



As we break into the top half of our little countdown, we start getting into some really exciting boom-or-bust type guys. Today, we're going to cover a defensive whiz at 3B who made some major strides with the bat last year, a pair of toolshed outfielders who have yet to play at even low-A, a power righthanded reliever (get used to seeing that description tossed around) and a southpaw who was acquired from the Tigers a couple of years ago in exchange for the immortal JHony Peralta.

30. Giovanny Urshela, 3B

DOB: 10/11/1991

Height/Weight: 6-0/197 lb.

Bats/Throws: Right/Right

Acquired: International free agent in 2008

2012 Stats: .278/.309/.446 with 14 HR and 59 RBI in 114 games for Carolina

Scouting Report: Signed as an international free agent out of Cartagena, Colombia, Urshela is an elite defensive 3B who had a solid season at the plate in 2012. Urshela popped 14 HR and posted a .755 OPS, both career highs. In 2011, Urshela played in 126 games for Lake County and hit just 9 HR with a .608 OPS, so he made clear strides at the plate last season. It's easy to see Urshela's growth as a hitter simply from looking at his stat line prior to and then after the all-star break. In the first half of the season, Urshela hit .254/.298/.345 with 2 HR and 20 RBI in 46 games. Not terrible, but not good either. After the all-star break though, Urshela played in 68 games and posted an impressive .294/.315/.515 line with 12 HR and 39 RBI. If Urshela can build on his 2nd half breakout in 2013, he could see his prospect standing take a huge jump.

Urshela has a smooth, line-drive stroke from the right side. He doesn't project to hit for a ton of power, but should hit for a decent average and collect plenty of doubles. Urshela drilled 30 doubles last season with the Mudcats, a figure that was good for 8th in the Carolina League. He has a big, athletic frame and will likely continue to fill out and add some strength that will help turn some of those doubles into home runs. Urshela does need to improve his approach, as he walked just 16 times last season. Despite the low walk rate, Urshela isn't a hacker at the plate with just 60 K last year, so it's just a matter of doing a better job with pitch selection. He's an average runner at best, hitting one triple and stealing just one base all of last season.

Urshela's real calling card is his defense. He has plus range, quick reactions and a very strong throwing arm at 3B. Scouts are unanimous in praising his D, and some even whisper that he has Gold Glove potential down the road. That's getting a little ahead of ourselves, but there's no doubt that he projects as plus defender at the hot corner. But 3B is still an offensive position, and Urshela's glove will only play if his bat can improve enough to carry him to the next level.

Urshela will play all of the 2013 season as a 21-year old, so he's well ahead of the developmental curve. He should be a member of the Akron Aeros for the entire season, and it will be interesting to see how the young Colombian adjusts to the advanced pitching of AA. So far in his brief career, Urshela has improved at the dish every time he's been promoted, so

hopefully that trend can continue against Eastern League pitchers. If he can carry over the momentum from his strong 2nd half in 2012, then Urshela will be a candidate for the top-15 part of this list next season.

Glass half-full: Jack Hannahan, with a little bit better bat

Glass half-empty: Jack Hannahan, with a little bit worse bat



29. Grant Sides, RP

DOB: 6/22/1989

Height/Weight: 6-4/215 lbs

Bats/Throws: Right/Right

Acquired: 12th round pick in the 2011 draft

2012 Stats: 3-1, 6 saves, 2.22 ERA with 75 K and 34 BB in 65 IP between Lake County and Carolina

Scouting Report: Sides was selected in the 12th round of the 2011 draft out of Samford College, and was coming off of Tommy John surgery in 2010. He had a great season in 2012, posting a 1.05 ERA in 18 appearances with Lake County and then striking out 11.2 batters per 9 innings pitched with Carolina after he was called up to the Mudcats. He served as one of the members of the Mudcats closer committee, nailing down 5 saves in the Carolina League. At the end of the season, Sides had a 2.22 ERA and had allowed just one HR in his 65 very impressive innings of work.

Sides' bread and butter is his fastball, and it's a plus offering sitting between 94-96 MPH and has touched 98. He's really just a two-pitch guy, and compliments the fastball with an above-average slider. He was still working on getting a feel for the slider in his first full season as a professional last year, but by the end of the year it was a pitch he felt pretty comfortable throwing in almost any situation.

Sides had impressive numbers last year, but he was much better overall in Lake County than in Carolina. When Sides moved up to the Carolina League, his ERA, walk rate, and AVG against all rose (as did his K rate, ironically). The most concerning jump came in Sides' walk rate, as after issuing just 11 free passes in 34 1/3 IP with Lake County, he walked 23 in 30 2/3 innings of work with the Mudcats. His higher K rate helped strand a lot of those runners, but the other peripherals are concerning.

Sides will turn 24 in June of 2013, so he needs to move quickly through the system to stay at an age-appropriate level. He should begin the 2013 season with AA Akron, and needs to do a better job throwing strikes with the Aeros than he did with the Mudcats last year. If he's throwing strikes, he can be an extremely effective reliever in the back end of a bullpen.

Glass half-full: A power reliever in the back end of a MLB bullpen

Glass half-empty: A power reliever in the middle of a bullpen



28. Giovanni Soto, SP

DOB: 5/18/1991

Height/Weight: 6-3/180 lbs

Bats/Throws: Left/Left

Acquired: From the Tigers in exchange for Jhonny Peralta in 2010

2012 Stats: 6-9, 3.93 ERA with 100 K and 49 BB in 121 1/3 IP for Akron

Scouting Report: Despite the sub-.500 record, Soto had an excellent season for AA Akron, posting an ERA south of 4.00 and a 1.31 WHIP. Those are solid numbers no matter what, but

when you consider that Soto was just a 21-year old in AA, that makes them even more impressive. Soto had some elbow issues in 2011 that limited him to just 64 innings of work, but he pitched pretty much injury-free in 2012, an encouraging sign that the elbow issue is in the past and nothing chronic.

Soto has an average fastball that sits consistently between 88-91 MPH, and has touched as high as 94. The pitch has nice arm-side run, and can be extremely effective against hitters on both sides of the plate when he's commanding it in the strike zone. He compliments the fastball with a cutter, curveball and changeup. His primary secondary offering is the cutter, a pitch that's especially effective against lefthanded batters. Both his curve and changeup are average pitches and can flash better than that, and the curve is more consistent than the changeup at this stage of Soto's career.

Soto won't turn 22 until late-May of this year, but for someone his age he has a pretty deep resume. For his career, Soto has a 23-21 record with a 3.09 ERA, 315 K and 127 BB in 349 2/3 innings pitched. Soto is a stereotypical "crafty lefthander" who does a nice job attacking hitters with his repertoire. He can pitch backwards, and his fastball velocity plays up due to his deceptive motion and success with his offspeed stuff. The Indians would like to see Soto add a little strength to his frame, and if he does that there's still a chance that he could pick up another tick or two on his fastball. Physically he reminds me a lot of former Indians RP Raffy Perez, and there's a chance that Soto ends up in a similar relief role. He doesn't have a plus third pitch yet, and could really be effective as a two-pitch lefty specialist with his fastball/cutter combo. For now though, Soto will remain in the rotation and should pitch in AAA Columbus at some point in 2013.

Glass half-full: A back of the rotation starter

Glass half-empty: A lefty specialist out of the bullpen





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