



It was June 6, 2011, 67 years to the day after Generals Eisenhower and Bradley ordered the combined allied troops to begin storming the beaches of Normandy, France in what was the beginning of the end for Adolf Hitler's "1000 year" Reich. Coincidence? Absolutely. Because all we're talking about is the 2011 Rule 4 Amateur draft. I was sitting nervously on my couch when Bud Selig announced that the Indians were on the clock. The 2011 draft was universally held as one of the most talented in years, and the Indians had the #8 overall pick. It would be almost difficult to screw up a top-10 pick in a draft that loaded, but if ESPN's Keith Law and other "experts" were to be believed, the Indians were about to do just that. Most of the so-called "experts" had the Indians selecting a low-ceiling, high-floor collegiate arm like Taylor Jungmann or Jed Bradley. A safe, signable pick, but a completely uninspiring choice that would have been a waste of the #8 pick in the draft . [I had recently published a couple of articles pining for the selection of prep shortstop Francisco Lindor if he was still on the board](#) , or [flamethrowing high schooler Archie Bradley if Lindor wasn't around](#) . Well, Bradley went 7<sup>th</sup>

overall to the Arizona Diamondbacks, leaving Lindor (and the gaggle of college arms) on the board for the Indians at #8. As the seconds ticked off the clock, I got that all-too familiar feeling in the pit of my stomach. The feeling that most Cleveland fans get when their team is on the clock; the feeling that something is about to go terribly wrong. But when the always-excitabile Bud Selig read off the Indians' selection, it was high school shortstop Francisco Lindor. I let out a yell of excitement, and got down to business writing a celebratory article about the Indians making what I hoped and believed was the best selection possible for the future of the franchise.

Lindor signed right at the deadline in 2011 for an overslot bonus of \$2.9 million. He reported to short-season Mahoning Valley in time to play in 5 games, collecting 6 hits in 19 at bats with the Scrappers during his professional debut. It was a brief taste of professional baseball for the switch-hitting prodigy, but enough to get his feet wet. The Indians aggressively assigned the 18-year old to low-A Lake County to open the 2012 season, and Lindor responded by hitting a very respectable .257/.352/.355 with 6 HR, 42 RBI and 27 SB in 122 games for the Lake County Captains. The low-A Midwest League is a notoriously difficult environment for hitters, so for the young Lindor to put up that line while at the same time providing Gold Glove-caliber defense at shortstop, you know the Indians had to be happy with their young prodigy. Lindor came into the 2013 season as the consensus top prospect in the organization, and a top-10 overall guy in all of baseball. The Indians had Lindor stick around in big-league camp during nearly all of spring training, getting him valuable experience in a major league clubhouse before assigning him to the high-A Carolina Mudcats for opening day. Like the Midwest League, the Carolina League is known to be friendlier to pitchers than hitters. But like in the Midwest League, Lindor is more than holding his own here in 2013. He's appeared in 63 games for the Mudcats so far this season, and is hitting a solid .296/.371/.399 with a HR, 21 RBI, 4 triples and 15 stolen bases. Probably the most impressive stat for the 19-year old is the 28 walks to just 29 strikeouts that he's accumulated this season. That kind of plate discipline for a 19-year old in the Carolina League is nearly unheard of. And when you consider that Lindor's lofty prospect status is built primarily on his defense, not his offense, you begin to see why the Indians are so excited for their shortstop of the future.



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