder.

TRACK RECORD: Stewart ranked among the top 10 in Division I in home run rate during his junior year at Tennessee and he's shown similar power with a wood bat. He has easily led the Tigers organization in home runs in each of his two full seasons.

SCOUTING REPORT: Like most power hitters in 2017, Stewart strikes out, but not excessively. He is prone to chase because he's looking to do damage whether early or late in counts. He has some zone awareness, and when he stays within himself he can generate power from a relatively compact swing. Stewart is a little pull-happy, but he has the ability to drive the ball out to all fields. He is a below-average runner who is unlikely to be more than a below-average hitter, but with 25-30 home run potential. The concerns about Stewart revolve around his defense. He has improved in left field, but he's still well below-average. Scouts say it's unrealistic to see him as better than a future 40 on the 20-80 scouting scale. His well below-average arm limits him to left field.

THE FUTURE: To play left field regularly, Stewart will have to be a prodigious hitter. He either is an everyday regular or a minor leaguer, but his swing and selectivity give him a chance to be a prodigious power hitter.

2017 Club (Class) AVG OBP SLG AB R H 2B 3B HR RBI BB SO SB
Erie (AA) .256 .335 .501 485 67 124 29 3 28 86 56 138 3



10. GREGORY SOTO, LHP

BORN: Feb. 11, 1995. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 180. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2012. **SIGNED BY:** Carlos Santana/Ramon Perez.

TRACK RECORD: Few question that Soto has a big league arm, but he hasn't done much to quiet speculation that in the long run he'll end up pitching out of the bullpen in the majors. He spent four years in short-season ball before making it to low Class A West Michigan in 2017.

SCOUTING REPORT: Soto has one of the best arms in the Tigers' system. He sits 95-96 mph from the left side, and his slider has enough power and shape to project as at least an above-average pitch as well. But Soto doesn't have a great idea of where the ball is going when it leaves his hand. His cross-body delivery helps contribute to his below-average control, and he has walked 4.6 batters per nine innings over the past two seasons. Soto's changeup has much farther to go, and its rudimentary nature leads further to reliever talk. Soto has learned how to work out of trouble because of his poor control.

THE FUTURE: Soto most likely ends up as a valuable bullpen arm with two pitches that can eat up lefthanders and enough stuff to be able to face righthanders. But the Tigers see enough glimpses of more to continue working to developing him as a starter when he returns to high Class A Lakeland in 2018.

2017 Club (Class) W L ERA G GS SV IP H HR BB SO AVG
Minors (2 teams) 12 2 2.25 23 23 0 124 97 4 65 144 .218

KANSAS CITY ROYALS TOP 10 PROSPECTS

POWERFUL NICK PRATTO, TOOLSY KHALIL LEE LEAD KANSAS CITY'S HEAVILY DEPLETED SYSTEM

BY BILL MITCHELL



1. NICK PRATTO, 1B

BORN: Oct. 6, 1998. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** HS—Huntington Beach, Calif., 2017 (1st round).

SIGNED BY: Rich Amaral.

TRACK RECORD: The Royals used the 14th overall pick in the 2017 draft to select Southern California high school first baseman Pratto. Nine years earlier, they had selected Eric Hosmer third overall in 2008. Prep first basemen are a rare commodity in the first round, with only Josh Naylor (Marlins, 2015) and Dominic Smith (Mets, 2013) serving as other recent examples. Pratto first burst on the scene as part of the winning California team at the 2011 Little League World Series in which he delivered the game-winning hit against Japan. He played with USA Baseball's 18U national team for two summers, bringing home world championships in both 2015 and 2016. A two-way player throughout his amateur career, Pratto drew draft interest as a lefthanded pitcher and would have both pitched and hit had he honored his commitment to Southern California. Instead, he signed with the Royals for \$3.45 million shortly after the draft and began his pro career in the Rookie-level Arizona League, where he ranked as that circuit's No. 9 prospect.

SCOUTING REPORT: Pratto profiles as a middle-of-the-order hitter thanks to a low-maintenance swing, above-average bat speed and the ability to use the

➤ **Projected Future Grades On 20-80 Scouting Scale**
HIT: 60. **POWER:** 55. **SPEED:** 45. **FIELD:** 60. **ARM:** 55.

whole field. His loose wrists and advanced approach allow Pratto to adjust to pitches late. He's still learning how to get to his power, but he drives balls to all fields and will add strength to an already powerful frame. Pratto is already a plus defender at first base with good footwork and instincts. He's not flashy but knows how to play. His above-average arm and athleticism would allow him to handle a corner outfield position, but for now he's a first baseman. Pratto is a below-average runner but with good instincts that should get him double-digit steals at least early in his career. He takes a solid attitude and demeanor to the field, maintains an even keel and is competitive by nature.

THE FUTURE: Pratto has enough baseball savvy and experience for his age that he could likely handle a jump to full-season ball in 2018, with a possible assignment to low Class A Lexington. The Royals have a longer instructional league period than most other Arizona-based teams, so Pratto's extra work and experience against more advanced pitchers in 2017 will help him make that next step. His upside is as a first-division first baseman at the big league level.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
AZL Royals (R)	.247	.330	.414	198	25	49	15	3	4	34	24	58	10



2. KHALIL LEE, OF

BORN: June 26, 1998. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 5-10. **WT.:** 192. **DRAFTED:** HS—Oakton, Va., 2016 (3rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Jim Farr.

TRACK RECORD: After a solid pro debut in the Rookie-level Arizona League in 2016, Lee skipped ahead to low Class A Lexington in 2017. Despite a .237 average and elevated

strikeout rate, he turned in an encouraging first full season in which he showed power, patience and speed.

SCOUTING REPORT: Lee's high strikeout rate is less of a concern because of his advanced knowledge of the strike zone, which allowed him to walk 12 percent of the time in 2017. He projects to be an average hitter with more power to emerge with experience and strength. Some scouts don't like his setup at the plate and he frequently struggles to get his foot down, but his hands are lightning quick and give him plus bat speed and good barrel control. Lee has above-average raw power to all fields with a swing that helps him put the ball in the air. Lee could have also been drafted as a pitcher and has plus arm strength. His premium athleticism will let him handle center field. He moves well in the outfield and takes good routes. He will be at least an above-average runner, even as he gets bigger.

THE FUTURE: Lee projects as a starting outfielder capable of handling all three positions. He heads to high Class A Wilmington in 2018.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Lexington (Lo A)	.237	.344	.430	451	71	107	24	6	17	61	65	171	20



3. SEULY MATIAS, OF

BORN: Sept. 4, 1998. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 204. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2015. **SIGNED BY:** Fausto Morel.

TRACK RECORD: Matias was the jewel of the Royals' 2015 international class and signed for \$2.25 million. He reached the Rookie-level Arizona League at age 17 in his pro debut

season in 2016 and tied for the AZL lead with eight home runs. He hit seven more homers in the Rookie-level Appalachian League in 2017 after wowing scouts at extended spring training with long home runs and impressive exit velocities.

SCOUTING REPORT: Scouts like to say that Matias passes the eye test. He's an impressive physical specimen with twitchy athleticism and raw strength. He flashes explosive power to all fields with plus bat speed and a swing plane built for carry on fly balls. While still plenty raw at the plate, Matias handled breaking balls better in 2017 and didn't chase as many pitches in the dirt. He still swings at fastballs up in the zone but has shown an ability to adjust. His plus arm makes him a natural fit for right field, his most likely position. He's an above-average runner but may slow down a tick as he ages.

THE FUTURE: While he'll still be a teenager in 2018, Matias will likely break camp with low Class A Lexington, where he'll be challenged by better pitchers. He has prototype right field tools—but also a long way to go.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Burlington (R)	.243	.297	.423	222	27	54	13	3	7	36	16	72	2



4. JOSH STAUMONT, RHP

BORN: Dec. 21, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** Azusa Pacific (Calif.), 2015 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Colin Gonzalez.

TRACK RECORD: Ranked as the Royals' top prospect a year ago, Staumont continued to frustrate in 2017 because his inconsistent com-

mand and control sabotaged his premium velocity and top-end breaking ball. He struck out 10 batters per nine innings in 2017—but he also walked seven per nine. Staumont started 2017 at Triple-A Omaha before being demoted to Double-A Northwest Arkansas on July 13 to find a more consistent release point.

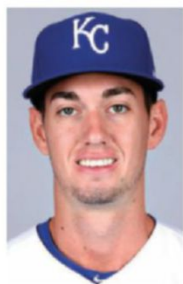
SCOUTING REPORT: Staumont has top-of-the-rotation stuff, and he dominates hitters when he's repeating his delivery and commanding his pitches. He has a plus-plus four-seamer that touches triple digits. His out pitch is a power curveball, thrown from a high three-quarters slot at 78-82 mph with depth and 11-to-5 tilt. It's an above-average pitch now and could be a plus offering with more consistent command. He is also developing a changeup.

THE FUTURE: The key to Staumont's success will be developing consistent control and not trying to be too fine. While some observers point to a future as a setup reliever, Staumont won't need more than below-average control and a fringe changeup to work as a starter.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	6	12	5.56	26	25	0	125	106	16	97	138	.233

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average: Emmanuel Rivera. **Best Power Hitter:** Chase Vallot. **Best Strike-Zone Judgment:** Nicky Lopez. **Fastest Baserunner:** Terrance Gore. **Best Athlete:** Khalil Lee. **Best Fastball:** Josh Staumont. **Best Curveball:** Josh Staumont. **Best Slider:** Richard Lovelady. **Best Changeup:** Foster Griffin. **Best Control:** Jace Vines. **Best Defensive Catcher:** Cam Gallagher. **Best Defensive Infielder:** Nicky Lopez. **Best Infield Arm:** Emmanuel Rivera. **Best Defensive Outfielder:** Bubba Starling. **Best Outfield Arm:** Seuly Matias.



5. ERIC SKOGLUND, LHP

BORN: Oct. 26, 1992. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-7. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** Central Florida, 2014 (3rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Jim Buckley/Gregg Kilby.

TRACK RECORD: Skoglund made his big league debut in 2017, four years after being drafted in the third round in 2014 out of Central Florida.

The bulk of the lean, lanky southpaw's season was spent at Triple-A Omaha, where he put up a 4.11 ERA in the hitter-friendly Pacific Coast League while fanning 103 in 104 innings.

SCOUTING REPORT: Skoglund battled through a lat issue early in 2017 but showed no ill effects. He gets lots of leverage and good plane from his 6-foot-7 frame. An above-average 90-95 mph fastball, which he elevates with two strikes, gets good movement and plenty of swings and misses. His heater gets good four-seam ride and arm-side tail, coming in late on righthanded batters. A solid-average curveball with good shape delivered at 80 mph is his best secondary pitch, followed by an 85 mph changeup with cut action he uses infrequently. Skoglund also mixes in an 87 mph slider that resembles a cutter, but it's a work in progress.

THE FUTURE: Skoglund profiles as a No. 4 starter and will head to spring training looking to earn a shot in the 2018 big league rotation.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	4	5	4.07	20	20	0	104	115	14	32	103	.277
Kansas City (MLB)	1	2	9.50	7	5	0	18	30	2	12	14	.375



6. M.J. MELENDEZ, C

BORN: Nov. 29, 1998. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 185. **DRAFTED:** HS—Palmetto Bay, Fla., 2017 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Alex Mesa.

TRACK RECORD: Melendez comes from a baseball family. His father currently is the head coach at Florida International. The Royals made him

a 2017 second-rounder, knowing that it would take an over-slot bonus to lure him away from the chance of playing college ball for his dad at FIU. After signing for \$2,097,500, Melendez began his pro career in the Rookie-level Arizona League, where he ranked as the 13th best prospect.

SCOUTING REPORT: At the plate, Melendez gets good carry off the bat with power to all fields, albeit with some swing and miss. He tends to get rotational in the batter's box with a deep barrel dip and gets his weight out in front. He's an average or better runner now. Melendez's calling card is his defense behind the plate. He's athletic with quick feet, good lateral mobility and good hands. He's got at least a plus arm with sub-2.0 seconds pop times on throws to second base. He gets rid of the ball quickly and can throw from his knees, and while his arm stroke is a little long, he makes up for it with arm strength and explosiveness from the crouch.

THE FUTURE: Melendez projects as a first-division catcher. He could begin 2018 at low Class A Lexington.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
AZL Royals (R)	.262	.374	.417	168	25	44	8	3	4	30	26	60	4



7. NICKY LOPEZ, SS/2B

BORN: March 13, 1995. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 5-11. **WT.:** 175. **DRAFTED:** Creighton, 2016 (5th round). **SIGNED BY:** Matt Price.

TRACK RECORD: The Royals were thrilled to get Lopez with their fifth-round pick in a 2016 draft that was short on college shortstops. Their

enthusiasm for the Creighton product showed when he made it to Double-A Northwest Arkansas by the middle of 2017 and finished the year in the Arizona Fall League.

SCOUTING REPORT: Lopez is a line drive type of hitter who takes good at-bats and gets on base with his good understanding of the strike zone and patient approach. He strokes balls gap to gap with a good feel for hitting, projecting as a plus hitter but with below-average power. He's a plus runner with good baserunning instincts. Lopez is an average defender now at both shortstop and second base, projecting as an above-average defender. He's not flashy, but with good range and instincts, Lopez gets to the ball and makes plays. He has enough arm for shortstop and a strong internal clock. He has at least an average arm now but could develop an above-average one with added strength.

