

Indians Top 50+ Prospects: #11-15

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Tuesday, January 08 2008 7:00 PM -

We inch ever closer to Tony's Top Ten Prospects, this morning unveiling numbers 15 through 11 on the big countdown. Showing up in this installment are a couple names very familiar to most Indians fans. Ben Francisco, who got some time with the big league team last year ... and fellow outfielder Trevor Crowe, the Indians first round pick in 2005 out of the University of Arizona. We'll run numbers 10 through 6 tonight, so be sure to check back in.



This is part seven of a nine piece installment ranking the Indians top prospects. Here is a listing of the previous six installments:

[Intro & Prospects Who Just Missed](#)
[Top & 2007 Draft & Dominican Summer League Prospects](#)
[Top Prospects #41-50](#)
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These reports will be archived here at TheClevelandFan.com under my [author listing](#) . In addition, these reports will be individually housed on my blog at [The Cleveland Indians Minor League Insider](#)

. A listing of the scouting reports for each player will be listed on the left panel for quick access, and these will be updated at times throughout the season with links to new video, pictures, and information.

All photos in this installment are courtesy of Carl Kline. To get in touch with Carl Kline for photo assistance, please e-mail me at tlastoria@theclevelandfan.com and I will forward his e-mail address to you.

All ages as of 04/01/2008

15. Matt McBride - Catcher

Age: 22 Height: 6'2" Weight: 215 Bats: Right Throws: Right

	AVG	R	HR	SB
2007 Lake/Akron	.287	107	428	68
Career	.283	159	612	92

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[McBride at Lehigh University](#) [McBride taking batting practice](#)

14. Scott Lewis - Left-handed Pitcher

Age: 24 Height: 6'0" Weight: 185 Bats: Left Throws: Left

	W	L	ERA	IP
2007 Akron	7	9	3.67	27
Career	10	15	2.82	64



History: The Indians drafted Lewis in the 3rd round of the 2004 Draft out of Ohio State University. At Ohio State, Lewis was a dominant pitcher, as his sophomore season in 2003 he went 9-1 with a 1.61 ERA and struck out 127 batters in just 84 innings pitched and won Big Ten

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Pitcher of the Year honors. In 2006, with a 1.48 ERA, Lewis won the Minor League ERA Title with the best ERA in all the minors.

Strengths & Opportunities: Lewis had probably one of the most consistent years of anybody in the Indians minor league system last year, and went largely unnoticed because of it. To the casual observer, Lewis' high strikeout rate would seem to indicate he throws some serious heat; however, this is not the case. Lewis has a fastball that consistently sits around 87-89 MPH and tops out at 91 MPH, but his tremendous command of his secondary pitches along with good arm action and deception throughout his delivery makes his fastball play up and look faster. He also throws a curveball and changeup, and the power and depth he has added to his nasty 12-6 curveball has made it one of the best in the system. His changeup has developed into a plus pitch, and he gets a lot of action on his pitches in the strike zone.

Going into last season, the Indians had handled Lewis with kid gloves because of past arm issues. After his brilliant 2003 season at Ohio State and being considered as a first round possibility in the 2004 Draft, he suffered a severe arm injury that resulted in him needing Tommy John surgery. He also battled bicep tendonitis all through 2005, and ended up pitching a total of only 21 innings combined in 2004 and 2005, so he went into the 2006 season on a strict pitch count of 65 to 70 pitches an outing. Lewis made it through the 2006 season unscathed, and last year the Indians increased his pitch count where by mid-season he progressed up to a 95 pitch count. Once again, he made every turn in the rotation, kept his team in games, and did not miss a start due to any injury setbacks. Lewis was actually strong at the end of the season reaching his peak velocity on the year at 90-91 MPH in his last start.

Lewis did not figure into very many decisions the past two seasons because of his pitch count restrictions, but by easing him back into action it helped him build up arm strength. Lewis initially had problems with the small pitch counts because just as he would get into a rhythm and start to feel good he was being taken out of the game. He handled it well overall, and ever since he came off the pitch count restrictions he has pitched better. For the second straight year, Lewis managed to stay healthy all year and may have shaken the injury bug that plagued him earlier in his career. The Indians have been particularly encouraged by the absence of injury considering the aggressiveness he shows when he releases the ball.

While Lewis made it through the season without injury, he was put on the disabled list for the Eastern League playoffs with inflammation in his left elbow. He reportedly complained of some soreness in the elbow and had some tingling and numbness in his hand, and as a precaution he was shutdown for the playoffs. He is currently 100% healthy and ready for spring training, but going forward Lewis needs to continue to prove he can be a durable pitcher and stay on the field for the Indians. His curveball continues to improve and is a very good pitch, but the Indians are still trying to firm it up a bit and make it more of an out pitch. Also, Lewis does not throw hard, so he will need to depend on his excellent command and secondary pitches to get more advanced hitters out on a regular basis. Lewis also needs to continue getting better at repeating his delivery and ironing out some flaws in his delivery mechanics.

