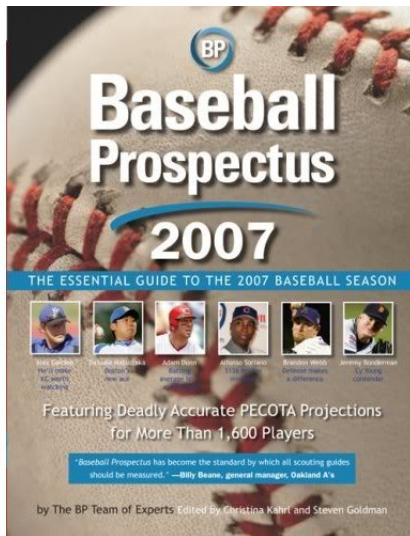


Q&A With Kevin Goldstein

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Monday, March 26 2007 7:00 PM -

If you want to talk baseball prospects, one of the top names around to talk with is Kevin Goldstein. Kevin is a highly acclaimed writer for *Baseball Prospectus* who focuses on baseball prospects and the draft with his



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, Kevin wrote for [Baseball America](#)

and [ESPN](#)

from 2003-2006, and to date he is the only person to write for both *Baseball Prospectus*

and *Baseball America*

Before joining *Baseball America*

, he built his reputation with the incredible website [The ProspectReport](#)

I recently had the chance to talk with Kevin about what he does, as well as the young players in the Indians farm system. In addition to my own questions, I polled some fans for any specific questions they wanted answered, and several are listed below. Thanks to Kevin for taking the time to do this, especially considering the fact that the minor league baseball season is about to start in just over a week. Oh, and be sure to pick up a copy of the new book, [Baseball Prospectus 2007:](#)

[The Essential Guide to the 2007 Baseball Season](#)

Without further ado here is the Q&A:

Q: Even though you write about and cover a deluge of prospects from various teams in baseball, you do have a rooting interest in a team, yes? Who?

Kevin Goldstein (KG): National League; Mets. American League; White Sox. I think it's important to note here that allowing my rooting interests to cloud how I evaluate prospects would be unprofessional, and frankly, quite lame. The funny thing is I get accused of having pro- or anti- biases all the time - I actually collected them for awhile and it took 18 months for me to fill up all 30 slots - so I've been accused of having it out for all 30 teams - but I digress.

Q: Was writing and following baseball prospects something you always wanted to do? What turned you on to it?

KG: Oh, man. Crazy long answer, so I'll keep it brief. Like many people in the business now, especially at Baseball Prospectus (BP), I grew up with the Bill James Abstracts, which really changed to the way I look at the game. The prospect action came around because while I love the numbers side of things, I love even more the scouting side of things, and the aspect of the game that is maybe not so quantifiable. In the end, I write about baseball for a living, which is the greatest thing ever. I'm still waiting for my mom to wake me up and tell me it's time to go to school.

Q: Getting to the prospects, when you rate/rank your prospects, do you use Nate Silver's PECOTA numbers? Is PECOTA as effective with predicting minor league performance as it is with the major leaguers?

KG: I don't think it's as effective - but it is telling. As a general rule, as with any kind of predictive system, the more information (track record) we have, the better we can predict off that track record. Minor league guys have less of a track record, so there's more variance.

Q: What notable players in the Indians farm system does PECOTA like? Dislike?

KG: I wrote the Indians comments for [Baseball Prospectus 2007](#), and two that jumped out at me were Adam Miller and Fausto Carmona. It didn't like Miller, much, but a lot of that is because 2005 was so messed up for him, and he is over-punished for it if you will. Despite some struggles, Fausto Carmona compares favorably to a number of starters who had nice major league careers - and I agree with that assessment.

Q: In your [Top 100 Prospect](#) listing, you have Adam Miler (19), Chuck Lofgren (35), and Crowe (60). Brian Barton just missed the cut. What are your thoughts on Barton? I've often seen comps to Mike Cameron.

KG: Not crazy about the Cameron comp - he's nowhere near that class defensively. He's a

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weird guy to evaluate just because of the age factor. Jason Bay made it work, but he's more the exception than the rule. Still, his production is impossible to ignore.

Q: In your [Top 10 Indians Prospect](#) listing, you had Drennen listed 4th and Barton 5th, but in your Top 100 Prospect listing, Drennen didn't make the list yet Barton was an honorable mention. Can you explain?

KG: Sure. Those 10 guys out of the top 100 were NOT 101-110 - they were more guys who I got a lot of questions about during the year and therefore anticipated people wondering why they were not included. If I went 200 deep instead of 100, Drennen would be ahead of Barton still.

Q: With Grady Sizemore firmly planted in center field for the Indians for several more years, many of the Indians outfield prospects like Trevor Crowe, Franklin Gutierrez, and others best chance to make the Indians roster is as a corner outfielder of 4th outfielder. Does this take away from their prospect luster since many of the Indians best outfield prospects are center fielders?

