



In honor of my TCF colleague Al Ciammaichella's Top 61 Prospects countdown, with an [overview](#),
[#61-56](#),
[#55-51](#), and
[#50-46](#)

posted by mid-afternoon on Saturday, I wanted to rank the players on my projected Indians 25-man roster. To do this, I'm going to consider offensive and defensive value for position players and performance and importance for pitchers. The Indians' organizational strength at that position will also be considered because players that are replaceable will be ranked lower.

This is entirely subjective and your personal rankings may differ drastically from mine. A lot can change between now and April 2, so the 25-man roster may be affected by injuries, late free agent signings or trades, and guys really making a positive impact the rest of the spring. This, however, is the roster I fully explain the Indians to break camp with.

To avoid a 4,000+-word article, I'll split this up into two parts running on consecutive Saturdays as my weekly View from the Porch article.

In descending order, here is a rank of my #25-#13 on my projected Indians 25-man roster:

#25: Matt Albers, RHP

Matt Albers will pitch in a lot of low-leverage situations for Terry Francona. With the team invested in the development of Cody Allen and three other right handers (Chris Perez, Vinnie Pestano, and Joe Smith) ahead of him in the pecking order, Albers may be used in more of a long reliever role. Over the last four seasons, 83 of Albers's appearances have spanned more than one inning.

He does not have particularly impressive career stats. Over the last four years, he has appeared in 237 games with a 4.34 ERA and a 1.71 K/BB ratio. He provides Major League experience and should be an asset as a guy who will be accepting of his role.

Albers's spot in the bullpen is no guarantee as there should be a lot of pressure from guys in Columbus throughout the season.

#24: Ryan Raburn, Utility IF/OF

Ryan Raburn's versatility and impressive spring will probably be enough to get him to open the season with the Indians. Raburn is coming off by far the worst season of his career. Prior to this season, Raburn was a career 4.6 win player over seven seasons with the Tigers. From 2009-2011, Raburn hit 45 home runs in 1,119 plate appearances.

Defensively, Raburn has been an above average left fielder, saving 16 runs defensively in over 1600 innings. In center, Raburn has been right around average. At every other position he has played, 1B, 2B, 3B, and RF, Raburn is a below average defender. In five of seven seasons, Raburn has also checked in as an above average base runner.

Raburn likely makes the team because using a veteran in a super utility spot is better than using a young guy. Veterans know how to stay fresh and adapt to the role. The Indians don't have a better candidate than Raburn.

#23: Jason Giambi, DH

Based on Terry Francona's comments about veteran leadership, Jason Giambi has a good chance to leave Goodyear with the Indians. Giambi's locker in Goodyear is between Jason Kipnis and Lonnie Chisenhall and that was done with a purpose. Giambi, who was a candidate for the Colorado Rockies managerial position, could see some at bats at designated hitter when the Indians want to sit Drew Stubbs against a tough righty or give somebody a day off.

It's difficult to know just how much is left in the tank for Giambi. The last three and a half seasons, he has played in the National League with the Rockies, serving predominantly as a pinch hitter. He played 78 games at first base over that span. Giambi spent 17 days on the disabled list in 2011 and 42 days on the DL in 2012.

With plenty of DH options on a daily basis and Yan Gomes in Columbus, who knows how long Giambi will be on the active roster. He is still a disciplined hitter with occasional power, so he could help.

#22: Rich Hill, LHP

Rich Hill should have the inside track at being the primary lefty setup man if he stays healthy throughout Spring Training. It's a very big role, but with Hill's recent health issues and two quality, but inexperienced, in-house options, Hill's time may be short and sweet with the Tribe, hence the low ranking.

Hill is trying to reinvent himself as a reliever as arm problems and ineffectiveness removed any chance of being an everyday starter. Hill made 25 appearances with the Red Sox last season, posting a 1.83 ERA as a situational lefty. One big issue for Hill was that he walked 11 in 19.2 innings, but he also struck out 21. For his career, Hill has held lefties to a .206 average.

With Nick Hagadone and Scott Barnes ready to step in at any given time, Hill will have to stay healthy and effective to keep his job.

#21: Lou Marson, C

Terry Francona has already [expressed his desire to have Carlos Santana catch](#) as much as his body allows. Marson, to put it nicely, really can't hit. He has no power and cannot hit right handed pitching. One thing Marson does do is walk, posting a career .309 OBP despite a .220 batting average. That's quite a skill for a guy who doesn't play much.

Marson, heralded for his defensive prowess, threw out just 11 of 78 base stealers last season, a 14 percent success rate. Marson checked in well above average in 2010 and 2011 with a 38 percent caught stealing rate. If 2012 is the aberration and not the norm, Marson will again carry value defensively.

Yan Gomes provides more bat and less defense, but he could get a shot to be the backup catcher if Marson continues to struggle throwing runners out along with providing very little offense.

#20: Scott Kazmir, LHP

The latest Indians reclamation project should win the final spot in the starting rotation and will get a chance to prove that he's back. After being a quality starter from 2005-2008, posting a 3.51 ERA and a 3.72 FIP, Kazmir stopped getting swings and misses and lost velocity. By 2012, he was pitching for the Sugar Land Skeeters in the Atlantic League and couldn't touch 90 mph.

Kazmir's velocity has returned, now sitting between 89-93 mph according to Spring Training reports, and with it, the chance to join a Major League rotation. Like everybody else, I'm skeptical of Kazmir. With Trevor Bauer and Carlos Carrasco in waiting, Kazmir will probably get a two-month audition to prove his worth. That would be enough time for Carrasco to shake off the rust and/or the deadline to pass for the Indians to get an extra year of contractual control out of Trevor Bauer.