THE FUTURE: Lopez's reliability could play in a utility infield role in the not-too-distant future. With Raul A. Mondesi the Royals' presumptive shortstop, Lopez could work his way into the picture at second base.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 teams)	.279	.348	.356	517	68	144	18	8	2	38	52	52	21



8. HUNTER DOZIER, 3B/OF

BORN: Aug. 22, 1991. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 220. **DRAFTED:** Stephen F. Austin State, 2013 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Mitch Thompson.

TRACK RECORD: After a subpar 2015 season in Double-A that saw his prospect status begin to dim, Dozier's strong 2016 performance

at Triple-A Omaha, in which he shortened his swing and improved his bat path, refurbished his status and led to his big league debut that September. An oblique injury sidelined Dozier early in 2017, then he missed two months with a broken hamate. Though healthy late in the season, he did not receive a September callup.

SCOUTING REPORT: At Triple-A in 2017, Dozier built on the swing improvements he made the previous season, though he hit just .226 in 24 games and will have to hit to provide value to a big league team. He's a below-average runner and fringe-average defender at his natural position of third base. He continued to see time in right field and projects as a second-division regular or bench bat capable of filling in at all four corner positions.

THE FUTURE: Dozier struggled in the Mexican Pacific League after the 2017 season. He will be 26 in 2018, when he has a good shot to make the big club because regulars Lorenzo Cain, Alcides Escobar, Eric Hosmer and Mike Moustakas were poised to depart as free agents.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (3 teams)	.243	.341	.441	111	16	27	8	1	4	13	14	50	1



9. FOSTER GRIFFIN, LHP

BORN: July 27, 1995. **B-T:** R-L. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Orlando, 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Jim Buckley.

TRACK RECORD: One of two Royals first-round picks in 2014, Griffin struggled in 2015 and 2016 as his velocity dipped. After finishing the

2016 season at high Class A Wilmington with a 6.23 ERA, Griffin returned to the Carolina League in 2017 as a different pitcher. With an uptick in velocity and more aggression on the mound, Griffin pitched better off his fastball, missed more bats (7.9 strikeouts per nine innings) and improved his breaking ball to post a 2.86 ERA in 10 starts before moving up to Double-A Northwest Arkansas on May 30.

SCOUTING REPORT: Griffin achieved better arm speed in 2017, which allowed him to make more quality pitches down in the zone. His fastball sits 88-92 mph, which was up a tick from before, and he located it better. His two-seamer has tail while his four-seam fastball has cut. He sharpened his 11-to-5 curveball as well. Griffin uses his changeup to keep hitters off balance. It's a below-average pitch now but projects as an average or above-average offering.

THE FUTURE: After 18 starts at Double-A, Griffin may be ready to move up to Triple-A Omaha in 2018, when he will pitch at age 22. He has the upside of a No. 5 starter.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	15	7	3.35	28	28	0	161	151	13	54	141	.250



10. SCOTT BLEWETT, RHP

BORN: April 10, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-6. **WT.:** 210. **DRAFTED:** HS—Baldwinsville, N.Y., 2014 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Bobby Gandolfo.

TRACK RECORD: Since being picked in the second round of the 2014 draft, Blewett's career has always been more about projection than

production, and he continued trending in the right direction in 2017 with a solid season at high Class A Wilmington. It took him two years to get out of low Class A, but after a rough 2015 season, Blewett bounced back in 2016 when he regained some fluidity in his delivery and his velocity ticked upward. He continued that trend in 2017 with added strength and mound aggression.

SCOUTING REPORT: Blewett's fastball sits in the 92-93 mph range and touches 96 at its best. It's a relatively straight pitch but is heavy down in the zone and induces a lot of ground balls. Blewett's 75-77 mph curveball has good depth and was sharper in 2017. It is now an average pitch. His below-average changeup is still in development, with the Royals encouraging him to use it more often. The pitch has good action, but its mid-80s velocity doesn't provide enough separation from his fastball.

THE FUTURE: Blewett will face his toughest challenge yet when he moves to Double-A Northwest Arkansas in 2018. If it all comes together for him, he projects as a back-of-the-rotation starter.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Wilmington (Hi A)	7	10	4.07	27	27	0	153	153	16	52	129	.262

MINNESOTA TWINS TOP 10 PROSPECTS

NO. 1 OVERALL PICK ROYCE LEWIS LEADS A PACK OF PROMISING PLAYERS WITH EYES ON THE TWIN CITIES

BY MIKE BERARDINO



1. ROYCE LEWIS, SS

BORN: June 5, 1999. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 188. **DRAFTED:** HS—San Juan Capistrano, Calif., 2017 (1st round).

SIGNED BY: John Leavitt.

TRACK RECORD: Armed with the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2017 for just the third time, the Twins surprised many in the industry by passing on college arms such as Brendan McKay and Kyle Wright along with high school phenom Hunter Greene. Instead, they took Lewis, a late-blooming gamer with outstanding make-up and the potential to become a five-tool, franchise player. Signed to a Twins-record draft bonus of \$6.725 million, nearly a full million below slot value, Lewis became the first 1-1 selection for the Twins since hometown catcher Joe Mauer in 2001.

SCOUTING REPORT: Predraft concerns about Lewis' hit tool proved unwarranted, and he had no problem making the necessary adjustments for a smooth transition to pro ball in the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League. Hitting coordinator Rick Eckstein got him to use his hips and legs better, and that opened up the pull side for Lewis, who homered on a full count in his first pro plate appearance. With a high waist and wide shoulders, he showed excellent plate discipline and an all-fields approach that drew comps to Ian Desmond. Lewis has plus speed and advanced instincts on the bases, where he was caught stealing just three times

► Projected Future Grades On 20-80 Scouting Scale

HIT: 60. **POWER:** 55. **SPEED:** 60. **FIELD:** 60. **ARM:** 55.

in 21 attempts. Lewis saw time at shortstop, third base and center field in high school, and he worked hard with the Twins to improve his range at shortstop with better positioning and pre-pitch anticipation. He flashed plus arm strength before the draft but saw that wane under the Florida heat and an increased workload. A separated left shoulder suffered in high school hasn't been an issue so far. Lewis' makeup and work ethic are off the charts, and his demeanor and ability to connect with teammates, fans and media are reminiscent of Carlos Correa or a young Derek Jeter. After a week or so, Ramon Borrego, his GCL manager, was calling for Lewis to skip the Rookie-level Appalachian League and be promoted all the way to low Class A Cedar Rapids. That eventually came in early August.

THE FUTURE: Lewis figures to return to the Midwest League to start his first full pro season in 2018. If he dominates there the way Byron Buxton did in 2013, a promotion to high Class A Fort Myers could come by midseason. He has given the Twins no reason to doubt his ability to stay at shortstop or their decision to invest the top overall pick in his vast potential.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 teams)	.279	.381	.407	204	54	57	8	3	4	27	25	33	18



2. WANDER JAVIER, SS

BORN: Dec. 29, 1998. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 180. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2015. **SIGNED BY:** Fred Guerrero.

TRACK RECORD: The Twins spent their entire 2015 international bonus pool on Javier, even going 1.3 percent over their limit to secure him for \$4 million. That's still an international

amateur record for the organization, which saw five-tool potential in a player ranked No. 9 in his signing class.

SCOUTING REPORT: Wiry, long-limbed and lanky upon signing, Javier has added strength to his frame and could still be growing. Still fairly raw with limited game experience, he worked with hitting coordinator Rick Eckstein and Rookie-level Elizabethton hitting coach Jeff Reed to better incorporate his lower half and improve his balance. Javier ditched his big leg kick and now has a simple setup and swing with quiet hands and a small lift of his front foot. While Javier still has a tendency to chase pitches out of the zone, the ball jumps off his bat and he shows gap-to-gap power with a willingness to stay up the middle with authority. A plus runner with plus athleticism, he shows plenty of range as well as a plus-plus arm at times.

THE FUTURE: Low Class A Cedar Rapids should be the next logical step for Javier, but the Twins might need to start him at extended spring training to produce enough shortstop reps for both him and Royce Lewis.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Elizabethton (R)	.299	.383	.471	157	34	47	13	1	4	22	19	49	4



3. ALEX KIRILLOFF, OF/1B

BORN: Nov. 9, 1997. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** HS—Pittsburgh, 2016 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Jay Weitzel.

TRACK RECORD: Drafted 15th overall in 2016 and signed away from Liberty with a bonus of \$2,817,100, the home-schooled prodigy raked

his way to MVP honors in the Rookie-level Appalachian League in 2016, his first pro summer. Shut down late in the year with inflammation in his throwing elbow, he rehabbed all offseason but still had to have Tommy John surgery in March 2017 that wiped out his season.

SCOUTING REPORT: Kirilloff has strong wrists, quick hands, excellent balance and a smooth lefthanded swing. The year off gave him a chance to strengthen his lower half and pack on close to 30 pounds of muscle, which should enable him to get to his 15- to 20-homer potential sooner. Using an all-fields approach, he has an advanced understanding of the strike zone, outstanding barrel awareness and the almost effortless ability to hit for average. An average runner who has played center field but likely fits better in right, Kirilloff also shows soft hands at first base. That could be a fallback option down the road and a way to take stress off his elbow.

THE FUTURE: Kirilloff figures to open 2018 in extended spring training before heading to the low Class A Cedar Rapids.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Did not play—Injured													



4. STEPHEN GONSALVES, LHP

BORN: July 8, 1994. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 213. **DRAFTED:** HS—San Diego, 2013 (4th round). **SIGNED BY:** John Leavitt.

TRACK RECORD: Given an above-slot bonus of \$700,000 as a fourth-round steal, Gonsalves has justified the Twins' faith after he pitched just

48 innings as a high school senior. Makeup concerns caused him to drop after he was suspended eight games for covering up a teammate's drug use.

SCOUTING REPORT: A shoulder strain landed Gonsalves on the shelf at the 2016 Arizona Fall League and again in spring 2017, when he missed the first six weeks of the season at Double-A Chattanooga. Tall with long levers and a three-quarters arm slot, he pitches at 88-91 mph and touches 94 with his fastball, which shows glove-side run and plays up due to deception and extension. He reads hitters well and works effectively at the top of the zone. He featured his 1-to-6 curveball more often in 2017, when it was a putaway pitch at times. His slurve slider is just average with short tilt, but his changeup earns above-average grades because of its late fade and his ability to maintain arm speed.

THE FUTURE: Gonsalves figures to open 2018 back at Triple-A Rochester. If he continues to hone his command and cut his walk rate, he should be vying for a spot in the middle of the rotation before long.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	9	5	3.27	20	19	0	110	94	11	31	118	.227

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average: Luis Arraez. **Best Power Hitter:** Brent Rooker. **Best Strike-Zone Discipline:** LaMonte Wade. **Fastest Baserunner:** Tanner English. **Best Athlete:** Royce Lewis. **Best Fastball:** Brusdar Graterol. **Best Curveball:** Blayne Enlow. **Best Slider:** Tyler Jay. **Best Changeup:** Stephen Gonsalves. **Best Control:** Felix Jorge. **Best Defensive Catcher:** Ben Rortvedt. **Best Defensive Infielder:** Royce Lewis. **Best Infield Arm:** Andrew Bechtold. **Best Defensive Outfielder:** Aaron Whitefield. **Best Outfield Arm:** Tanner English.



5. BRUSDAR GRATEROL, RHP

BORN: Aug. 26, 1998. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 225. **SIGNED:** Venezuela, 2014. **SIGNED BY:** Jose Leon.

TRACK RECORD: Signed out of Venezuela for \$150,000, Graterol was part of the Twins' 2014 international signing class. He returned from Tommy John surgery in 2017 to rock-

et up the prospect charts while dominating at two levels. In his final outing of a season capped at 40 innings, he struck out five in the first three innings of an elimination-game win that sent Rookie-level Elizabethton on its way to the Appalachian League title.

SCOUTING REPORT: After sitting at 87-88 mph before surgery, Graterol used the rehabilitation process to completely remake his body and his repertoire. Now 6-foot-1 and 225 pounds after packing on nearly 60 pounds of good weight, most noticeably in his legs and hind-quarters, he has boosted his fastball to 95-98 mph with flashes of 101 mph. Graterol also has a late-breaking plus slider at 85-89 mph and a hard curve at 80-83 mph that has a chance to be above-average. His 86-89 mph changeup projects as at least average.

THE FUTURE: Graterol figures to open 2018 at low Class A Cedar Rapids, where he will continue to build up his innings. With outstanding work ethic and aptitude, he has the highest ceiling of any Twins pitching prospect, with rotation-topping potential.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (2 teams)	4	1	2.70	10	7	0	40	26	2	13	45	.184



6. FERNANDO ROMERO, RHP

BORN: Dec. 24, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 215. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2011. **SIGNED BY:** Fred Guerrero.

TRACK RECORD: Signed less than two months from his 17th birthday, the late-blooming Romero was discovered at a select tournament in Jupiter, Fla. He was limited to just

three starts in 2014 and 2015 after having Tommy John surgery and a knee injury. He roared back onto the radar with a standout 2016 and mostly built on those gains in 2017 at Double-A Chattanooga, though he faded due in part to a shoulder impingement.

SCOUTING REPORT: Despite lacking leverage or an ideal pitcher's frame, Romero shows the potential for three above-average pitches. He touches 98 mph with his fastball and pitches at 92-96 mph with heavy sink, though his lack of elite arm speed and a max-effort delivery have raised concerns about his durability. His high-80s slider shows sharp tilt when he stays on top, but it flattens out when he drifts in his delivery. His command can be erratic, and some see him eventually turning into a reliever. His changeup is average.