The Outlook: The key for Lewis is health. If manages to do that, he has a bright future ahead of him. He has now made 54 starts the last two years and avoided missing any time, save for the playoffs last year. Lewis was rostered by the Indians this offseason, and is now a viable starting pitching or bullpen option for the Indians going forward if a need arises. Lewis will start the season in the Buffalo rotation.

Video: [Lewis on the mound in spring training](#) .

13. Jared Goedert - Second Base

Age: 22 **Height:** 6'1" **Weight:** 180 **Bats:** Right **Throws:** Right

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	BPS			
2007 Lake/Kinston	.317	81	290	67
Career	.295	144	528	98



History: The Indians originally drafted Goedert out of high school in the 36th round of the 2003 Draft, but he chose to go to college and the Indians took him again when he was eligible in the 9th round of the 2006 Draft out of Kansas State. It should be noted that prior to being called up from Lake County to Kinston last year, Goedert ranked 1st in just about every important offensive category in the South Atlantic League (SAL).

Strengths & Opportunities: Talk about a player breaking onto the prospect scene. The Indians liked his offensive potential when they drafted him, but no one ever saw coming what Goedert did the first half of the 2007 season. Goedert had a pedestrian showing in his professional debut in 2006 at Mahoning Valley (.269 AVG, .711 OPS), but last year baseball people took notice. His surge in offensive production that led to an all out assault on SAL pitchers goes back to a lot of hard work in the offseason and in spring training.

Goedert is not a big assuming player nor overly strong, but he has very good power, the ball explodes off his bat, and he has the ability to hit the ball out to any part of the ballpark. He is a quiet, mentally tough kid with a consistent swing and line drive stroke that help generate most of his power, and he hits the ball where it is pitched. Goedert's sound mechanics and low maintenance swing help create a nice, consistent bat path to the ball. Before last season, he received help from instructors in the offseason and in spring training and was able to correct some flaws in his swing and get more backspin on the ball to help balls travel further in the air. He now generates good backspin on the ball with a good downward movement with his swing, and is short to the ball.

Goedert has shown a very good eye at the plate and the ability to consistently put the ball in play. His plate discipline is excellent, and he has shown the ability to hit well with two strikes as he hit .340 last year in that situation. Having a good two-strike approach was stressed to him his whole life and through college (his dad was his high school coach). The Indians strongly encourage players to draw walks and take pitches as part of their development, to hit their pitch early in the count and lay off marginal pitches. Goedert has a good understanding of this philosophy already, and his walk-rate is already off the charts. For his career he has walked

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almost as much as he has struck out, and would have put up well over 80 walks last year if he played the whole year.

While he can definitely hit, his defense is what holds him back. Goedert is not flashy defensively, but he makes all the routine plays and has an above average arm. To make him more versatile and push him to Kinston, the Indians moved him from third base to second base near the end of May and he handled the transition well and remained there the rest of the season. The position change was a creative way to get Goedert up to Kinston since Wes Hodges was blocking him, and considering his limitations at third base a position change to the right side of the infield was probably inevitable anyway. Initially, Goedert had some trouble adjusting to the much shorter throws to first base, and his feet are kind of heavy, but overall he played okay and adapted well to the new position the last half of last season. He has shown some good agility, and his strong arm will help on plays up the middle and in turning double plays.

While Goedert had built up an avalanche of momentum with his hot hitting at Lake County, an injury to his shoulder cropped up in late May. Goedert was sidelined for almost six weeks from early June until mid-July with a recurrence of an injury to his left shoulder (labrum) which he had surgery on in October of 2006. He had recovered before last season started, but he had re-aggravated the injury in mid-May diving to his left for a groundball. The shoulder injury hindered him from the moment he arrived in Kinston, and when he was first called up he only hit .229 before going on the disabled list. When Goedert returned in mid-July, he was still not 100%, and for the rest of the season the Indians had him play every other day in order to properly rest his shoulder so it would not flare up. Goedert struggled some in his return, as he only hit .227 with a .593 OPS in his first six games back, but for the month of August he hit .309 with 4 HR, 16 RBI, and a 1.063 OPS playing every other day. Those numbers seem to indicate he was getting back to his April and May form, even though he was not 100%.

Going forward, Goedert is still fairly foreign to second base, so he will continue to work hard at improving defensively at the position. Minor league fielding coordinator Bruce Fields will continue to work with him on his positioning and turning the double play. Goedert looked good in the Florida Development Program in the fall, and his shoulder reportedly was fine. Even though Goedert is on a program to strengthen the shoulder, the shoulder issue is a concern as it could be something that never goes away.

