



Day four of the countdown is upon us; are you sick of me yet? I hope not, because the best really is yet to come. Today, we're going to look at a power righty who has worked his way to the top of the Indians minor league ladder, a 2012 pickup from the Angels who throws as hard as anyone in the organization, an athletic righthander from Wichita State who is flying a bit under the radar (for now), a power hitting catcher with origins in the Colonial League and a catcher/first baseman who came over from the Toronto Blue Jays this past offseason and is currently fighting for a spot with the big club out of spring training.

45. Matt Langwell, RHP

DOB: 5/6/1986

Height/Weight: 6-2/225

Bats/Throws: Right/Right

Acquired: 11<sup>th</sup> round pick in the 2008 draft

2012 Stats: 4-0, 3 SV, 2.74 ERA with 81 K and 27 BB in 69 IP between Akron and Columbus

Scouting Report: Langwell started out the 2012 season back in the Eastern League, but after 14 1/3 innings in which he allowed just one earned run he was promoted to AAA Columbus. With the Clippers, Langwell posted a 3.29 ERA and racked up 63 K in 54 2/3 IP, putting him at the doorstep of the big league roster in his 5<sup>th</sup> minor league season. It was the second consecutive year that he finished the year in Columbus, but has yet to get the call to the corner of Carnegie and Ontario.

Langwell is a straight-up reliever, featuring a simple but effective two-pitch arsenal of a fastball and slider. The fastball sits in the 91-94 MPH range, and his slider is in the low-80's. It's not a complicated repertoire, but it is effective in short bursts out of the bullpen. He's at his best when he is locating the slider well, keeping it down and away from righthanded hitters. He was a starter at Rice University, but after his first year as a pro the Indians transitioned Langwell to the bullpen where he has remained for the rest of his minor league career.

Prior to 2012, it was looking like Langwell might top out as a AAA reliever. But his K rate jumped to 10.6 per 9 IP last year, the highest K/9 of his minor league career. He lowered his ERA by a quarter of a run from 2011 to 2012, and gave up fewer hits and walks per 9 IP as well. Langwell put himself squarely in the discussion for a major league role as early as 2013, and he got an invite to big league camp this spring to compete for a job out of Goodyear. It's likely that Langwell will be back with AAA Columbus to start off the 2013 season, but he's in the mix for a call-up to The Show should the big club need a righthanded reliever in 2013.

Glass half-full: A setup man at the major league level

Glass half-empty: A setup man at the AAA level



44. Fabio Martinez, RHP

DOB: 10/29/1989

Height/Weight: 6-3/190 lb.

Bats/Throws: Right/Right

Acquired: Off of waivers from the LA Angels in 2012

2012 Stats: 0-7, 10.24 ERA with 30 K and 40 BB in 29 IP between high-A Inland Empire and Carolina

Scouting Report: Looking purely at the numbers, you're probably wondering why in the world Martinez is even on this countdown. I admit, the stat line is...not pretty. But there's a good explanation, I promise. Martinez was originally signed by the Angels as an international free agent in 2007 out of the Dominican Republic. He finally arrived stateside in 2009 after pitching in the Dominican Summer League, and in his first season in the US he went 4-2 with a 3.33 ERA, 102 K and 38 BB in 67 2/3 IP. I say again, 102 strikeouts in just 67 2/3 IP. He followed that up by striking out 141 (and walking 76) in 103 1/3 IP for Cedar Rapids in the low-A Midwest League in 2010, and despite the control problems Martinez was a top-10 prospect in the Angels organization. In 2011 he threw just 2 1/3 innings before being shut down with a lingering shoulder injury that cost Martinez the last month of the 2010 season as well. He never needed surgery, but the Angels tried to play it as safe as possible with their young pitcher.

Why did the Angels exercise so much caution with Martinez? Well, one look at his fastball tells you pretty much everything you need to know. Martinez sits comfortably in the 94-96 MPH range with his plus-plus heat, touching as high as 99. It's an outstanding offering with a lot of life, and as you can tell by the walk totals he sometimes has problems controlling the pitch. In addition to the fastball, Martinez has a slider that can flash plus or sail to the backstop, or pretty much anything in between. When both pitches are on, Martinez is pretty much unhittable. When they're not, he walks pretty much everyone in sight.