THE FUTURE: Added to the 40-man roster after the 2016 season, Romero twice was bypassed in favor of fellow righthander Felix Jorge when the Twins needed a spot start in 2017. Ticketed for Triple-A Rochester, Romero has a ceiling of No. 2 or No. 3 starter.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Chattanooga (AA)	11	9	3.53	24	23	0	125	124	4	45	120	.256



7. BRENT ROOKER, OF/1B

BORN: Nov. 1, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 220. **DRAFTED:** Mississippi State, 2017 (1st round supplemental). **SIGNED BY:** Derrick Dunbar.

TRACK RECORD: Drafted in successive years by the Twins, Rooker improved his stock considerably by going back to college. After nearly

accepting a modest 38th-round bonus in 2016, the Memphis-area product signed for the full-slot figure of \$1.935 million following a record-setting season at Mississippi State.

SCOUTING REPORT: Rooker hit the ground running in pro ball, showing top-of-the-scale power and hitting 18 homers in 62 games at Rookie-level Elizabethton and high Class A Fort Myers. Having honed his power stroke and improved his contact rate in college, the powerfully built Rooker reminds some of former Twins left fielder Josh Willingham. Rooker still has some swing-and-miss in his game, especially on power breaking balls and soft stuff from lefties, but his walk rate should improve along with his pitch recognition. He showed enough mobility and arm to be a tick below-average in left field. He is a smart baserunner despite below-average speed.

THE FUTURE: Already on the fast track due to his advanced bat, Rooker should remain in left as he climbs the ladder. He projects as a middle-of-the-order weapon with power as his carrying tool.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Minors (2 teams)	.281	.364	.566	228	42	64	11	0	18	52	27	68	2



8. NICK GORDON, SS/2B

BORN: Oct. 24, 1995. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 170. **DRAFTED:** HS—Orlando, 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Brett Dowdy.

TRACK RECORD: Bloodlines bode well for Gordon, son of big league pitcher Tom Gordon and younger half-brother of second baseman Dee

Gordon. Drafted fifth overall in 2014 after a standout prep career in Orlando, the Florida State signee received a \$3.851 million signing bonus as the first high school position player drafted.

SCOUTING REPORT: At Double-A Chattanooga in 2017, Gordon slashed his way to an appearance at the Futures Game. He managed just 13 extra-base hits after June 18, however, and hit .211 over his final 180 at-bats. Lefties have given him trouble at multiple levels, but overall his hit tool tops his list of attributes. Not a burner like his brother but an instinctive runner, Gordon shows advanced barrel awareness to go with sound plate discipline and a line-drive swing that produces gap power. His range is just average and he struggles at times with footwork, hop anticipation and throwing accuracy.

THE FUTURE: Rival evaluators have their doubts about Gordon's ability to remain at shortstop, where he has been error-prone. Gordon figures to see more time on both sides of the bag (and possibly left field) as he makes the climb to Triple-A Rochester in 2018.

2017 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Chattanooga (AA)	.270	.341	.408	519	140	80	29	8	9	66	53	134	13



9. BLAYNE ENLOW, RHP

BORN: March 21, 1999. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 180. **DRAFTED:** HS—St. Amant, La., 2017 (3rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Greg Runser.

TRACK RECORD: Enlow placed No. 33 on the BA500 predraft ranking but lasted until the third round in 2017. He signed for a well above-slot

\$2 million to forego a commitment to his hometown Louisiana State. He suffered a broken ankle and pelvis in a car collision before his sophomore year of high school but as a senior pitched for Team USA's 18U team.

SCOUTING REPORT: With a long, lanky pitcher's frame and good arm speed, Enlow projects to add more velocity to a fastball that already touches 95 mph. He pitches at 88-93 mph out of a high three-quarters arm slot, but his best offering is a plus-plus curveball that rated as the best in his high school draft class. Enlow's curve, already the best in the Twins' system, reaches 84 mph with tight spin that produces plenty of swings and misses. His 79-80 mph changeup has potential, but he's reluctant to use it. At the Twins' urging, he added an 87-88 mph cutter upon signing. He stays in his delivery well and has good mound presence.

THE FUTURE: Heading into his age-19 season, Enlow should advance to low Class A Cedar Rapids, where he will get a chance to adjust to an increased workload. He projects as a No. 2 or No. 3 starter.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
GCL Twins (R)	3	0	1.33	6	1	0	20	10	1	4	19	.141



10. TYLER JAY, LHP

BORN: April 19, 1995. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 185. **DRAFTED:** Illinois, 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Jeff Pohl.

TRACK RECORD: Taken sixth overall in 2015, Jay signed for \$3,889,500 and initially transitioned to a starting role after serving as an All-American closer at Illinois. Upon reaching

Double-A Chattanooga at midseason 2016, however, the slightly built Jay ran into neck, shoulder and fatigue issues. After he was worn down by the summer heat and the rigors of starting, he and the Twins mutually decided to return him to the bullpen in 2017. Instead, more neck and shoulder woes limited him to just two appearances over the first four and a half months of the season before he finally returned for good in mid-August.

SCOUTING REPORT: Sent to the Arizona Fall League, Jay mostly pitched in the low 90s with his four-seam fastball but did touch 95 mph in the Fall Stars Game. A hard, late-breaking slider that showed plus potential at 86-87 mph in his first two seasons remained erratic upon his return. Even in relief he continued to flash an above-average curveball at 78-80 mph and a show-me changeup just in case he's used in multi-inning roles.

THE FUTURE: The product of the Chicago suburbs has a football background and a competitive streak that should serve him well as he pushes for a spot in the big league bullpen at some point in 2018.

2017 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Minors (3 teams)	3	0	3.09	8	1	0	12	11	2	4	19	.239



Dodgers righthander Dennis Santana moved to the first-base side of the rubber in 2017.

NATIONAL LEAGUE ORGANIZATION REPORTS

FEELING AT HOME ON THE MOUND

Converted shortstop Dennis Santana continues his climb

LOS ANGELES ANGELS

Dennis Santana is hardly the first young man from San Pedro de Macoris to dream of making the big leagues as a shortstop.

And he won't be the first to eventually get there at another position.

In March 2013, Santana signed with the Dodgers out of the Dominican Republic as a 16-year-old. But it took just 56 games in the Dominican Summer League, during which time he hit .198 and made 24 errors, to put an end to Santana's infield career.

"At the beginning, it was difficult," Santana said, to accept that he needed to move to the mound.

The idea didn't come completely out of the blue, however. Just a month before signing with the Dodgers, Santana worked out for the Rays, who wanted to sign him as a righthanded pitcher.

"I said, 'No chance. I want to play shortstop' . . . (Later, the Dodgers) told me I can make the big leagues faster as a pitcher. I said, 'Okay, let's go.'"

"As the years went on, I started realizing that's where I should have been in the first place."

Santana has established himself as one of the better pitching prospects in the Dodgers system. The 21-year-old joined the 40-man roster in November after going 8-7, 4.11 with 129 strikeouts and 45 walks in 118.1 innings at high Class A Rancho Cucamonga and Double-A Tulsa.

Santana needs a good deal of refinement still. He made one key adjustment in 2017 at the suggestion of new director of player development Brandon Gomes. He moved from the third-base side of the rubber to the first-base side. The change allowed him to "throw more strikes" and work more effectively away from righthanded hitters.

Santana's job now is to become more consistent.

"I need to work on my attitude in the game sometimes and be more focused," he said. "Sometimes, in the first inning I give up two runs. I come to the dugout and throw my glove and knock over everything."

"A lot of people tell me, 'Control what you can control. You can only throw the ball. You can't control the hitter or if somebody makes an error.'"

—BILL PLUNKETT

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

Some call it a magic fastball. Others prefer "invisi-ball." Whatever you call it, 23-year-old lefthander Colin Poche throws it.

Poche's fastball doesn't register as dominant after a glance at the radar gun, but it played that way in the low minors in 2017. Though he mostly sits 91-93 mph, he rode his heater to a dominant season, striking out 14.5 batters per nine innings and logging a 1.99 ERA as a reliever at low Class A Kane County and high Class A Visalia.

The performance allowed the 14th-round pick in 2016 out of Dallas Baptist to move on to the radar.

"I've never seen more swings and misses on fastballs," Visalia pitching coach Jeff Bajenaru said. "He'll throw 10 straight fastballs and they'll swing and miss at seven of them."

Poche has a couple of things going for him to create deception. First, he hides the ball from hitters while loading his arm. Then, he strides aggressively toward the plate, making his fastball appear 2 mph faster because of his extension, according to the D-backs' analytics department.

"I'm releasing the ball closer to home plate than average, and I think when you pair that with (batters) not being able to pick it up, it makes my fastball play up," Poche said. "I've just kind of always thrown that way. Even when I was young and throwing very slow, I was throwing it by people."

Poche's high strikeout rate carried over to the Arizona Fall League, where he punched out 21 in 16.1 innings.

Originally a 2012 fifth-round pick out of high school by the Orioles, Poche said he came close to signing before negotiations stalled. He wound up at Arkansas but after going down with Tommy John surgery decided it was time to transfer.

He was mostly a starter in college, but he believes he found a home in the bullpen.

"My fastball being my best pitch, I throw it a lot," Poche said. "It probably plays better in shorter stints out of the bullpen."

—NICK PIECORO

ATLANTA BRAVES

The Braves' bullpen may appear to be crowded heading into 2018, but that didn't stop the organization from selecting righthander Anyelo Gomez in the Rule 5 draft.

The native of Dominican Republic had a breakout year in the Yankees organizations in 2017. Gomez focused his time at Double-A Trenton but appeared at all four full-season levels

and recorded a cumulative 1.72 ERA, .199 opponent average and strikeout rate of 10.6 per nine innings.

Atlanta had positive scouting reports on Gomez from the past two seasons. According to assistant general manager Perry Minasian, major league scout Rick Williams was impressed upon seeing Gomez, who will be 25 next season, multiple times this year in the Dominican League.

"He has a good arm. (He throws a) plus fastball with a changeup that plays," Minasian said. "He's got a chance to be a quality reliever. We'll see how he looks in spring training."

Gomez has touched the upper 90s consistently with his fastball and was throwing in the low to mid-90s in the DL this winter. He also has developed an above-average changeup with good depth that he mixes well with his heater. He does a good job of keeping the ball in the park by allowing just two home runs in 70.1 innings in 2017.

The Yankees signed Gomez as a 19-year-old in November 2012. He spent his first two seasons in the Dominican Summer League and did not see significant activity at the full-season level until 2016, when he split time starting and relieving at low Class A Charleston.

Gomez showed promise in the South Atlantic League by striking out 76 in 76.1 innings, which set the stage for a breakout in 2017. He notched nine saves in 20 appearances at two Class A levels before moving up to Double-A on June 23. He concluded the campaign by pitching two innings at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and retiring all six batters he faced.

—BILL BALLEW

CHICAGO CUBS

In another draft where they loaded up on pitchers, hoping to find future pieces for the rotation, the Cubs may have discovered their next position player on a fast track to Wrigley Field.

Austin Upshaw lasted until the 13th round in 2017, but he quickly and quietly made an impression after signing. The 21-year-old Kennesaw State product hit two home runs in his first Rookie-level Arizona League game, skipped short-season Eugene entirely and became a middle-of-the-order hitter at low Class A South Bend.

"It's kind of like the rest of the college bats who we've always targeted," scouting director Matt Dorey said, referencing Upshaw's lefthanded swing and ability to control the strike zone. "We thought there was going to be some power in there down the road."

Upshaw is obviously still a long way from playing next to first-round college talents like Kris Bryant, Kyle Schwarber

or Ian Happ. Ultimately, the 2017 class will be judged on top picks Brendon Little and Alex Lange and whether they develop into big league starters.

But Upshaw showed enough during his 52-game audition with South Bend, hitting .290/.339/.381 with two home runs, to be in position to begin 2018 at high Class A Myrtle Beach.

The decision to draft Upshaw blended multiple disciplines. The analytics department keyed in on his consistent college production, while area scout Keith Lockhart projected a power surge for the 6-foot, 175-pound batter and an ability to move from first base to third base or possibly even second base. He cycled through all three positions during his pro debut.

The Cubs hope that Upshaw will continue to refine his polished hitting approach and gain exposure around the diamond—perhaps picking up corner outfield—while developing an all-around skill set that would make him a good fit for the big league roster.

“You start looking at versatility,” Dorey said. “This guy has a chance to wear a bunch of different gloves potentially. And he does a lot of things offensively that we like from this demographic.”

—PATRICK MOONEY

CINCINNATI REDS

It's not unusual for a minor leaguer to spend his offseason working at a baseball training facility.

What is unusual is that 25-year-old righthander Aaron Fossas is working at a baseball facility in Georgia not as an instructor but as a Web site builder.

“It's fun for me to be able to make some money in the offseason . . . but also have a refresher on something that's not physically baseball related,” Fossas said. “I'm able to work my mind in a different way.”

Fossas is the nephew of former big league lefthander and current Reds pitching coordinator Tony Fossas. He had Tommy John surgery as a senior at Wake Forest and then used his rehab year to earn a master's degree in business management.

Fossas worked as a reliever at low Class A Dayton in 2017, recording a 2.43 ERA in 44 appearances. He succeeded against youthful Midwest League competition with a 90 mph fastball and by locating a slider and changeup, but he understands the reality of the situation.

“I barely made it on the Dayton roster,” Fossas said. “ . . . Things had to go right for me, and then I came on as one of the last guys on the roster at each stage.”

From college to pro ball, Fossas said he has felt pressure to prove himself.

“To this point, it's been something

that's helped me succeed as opposed to crippling me,” he said. “My goal is to show up to spring training (in 2018) . . . and try to earn a spot on a roster to start the year.”

