

We're getting closer and closer to the launch of Tony's Top 50 Indians Prospects, a piece we will run in seven installments as we count it down from now until mid January. In this lead in to that piece, Tony and Dennis Nosco take a look at the Indians 2007 draft class, who they chose not to include in the top 50 for reasons explained in this piece. More great stuff from Tony and Dennis here as we await their Top Prospect List.



As mentioned in [Thursday's intro piece](#) , as the Top 50+ Prospect list was being put together this year, it was decided to not include any 2007 draftees except first round pick Beau Mills and to include no 2007 foreign signees or guys who played this year in the Dominican Summer League (DSL). Frankly, although a number of these guys have the potential to be top prospects, it is very difficult to rank them against more experienced prospects based on a few summer league games (in some cases no games at all) against young, inexperienced opponents.

Although we decided not to include them in this prospect list, we felt that they still needed to be included in some way and felt this addendum to the Top 50+ Prospect list was necessary. So, before we dive into the actual list, here is one more group of players. Thanks to [Dennis Nosco](#) for taking the lead on this, as he wrote the scouting reports for all of the players listed below from the 2007 Draft and the DSL. Most that know Denny know that he has a passion for the draft, so this was right up his alley in picking out and showcasing the top young talent from our most recent draft.

A number of these younger players distinguished themselves in their first year, and we have highlighted a number of them from each area below in alphabetical order.

It should be noted, and someone brought this up in response to our first article, that the Indians farm system ranks somewhere around the middle (15th) in baseball. A lot of this has to do with the graduation of some good talent last year, the loss of Matt Whitney and Brian Barton in the Rule 5 Draft, and did not add much due to a lackluster draft last year and a lack of any high profile international signings. Still, there is a lot of potential with a lot of the young guys who stepped up and performed in the lower levels at Lake County and Kinston last year.

All ages are as of April 1, 2008.

2007 Draftees

Matt Brown - Outfielder

Age: 23 **Height: 6'1"** **Weight: 183** **Bats: Left** **Throws: Right**

				
2007 Mahoning Val	.250	63	224	22

The Indians 13th round pick in 2007, coming out of college last year his biggest challenge was developing better plate discipline. He is an intriguing outfielder who offers a great package of overall tools, one of the best in the 2007 draft. He was the 184th best prospect in the 2007 draft according to Baseball America and that publication predicted he could have gone as high as the 3rd or 4th round so he is a very good late round pick by the Indians. He has good bat speed, raw power, good arm strength, is an average runner and his defense is a major strength for him right now. He is an all-out player which is good in the field, but he takes that attitude to the plate with him which presents a problem and the Indians will continue to work as they did in the Fall Instructional League to get him to shorten his long, maximum-effort swing. He had a sore arm in the instructional league and so had to mostly DH there which could be a problem if it continues into next season. He should open the season in Lake County.

Video: [Brown at the plate](#) .

Bo Greenwell - Outfielder

Age: 19 **Height: 6'0"** **Weight: 185** **Bats: Left** **Throws: Left**

				
2007 GCL Indians	.215	37	144	12

Greenwell is a toolsy, high energy, leadoff type hitter, with good strike zone discipline and good hands. He has a passion for the game that, at least in part, must have come from his father. The Indians think he can be an above-average base stealer (he has 60 speed on the scouts' 20-80 rating system) and that he should be able to stay a centerfielder as he advances. His play has evoked

comparisons to that of Johnny Damon. His dad is Mike Greenwell, the former Boston Red Sox star. Even with the blood lines there is a lot of projection in Greenwell who was drafted near the top of the range (6th-12th round) that he was projected to go and his first year numbers did not suggest that he was ahead of the development curve in any way. He likely will remain in extended spring training when spring camp breaks, and open the year with a short-season league team in June.

Jonathon Holt - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 22 Height: 6'2" Weight: 210 Bats: Left Throws: Right

	WHIP			
2007 Mahoning Val 2		3	4.32	16

The Indians selected Holt in the 5th round of the 2007 Draft from the University of Tampa where he was their closer. He was described in scouting reports as being durable with good fastball movement and a two pitch mix - fastball and slider although his changeup has the potential to be a good pitch against lefthanders which is something he probably needs to be a late inning guy and not just a specialist. He doesn't break 90 MPH with his fastball very often, pitching at 88 MPH mostly, but like real estate, it's all about location and his fastball has good arm side run. He is a strike thrower as evidenced by his 27:4 K/BB ratio in 33 innings this summer. His numbers were a bit skewed as the Indians used him four times as a starter. This proved disastrous to his stats as he had a 9.00 ERA in 12 innings as a starter and a 1.69 ERA and a 0.90 WHIP in 21.1 innings as a reliever. [Dennis Nosco](#) and Baseball America think that Holt has a chance to move fast as reliever and potentially be the first Indians' 2007 draftee to reach the majors. [John Mirabelli](#) agreed in an interview right after the draft. Holt projects to be a good 6th

or 7th

inning guy, or if he overachieves, a major league setup man maybe in the mold of Rafael Betancourt.