Outlook: The Indians are excited about Goedert's potential, especially since he fills a position of need at middle infield in the organization. The Indians moved Goedert quickly to Kinston so he could be challenged, and unfortunately his shoulder injury slowed his progress the rest of the year. Goedert's performance immediately brings to mind the breakout season former Lake County third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff had in 2004 when he hit .330 with 16 HR and 87 RBI. Like Goedert, prior to his breakout season in 2004 Kouzmanoff was not a highly touted prospect around baseball or followed by the fans. Goedert's clear path to the majors is at second base, as it is a position in the Indians' system where he has absolutely no one in front of him. Given his limited time in Kinston last year, Goedert should start the season in Kinston and move to Akron quickly.

Video: [Goedert taking batting practice](#) .

12. Trevor Crowe - Outfielder

Age: 24 **Height:** 6'0" **Weight:** 190 **Bats:** Switch **Throws:** Right

	OPS			
2007 Akron	.259	133	518	87
Career	.266	293	1134	187

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[Crowe at the plate](#)

11. Ben Francisco - Outfielder

Age: 26 Height: 6'1" Weight: 190 Bats: Right Throws: Right

	OPS			
2007 Buffalo	.318	95	377	60
Career	.294	587	2252	373



History: The Indians selected Francisco in the 5th round of the 2002 Draft out of UCLA. In 2002, he was named the Topps Minor League Player of the Year in the NY-Penn League (NYPL), an NYPL Postseason All Star, and named to Baseball America's Short Season All Star

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team. He won the NYPL batting title (.349), lead the league in runs scored (55), was third in stolen bases (22), third in on-base percentage (.416), fourth in slugging percentage (.502), second in hits, second in doubles, and fifth in extra base hits (28). Last year, Francisco was selected by the International League as a post season All-Star, and also was named a Topps Triple-A All -Star. Baseball America tabbed him as the Most Exciting Player in the International League last year.

Strengths & Opportunities: Francisco had a breakthrough season last year, where he went to Cleveland and caught the attention of many fans when he hit a walkoff homer in his first major league start, and in 62 major league at bats hit .274 with 3 HR, 12 RBI and had an .803 OPS. He had two hitting streaks of 15 games or more at Buffalo last year, and was consistent all season where he never had a bad month as he hit .319 in April (19 games), .366 in May (25 games), .284 in June (17 games), and .320 in August (31 games). Francisco won the 2007 batting title in the International League by hitting .318 (120-377) for the season, which was his second career minor league batting title (2002 NYPL as noted above).

Francisco's bat provides very good extra base hit production, and he has showed very good ability hitting the fastball, whether in Cleveland or the minors. He has proven he can hit anyone's fastball as they cannot get it by him or elevate it past him. He handled the up and down well of going back and forth from Cleveland to Buffalo last year, and is someone who has a lot of value for the Indians at the major league level. He is a versatile defender who can play all three outfield positions well. His speed is average, but he is an excellent baserunner as his instincts on the basepaths lead to many of his stolen bases. The Indians were impressed with his play last spring training and during the short time he was called up, and believe he is capable of helping them at the major league level right now.

Francisco is one of the most under-rated players in the system who has always put up good numbers and has some good attributes, but because of his age and no outstanding tools he often gets overlooked. Still, all he has ever done is hit at every level, from short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley to the major leagues. While the Indians love his bat, they feel he would be further along if not for several trips to the disabled list during his first few years in the farm system. In 2003, he missed the first two months of the season after undergoing hand surgery (hamate bone) in spring training, and then in 2005 he missed most of the first two months of the season because of a sprained ligament in his left thumb.

While he is capable of helping the Indians right now, the Indians would like to see Francisco become more consistent defensively, which is something that is more easily accomplished in the minor leagues. He is a hard working individual, but he has been more passionate about hitting than he has about playing defense which is only natural. Improving his defense is something the Indians have challenged Francisco on, and he has welcomed the challenge. Francisco acknowledges that he has to improve his defense, and that he needs to work on being better prepared to face major league pitching.

Outlook: After an MVP season in Buffalo in 2006, it looked like Francisco would be lost in the 2006 Rule 5 Draft until the Indians used their last position player slot on the 40-man roster for him that offseason. The move may turn out to be one of the best, unheralded decisions this organization has made in the last few years, as Francisco surely would have been gobbled up in the draft, and most likely would have stuck with the team that drafted him given his advanced approach and major league readiness. Francisco has little to prove in Buffalo as he has been there for two full seasons in 2006 and 2007 and won MVPs each year, and he also spent a small portion of the 2005 season there, but it looks like barring a trade to clear up some room in a crowded major league outfield that Francisco will return to Buffalo to start the 2008 season and be the first outfielder called up when a need arises.

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

Up Next: Indians Top 50+ Prospects #6-10