Fossas barely made it to pro baseball. He went undrafted in 2016 and had signed a contract to work for Oracle in Boston when the Reds invited him to try out in Arizona. Fossas received permission from Oracle to pursue baseball and signed with Cincinnati on June 13.

As someone who has already searched for a job in the real world, Fossas knows what he's learning now can help him if he wants to continue to work in baseball.

But for now, Fossas said he is focused on only one thing: “I want to play as long as possible.”

—C. TRENT ROSECRANS

COLORADO ROCKIES

Jonathan Daza runs well but stole two bases in nine attempts in 2016 at low Class A Asheville. Farm director Zach Wilson said Daza “was challenged” on that area of his game.

He responded in a big way in 2017 at high Class A Lancaster, where he hit well as he has every season and then carried his performance over to the Arizona Fall League. The Rockies added Daza to the 40-man roster in November.

Wilson said the righthanded-hitting Daza is a plus runner who has become “super aggressive on the basepaths.”

Daza stole 31 bases in 39 attempts at Lancaster, where he hit .341/.376/.466 with 34 doubles, 11 triples and three homers in 135 games. He won the California League batting title.

“It had nothing to do with playing in (hitter-friendly) Lancaster,” Wilson said. “It's not like he hit 20 home runs. He's a line drive, gap-to-gap, barrel-control type of hitter. He would have done that no matter where he played.”

In the AFL, Daza hit .318/.333/.379 with 11 stolen bases in 19 games. He signed out of Venezuela in 2010.

Daza, who will be 24 in 2018, has the strongest outfield arm in the Rockies' system and outstanding instincts to play center field. He gets quick jumps on balls with a quick first step.

“He probably plays the best center field in our organization for anybody not named (Raimel) Tapia or (David) Dahl,” Wilson said. “He makes it look easy.”

Tapia and Dahl are lefthanded hitters, so the righthanded Daza could be a complement.

It was an easy decision to protect Daza, whom Wilson felt would otherwise have been taken in the Rule 5 draft.

“He's got the present skill set where he could play in the big leagues,” Wilson

said. “He's not fully ready for that. But a team that might have taken him in the Rule 5, you can put him on your club right now as a fourth or fifth outfielder and he'd be fine.”

—JACK ETKIN

MIAMI MARLINS

First baseman Garrett Cooper was just a sophomore at Los Angeles' Loyola High when Giancarlo Stanton was a senior in the same league.

“All the balls Stanton's hitting now—he was doing that in high school, too,” Cooper said. “With the bats we used in those days, he was pretty dangerous.”

About a decade after his sophomore prep season, Cooper had another interesting experience on July 14, 2017. At age 26, Cooper was traded from the Brewers to the Yankees, who immediately brought him up to make his major league debut against the Red Sox at Fenway Park.

In batting practice, he was in a group with Aaron Judge, Gary Sanchez and Matt Holliday, who combined to hit 104 home runs in 2017.

“I was trying to hit the ball 600 feet in

BP,” Cooper said.

Cooper went 0-for-4—“with three punchies” as he put it—in that first game. But he got his first big league hit two days later against David Price, then collected three hits the next day and went on to hit .326 in 13 games.

The offseason brought a trade to the Marlins when the Yankees sought to clear space on their 40-man roster. Now, the 6-foot-5, 235-pound righthanded hitter could fit in a first base platoon in Miami with lefty-swinging Justin Bour.

A 2013 sixth-round pick out of Auburn, Cooper experienced a breakout 2017 season. In 75 games at Triple-A Colorado Springs, he hit .366/.431/.652 with 17 home runs.

It was partly because of those numbers, that Cooper—the youngest of seven children who grew up playing beach volleyball, football, baseball and basketball in the Torrance area—was traded twice within four months.


Suddenly, he was in demand.

Cooper said Yankees general manager Brian Cashman and Marlins counterpart Michael Hill called him after the trade was made in November.

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was Greg Bird's position, and that there were multiple teams wanting to trade for me," Cooper said. "But he said the Marlins really wanted me. (Hill) said it was a great opportunity for me."

—WALTER VILLA

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

It's almost impossible to make up for lost time in baseball, but righthander Adrian Houser took big steps in that direction in 2017.

The 24-year-old got back on the mound in the second half after recovering from Tommy John surgery, and the Brewers were excited about the progress he made.

"He did a fantastic job with the rehab process and getting himself in excellent physical condition," farm director Tom Flanagan said. "So when he got back on the mound and into games, it wasn't much of a surprise to see how his velocity came back.

"He's someone that we are excited about heading into 2018."

Houser, one of four prospects acquired from the Astros in July 2015 for outfielder Carlos Gomez and righthander Mike Fiers, was throwing consistently in the mid- to high 90s during a 29-inning run in the low minors that culminated in the Arizona Fall League, where he was given four outings to cap his return to action.

Houser, who was a September callup in 2015, pitched at Double-A Biloxi in 2016 when his elbow blew out at mid-season and he required surgery.

The nearly 30 innings of work Houser got under his belt should serve as a good springboard for 2018.

"It's more about getting innings for Adrian," Flanagan said. "We want to get him into a routine and allow him to build his workload along the way."

The other three players from that trade—outfielders Domingo Santana and Brett Phillips and lefthander Josh Hader—made big contributions for the rebuilding Brewers' surprising 86-win team in 2017. If Houser, a 2011 second-rounder out of high school in Oklahoma, follows suit, the deal will have an even bigger impact.

"That trade keeps paying dividends," Flanagan said. "We gave up two really good major leaguers to get that group, but having Adrian back healthy enhances the possible impact they will have."

—TOM HAUDRICOURT

NEW YORK METS

Among the best performances by a Mets prospect in the Arizona Fall League came from David Thompson, a 24-year-

old third baseman with a reputation for hitting the long ball.

Thompson hit .328/.371/.569 with one home run and 15 RBIs in 15 games for Scottsdale in the AFL after spending the season at Double-A Binghamton.

As a high school player at Westminster Christian in Miami, Thompson hit 55 career homers to break the state record set by Alex Rodriguez, who starred for the same school.

The Mets selected Thompson from Miami in the fourth round of the 2015 draft. In 133 games for Binghamton in 2017 he hit a career-high 16 homers and ranked fourth in the Eastern League with 29 doubles.

"He's a kid out of the draft with big power potential, and he's starting to show that," assistant general manager John Ricco said. "I still think he has chance to develop further. He's a pretty good defender, but he's got power on the corner, and that is what we look for. He came from a big program, so I think we expect him to come in and compete, and he had a nice year.

"When you play in the Eastern League and do what he did, that is generally a good litmus test."

Ricco said he expects Thompson to begin 2018 at Binghamton, with an eye toward Triple-A Las Vegas. He batted .263/.325/.429 last season at Binghamton and showed promise as a third baseman.

"He has a good glove, average arm strength and can make the tough play," a talent evaluator who has scouted Thompson said. "Offensively he has pop to the pull side. He's a gap-to-gap hitter with good plate discipline."

With third base in flux—David Wright has missed most of the last three seasons with various ailments and Asdrubal Cabrera is unsigned beyond 2018—Mets officials will keep tabs on Thompson.

"I think he has a chance in a couple of years," Ricco said. "He's got enough arm to play third, and I think he stays there because of his power."

—MIKE PUMA

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

The Phillies' big league shortstop job, filled for 17 seasons by Jimmy Rollins and Freddy Galvis, now belongs to J.P. Crawford after Philadelphia traded Galvis to the Padres in December.

At lower levels of the system, 20-year-old Venezuelan shortstop Arquimedes Gamboa is turning heads.

"He's a legitimate shortstop prospect with excellent physical ability," director of player development Joe Jordan said. "He'll show you all five tools, with some above-average."



Phillies shortstop Arquimedes Gamboa began to develop physically at low Class A in 2017.

The Phillies signed Gamboa for \$900,000 in July 2014. He showed improvement across the board in 2017 at low Class A Lakewood. He battled back from an early-season hamstring injury to play in 79 games and hit .261/.328/.378 with a walk rate of 9.4 percent and a strikeout rate of 14.8 percent, which both represent improvements.

Phillies officials love that Gamboa finished strong by hitting .327 (32-for-98) with 11 extra-base hits, including four homers, in his last 25 games. He ended the season with a 14-game hitting streak. Additionally, he did not make an error in his final 18 games and finished with a .953 fielding percentage.

Gamboa, a switch-hitter, has added size and strength since signing at age 16. He is now 6-foot-2 and 195 pounds. Jordan called Gamboa a plus runner with a plus arm.

"And there's power in there," Jordan added. "Physically, he's very impressive. He's got the type of body that can take on strength.

"As with many international players,

he was young when he came to us. It took a little while for him to get to know everyone and build trust with our field staff, but once that happened, things really got rolling and what we're seeing right now is really exciting."

Gamboa signed with the Phillies on the same day as countryman Daniel Brito, a second baseman who signed for \$650,000. The duo formed the double-play tandem at Lakewood in 2017 and should be ready for high Class A Clearwater in 2018.

—JIM SALISBURY

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

The Pirates exited the Rule 5 draft with a reliever who, despite his high upside, has no chance to make the Opening Day roster.

Righthander Nick Burdi offers tantalizing, triple-digits velocity, but he will be unavailable in the first half after having Tommy John surgery last May. In fact, various arm injuries limited him to just 20 total innings at Double-A

Chattanooga the last two seasons.

The Pirates acquired Burdi from the Phillies, who selected him third overall from the Twins in the Rule 5 draft. Pittsburgh sent \$500,000 in international bonus pool money to Philadelphia to acquire the rights to Burdi, who will be 25 in 2018.

"Obviously, he has a big arm and has shown the ability in the minor leagues to get strikeouts," general manager Neal Huntington said. "It seemed like over the last two years, his ability to throw strikes has improved some. We understand the injury risk, and his Tommy John surgery is the reason why we believe he's available, because otherwise, he might have finished the season in big leagues.

"But his potential upside was worth the gamble."

Burdi excelled in college as the closer for Louisville, when he boasted a high-90s fastball and devastating slider. The Twins took him in the second round of the 2014 draft, and he reached Double-A in 2015 before missing most of 2016 with a bruised right humerus. He tore his ulnar collateral ligament in 2017.

In 17 innings before the injury, Burdi allowed only one run while striking out 20 and walking just four. For his career, he has struck out 12.3 per nine innings.

"He has the fastball-breaking ball combination, the ability to get swings and misses, the ability to get soft contact," Huntington said. "He has that big arm you can dream on."

—DUSTIN DOPIRAK

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

Though the Cardinals were able to mask it with a wealth of outfield talent and the usual parade of young power pitchers, the organization had a soft spot on the minor league depth chart—smack in the middle of the infield.

They addressed it with one move at the Winter Meetings.

After trading four prospects—including righthander Sandy Alcantara and outfielder Magneuris Sierra who both ranked in the top 10—to the Marlins for Marcell Ozuna, the Cardinals had another extra outfielder to deal and did so by sending Stephen Piscotty home to Oakland. The 2012 supplemental first-round pick from Stanford hails from the Bay Area.

In return the Cardinals received two needed middle infielders: shortstop Yairo Munoz and second baseman Max Schrock. Both will be 23 in 2018, and both immediately become the team's top infield prospects in the high minors.

Munoz, who signed with the A's out of the Dominican Republic in 2012, had to be added to the 40-man roster but

represents an immediate replacement for the traded Aledmys Diaz. In 112 games at Double-A and Triple-A in 2017, Munoz hit .300/.330/.464 with 13 home runs and 22 stolen bases. He brings a plus arm and good hands to shortstop, third base or second base, and his speed fits the baserunning profile the Cardinals are trying to enhance.

"Both guys are sort of interesting," president of baseball operations John Mozeliak said. "Munoz gives us a lot of defensive protection. When you look at where we were in the middle infield . . . and now being able to have him come in—it does a lot for us."

The 5-foot-8 Schrock, a 13th-round pick by the Nationals in 2015 from South Carolina, becomes the system's top pure hitter. The lefthanded batter hit .321/.379/.422 with six homers in 106 games at Double-A Midland in 2017 and ranked fourth in the Texas League batting race, third in on-base percentage and first in lowest strikeout rate.

The Cardinals plan to have Schrock rotate between second and third base.

—DERRICK GOOLD

SAN DIEGO PADRES

With a full 40-man roster, A.J. Preller sat on the sidelines at the Rule 5 draft for the first time since 2014, but the Padres' fourth-year general manager didn't leave the Winter Meetings without taking a gamble on his big league roster: Bryan Mitchell.

The 26-year-old Yankees righthander had been a target of Preller's for years. He finally joined the organization on Dec. 12 after the Padres agreed to take on Chase Headley's \$13 million salary in a trade that sent outfielder Jabari Blash to New York.

Headley could be on his way to another team, but Mitchell, a 16th-round pick in 2009 out of high school in North Carolina, is expected to compete for a rotation spot.

"He's a guy who our scouting group had talked about a lot the last three years," Preller told the San Diego Union-Tribune. "He has big fastball velocity, and he's got a really good breaking pitch in there, too . . .

"(He has) four years of (club) control—we kind of compared that to the free agent market, and he was probably more intriguing in terms of upside. He's one of those guys who clubs try to acquire. Obviously, if he was performing like a front-of-the-rotation starter, you're not getting him, but I think the components are there."

Mitchell has topped out at 97 mph in the big leagues and has ranked as high as No. 11 in the Yankees system, heading into the 2016 season. He also throws a low-80s hammer curveball, an

above-average cutter and a show-me changeup.