#19: Brett Myers, RHP

This is certainly low for the pitcher projected to be the Indians #3 starter, but my expectations for Myers are low. Myers makes the transition back to the starting rotation after spending the 2012 season in the bullpen. From a performance standpoint, the Indians should be happy if Myers posts league average numbers. In Myers's last three seasons as a starter, his average fastball velocity has been 88.4, 89.3, and 89.3. Last season, in the bullpen, he averaged 91.6.

Not that velocity means everything, but his home run per fly ball percentage is well above average and he induces an above average number of ground balls. The Indians infield defense remains a question and any mistake Myers makes could leave the ballpark with runners on.

Like with Kazmir, the Indians have Carrasco and Bauer in waiting and could always choose to move Myers back to the bullpen if he struggles as a starter.

#18: Nick Hagadone, LHP

Nick Hagadone had a really difficult 2012. Not only did he post a 6.39 ERA and continue to show serious control issues with a 5.33 BB/9, he broke his arm by punching a wall in the clubhouse. Hagadone is a hard-thrower with a high ceiling and could develop into a premier left handed setup man. It's a role he will have to earn.

Hagadone did make enormous strides in getting ahead in the count, throwing first pitch strikes to 59.5 percent of hitters. He needs to trust his stuff and avoid nibbling in order to be effective. With his arm, the sky's the limit, but I still believe Rich Hill will be who Francona counts on in the biggest situational spots.

Scott Barnes will be nipping at Hagadone, and Hill, for that spot in the bullpen. He was impressive last season, holding left handed batters to a .236 average.

#17: Cody Allen, RHP

Cody Allen's meteoric rise through the Indians system was one of the most pleasant developments of the 2012 season. Allen began the year in Advanced-A Kinston and ended the season in Cleveland. What he did in the minor leagues was incredible. In 31 appearances covering 43.1 innings, he allowed nine runs, struck out 53, and walked nine.

With the Indians, Allen showed flashes of brilliance, regularly hitting 97 on the gun and posted a 3.72 ERA over 29 appearances. In 29 innings, he allowed 44 baserunners, but still struck out 27. He will be put into a role where he has a good chance to excel and will serve as the 6th/7th innings setup man behind Joe Smith.

The Indians do have some quality relief arms in the system. Unless Allen totally falls flat, he should spend the season in Cleveland.

#16: Ubaldo Jimenez, RHP

As much as we hate to admit it...again...the Indians' success could be tied to the right arm of Ubaldo Jimenez. Believe me, he's not rated this high for his performance. The Indians are working with Jimenez to [fix his delivery](#) and regain velocity by getting his momentum to go towards the plate. This is not a minor fix because it involves removing a lot of bad habits.

Jimenez has a long way to go to be adequate. To be "good", he has an even longer way to go. Jimenez pitched into the seventh just eight times in his 31 starts last season and had the higher BB/9 and HR/9 of his career. Even if the velocity does not return, Jimenez must keep the ball down and go back to getting ground balls.

It's hard to say if or when the Indians would pull the plug on the Ubaldo Jimenez Experience, but, like the other two starters I have mentioned, Bauer and Carrasco will be options.

#15: Mike Aviles, Utility IF

Mike Aviles was a solid acquisition by Chris Antonetti, picking up the veteran infielder for Esmil Rogers shortly after the 2012 season. Aviles will give the Indians a good defender to plug in at second base, shortstop, or third base to give a day off to three of their key players.

Jason Kipnis wore down last season after posting an impressive first half that garnered All-Star talk. He had a .277/.345/.419/.764 slash line in the first half. His second half was ugly, batting .233/.322/.328/.651. The biggest difference was in slugging percentage, which signifies a slow down of bat speed and fatigue. Asdrubal Cabrera is a player prone to streaks, good and bad, and a day off here and there could snap him out of bad streaks. Lonnie Chisenhall will struggle against lefties, while Aviles is above average against them.

Aviles should be a very valuable player to the team and there are no utility candidates to push him.

#14: Drew Stubbs, OF

Drew Stubbs was the “throw-in” in the Shin-Soo Choo/Trevor Bauer trade. As the throw-in, he is projected to be the everyday right fielder, with Nick Swisher playing first base and Mark Reynolds as the everyday designated hitter. In this case, “everyday” seems a little hyperbolic, because the Indians have so many options at 1B/RF/DH.

As I outlined the other day in [my piece about platoons](#) , Stubbs is an effective bat against left handed pitching. He has a little bit of pop in his bat as well. He is a good defensive outfielder who possesses great speed. It would seem that Stubbs is going to play quite a bit and his value will come from his legs.

He strikes out a lot, which should be negated slightly by batting at the bottom of the order. The only way his at bats are cut is if Giambi proves to be a productive DH, moving Swisher to RF and Reynolds to 1B. Stubbs will be a big part of this team.

#13: Lonnie Chisenhall, 3B

Lonnie Chisenhall finally gets the third base job all to himself. With nobody to push him for at bats, he can relax and focus on being a productive hitter. There are a lot of things in Lonnie Baseball's game that are a work in progress, including defense, hitting against left handed pitching, and plate discipline. But, he's got a short, quick line drive stroke and has some power.

If Chisenhall flops offensively, the Indians should have enough offense to survive. Defensively, Chisenhall needs to hold up his end at the hot corner and not cost the Indians too badly.

Mike Aviles will probably see a little time at third base to spell Chisenhall, but, barring injury, it's safe to pencil him in for at least 550 plate appearances and his first full season in the bigs.

Like I said, this list is entirely subjective, but one of the things to notice is that the Indians have a lot more depth than in past years. Slumps to key players won't kill the Indians like it has in the past because they have the ability to give a struggling player a day off.

The top 12 on the Indians 25-man roster will be posted next Saturday, so be sure to keep an eye out for it.