



As if the offseason couldn't get more stunning, the Indians had one final ace up their sleeve. With pitchers, catchers, and some position players reporting for Spring Training in Goodyear, AZ, the Indians generated even more of a buzz, coming to terms with Scott Boras client Michael Bourn on a four-year, \$48M contract with a vesting option for a fifth year, which automatically kicks in if Bourn has 550 plate appearances in 2016. Bourn, 30, was still on the market because of Boras's contract demands and because of the draft pick compensation that was required to sign him. The Indians will forfeit their competitive balance pick in the 2013 MLB Draft due to the signing.

In Bourn, the Indians get a speedster and plus defender. He'll certainly add a new dimension to the lineup, with 257 stolen bases over the last five seasons. Bourn has a career .272/.339/.365/.704 slash line over 871 games. Bourn has averaged just under 150 games played per season over the last five years, so the Indians are also getting a versatile player who has pretty much stayed healthy. He has spent his entire career in the National League with the Phillies, Astros, and Braves.

Bourn will be the Indians' Opening Day centerfielder, barring an injury. Advanced statistics are crazy about Bourn, who saved 24 runs defensively in the outfield in 2012. His WAR, wins above

replacement player, was 6.4 last season, which 13th in all of baseball. The majority of Bourn's value comes from his defense and his baserunning skills, but he set a career high in walks in 2012. By virtue of hitting a career-high nine home runs, Bourn also set a career high in slugging percentage.

The Indians now have a lot of options in their everyday lineup. With Michael Brantley, Drew Stubbs, and Bourn, the Indians have three very capable centerfielders. Nick Swisher could either play right field or first base, which could move Mark Reynolds into the everyday DH role. Bourn could bat leadoff, second, or towards the bottom of the order, depending on how manager Terry Francona wants to set up his lineup. The Indians lineup has now a tremendous combination of power and speed and great depth. Depending on the lineup, Mike Aviles and Drew Stubbs will be on the bench and those two players are borderline starters on a lot of teams.

If the Indians do decide to make Reynolds the full-time DH with Swisher at first base, an outfield of Brantley-Bourn-Stubbs could be the fastest defensive outfield in baseball. All of them have questionable throwing arms, but it's hard to see a lot of balls falling in for hits. They will definitely cover a lot of ground and will be very exciting to watch. Bourn's arm has rated above average in four of the last five seasons, so there's some hope there that he can contain the running game a little bit.

Frankly, this is a stunning bit of news. The Indians reportedly had no money left, yet managed to swoop in and grab Bourn, in large part because of their protected first round pick. Some sites, including Fangraphs, were projecting Bourn to sign a five-year, \$80M deal, so this looks like a bargain for the Indians. Anticipation is definitely building for the season and it's clear that the front office and Terry Francona are committed to building a winner. Boras, who [blasted the Indians](#) during the Choo negotiations and in the offseason, still managed to get a lucrative multi-year deal for his client.

If you're keeping score at home, that means that the Indians added Trevor Bauer, Nick Swisher, Michael Bourn, Mark Reynolds, Brett Myers, Mike Aviles, Drew Stubbs, and Matt Albers as guys who are sure to make a Major League impact this season. That's definitely a shift from what we have seen from recent offseasons and this Bourn signing is the cherry on top.