Mitchell pitched just 98 big league innings for the Yankees in parts of four seasons, however. A fractured toe early in 2016 cost him momentum, but in San Diego, the Padres are hoping a change of scenery, work with pitching coach Darren Balsley and the freedom to finally stretch his legs in the majors will help Mitchell realize his full potential.

"He's a guy who got caught on the Interstate between (Triple-A) Scranton and New York and didn't get sufficient opportunity," Padres manager Andy Green told reporters at the Winter Meetings. "He pitched in the bullpen, pitched in a starter's role every now and again. They were never able to give him the consistent opportunity, which we think he'll thrive in."

—JEFF SANDERS

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

Shortstop Ryan Howard passionately wants to become a big leaguer—and he believes that passion will help him reach his goal.

"I don't think that I've ever been a guy where people are like, 'Oh, he's a for-sure big leaguer,'" said Howard, 23. "I kind of take pride in that, being a guy who works hard to get to where he wants to go."

The Giants' fifth-round pick in 2016, Howard worked hard enough to finish sixth in the California League with a .306 average while playing at high Class A San Jose in 2017. Of his 161 hits, just 30 went for extra bases: 21 doubles and nine home runs.

That motivated Howard, a righthanded hitter listed at 6-foot-2, 195 pounds, to find a way to add some pop to his game for 2018. The key might be in his left hip.

The Missouri product said that sometimes his "front hip is leaking out early, which is causing me to lose power and not be able to drive balls to right field."

General manager Bobby Evans believes Howard can increase his extra-base hit output by becoming more selective; he walked just 23 times in 565 plate appearances in 2017.

"We've got to find a way to help him control the count better," Evans said.

Lefthander Garrett Williams, who spent the final two months of 2017 at San Jose, appreciates Howard's fiery and funny personality.

Williams said Howard "loves to keep the energy up . . . (He) keeps everybody laughing."

Having a good sense of humor helps Howard because he shares a name with the Phillies' long-time slugging first baseman. Each Ryan Howard is from the St. Louis area and each was a fifth-round

pick out of college.

Howard has embraced sharing a name with a prominent player, but it took time to reach that point.

He said that in 2017, a fan brought a Ryan Howard Phillies card to a game and asked where Ryan Howard was. "Someone pointed at me, and obviously, I didn't look like him," Howard said.

—STEVE KRONER

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

In righthander Kyle Johnston's first year in pro ball, he might have spent more time focused on his legs than on his arm.

The 2017 sixth-round pick split time between the rotation and the bullpen at short-season Auburn, as he had in the Big 12 Conference at Texas. Working with pitching coach Tim Redding, Johnston went 0-2, 3.43 with 32 strikeouts and 23 walks in 45 innings for the Doubledays.

"There's a lot there to work with and tap into," Redding said. "One of our big areas of emphasis in the organization is working from the ground up, and he really bought into that. Once you're able to understand your lower half, your upper half goes along for the ride."

Redding, who pitched for the Nationals and four other teams in his eight-year major league career, said Johnston flashed a solid 12-to-6 curveball. The 21-year-old also impressed with his mid-90s fastball and his slider. Johnston mixed in a changeup with a grip he picked up from pitching coordinator Paul Menhart.

As a junior with the Longhorns, the 6-foot Johnston had a 2.90 ERA in his 12 starts while making five relief appearances. In the New York-Penn League, he started seven games and relieved seven.

"I'm up for anything they want me to do," Johnston said. "In (instructional league), I worked with the starters, but I was limited to throwing bullpens because of the innings I pitched over the course of the year."

Undrafted out of high school in Flower Mound, Texas, Johnston saw himself as someone who needed three years of college seasoning. The time in Austin helped him prepare for becoming a professional, and then his baseball education grew over the summer.

"I learned probably the most I've ever learned in baseball," Johnston said. "All the coaches had my back through all the ups and downs—and the downs are just a part of baseball. That's where you develop as a pitcher. I felt like I could see past the results and realize where I was getting better."

—LACY LUSK

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HALO EFFECT

OHTANI ARRIVES

For ex-big leaguers in Japan, Ohtani is a special but not invincible talent

BY KYLE GLASER

The recruitment of Shohei Ohtani reached a fever pitch before the Angels emerged victorious in the pursuit on Dec. 10. Every rumor and emerging detail was treated as headline news. Hopeful fan bases changed their Twitter handles to include Ohtani's name. Teams made specific—and largely unprecedented—trades for international bonus pool money solely to sweeten their offers to Ohtani, the 102-mph throwing, 500-foot home run hitting, 23-year-old called the Japanese Babe Ruth.

When the Angels won the bidding for Ohtani, they introduced him not at a traditional press conference, but a rally in front of Angel Stadium to which all fans were invited.

It was quite the circus, and one that prompted the question: "How good is Ohtani, really, and how much of it is hype?"

One demographic is uniquely suited to answer that: ex-major leaguers who played against Ohtani in Japan.

"I see the appeal," said righthander Dennis Sarfate, a reliever who pitched parts of four seasons in the majors and won the Japan Series MVP award in 2017. "I've said it from day one, this guy is going to be a superstar, and he is that good."

Those with major league experience who have faced Ohtani widely see a player who is major league caliber and a special talent, but also one who has flaws and weaknesses in his game, like everybody else.

Stefen Romero, an outfielder who played parts of three seasons for the Mariners before joining Orix in the Pacific League for 2017, was one of the few to actually face Ohtani on the mound this year. Ohtani made just five starts due to an ankle injury that required surgery in October.

When Romero faced Ohtani, he struck out swinging.

"I fouled off some good fastballs at 98-100 (mph)," Romero said, "and he just threw a devastating forkball in the dirt.

"He's not your everyday Japanese player. He's 6-foot-5 or 6-foot-6 and he's huge. When you see him on the mound it's just so smooth and effortless and it just comes out . . . He doesn't throw 100 (mph) all the time. Throughout the game he'll be like 93-94, and then when he wants to he'll go 100, 100, 100."

Ohtani's premium velocity has long been a main selling point. However, from a hitter's perspective, it's not Ohtani's fastball that necessarily separates him.

"His fastball is hittable," Romero said. "I feel like it's hittable to American players because it's straight. There's not a lot of movement. It's hard, but it is straight. It's more of like an overhand, three-quarters arm slot, so it's not too difficult to pick up. But it's his offspeed pitches that he can throw for strikes and have the same arm slot and arm speed with that will get you in trouble. His forkball, it looks just like a fastball but it drops two feet straight down. It starts at your thigh and looks just like a 100 mph fastball and then it just drops two feet into



The Angels eschewed the traditional press conference to introduce Shohei Ohtani, whom they signed out of Japan in December, and held a rally at Angel Stadium open to fans and media alike.

the dirt. His offspeed stuff is pretty legit."

Ohtani's complete arsenal, officially, is a fastball, slider, forkball, changeup and curveball. Those who faced him note he really only throws his fastball, slider and forkball, with the other two offerings rarely used.

All three of Ohtani's main pitches—fastball, slider and forkball—draw plus or better grades from evaluators. At the same time, like many other 23-year-olds, he still has progress to make with his consistency and sequencing.

"Sometimes he thinks too much," Sarfate said. "It's like, 'Hey, you throw 100. Stop throwing offspeed.' I mean I've seen him throw as many as seven breaking balls in a row.

"He doesn't have great command," added Sarfate, who has played against Ohtani in Japan since 2013. "Everyone thinks his command is good, but I've seen him walk three, four guys in a row and it's because he gets out of sync because he throws so many breaking balls . . . If he got a catcher who was around for a while and they could actually guide him

through it, I think he would eventually be really good."

So, is Ohtani ready to step in and be an ace-caliber starting pitcher from day one? Not quite, in the eyes of the ex-big leaguers who faced him, though they acknowledge he may get there eventually.

"If you compare him to a (Yu) Darvish right now, I don't think he's there yet," said former White Sox and Pirates third baseman Brent Morel, who played parts of six seasons in the majors before moving to Orix in 2016. "Watching (Darvish) pitch, he just has more of a repertoire, and it seems like better command of what he's doing. Obviously, (Ohtani is) younger, maybe skilled more. It's just kind of honing that in and being more consistent. But it's definitely there."

"He's not Masahiro Tanaka," Sarfate said. "Tanaka faced us in 2013 when I was with Seibu. He was definitely far more advanced than what Ohtani is, but he was also a little bit older. If you had said Tanaka (would compete for Cy Young Awards right away),

If you're a starter who can throw 100 with multiple pitches, there's not too many guys in the world who can do that. I say he's the best player on the planet. I labeled his flaws, but his pro sides outweigh his cons.

DENNIS SARFATE, A RELIEVER WHO WON THE JAPAN PACIFIC LEAGUE MVP AWARD IN 2017

I would've said, 'Absolutely.' The guy commands three pitches down in the zone, he's consistent every time he takes the mound. There's no way Ohtani comes in his first year over and contends for the Cy Young.

"He is better than most guys I see pitch as a fourth or fifth starter. He can definitely go there and pitch in the big leagues, and you can let him have his ups and downs. If he just worked on pitching, I think then he could be a Cy Young winner."

And there lies the dilemma on Ohtani. He wants to hit and has a long track record of success hitting in Japan, and teams pursuing him were forced to get creative to find ways to get him meaningful at-bats while also pitching. The Angels ultimately decided Ohtani would serve as their DH on certain days he didn't pitch, and they indicated they will move to a six-man rotation in order to get Ohtani extra at-bats.

The reason they are willing to do so is Ohtani's lefthanded power. It can be jaw-dropping to watch, even for ex-big leaguers who have seen Giancarlo Stanton, Nelson Cruz and other big-time sluggers put on massive power displays.

"First time I saw him take batting practice was unreal," Romero said. "He was just hitting the ball with ease. His power is ridiculous. Brandon Laird, who is on his team, came up to me and was like, 'Hey, watch Ohtani's BP,' because they're in the same hitting group. So I was like, 'All right.' He was just hitting balls opposite-field, 20 rows up at their stadium, and their stadium at Sapporo is a pretty legit-sized stadium. It's not small by any means, and he's just oppo 20 rows deep, center field 20 rows deep, and then pull side he's going like 40 rows, almost on top of the concourse. I'm like, 'That's just ridiculous.'"

Whether Ohtani will be able to get to that power against big league pitchers is an open debate.

Sarfate, for example, has been able to keep Ohtani in check in five.

"I think I faced him 11 times and I think I gave up a single and triple, and the single was actually a squiggler down the third-base

line that he beat out," Sarfate said. "He's got decent plate awareness. The only problem I see him having issues with early on—and he can make the adjustment—is fastballs in. Japanese guys tend to stay away from him. I think it's a lot of respect, and they don't want to throw a fastball in and break his arm or hit him in the elbow. I think he's aware of that, that no one pitches him in. I pitch him in and have had good success going in.

"Big league pitchers aren't afraid to go in. They don't care who you are, and that's going to be his one adjustment he's going to have to make."

Morel, from his vantage point playing the infield, sees the same potential shortcoming on fastballs in.

"He just has unbelievable pop to the opposite field, center field, (but) it didn't seem like he pulled too many balls unless they were off-speed," Morel said. "I think he'll get pounded in like any young hitter going to the big leagues. He'll have to make the adjustment. He was so big and strong he didn't have to worry about it too much over there. I'm not saying he can't make the adjustment, he just hasn't had to yet."

Which leads to the main question: Can Ohtani, for all his significant raw talent, buck 100 years of major league history and excel as both an elite hitter and elite pitcher at the same time?

"What he's doing is absolutely amazing, I'm glad he's going to try it and teams are going to give him an opportunity to do it," Sarfate said. "I think, my opinion, eventually he's going to have to make a choice. He's going to either say I'm a full-time hitter or a full-time pitcher. I don't think he's going to be able to do both. If he just picks one, I think he can be amazing and take off and be a 40 (homer)-40 (steal) guy or he can be a Cy Young winner. But he's gotta pick one."

Others agreed that Ohtani's ultimate success will be in one over the other, not both.

"His success in MLB will be as a pitcher more than a hitter," Romero said. "I feel that way, and (so do) a lot of other American players I've talked to who are in Japan and have played him for a few years do too."



Still, even with areas of his game that require development, Ohtani remains a premium pitcher with a rare skill set. In the eyes of all who faced him, he has elite potential.

"He was a little inconsistent with offspeed, I feel like when I faced him, but it was still three plus pitches and I think he'll have pretty good success in the big leagues just because he has that," Morel said. "He throws hard enough where you have to commit to it and has a really good forkball. I think for him it's just kind of making that slider a little sharper. It can be very effective for him at times.

"If you're a starter who can throw 100 with multiple pitches, there's not too many guys in the world who can do that."

"I say he's the best player on the planet," Sarfate said. "I labeled his flaws, but his pro sides outweigh his cons." ■

New Angels prospect Shohei Ohtani has jaw-dropping raw power, but former big leaguers who have played against him in Japan say he hasn't had to prove that he can hit inside fastballs, and that major league pitchers will try to exploit that weakness early in his career.

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JETER BOBBLES INITIAL CHANCES IN MIAMI

New Marlins leader has struggled to find his footing

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Derek Jeter survived 2,905 regular season and postseason games over two decades in New York with barely a scratch on his person or his reputation.

Yes, he was perceived as selfish when he resisted the idea of moving down in the Yankees' batting order in his twilight years, and the concept of the Derek Jeter breakup "gift basket" elicited some chuckles amid discussions about his prolific dating life. But for the most part, the coverage Jeter received in the New York and national media alternated between fawning and reverential. Nothing came close to the beating he absorbed while diving into the third-base seats in pursuit of that Trot Nixon foul pop in 2004.