I never like to "scout" by looking at raw numbers, but in Martinez's case they really do tell most of the story. He's struck out 398 and walked 213 in 304 career minor league innings pitched. He has an electric arm, one of the best in the system, but if he can't maintain some level of control then all of the velocity in the world won't do him any good. The Indians designated Martinez for assignment in November, removing him from their 40-man roster. It's going to be a long road for Martinez, but he absolutely has all of the raw talent necessary to be an elite closer at the major league level. He's a very nice, soft-spoken kid who wants nothing more than to get back to his old 2010 self, and if the Indians developmental staff can harness his talent, then they'll have really stolen a player from the Angels. He's a long shot to make it to The Show, but it's a shot worth taking due to his immense raw talent.

Glass half-full: A closer at the MLB level

Glass half-empty: The yips persist and he never makes it out of AA



43. Jordan Cooper, RHP

DOB: 5/10/1989

Height/Weight: 6-2/190 lb.

Bats/Throws: Right/Right

Acquired: 9<sup>th</sup> round pick in the 2008 draft

2012 Stats: 9-8, 1 SV with a 3.46 ERA, 76 K and 16 BB in 96 1/3 IP between Lake County and Carolina

Scouting Report: Cooper was a 9<sup>th</sup> round selection in 2008 out of Wichita State, and the former Shocker began the 2012 season in Lake County. After just one appearance for the Captains, he was promoted to Carolina where he threw 94 of his 96 1/3 innings last year. He pitched the first half of 2012 out of the Mudcats bullpen, but transitioned his way into the starting rotation in August to close out the year. Cooper really came on after the all-star break, going 8-4 with a 2.97 ERA in 63 2/3 IP in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the season, striking out 50 and walking just 11. He did a much better job locating the ball within the strike zone, giving up 3 HR in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half after allowing 5 bombs in 30 1/3 IP prior to the all-star break.

Cooper has a deep arsenal that he uses to attack hitters, throwing both a 2 and 4-seam fastball, slider, cutter and curveball. The 4-seamer sits comfortably in the low 90's, and he can reach back for more. The 2-seamer is a tick slower, but has very nice arm-side run. His litany of breaking balls make him especially tough on righthanded hitters, as Cooper posted an ERA almost a full run lower against righties than against lefties last season. He has excellent stamina and endurance, maintaining his stuff deep into starts and not losing his velocity or the sharpness in his breaking stuff even after getting into the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> inning of his starts.

Cooper is a big, athletic pitcher with an extremely clean, repeatable delivery. He has a variety of pitches to keep hitters off balance, and does an excellent job pounding the strike zone and letting his defense help him out. He's not a huge strikeout guy but because he doesn't issue many free passes he can afford to pitch to contact more than most guys. He's comfortable starting or relieving, but I think that he definitely has a starter's arsenal and should stick in the rotation for the foreseeable future. I saw Cooper pitch twice last year, and both times he was lights-out for the Mudcats. He closed out the 2012 season with 20 straight innings without allowing an earned run, striking out 16 and walking just two in that timeframe. He was named the Carolina League Pitcher of the Week on August 27 for his efforts, and really went out on a high note in 2012. Hopefully he can carry that momentum over to 2013, and he should get a chance to do just that with the Akron Aeros to start off the season. He's a bit of an under-the-radar guy in the organization right now, but if he can have a 2013 similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of his 2012 season, he'll make a huge leap in these rankings come next offseason.

Glass half-full: A strike throwing, innings eating starter

Glass half-empty: A strike throwing, innings eating swingman out of the bullpen



42. Jake Lowery, C

DOB: 7/21/1990

Height/Weight: 5-10/200 lb.

Bats/Throws: Left/Right

Acquired: 4<sup>th</sup> round pick in the 2011 draft

2012 Stats: .232/.332/.397 with 9 HR and 53 games between Lake County and Carolina

Scouting Report: Lowery signed quickly after he was drafted in 2011, and was able to play a full season with the NYPL Mahoning Valley Scrappers. He made the NYPL All-Star team, and finished the season with 6 HR and a .792 OPS in 69 games. Based on that performance, the Indians decided that the 21-year old catcher was ready to skip low-A and take on the high-A Carolina League, and he was the Mudcats opening day catcher last season. Lowery struggled

with Carolina, hitting just .222/.315/.325 with 2 HR in 59 Carolina League contests, and the Indians decided to send him down to Lake County to try and get the young backstop to relax and just be himself. Lowery responded with much better numbers in part-time action with the Captains, going for a line of .248/.358/.504 with 7 HR and 28 RBI in 39 Midwest League games. It was an encouraging recovery for Lowery, who had really been struggling with the Mudcats in the first half of the 2012 season.