Chris Jones - Left-handed Pitcher

Age: 19 Height: 6'2" Weight: 165 Bats: Left Throws: Left

	WHIP			
2007 GCL/Lake	0	0	4.20	2

Chris is a slender left-handed pitcher. His fastball at the time he was drafted was a tick below average (he threw in the low 90s in the instructional league) with good arm side tail. His out pitch is clearly his curve ball and the Indians are very excited about his curve. He projects to have an average changeup with good sink and fade. Initially, the idea would be for him to start 2008 in the rotation at Lake County. There is a good deal of sentiment in the Indians organization that Chris is going to be a really good pitcher and he rates watching next year.

Joey Mahalic - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 19 **Height: 6'3"** **Weight: 205** **Bats: Right** **Throws: Right**

2007 GCL Indians **2** **0** **4.86** **7**

This spring Joey had an average fastball (84-88 MPH) with good late movement that was good enough to make him the High School Player of the Year in Oregon. During the summer, before he signed, he pumped it up to as high as 94 MPH. He also has a sinker, slider and a changeup with his slider being his best pitch. He already is filling out, has a durable body and comes from an athletic family as his father played as a linebacker in the NFL and his mother was a college athlete and this shows as he competes well. [John Mirabelli](#) called Joey out as possibly being the sleeper of the Indians 2007 draft. Next year, Mahalic likely will stick around for additional instruction in extended spring training, before moving to Lake County or a short-season league team by mid-season.

T. J. McFarland - Left-handed Pitcher

Age: 18 **Height: 6'3"** **Weight: 190** **Bats: Left** **Throws: Left**

Did Not Play **-** **-** **---** **-**

The Indians made T.J. their 2007 4th round draft pick in great part due to his spurt at the end of his senior year in high school where he threw up to 94 MPH (normally sits at 91-92 MPH) with the makings of a good breaking ball. Unfortunately, he has yet to throw a pitch for the Indians, as he did not play last summer and did not pitch in the Fall Instructional League (he attended but did not pitch). He hurt his elbow as a high school junior but avoided Tommy John surgery. It is not clear if the problem that caused the Indians to be extra careful with him both in the summer and in the instructional league was his elbow or his shoulder, but he insists that he is fine physically and is chomping at the bit to start pitching. It is hard to pinpoint his upside right now because he came on so fast this spring and then didn't pitch this summer or fall. He will most likely have to open next season in extended spring training as he gained no game experience this year. He should pitch for one of the short-season league teams next year, most likely the Gulf Coast League team.

Kevin Rucker - Outfielder

Age: 18 **Height: 6'1"** **Weight: 185** **Bats: Right** **Throws: Right**

2007 GCL Indians **.281** **11** **32** **3**

If there is one player from the 2007 draft that fits the role of sleeper it may be Kevin Rucker. The Indians 47th round draft pick and a player not listed among the top 120 players in the state of California by Baseball America, he signed much earlier than expected as he wanted to play baseball. He is the classic toolsy outfielder with good power to pull side (maybe 15+ HR potential), average speed that allows him to steal a base and is a solid fielder with a strong, accurate arm.

Written by {ga=consigliere}

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He has strong quick hands, and when he makes contact the ball jumps off his bat. He is a very raw prospect and will require patience with his advancement likely being only one level a year, and this could not have been more evident as he only got 32 at bats in his first season in rookie ball. Most of the season was spent preparing him for the advanced level that pro ball offers. He most likely will start the year in extended spring training and return to the rookie level league (GCL).

Mark Thompson - Shortstop

Age: 23 Height: 5'9" Weight: 165 Bats: Right Throws: Right

2007 GCL Indians	.281	11	32	3
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Matt's defining tool currently is his glove. He has average arm strength, is an average major league runner, but has some adjustments to make as a hitter. For him to be a regular he has to excel in the field and he has to learn to hit more than he can right now. After his play in the Fall Instructional League he was compared to Mike Bordick. He impressed pretty much everyone in that camp and, although he probably projects as no more than a utility infielder in the majors if he ever makes it that far, his attitude and defensive skills make it a distinct possibility that he may reach his potential.

2007 International Signees

Although the Indians signed a number of players from [Latin America and Pacific Rim](#) countries including [a couple of late signees](#)

this year and there may be

[a couple of more](#)

on the way soon, most of these guys (with the exception of Taiwanese catcher [Chun-Hsiu Chen](#)

who may begin his professional playing career at Lake County next year) are not even polished enough to play in the GCL yet. The only signee who has a chance to help the Indians in the near future is veteran Japanese pitcher Masahide Kobayashi.