In his first few months as part-owner and chief operating officer of the Marlins, Jeter has discovered that perceptions are more difficult to shape in the big chair. There's no such thing as a third at-bat to erase the memory of the strikeout and double play grounder that preceded it. A man can't even watch an NFL game without somebody taking a shot at him.

Jeter and his partner, billionaire businessman Bruce Sherman, are trying to build something that lasts in South Florida despite major financial obstacles. They paid \$1.2 billion for a Marlins franchise that had accumulated massive debt under previous owner Jeffrey Loria, in a market that was iffy to begin with and with a fan base that has become even more disengaged and cynical with time.

Attendance hasn't sniffed 2 million since the opening of Marlins Park in 2012. And now Jeter arrives on the scene with a mandate to win the fans' trust, build a staff, put a competitive product on the field and improve the farm system as he simultaneously sells off the franchise's most recognizable faces.

If the epic nature of his undertaking weren't readily apparent, it became evident during the Winter Meetings, when Jeter assumed the role of human pinata in absentia. Amid a general lack of activity, the hot topics of conversation were: 1) Marlins salary dumps; and 2) prominent baseball personalities lining up to take shots at Jeter and the Marlins for their salary dumps.

The first big media event featured an animated Giancarlo Stanton disparaging the Marlins over pulling the plug on his tenure in Miami and trading him to the Yankees for Starlin Castro, two prospects and . . . \$265 million in salary relief. Stanton wasn't happy about being packed off three years after signing a 10-year, \$325 million deal, and he was even less pleased over the way he felt the Marlins strong-armed him into waiving his no-trade clause. He made those feelings eminently clear during a scorched-earth news conference at the Walt Disney Swan and Dolphin resort.

"Maybe watch from afar if you're going to watch," he advised hardcore Marlins fans.

Just hours after Stanton spoke, Twitter erupted in a



state of glee when TV cameras captured Jeter in his booth watching the Dolphins-Patriots Monday Night Football tilt. Lots of people wondered why he wasn't in Orlando, immersed in meetings and getting a firsthand glimpse of how the sausage is made.

It would get worse. Scott Boras, who never hesitates to speak his mind on the state of the industry, openly wondered why MLB would sell a team for \$1.2 billion to a group lacking the financial wherewithal to pay the debt service and put a representative team on the field.

"You would hope that (with) new ownership that MLB would screen the ownership so that it comes in and provides additions," Boras said. "(Instead), they come in and they redirect, so you're not a jewelry store that's coveting your diamonds. You now become a pawn shop that is trying to pay the rent of the building. I think major league markets are damaged by that."

Marlins-watchers didn't expect this level of contentiousness when they cheered the departure of Loria, who never ceased to find new and creative ways to alienate the fan base. Jeter seemed like the perfect savior, with his winning pedigree and desire to immerse himself in the process. But it's been a series of missteps and public relations gaffes from day one.

Some of it was garden-variety snark. When a photo of Jeter made the rounds in his first day on the job and social media comics poked fun at the industrial strength hand sanitizer dispenser behind his office desk, it seemed a lot like overkill.

More often, Jeter suffered for being tone deaf or out of touch. He received some bad publicity for assigning outgoing team president David Samson with the task of firing goodwill ambassadors Tony Perez, Andre Dawson, Jack McKeon and Jeff Conine—a.k.a. Mr. Marlin. Not long after, Marlins scout Marty Scott revealed that he had been fired while in a South Florida hospital recovering from colon cancer surgery. You just can't make this stuff up.

In fairness, Jeter deserves the benefit of some time to navigate the learning curve in his new role. Some baseball insiders think he could benefit from the presence of a Stan Kasten-Larry Lucchino-Randy Levine type to help him with the business side, community outreach and myriad other responsibilities of his position. But that would necessitate taking a back seat as the public face of the franchise, and Jeter isn't big on having his hand held.

So he keeps taking the hits. Shortly before Christmas, he met with 200 Marlins season-ticket holders, and many of them shared their anger over the team's new direction. One woman cried in response to the team's decision to trade Stanton, Dee Gordon and Marcell Ozuna, while another groused to Jeter about his failure to answer her emails.

"You don't have my email address," Jeter told her.

As he prepares for the second rookie year of his baseball career, Jeter can be sure of one thing: If Marlins fans have reason to complain, they'll always figure out a way to find him. ■

Criticism never stuck to Derek Jeter when he starred as shortstop for the Yankees. He's jumped from controversy to controversy in his brief tenure as the face of the Marlins' ownership group.

MIKE EHLMANN/GETTY IMAGES

BRACEY MADE HIS MARK

Longtime scout, executive left his impact on San Diego

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Ken Bracey was baseball's E.F. Hutton. "When you were in a meeting discussing a player, when Bracey spoke you listened," said Giants manager Bruce Bochy, who knew Bracey from Bochy's days as a player, coach and manager with the Padres.

"He'd sit over there off to the side and a player would be brought up and he would say, 'He can't play,' and shake his head," Bochy said.

Would he be wrong?

"No," Bochy said.

And if he liked a player?

"He wasn't wrong then, either," Bochy said.

At the age of 80, Bracey passed away last month, the victim of pancreatic and liver cancer, which was discovered just two weeks before his death.

He was the ultimate baseball lifer. Signed by the Yankees at the age of 19, he spent one year pitching in their minor league system, and then seven with the Giants' minor league teams. He compiled a 52-40, 3.41 record in 331 minor league appearances, 313 out of the bullpen, in an eight-year playing career in which he never pitched above Double-A.

When he hung up the uniform, he picked up the clipboard, radar gun and stopwatch, and began a scouting career that was highlighted by 38 years with the Padres before being hired by then-Dodgers general manager Ned Colletti and spending his final seven years with Los Angeles.

Kevin Towers was a Bracey disciple, having met him as a player after being a first-round draft choice of the Padres out of BYU in what was then the June secondary draft in 1982. Towers was mentored by Bracey as a young area scout, counseled by him as a scouting director, and then embraced when Towers was the general manager of the Padres.

"He was a veteran guy and as a young scout he wasn't going to pamper you," Towers said. "He was going to make you better. And when I was a general manager he was one of the best scouts I could have ever had."

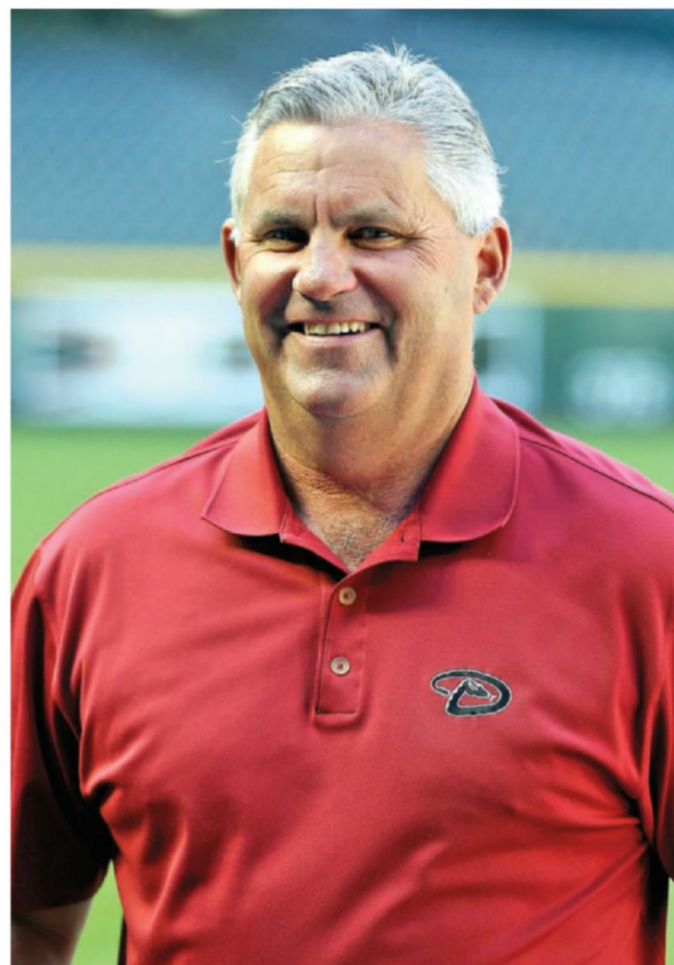
"When he didn't like a guy, and there were a lot of them, you knew they weren't guys you should like," Towers said, "and when was solidly on an individual you knew he could play. He wasn't worried about what everybody thought. He was going to tell you what he thought, and he wasn't wrong on much."

"He wasn't a guy who would waffle, and wait to see what he thought you wanted to hear. You would look at him and he would have that smile on his face and nod yes, and you knew that was what you needed to do."

He was, however, extremely loyal. Towers said there were occasions over the years, before he finally went to the Dodgers, that Bracey had chances to go with another organization, but after Towers would grant permission and Bracey would interview it was always easy to address concerns and keep Bracey with the Padres.

"He wasn't a leverage guy, looking to bounce around," said Towers. "He liked to be a part of an organization and I liked having him as a part of (the Padres) organization. I don't remember a deal I made when I didn't lean on him to get his opinion. He was a special person."

He will be missed by everyone whose path he crossed in his lifetime in baseball. ■



Ken Bracey was a longtime Padres scout and a top lieutenant to former GM Kevin Towers (left). During his time with the Padres, Bracey was one of the most trusted voices when it came time to decide whether to acquire player. He also worked for the Dodgers for seven years.

CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES



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► For the unabridged version of our **exclusive interview** with Minor League Baseball president **Pat O'Conner**, including his thoughts on possible international friendlies, visit BaseballAmerica.com/minors

MINORS MATTERS

ONE-ON-ONE WITH PAT O'CONNER

BASEBALL AMERICA SAT DOWN WITH
THE MINOR LEAGUE PRESIDENT

BY JOSH NORRIS

For the second straight year, BA associate editor **Josh Norris** took time at the Winter Meetings to sit down with Minor League Baseball president **Pat O'Conner**. Most notable among the 40-minute discussion was O'Conner's belief that the players deserve higher wages, but not the Fair Labor Standards Act protection they are seeking via a lawsuit currently working its way through the courts.

Beyond that, O'Conner provided his thoughts on the prospect of major league expansion, the shortening of schedules in the minor leagues, the possibility of interleague play, the need for a new stadium in Richmond and, of course, Tim Lincecum.

Here is the transcript of that interview.

Q Overall, how do you rate this year in the minor leagues?

A 2017 was a good year for us. It wasn't a great year. It was a good year. It seems like a little bit of a broken record, but we were really impacted by the rain this past year. And I always talk about there being two or three things that determine what kind of season you're going to have. One is weather. Two is your team. And three is what kind of business you run. And we can't control the first two. But I made some comments Monday that said what Mother Nature taketh, Tim Lincecum giveth. Lincecum was a saving grace for the global result. But it was a good year. You just can't do anything about the weather. You can sit around and lick your lips and crack your knuckles and worry about it. It was a good year for us, (but) it's still too early to get the financial numbers, but I expect them to be good. I think that



we're at a point where we're not opening that many new stadiums, which used to always give you a point or two, or a chance at a point or two. We're a slow, measured, steady growth and we just need to keep heading that way. I'm very optimistic about the future with the advent of the Tickets.com opportunity. We need to start growing our business in real terms and I'm not looking for huge chunks, huge jumps. Just nice, steady gain.

Q Did you get a chance to go see a game or a series where Lincecum played?

A I didn't. With scheduling, I just could not personally get there. I saw plenty of video and I talked to plenty of people who experienced it. I remember last year at the Winter Meetings, I did an interview with Sande Charles and she asked me about Tim Lincecum, and I said 'I don't know the man,'—I still have not met Tim—'but I expect everything I know about him for him to be a good teammate, a good ambassador for Minor League Baseball, great to the fans and I hope that he has athletic success.' That's pretty much what happened. The stories you saw about Lincecum, the things he was doing with our fans, reports about his interaction with his teammates. I checked with a few teams who were the visiting team for Tim, and it was consistent and the reports were consistent. He never asked for much. He never was demanding. He didn't have an entourage. He would come and tell you the first day he got there, (he'd) do 15 minutes about his whole

transition to baseball thing. 'I want to do it in the dugout, weather permitting. I don't want to burden my teammates. I want to do 15 minutes, bring everybody you want. I'll talk to the media the rest of the series, but it's about the game.' It wasn't a demand, but it was respectful for him to do it that way. He signed autographs everywhere. He had a couple of people with him, from what I understand, to just help him take care of things. I mean, the guy runs a company or two, a foundation or two, and it was anything but an entourage. I never heard anybody say that he demanded one thing. Great teammate in the clubhouse, just really committed to trying to get better. That's the best we could ask for.

Q Did you expect the kind of attendance boosts he provided?

A I did because of the regionality of it. He played most of his season in the Southeast Conference territory, and he finished his season in Florida. I expected good numbers. There's the Tim Lincecum lovers, and then there are those who are curious. If you add that combination up, then you see what you get. I think it was very positive. I think it was very positive for the game overall, and I know it was positive for Minor League Baseball. I told Sande Charles a year ago, 'I welcome him with open arms because I think he's going to be a great addition to what he do.' The athletic aspect of it, that's between him and the Mets. But from everything I can tell, he's welcome in minor league baseball all he wants.

Baseball America spoke with Pat O'Conner, the president of Minor League Baseball, at this year's Winter Meetings at Walt Disney World.

