

A Scout's Take On The Indians

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Tuesday, June 10 2008 7:00 PM -

In Tony's travels to the different minor league affiliates, he comes in contact with a lot of different people, many of whom he keeps in touch with. One of these people is a major league scout for another team, and one that has the Indians organization as one of his responsibilities. Tony recently had a chance to speak with him on the phone for 45 minutes, thoroughly picking his brain as to his thoughts on several members of the Indians organization. Another great effort from T in this one.



One of the cool things about going around to the different affiliates to check in on the players and teams each month is not only do I get a chance to see the players and talk to them, but every visit I meet someone new outside the Indians organization. Some of these people I have remained in contact with, and in this piece one of those contacts is a major league scout I have spoken to on several occasions.

I recently had the chance to sit down and talk on the phone with a major league scout who has the Indians as one of the teams he scouts for trades from Single-A Lake County all the way up to the major league team. It was a near 45-minute conversation where the scout was staying overnight in a hotel room out in the Midwest getting ready for his next pitstop in another minor league city.

This scout is one of the top scouts for the organization he scouts for. He has five organizations that he scouts, Cleveland being one of them, and will spend five days in each of the five organization's minor and major league cities to see their four full season minor league teams and major league team.

He only sees each team once and does not come back the rest of the year.

For example, he was in Lake County in early May and Kinston in mid-May, saw each club for five days (to see the five-man starting rotation make their starts), and will not be back to see them this year.

This is the way it works for most clubs, if not all of them.

Once the amateur staff is done with the Major League Draft, his organization will send crosscheckers out to see the guys again later in the year.

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It should be noted that the scout in this piece has not been to Buffalo, so we did not spend any time talking about the few prospects that are on the team other than ones he may have seen in Akron earlier in the year. Bottom line, when the scout is evaluating talent he is scouting for tools and skills, and not so much performance. Guys who perform and don't have tools he said better really perform.

The only performance that is considered is that which supports his projection.

For example, if he says this guy will be a groundball pitcher he better show stats that he is a ground-baller down the road.

It is not maybe and can-be, it is either they are or they are not.

In the interest of keeping the scout's comments direct and to the point, as well as keep his anonymity as he requested, this is but a raw article that pretty much takes what the scout said word for word on about a dozen players in the system. Some players we talked about for several minutes, while others for only a few seconds.

Anyway, here are the comments on each player we talked about:

Indians Top Prospects: "These are the top guys I have: Beau Mills, Mike Pontius, David Huff, Wes Hodges, Nick Weglarz, Hector Rondon, and Kelvin De La Cruz.

There are others and they might jump into the mix.

A couple under the radar type guys.

That is the grouping so far."

Kelvin De La Cruz (LHP - Lake County): "Based on what I saw, he is a middle of the rotation starter on a championship club. He has enough velocity, and he may develop more.

His stuff and pitch-ability support the role of a starter.

I like his no fear aggressive approach.

He has a simple fastball, curveball, changeup attack plan.

I think he will at some point establish the major league order of command first, movement second, and velocity third.

I think he is on the right career path.

He pounds the zone.

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Good sink down in the zone.

His curveball was fringy when I saw him, but it is a projectable plus-plus pitch with real good depth and a swing and miss put away type pitch.

He showed the feel for the changeup, and I think that projects to be a plus pitch too.

He is athletic as he handled all the bunts and all the comebackers.

I think there is room there for more growth, usable strength and weight.

You have to use your imagination a little bit with projection, but I like the kid.

I really do."

Ryan Miller (LHP - Lake County): "He is a performer. He showed a solid-average fastball and a projectable average breaking pitch.

His breaking ball is kind of a hybrid, it wandered back and forth between a slider and curveball.

He showed a feel for a change and looks like it can develop into an average pitch.

He is a medium frame performer type of guy.

I think he will refine his secondary stuff to allow him to have major league value in at least a specialist role.

If he tightens the slider, he could throw several of those in a row consecutively and retire left-handed hitters.

I'd like to see him remain a starting pitcher, but I think the left-handed specialist role is an option for a championship organization.

He'd be more a Triple-A starter or a left-handed specialist."

Chris Archer (RHP - Lake County): "Now this guy is really interesting. For me, he would be a notch above Miller.

He was 89-93 MPH, 91 average.

His curveball was 79 MPH.

He has a projectable plus fastball.

His curveball projects as a 55 for me, and his change as solid-average.

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He is a guy who I can see going bullpen or starter.

His body type, there is room for more there and he is going to probably gain more.

He has control and command issues, but my projection is based on flashes from what I have seen of him.

His delivery and arm action faults are definitely correctable.

In doing so, he will see an immediate command and control spike and then his projectable stuff will play up.

When the stuff plays, he will see immediate improvement in four categories: K/9, HR/9, BB/9 and groundball percentage.

He worked out of a bases loaded jams, has a live arm, plus velocity, projectable plus curveball, and a projectable average three-fingered straight change.

His delivery he kind of rushed, he is rotational, and short in stride with the touchdown.

