

Written by {ga=consigliere}
Monday, March 02 2009 7:00 PM -

The countdown continues, as Tony moves into his Top 30 prospects in the Indians farm system. Today's quintet includes catching prospect Matt McBride, the team's second round pick in 2006 ... as well as the Tribe's third, seventh, and eighth round selections from this recent draft. Also, Tony will be making an appearance on MiLB radio this Wednesday night to talk about the Indians farm system, and the details on that are enclosed in this column as well.



For those interested, I will be on MiLB Radio this Wednesday night (March 4th) at 11:30 PM EST. The site is <http://www.milbradio.com/> and they are on BlogTalkRadio.com just like us. The link to listen to the show [is here](#).

Also, my [2009 Cleveland Indians Top 100 Prospects & More book](#) is now available. Click on the hyperlink for all the details, and to order it just go to [my website](#) and click on the form to the top right to complete the order with a check or credit card. If you wish to send a check or money order by US Mail, please contact me at tlastoria@indiansprospectinsider.com and I will verify the order and provide my full mailing address for

you so send payment.□

We continue today with #30-26 in the Indians Top 100 Prospect Countdown. Here are the earlier rankings:

100. Brian Juhl (C)
99. Brad Hinkle (RHP)
98. Mark Thompson (SS)
97. Adam Davis (C/INF)
96. Adam White (OF)
95. Jerad Head (INF/OF)
94. Brock Simpson (1B/OF)
93. Ryan Blair (OF)
92. Dustin Realini (INF/OF)
91. Shawn Nottingham (LHP)
90. Cirilo Cumberbatch (OF)
89. Michael McGuire (RHP)
88. Sung-Wei Tseng (RHP)
87. David Roberts (RHP)
86. Jason Smit (INF)
85. Marty Popham (RHP)
84. Jose Constanza (OF)
83. Adam Abraham (INF)
82. Isaias Velasquez (2INF)
81. Gary Campfield (RHP)
80. Heath Taylor (LHP)
79. Rich Rundles (LHP)
78. Dallas Cawiezell (RHP)
77. Robbie Alcombrack (C)
76. Carlos Moncrief (RHP)

75. Nate Recknagel (C/1B)
74. Karexon Sanchez (INF)
73. Roman Pena (OF)
72. Kyle Landis (RHP)
71. John Drennen (OF)
70. Todd Martin (1B)
69. Santo Frias (RHP)
68. Michael Finocchi (RHP)
67. Kevin Rucker (OF)
66. Matt Meyer (LHP)
65. Bo Greenwell (OF)
64. Paolo Espino (RHP)
63. Jonathan Holt (RHP)
62. Vinnie Pestano (RHP)
61. Kevin Dixon (RHP)
60. Randy Newsom (RHP)
59. Chris Nash (1B)
58. Carlton Smith (RHP)
57. Lucas Montero (OF)
56. Steven Wright (RHP)
55. Michael Aubrey (1B)
54. Delvi Cid (OF)
53. Clayton Cook (RHP)
52. T.J. McFarland (LHP)
51. Wyatt Toregas (C)
50. Chris Jones (LHP)
49. Chen-Chang Lee (RHP)
48. Matt Brown (OF)
47. Ryan Edell (LHP)
46. Neil Wagner (RHP)

2009 Indians Top Prospects: #30-26

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- 45. Danny Salazar (RHP)
- 44. Jared Goedert (2B/3B)
- 43. Josh Judy (RHP)
- 42. Jeremie Tice (3B)
- 41. Joey Mahalic (RHP)
- 40. Erik Stiller (RHP)
- 39. Ryan Morris (LHP)
- 38. Mike Pontius (RHP)
- 37. Ryan Miller (LHP)
- 36. Frank Herrmann (RHP)
- 35. Bryce Stowell (RHP)
- 34. Stephen Head (1B/OF)
- 33. Chuck Lofgren (LHP)
- 32. Trey Haley (RHP)
- 31. Rob Bryson (RHP)