Q We're going to 140 games in all full-season leagues in 2018. Is that the lowest you'll see it going?

A That's the lowest that MLB can force us to take it. I think that player health, player safety, health and well-being, rest and recovery periods, all of that stuff is in discussion at a greater level that I've seen in 25 years that I've heard of it. We have a (Professional Baseball Agreement) coming up in the next two years. It can't go lower under the current agreement, at full-season levels, and obviously at short-season. I don't anticipate anything (lower) under this current PBA. It's too early to tell what the next agreement might bring.

Q With that PBA coming up, then, what do you want to achieve?

A I think that for the health and well-being of the game and my membership in MLB, I think that we want to have an agreement that offers stability over the longest possible term. I think it's important to know what their roster slots are going to be, and by that I mean how many teams are going to be involved and where they are. I think it's important for our clubs to know if you have make facility adjustments or if you have to do different things, the ability to stretch that out with amortization and depreciation and to sell that over a longer period of time is to your advantage. I just like the stability. We've been together since 1901—it's really not a question of 'if'—the relationship has never been better than it is today. So what we have to determine is, what, and for how long? I'm just a fan of stability. If, for instance, we do one before the PBA expires in 2020, I would want to add several years to the back end so we have a good long run. The unknown is the toughest thing in baseball and in business, the instability of not knowing where you're going to operate, how you're going to be expected to operate. It's tough for our clubs to make investments in human resources and physical plant resources without the luxury of time.

Q With that in mind, would there be a tweaking of the way the affiliation shuffle works?

A Possibly. We've talked a lot of about that . . . It's not perfect. There are aspects to it that I really don't like, but I have yet to find somebody who's got a viable alternative. And I'm not being critical. It's fine to say it stinks, maybe it does stink. Well, what do you want to do instead? Well, I don't know. From that perspective, what we're looking at is a PBA that has not really been addressed critically in over 10 years, certain aspects of it since it was originally drafted 25 years ago, like facility standards. So we owe it to each other to just put everything on the table that is an issue and sort through it. You have to stop and look at how much the game's changed in the last 25 years. You now have strength and condi-

tioning coaches. You now have videographers. You now have nutritionists. And those people need space that was not contemplated when the new facility standards were adopted in the early '90s. Now, the issue is I don't think there are too many facilities that were built so when you looked at the blueprints there were four rooms that said 'blank for a reason' or 'vacant for future use.' So we've got some logistical issues to discuss. There is the philosophy of, we need space to accommodate these people. OK, how are we going to go about doing that?

Q Is that also true when it comes to upgrading and updating the transportation situation, with bigger buses or more buses?

A Yeah, but I mean, usually what you find is you have a 45-passenger bus. If you want more room, you just get a second one. A lot of our clubs, especially at Triple-A, are traveling with two buses now . . . There's only so many ways, and it takes so long to get from point A to point B. So we have to look at what we can look at, and the problem—especially since between 9/11 and the economy—a lot of airlines in cities that we serve, they fly 50-seat jets. We can get the team on there, but we can't get the equipment on there. It makes the plane too heavy. The (Pacific Coast League) has a travel committee that addresses and tries to envision those problems. It's not something we take lightly, but it's something that would be great if everybody would just charter. Well, it's cost prohibitive. You just can't charter. So we continue to look at it, always looking for better ways, quicker ways, safer ways, to get guys from point A to point B.

Q I'm sure you saw Tracy Ringolsby's story a few months ago about possible MLB expansion. With that in mind, have you started looking at potential cities for the minor league teams to play in if expansion comes to pass?

A Well, no. No. The problem is, if you start looking at sites, you create a brushfire that you lose control of. I am not as confident as Tracy that (expansion is) imminent. The thing that we talk about is the reality of—depending on where they expand, and if history is going to be our guide, and history being that the two clubs will have five or six teams each—I need anywhere from 10 to 14 teams. If the expansion is in two of our markets, not only do I have to replace them, I've got to give each team five or six affiliates. And I've got to tell you, I don't have 12 cities. I don't have 12 cities on a list that I can, in my wildest dreams, make up. So I don't think (expansion) is imminent. I do think it will happen, but I don't think it's imminent. I'm not convinced that, from a big league perspectives, it's not going to involve some international (sites) based on where the commissioner wants the game to

go. That would mitigate some of our concern about the number of cities we need. But I've got to tell you, we have conversations constantly with Major League Baseball and they know the predicament that creates for us, so they're not going to come in and say 'Oh, by the way, we're going to expand next year.'

Q That kind of dovetails into where I wanted to go next. It's always been on the back burner, but there's a possibility of interleague play between the Midwest and South Atlantic leagues.

A I think because of the rules and regulations and the player qualifications and the perception—and I think it's a reality—of the (difference in) the level of play that you've got to stay with high Class A with high Class A and low Class A with low Class A. Again, I can't imagine farm directors would disapprove, but with the consent of all the stakeholders, I'm not going to tell them they can't do it . . . If two teams are close in the leagues (say, Lexington and Bowling Green, Ky.), don't play them 20 times. Duck in there and play one, or if you can sister-city it and it makes sense. I can tell you that there are comments, and I've heard them, that say 'Why am I driving through two Sally League cities to get to my next Carolina League game? Why aren't these two cities in the Carolina League and that one in the Sally?' That's a historical issue, and it's now a franchise value and a cost of doing business issue. It's not as easy as telling one team, 'Oh, you're not in that league any more. You're in this one.'

Q Going back to the affiliation shuffle, a lot of teams have been taking themselves out of that mix by buying their affiliates. What do you make of that trend?

A I mean, I don't think they'll ever take it out of central office control, I mean Park Avenue (MLB headquarters) and St. Pete (MiLB headquarters). Let's face it: Of the 30 affiliated teams (at a given level), there are 24 teams that sort it out fairly consistently, there are three that are kind of stable and subject to change and there are three that are always going to be moving. The last six don't really envision getting into the top 24. That's not their goal. Their goal is to not stay in the last three. And so there's places you run to and there's places you run from, and conversely, from our standpoint, there are some major league affiliates that are better than others. There's some you want and some you don't . . . I am not opposed to a new system, but I'm just not smart enough right now to figure it out. And I'm open to discussing what is fair and equitable. I do think that whatever happens, characteristics of it have to be choice. This purchasing (of affiliates) is starting to limit

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NUMBER OF GAMES THAT FULL-SEASON MINOR LEAGUE TEAMS WILL PLAY IN 2018. A LOWER TOTAL MUST BE NEGOTIATED IN THE NEXT PBA.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

the choice, which I think is critically important and why you saw the commissioner, with my agreement, go to 51 percent equity if a major league club wants to buy in. So we're not going to eliminate it, but we're going to throw an anchor out where one of my clubs might sell 25 percent and put that money in its pocket. That, to me, is buying the (Player Development Contract). Fifty-one percent, to me, is buying the ballclub.

Q I imagine we're in the same limbo we were last year with Senne lawsuit considering it's still tied up in appeals.

A Yeah, there were two, and one (Miranda v. Selig) was dismissed. And I haven't read the decision and haven't talked to my lawyers . . . The Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal, which is, in effect, killing it. And they cited antitrust reasons. And the gratifying thing for us—and here's where I'm speculating—is that the Curt Flood Act, which we helped get into place in the early '90s, which preserved antitrust protection for the minor leagues, was cited in the lawsuit. It's been cited several times in the last nine months. So it's amazing that something that's 25 years old is still serving its purpose

Q I've seen Stan Brand and other people characterize minor league players as apprentices or interns. Do you agree with that characterization?

A Well, yeah. In a technical, legal sense we can debate what that title is. I don't think that minor league baseball is a career choice for a player. Anecdotally, I tell people all the time, if I'm a scouting director and I sign a player and ask him, 'Son, OK, what's your career goal?' (and he says) 'I want to be a career minor leaguer.' We're tearing the contract up. You're not here to stay long. When I ran ballclubs, my opening comment to my clubs is, 'I'm glad each and every one of you are here, and I hope I don't see any of you next year because you've gone to play in Double-A.' So, look, the average life or the average career of a minor leaguer is less than three years. I do think that it's time for an adjustment in salary, but the issue of putting them into an FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act)-protected position where they're entitled to minimum wage and overtime is complicated. What's a (minor leaguer's) workday look like, Josh?

[Josh Norris, answering:] It's long. It's very long.

But is it? OK, you come in at 2 o'clock. You don't have to be there till 3, but you come in at 2. From 2 to 3, you play cards. And at 3 you go out for infield or extra hitting or whatever, and then you come back and you take an hour. While the other team's hitting, you take an hour and you get a sandwich that I (the club) pays for and you eat it. Are you working?

Q Perhaps not, but at a lot of places where workers are paid an hourly wage, lunch breaks are paid.

A But not in all cases. There are people who

clock in and clock out for lunch. My point is, we know what minimum wage is, that's easy.

Q It varies from state to state.

A Yeah, but you can go to the national level and keep everybody happy. How do you figure out overtime?

Q Is there not a medium somewhere between making them full-time hourly workers and raising the pay.

A That's it. Like I said, I think it's time for an adjustment, and that's it. This is not a career choice, and people want to debate about the fact that McDonald's worker make more than minor league baseball players, and that's a fact. But I don't think that somewhere there's a major league in French fry prep that makes \$550,000 (as its) minimum wage or starting wage.

Q If that's the analogy, then the top is the manager of the McDonald's?

A How about the analogy that you're chasing the brass ring, and this is not a profession. I think an adjustment's due, no question about it. And I wouldn't be surprised if in this process you didn't see one.

Q Over the last couple of years we've seen the branding trend get crazier and crazier. Where do you think it's going, and does it positively or negatively affect in-park attendance?

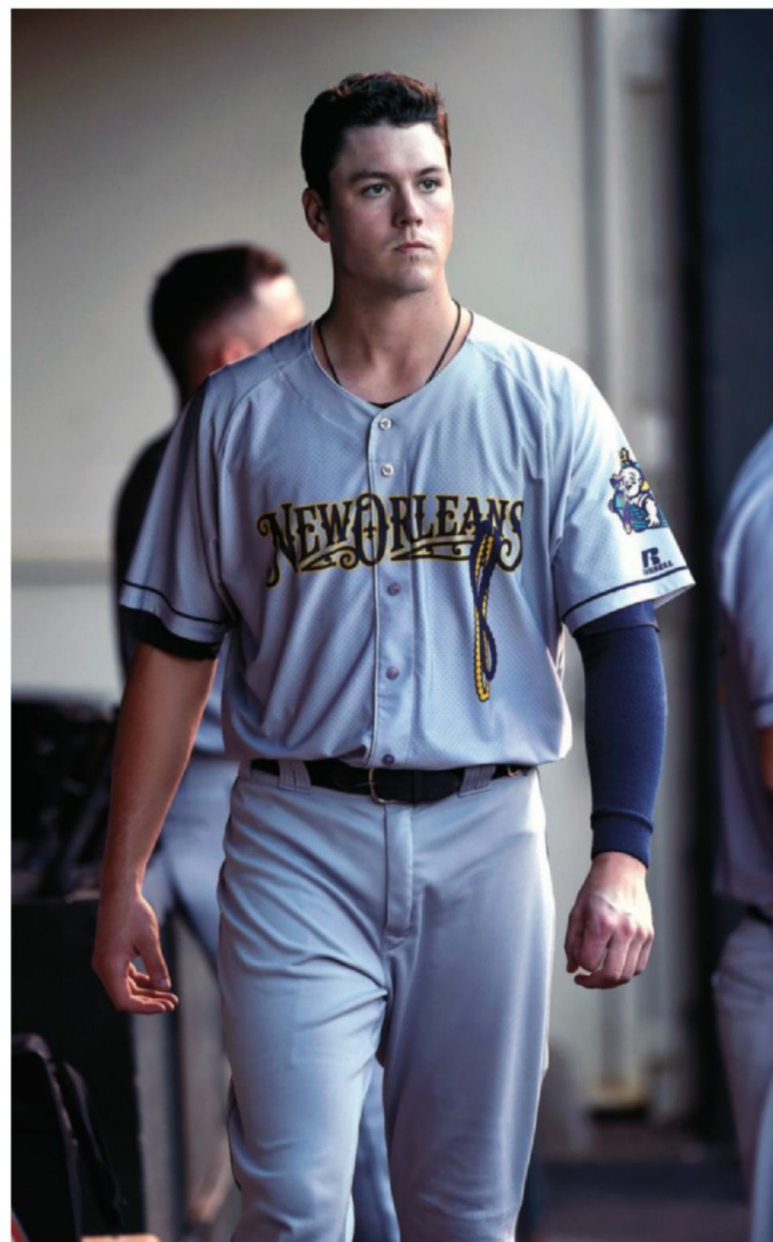
A I give everybody the credit that the re-branding is done in an effort to improve business. E-commerce, merchandise, tickets. You sell tickets and people show up (which means) food and beverage. I think it's going to continue, and it's going to continue because of the success of it. We've launched 10 radically different logos and nicknames in the last three or four years.

Q And that's just the permanent ones, not even counting the one-offs

A But from the permanent standpoint, I can't think of one that's been a miserable failure. Look, I told you last year I used to have opinions and I used to voice them and I used to say, 'Well, I don't think that (logo) ought to come in' and I'd look next spring and it's on the top 25 list, so I got out of the business of passing judgment, but I do give our clubs the credit. Is it about drawing people to the park? Absolutely. It's part of the brand and the branding process. We have gotten very sophisticated and very creative. In my mind, maybe sometimes we cross the line, but every time I think we do the public embraces it. I think the market will tell us when we've gone too far and we've had enough.