He is just kind of a bad delivery kind of guy right now.

Once that get straightens which is correctable and coachable because he is so young, when he stays on-line he flashes all that stuff you look for.

Flash is his middle name right now, and he is a guy I see in the big leagues someday.

I think the performance spike will come with the delivery cleanup and modifications.

I like his on the field makeup.

He is content and grinds through his wildness.

He hangs in through his wildness, so you see the mental makeup there.

He is young for the league and needs to repeat Low-A.

I like this guy."

Mike Pontius (RHP - Kinston): "I like Mike a lot. I saw him in Lake County and in Kinston. Of all the people we have discussed, to me he has the highest projection.

Moreso than De La Cruz, Miller, Archer, all of them.

I learned he was a football player, from you actually.

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He lost a bunch of weight and he was under the radar, and he is now on the radar that's for sure.

I have him as a late game setup type guy.

He has major league late game setup man all over him.

The velocity is there with a plus-plus fastball, and he has a projectable plus-plus curveball.

He has the mental skills for the setup role, and the football mentality plays into it.

There is no reason to rush him as he was young for the Sally League as it is a 21.9 average league.

He is too good for the Sally League though, so it was good he was moved to High-A.

He has a collection of tools and skills.

Shades of a Rafael Betancourt type guy, but I feel he goes beyond that.

He is kind of like a John Wetteland where he might end up being like a closer.

I see him at least as a setup man.

He has the Joe Borowski type curveball, but he has the Wetteland type velocity.

That is a pretty good combo there.

He pitches at an over-the-top angle so he leverages down on hitters well ands creates a good angle.

His curveball comes out of the same slot so there is no chip off involved.

I like his delivery, it is compact, correctional, and he repeats it.

He does a good job reading bats, when he sees the hitter scuffling he goes right after that weakness.

He pitches to his strengths, and he gets groundballs.

He has some natural cutting action and movement on his fastball even though he is not a three-quarter angle guy.

Curveball is a swing and miss pitch.

To me, he needs innings pitched.

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It is hard to find faults with the guy.

He just needs to get out there and pitch and stay healthy."

Luis Perdomo (RHP - Kinston): "That guy, he is interesting. I saw him last year, and he is definitely better this year.

He has done some things that are pretty interesting.

To me right now he would be a middle reliever guy and not a setup guy or closer.

He pounds the zone with the fastball and slider.

So goes his slider, so goes his upside.

This year the slider has spiked and it is a lot better.

He would be a good middle relief guy to come in and wipeout righties with that two-pitch plan.

The slider is a swing-and-miss under the bat type pitch, so he can get lefties out too.

Because of his velocity, guys will have to amp up on that and then they will get tricked with the slider.

Command and control is the key with him.

The mentality is there.

He really flourishes in that role.

He is aggressive and pounds the zone.

He is 24 and right at the league average of 23.1, so he is a little old for the league.

I like his velocity and slider, which is a swing and miss put away pitch."

Wes Hodges (3B - Akron): "I think he is better this year than last year. His bat profiles at first or third base, but I think he will play enough to stay at third.

His body is better this year and it appears he has firmed it up.

In instructional League in 2006 he had just signed and I heard good things about him in college and had never seen him, and when I saw him I thought 'oh gosh he is going to have to firm up the body a little bit and show a little more agility and mobility', and he has done that.

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He has done a lot better this year than last, and he is going to play third base.

He has enough agility and he makes all the plays, and I think he stays there.

If I had to make the decision, I would not move him."

Jeanmar Gomez (RHP - Kinston): "To me, he will be an up and down type guy. He has a live arm with room for more velocity.

His breaking ball is the missing part, and I think he needs to eliminate the slider and develop a curveball or splitter to compliment the overhand fastball.

He is an over-the-top guy, and he needs another vertical pitch like the overhand breaking ball or split.

Forget the slider because it does not work up there and it is very hittable.

If he develops a top to bottom vertical pitch to go with his fastball, there is some hope there."

Hector Rondon (RHP - Kinston): "He is 20 years old, so he is 2.9 years young for the Carolina League. I have him as a #4/5 starter. He is an upgrade from 2007, and he has enough velocity to challenge with a power pitch.

He also flashed for me a lot of touch and feel for finesse that is needed.

He throws a fastball, breaking ball and changeup.

I think he is an undervalued guy.

There is a guy I like who is under the radar a bit.

A definite upgrade from 2007."

David Huff (LHP - Buffalo): "I like him as a middle of the rotation guy. He has a veteran attack plan. It is all about command, movement and velocity.

His fastball plays up because of his plus changeup.

His changeup is a legitimate weapon against lefties and righties.

He is in the upper echelon of the system."

Steven Wright (RHP - Kinston): "For me he is not a big league guy, I have him as an organizational guy."

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Chuck Lofgren (LHP - Akron): "He has had a very rough year and been very inconsistent. I think with delivery work, the old Lofgren will re-appear."

Nick Weglarz (OF - Kinston): "I really like him a lot. The plate discipline is off the charts good, and the power is surely there."