Lowery won the Johnny Bench Award in 2011 as the nation's top collegiate catcher. He hit .359 with 24 HR at James Madison University, and was voted as the top defensive catcher in the Colonial League by the opposing coaches. He has an average hit tool and above-average power from the left side. He has more success against righty pitching than lefty, but doesn't have platoon splits. He has a patient approach and a good eye at the plate, drawing 52 walks in 98 games last year. He does need to make more contact, striking out 110 times last season (including 71 in 59 Carolina League games). It was surprising to see so many strikeouts for Lowery, as he whiffed just 56 times in 69 games with the Scrappers in 2011. Skipping low-A is a challenge for any player, and for a 21-year old catcher who needed to worry about defense in addition to offense, it just proved to be too much for Lowery to handle.

Defensively, Lowery has a strong arm and good feet. His arm is so strong that he sometimes makes throws to 2B from his knees, something that the Indians coaching staff would prefer he eliminated from his arsenal. He moves well behind the plate and does a nice job handling a pitching staff. His arm actions can get a little loose, and the Indians would like him to clean those up to improve his pop times on throws to 2B. He projects as an average defensive catcher, and most of his value should eventually come from his bat.

Lowery is a good athlete and a talented hitter. Last season's struggles in Carolina are likely to be the exception, rather than the rule for Lowery at the plate. His power is legitimate, and his hit tool is better than we saw with the Mudcats last year. He should be able to cut down on the strikeouts, and the batting average and OBP will take corresponding jumps if he can just improve his contact rate. Lowery will play most of the 2013 season as a 22-year old, so even after a rough 2012 it's not like he's that far behind the developmental curve. He struggled with some of the advance breaking stuff that he was facing for the first time, but now that he knows what to expect he could have a much better year in a repeat tour of the Carolina League. He should again start off with the Mudcats, and it will be very interesting to see how much Lowery has grown and improved during the offseason.

Glass half-full: An offense-oriented starting catcher

Glass half-empty: An offense-oriented backup catcher



41. Yan Gomes, C

DOB: 7/19/1987

Height/Weight: 6-2/215 lb.

Bats/Throws: Right/Right

Acquired: From the Blue Jays as part of the Esmil Rodgers deal in 2012

2012 Stats: .204/.264/.367 with 4 HR and 13 RBI in 43 games for Toronto; .328/.380/.557 with 13 HR and 59 RBI in 79 games for AAA Las Vegas

Scouting Report: A native of Brazil, Gomes had by far the best offensive season of his career for AAA Las Vegas last year, propelling him all the way to the major leagues for a 43-game audition with the Blue Jays. Prior to 2012, the last time Gomes posted an OPS over .800 over a full season was in 2009, when he split time between the Rookie League and low-A and finished with 2 HR and an .809 OPS. Did he suddenly discover a hidden problem in his swing and fix it for the 2012 season? Probably not; the Pacific Coast League has always been known as a hitters league, and the Blue Jays affiliate part in Las Vegas is an absolute hitters paradise with dry desert air and cozy dimensions. All offensive numbers produced in Vegas have to be taken with a rather large grain of salt. Still, the 24-year old didn't exactly embarrass himself in his big-league audition, and should compete for a roster spot out of Goodyear in 2013.

Defensively, Gomes is a versatile player who appeared in games at catcher, 1B, 3B and outfield for the Blue Jays last season. He runs very well for a catcher, and his speed is probably a tick above average overall. He has a strong arm and a clean release, gunning down 31% of would-be basestealers for his minor league career.

Gomes participated in the Indians Winter Development Program this offseason, a program that typically features less experienced prospects than Gomes. His willingness to come to Cleveland in December for the program is a good sign that Gomes is excited about carving out a role for himself in his new organization, and Gomes has done everything the Indians have asked of him since they acquired him last fall. He's the first Brazilian-born player to play in major league baseball, and naturally has claim to the first hit and first home run by a Brazilian player. Despite that success, Gomes is not playing with Brazil's World Baseball Classic team, preferring to stick around in Indians camp and fight his way towards a roster spot. He's not likely to make the team out of Spring Training unless they carry three catchers, but if injury should befall Carlos Santana or Lou Marson, Gomes would be the first catcher called up to replace them. He'll likely play most of 2013 in the friendly confines of Huntington Park in Columbus, where he should continue to put up impressive offensive numbers at the AAA level.

Glass half-full: A backup catcher with some pop

Glass half-empty: A super-utility player with some pop

[Follow @Gotribe31](#)