Q We went back and forth in the office about the Baby Cakes name. Some people hated it. Others liked it. Then it won our first LogoMania contest.

A In the first place, I didn't know what a Baby Cake was. So when they started explaining it to me, I said, 'OK, at least I see the regional. In New Orleans they know what it is,



so, OK." And then they come out with that cool, nasty baby logo. He looks angry, so, OK. And then it wins LogoMania, it's in the top 25 and people down there embrace it. My concern was more stoic and historical. You tell me you're going to put Triple-A professional athletes in a uniform that says Baby Cakes? Then I go to the Congressional baseball game, and Cedric Richmond, who's from Baton Rouge, is in full regalia—he's the pitcher for the Democrats—complete, top-to-bottom Baby Cakes. ■

► For stories about how **fantasy providers** will handle Angels prospect Shohei Ohtani and the processes and discussions they used to arrive at their decisions, head on over to **BaseballAmerica.com/industry**

GEAR

PLAYERS GET LOOSE WITH THERAGUN

The device helps players maintain their muscles

BY TIM NEWCOMB

Use Alex Gordon as an example. The Royals star dips into the dugout and runs a TheraGun device over his body, using the vibration therapy to loosen muscles. So do Yasiel Puig, Bryce Harper and an increasingly growing number of MLB players, whether pregame, in-game or postgame.

What all the players have in common is the desire to use Dr. Jason Wersland's technology to loosen muscles, whether getting them ready for use on the field or as a way to recover from the brutal travel and on-field grind of a major leaguer.

"Most of the time, athletes have been worked on a lot and know what it feels like to have treatment," Wersland said. "I witness when they put this in their hands, it speaks a language they get immediately and they have to have it."

Cutter Dykstra, son of former big leaguer Lenny Dykstra, has joined the TheraGun ambassador team, traveling across the continent getting the product in the hands of major league therapists and ballplayers. "The best thing about the TheraGun is the ease of use for these guys to have it in their bag," Dykstra said. "They have it in the dugout, in the bullpen ready to go. There is no setup time. In baseball, you are playing every day with long games, so to have something where you don't have to go ask for a massage or treatment is huge."

TheraGun offers vibration therapy, something that has been around for quite some time, but with portability. The amplitude and frequency creates the "ideal sauce" for vibration therapy on the go, Wersland said. The idea of vibration therapy is to move glycogen to the muscle while flushing the system with micro contractions that activate the muscle for use. By increasing glycogen to the muscle, it has enough fuel ready to burn. Vibration increases blood flow, breaks up scar tissue, decreases lactic acid and releases muscle spasms.

Using the gun, which comes with four different amplitude tip applications, can cut down on warmup and recovery time, Wersland said. He equates it to a three-fold benefit, meaning 3 minutes using the gun on a muscle equates to a 30-minute massage.

"It helps you prepare, perform and recover," he said. "Each one of those sections you treat with different timing and different ways."

For warmups, instead of heading to the clubhouse to run in place for that quick pinch-run call, a player may use the TheraGun for 30 seconds, Dykstra says. "For a guy sitting on the bench cold, they can put this up and down their arms and legs and get loose and cut their warmup time almost in half."

The in-game or in-workout use isn't much different, as players will run the gun over specific parts of the body to loosen it and prepare it to return to the field. Those sessions may take just 30 seconds or a



minute.

The recovery aspect can last up to 20 minutes, acting like an intense massage. "The recovery can be on the bus, on the plane, in a hotel room or at home without really having to do anything but work on healing yourself and getting better," Dykstra said.

The portability and ease of use make TheraGun a popular choice for athletes, but a one in the hand of trainers gives the players an extra benefit, because trainers have the knowledge of how to "sweep" the body to activate the proper muscles and tendons.

TheraGun has released its second version, the G2Pro, which updates the motor, changes the on/off trigger into a switch to allow play-

ers to reach more places on the body, adds a quick-attachment aspect and a battery indicator. Each battery—it comes with two—can last 40 minutes on a charge.

For the attachments, Wersland said they've developed a standard 1-inch-diameter ball, a larger 2-inch version to work on larger muscle groups with more vibration surface area, a cone to allow pin-point penetration into specific areas and a dampener attachment that has a softer output to make it more comfortable for youth or sensitive areas.

As players continue to search for ways to ease the strain on their body, TheraGun points them toward vibration therapy, whether in the dugout or in the clubhouse. ■

FOR THE RECORD

OBITUARIES

BOB BORKOWSKI, an outfielder who played for the Cubs, Reds and Brooklyn Dodgers from 1950-55, died Nov. 18 in Dayton, Ohio. He was 91.

Borkowski played in 470 major league games during his career—318 of which came with the Reds—and hit .251/.298/.346 with 16 home runs and 112 RBIs.

WILLIAM "WILLY" CONNOLLY, an infielder and outfielder who played 95 games in the Midwest League for the Twins organization in 1966, died Oct. 27. He was 74.

RAYMOND "RAY" COUVILLION, a righthander who pitched in the Evangeline League for the New Iberia Cardinals in 1947, died Nov. 12 in Opelousas, La. He was 92.

ERNE FAZIO, who played both second base and shortstop for the Houston Colt .45s in 1962 and '63 and the Kansas City Athletics in 1966, died Dec. 1 in Danville, Calif. He was 75.

Fazio played in 141 major league games during his career, including a career-high 102 in 1963, when he hit his only two major league home runs off of lefthanders Denny Lemaster and Hall of Famer Warren Spahn of the Milwaukee Braves.

DICK GERNERT, a first baseman and left fielder for the Red Sox, Cubs, Tigers, Reds and Astros from 1952-62, died Nov. 30 in Reading, Pa. He was 89.

Gernert played the majority of his 10-year career with the Red Sox, including his rookie season in 1952, when he hit 19 home runs and finished 25th in American League MVP voting.

MIGUEL ALFREDO GONZALEZ, a righthander who pitched in six games for the Phillies in 2014, died in a car crash on Nov. 23 in Havana, Cuba. He was 34.

Gonzalez played for the La Habana in Cuba from 2004-12, completing nearly 600 innings before signing a three-year, \$12-million con-

tract with the Phillies in 2013. Gonzalez struck out five batters in 5.1 innings during his major league career.

RICK "MYRON NOODLEMAN" HADER, one of the most well-known entertainers at minor league ballparks across the country, died Nov. 1. He was 59.

JOHN HALVACHS, a righthander who pitched in the Sooner State and Mississippi-Ohio Valley leagues for the New York Giants in 1953 and '54, died Nov. 3 in Lawrenceburg, Ky. He was 86.

DELTON "DEL" HELMS, who played 26 games in the Florida State League for the Tigers organization in 1957, died Nov. 8 in Longwood, Fla. He was 88.

MANNY JIMENEZ, a left fielder for the Kansas City Athletics from 1962-64 and the Pirates and Cubs from 1966-69, died Dec. 11 in New York. He was 79.

Jimenez hit .272/.337/.401 in 429 major league games during his career, including his career-best year in 1962, when as a rookie with A's he hit .301/.354/.428 with 11 home runs and 69 RBIs in 139 games.

WILLIAM "BILL" KNOCH, a minor league righthander who pitched in the Pirates organization from 1960-68, died Nov. 11 in Pittsburgh.

FRANK LARY, a righthander who pitched for the Tigers, Mets, Montreal Expos and White Sox from 1954-65, died Dec. 13 in Tuscaloosa, Ala. He was 87.

Lary was a two-time all-star with the Tigers in 1960 and '61, when he combined to win 38 of his 72 starts. He finished third in the American League Cy Young Award voting in 1961, when he went 23-9, 3.24 in 36 starts. For his career, Lary won 128 games and struck out 1,099 batters in 2,162 innings.

ROBERT "BOB" LEWIS, who played 10 games in the Longhorn League for the Odessa Oilers in 1949, died Nov. 1 in Fairfax, Va. He was 89.

CARL "ALEX" MORROW JR., a minor league infielder for parts of five seasons from 1952-60 for the Washington Senators and Reds organizations, died Sept. 3 in Montgomery, Ala. He was 82.

PETER PALMER, who played in the Pennsylvania-Ontario-New York and Carolina leagues for the Phillies organization during the 1952 and '55 seasons, respectively, died Nov. 7 in Muskegon, Mich. He was 89.

RANCE PLESS, a corner infielder for the Kansas City Athletics in 1956 and later a scout with the Braves for 25 years, died Nov. 11 in Greeneville, Tenn. He was 91.

Pless played in 48 games during his only major league season, recording 23 hits and nine RBIs during his 85 at-bats.



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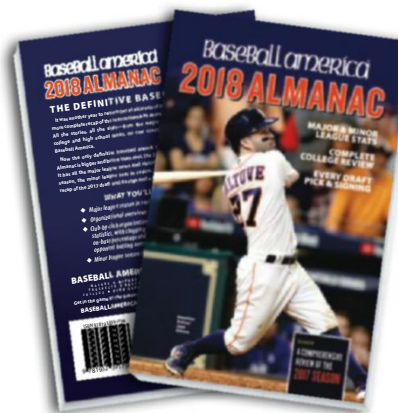
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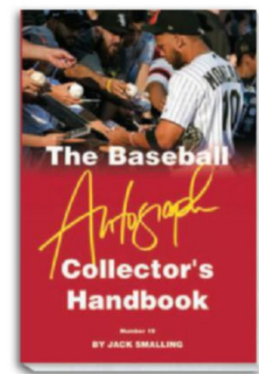
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CAN THE SONS BEST THE FATHERS?

Major league progeny highlight 2018 prospect class

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Baseball has a long history of being a game of fathers and sons. From Ray Boone to Bob Boone to Aaron and Bret Boone. From Ken Griffey Sr. to Ken Griffey Jr., baseball is a sport where sons often follow in the footsteps of their fathers.

Genetics plays a part in sons of big leaguers having professional careers of their own. Growing up around the game and getting top-notch instruction doesn't hurt either.

Baseball America was first published in 1981, so the magazine has gotten a chance to follow and celebrate the careers of baseball fathers and sons for years, but we're in an especially fertile time for prodigies who are progeny.

Heading into 2018, as many of four of the top 10 prospects on our Top 100 Prospects ranking will be the sons of former minor leaguers or big leaguers.

As we determine the Top 100 Prospects list, one of the questions we will answer is whether Blue Jays third baseman Vladimir Guerrero Jr. can equal his father's No. 2 ranking on the 1997 Baseball America Top 100 Prospects list. It will be another couple of decades before we'll know if he can match his father's Hall of Fame-caliber career, but there's no doubt that the Guerreros are already the best father-son prospects of the BA era.

Blue Jays shortstop Bo Bichette will also rank very high on the upcoming Top 100. Bichette is already a better prospect than his father, long-time Rockies outfielder Dante Bichette. But the elder Bichette can point out that he never got a chance to crack a Top 100. Our first Top 100 wasn't announced until 1990. Bichette was the No. 4 prospect in the California Angels' system before the 1989 season.

In fact, Dante Bichette ranked one spot ahead of righthander (and future Marlins closer) Bryan Harvey on that Angels' Top 10. Now Bryan Harvey's son Hunter, a righthander for the Orioles, has already made one Top 100 (No. 68 in 2014) and could crack it again if he can show he can stay healthy after a string of injury issues.

Ronald Acuna's father Ron, an outfielder, didn't ever make a top 10, but he did play more than a decade in the minors. The younger Acuna has already exceeded his father as a prospect, something his Top 100 Prospects ranking will only solidify.

Padres shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. skyrocketed up our rankings with a breakout season in 2017. His father Fernando Sr. never made a Top 100, but he did rank No. 2 for the Rangers in 1997.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. is following a similar path to that of his father, who proved to be one of the best hitters of his generation.



ANDREW WOOLLEY

Those four are among the top prospects in all of baseball, but they aren't the only notable sons. Twins shortstop Nick Gordon is looking to make his fourth Top 100. His half-brother Dee peaked at No. 26 on the 2011 list. Like the Bichettes, father Tom can't compare Top 100 rankings. Tom would have ranked high in 1989, when he ranked fourth among all righthanded pitching prospects—but we at BA were one year away from turning position rankings into a full-blown Top 100 Prospects.

The list goes on as you scan the team Top 10s we have published in each issue. Padres righthander Cal Quantrill is following in the path blazed by father Paul Quantrill, who had a 14-year big league career of his own. Bichette and Guerrero were teammates at high Class A Dunedin with Cavan Biggio, son of Astros second baseman Craig Biggio.

All of those father-son pairings span the Baseball America era. But as we've sent another Prospect Handbook to the printer, we're excited to have reached another milestone.

Birthered in 2001 at the turn of the 21st Century, the Prospect Handbook ranks the

Top 30 Prospects in each organization and reviews the state of each farm system. The book has now been around long enough to have spanned generations.

In our first Prospect Handbook, then 21-year-old, switch-hitting shortstop Cesar Izturis ranked No. 3 on our Blue Jays Top 30 Prospects list after spending the 2000 season at Triple-A Syracuse. He went on to have a 13-year big league career that stretched from 2001 to 2013.

This year, 18-year-old, switch-hitting second baseman Cesar Izturis Jr. is the Mariners' No. 31 prospect coming off a season he spent in the Dominican Summer League. We publish a supplement that ranks one additional prospect—No. 31—for each organization, but you can only acquire the supplement if you order the Handbook directly from BA.

Izturis Jr. has a little more work to do in 2018 to break into the proper Prospect Handbook, so there is still the opportunity for the first true father-son Prospect Handbook pairing.

Given the current trends, we know we won't have long to wait. ■



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