Masahide Kobayashi - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 33 Height: 6'0" Weight: 196 Bats: Right Throws: Right

2007 Chiba Lotte Marines	2	7	3.61	49
Career (Japan)	36	34	2.79	445

The 33-year old closer for the Japanese Major League Chiba Lotte Marines throws an assortment of pitches, and throws both a two-seam and four-seam

fastball. The two-seamer tops out at 88-89 MPH, and the four-seamer at 93-94 MPH. He also reportedly throws a hard biting slider and a forkball. Last year, he had an off year and was even sent to the Japanese minor leagues to get himself back on track. He is tabbed to throw meaningful innings for the Indians next year as a 7th/8th inning guy, and will also back up Joe Borowski as a potential closer.

2007 Dominican Summer League

The players in this group are unbelievably far away from the majors. Their progress is measured in baby steps as compared to their US brethren, especially US college players. It is considered a real positive if six to seven of these guys even make it to the US minors every year, let alone become solid prospects. That being said, the Indians had some latent talent in their DSL team last year.

Abner Abreu - Shortstop/Third Baseman

Age: 18 Height: 6'3" Weight: 170 Bats: Right Throws: Right

				
2007 DSL Indians	.303	56	228	34

Abreu opened some eyes this year as a tall, rangy shortstop. He has the potential to hit for power as demonstrated by his performance in the Fall Instructional League (FIL) where he showed power to all fields and a quick bat that allowed him to drive the ball to his pull side when FIL pitchers tried to bust him inside. He may eventually move off shortstop as he fills out and play only third base. Abreu most likely remains in extended spring training and plays next year with the rookie level team in the Gulf Coast League.

Lurvin Basabe - Second Baseman

Age: 18 Height: 5'8" Weight: 179 Bats: Switch Throws: Right

				
2007 Dominican Sl	.284	60	208	38

Lurvin is the typical short Latin middle infielder. He doesn't show much pop at the plate but does show advanced plate discipline (45:30 BB/K ratio) and some speed that he needs to refine (19 SB in 33 attempts). He had the highest error total on his DSL team with 27. He was hurt in the Fall Instructional League (FIL), so the Indians did not get a good look at him. That said, Basabe has some tools and the fact that they even brought him to the FIL means that the Indians do consider him a real prospect. His path to the majors may be an uphill one, however, as the Indians in the recent past have not valued short Latin middle infielders that highly, even if those guys have good statistical performances at upper levels of the minors. Basabe most likely will remain in extended spring training next year before making his stateside debut with the rookie level Gulf Coast League Indians.

Kelvin Diaz - Third Baseman/First Baseman**Age: 21 Height: 5'11" Weight: 184 Bats: Right Throws: Right**

2006 DSL Indians	.382	58	204	43
2007 DSL Indians	.315	68	238	40

Among diehard fans of the Indians' minor league teams, Diaz is something of a folk legend. Not to be confused with Kelvin N. Diaz who was a pitcher for the Indians' GCL team who retired earlier this year, Diaz has been unable to get a visa to play in the United States either of the past two seasons partly because his identity and age cannot be verified as he was not born in a hospital. In 2007 his overall talent level would have put him at a level to play for Lake County because, although his hitting is a notch above that level his defense and overall knowledge of the game is still lagging behind. His last two seasons in the DSL have both been marked by a homerun barrage early in the season followed by a drop in power as the season wore on, but still ending up with a high batting average and OBP as he has shown advanced plate discipline (35:29 BB/K ratio in 238 at bats) for a young Latin player, especially one with significant power potential. His defense is poor (25 errors in 2007) were mostly the result of poor footwork on his throws. If the visa issues get cleared up this year, he should open the season as the starting third baseman in Lake County.

Alexander Perez - Right Handed Pitcher**Age: 18 Height: 6'2" Weight: 156 Bats: Right Throws: Right**

2007 DSL Indians	1	2	2.90	13
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Perez had an excellent year for the Indians' 2007 DSL team. As can be discerned by his height/weight ratio he needs to add bulk and strength. However, he had excellent K/BB and K/IP ratios. Towards that goal he participated in the Fall Instructional League, but only in the strength and conditioning program. Perez should remain in extended spring training and pitch for the rookie level Gulf Coast League Indians this year.

Danny Salazar - Right Handed Pitcher**Age: 18 Height: 6'0" Weight: 180 Bats: Right Throws: Right**

2007 DSL Indians	5	3	2.90	14
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Salazar was the most consistent of the DSL starting pitchers this year. He had good movement on his high 80s fastball and flashed a good breaking ball in the instructional league, with his participation being a sign the Indians consider him a good prospect. He should also open the year in extended spring training before making his stateside debut with the rookie level Gulf Coast League Indians.

Up Next: Indians Top 50+ Prospects #41-50