KG: When ranking prospects, you really can't put opportunity into the equation. For example, if the Yankees had some total stud, the best shortstop prospect around, and he was at Triple-A, you couldn't ding him just because Jeter was around. So it doesn't affect their luster, it just hinders their opportunity with the current club.

Q: Andy Marte is about to begin his first full season in the majors, and Baseball Prospectus used to always be very high on his potential. What do you expect from Marte this year and beyond?

KG: Marte has lost some luster, and again, more because of NOT developing at the expected pace as opposed to going backwards. I still think he'll be a solid third baseman, worthy of a starting job - just not a big star.

Q: While not a prospect anymore, what is your take on recently acquired second baseman Josh Barfield?

KG: I'm a huge Barfield fan and I love that trade. I think he'll have a big year - say .280 or so with 15-18 home runs. His bat was killed by that home park last year and his hitting ability is too good to ignore.

Q: Where did Franklin Gutierrez's power go? Also, is holding Asdrubal Cabrera back in Double-A Akron a good move on the Indians part to get Cabrera to catch his breath some and work on things?

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KG: I think too much was put into Gutierrez' power surge in the Florida State League, at Vero Beach, the best home run park in the league. His double rate has really remained both high and constant, the disappointment is more in the power not developing, as opposed to going backwards. I still think there's some future for him as a good bench outfielder. Cabrera's a larger concern. He's thickened up a bit, and not the defensive force he once was. His glove was going to carry him, and now it might not.

Q: What is the Indians farm system's biggest area of strength? Weakness?

KG: The strength of the system is in pitching, both starters and relievers. Their weaknesses are up the middle players - catchers and shortstops especially.

Q: How many actual blue chip prospects do you think the Indians have in their farm system?

KG: I think Miller is the only absolute blue-chipper here - and that's not a bad thing - many teams don't even have one.

Q: Miller was recently sent down to minor league camp by the Indians after 14 shutout innings of work in 4 appearances this spring, and held opposing batters to a .160 average. Is he ready?

KG: Probably, but I understand wanted to get him some Triple-A work first. He'll likely be up by the All-Star break at the earliest.

Q: What is Chuck Lofgren's ETA, and what are your thoughts on him?

KG: Late 2008. Very good prospect, above average starting pitcher - not a superstar but very valuable.

Q: Is Brad Snyder in for a rebound season, or was he exposed last year and his ceiling may have been reached?

KG: It's really very very clear what's going on there. He has tons of tools, but none of it is going to matter until he curbs his strikeout rate, and that's a very very difficult thing to do. This is a pretty pivotal year for him.

Q: The Indians have several rookie relievers who could see action this year in Juan Lara, Eddie Mujica, Tom Mastny, Rafael Perez and Tony Sipp. Aside from Sipp, any of these guys worth getting excited about?

KG: I think so. I'm actually a really big fan of their relief corps, liking all of those guys and seeing them as solid to above-average bullpen arms. They could be very deep in the late innings in a year or two.

Q: What highly touted prospect in the Indians system do you see having a strong year to either solidify his status or breaking through to elite status?

KG: I could see Wes Hodges having a big, big year with the bat, though his defense could be shaky.

Q: What lesser known prospect is someone to keep an eye on?

KG: I think Josh Rodriguez could have a big year and end up profiling as an interesting offensive oriented second baseman.

Q: What about Ryan Goleski? Do you view him as a significant loss for the Indians? Do you think he is going to be returned?

KG: I don't think it's a huge loss. He's probably NOT going to make the team, but Oakland wants to keep him, and probably will so with a minor trade.

Q: Is it time for Michael Aubrey to, um, you know or get off the pot?

KG: Sure. Just an ugly career. Sad, really - because when he's healthy, he sure can hit.

Q: What positional player taken in the 2006 draft do you like most? Pitcher?

KG: Like most - grading as top value, not just as top players, I'll take Matt McBride and Stephen Wright.

Q: The Indians drafted power right-hander Tim Lincecum in the 42nd round of the 2005 Draft, but were unable to sign him. Lincecum ended up being drafted by the Giants in the 1st round of the 2006 Draft, and now he is one of the top right-handed pitching prospects in all of baseball. Couldn't the Indians see the potential in him and overpaid for him like they did with Tony Sipp?

KG: I don't think it's fair at all to criticize the Indians here. The gap between the June 2005 version of Lincecum and the June 2006 version is vast. They took a flyer on him, and they made a solid, honest run at signing him, but he went back to school hoping to improve his stock. He did, the gambit worked, but Cleveland did nothing wrong there.

Many thanks to Kevin for taking the time to talk about the young Indians at the major league level, as well as in the farm system. Be sure to check out Kevin's prospect pieces on [Baseball Prospectus](#) titled "Future Shock" which appear several times a week.

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Coming Soon: In-depth team previews for the Indians four full-season minor league affiliates Buffalo, Akron, Kinston and Lake County.