30. Tim Fedroff - Outfielder

Born: 02/04/1987 - Height: 5'11" - Weight: 220 - Bats: Left - Throws: Right

Year	Age	Team	Lvl	G
2008	21	North Carolina	C	67
2008	21	Mahoning Vy	A-	23

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29. Matt McBride - Catcher

**Born: 05/23/1985 - Height: 6'2" - Weight: 215 - Bats: Right -
Throws: Right**

Year	Age	Team	Lvl	G
2006	21	Mahoning Vy	A-	52
2007	22	Lake County	A	105
	22	Akron	AA	2
2008	23	GCL Indians	R	17
	23	Lake County	A	11
	23	Kinston	A+	17
		Career		204

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28. Eric Berger - Left-handed Pitcher

Born: 04/22/1986 - Height: 6'2" - Weight: 205 - Bats: Left -
Throws: Left

Year	Age	Team	Lvl	W
2008	22	U of Arizona	C	0
2008	22	Mahoning Vv	A-	0
2008	22	Lake County	A	0



History: Berger was an 8th round pick in the 2008 Draft out of the University of Arizona. He started his 2008 season in the Arizona

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bullpen to build up arm strength since he was coming off Tommy John surgery in July 2006, and by the end of their season he was back in the starting rotation. He signed with the Indians quickly and was sensational in his professional debut at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley. He got a late season call-up to Single-A Lake County, but in his first appearance strained an oblique in the third inning while trying to field a bunt. As a result he was shut down until the final week of the season and only made two appearances with Lake County.

Strengths & Opportunities: Berger has a standard three-pitch mix of a fastball, 12-6 curveball, and changeup. Before undergoing Tommy John surgery, Berger touched 96 MPH with his fastball but currently sits between 90-93 MPH now. When the 2009 season begins, Berger is expected to finally be 100% recovered from the surgery so there is a good chance that his velocity will kick up another MPH or two. The curveball and changeup grade out as average pitches, but while Berger shows more confidence in the changeup, his curveball has more depth to it and has the potential to be an above average offering and swing-and-miss pitch at the next level.

In his initial exposure to professional baseball, Berger established the ball down in the zone very well. Going forward, most of the focus will be in establishing a good second and third pitch to complement his plus fastball. Whether that means he keeps the changeup-curveball or the Indians scrap one of both of them for something else remains to be seen. In addition to developing his secondary pitches, the focus will be on getting him to continue working down in the zone and refining his command. He has been a little inconsistent with his command, but is to be expected coming back from such a surgery.

Outlook: Berger really threw the ball well last year in his professional debut, and is sort of carrying a chip on his shoulder because of all the teams that passed on him in the draft because of the injury. He is an advanced college pitcher, and a guy who should move quickly through the lower levels of the system. He should open the 2009 season in the starting rotation at advanced Single-A Kinston, and could possibly see time in Double-A Akron by the end of the season.

27. Alexander Perez - Right-handed Pitcher

Born: 07/24/1989 - Height: 6'2" - Weight: 156 - Bats: Right - Throws: Right

Year	Age	Team	Lvl	W
2007	18	DSL Indians	R	1
2008	19	GCL Indians	R	2
		Career		3

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26. Cord Phelps - Second Baseman

Born: 01/23/1987 - Height: 6'2" - Weight: 200 - Bats: Switch - Throws: Right

Year	Age	Team	Lvl	G
2008	21	Stanford U	CCR	63
2008	21	GCL Indians	R	1
2008	21	Mahoning Vy	A-	35



History: Phelps was a 3rd round pick in the 2008 Draft out of Stanford University. His professional debut was slowed by a sprained ankle he

suffered prior to the College World Series, so he spent a few weeks in Winter Haven rehabbing the injury before moving on to short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley where he excelled.

Strengths & Opportunities: Phelps is the most complete player the Indians obtained in the 2008 Draft, and has an ability to impact the game in several different areas. He is a good base-runner, a great defender, and has a very polished approach at the plate. He handles himself really well at the plate and has a good gameplan, which was showcased by his 41-38 strikeout to walk ratio last year in college. He puts the ball in play and pounds the gaps, and has the potential to drive the ball more as he is still adding power. Prior to his junior season at Stanford, Phelps did not hit a home run in 278 at bats, but last year he ended up with 13 home runs in 259 at bats due to a spike in his strength and physical growth. Because he is a switch-hitter and has shown a good, patient approach at the plate he profiles as a #2 hitter and potentially could be a leadoff hitter. He is an above average runner.

While Phelps is firmly planted at second base, he does have experience at other infield positions which can create some versatility for him down the road to help him break into the big leagues. In addition to second base, Phelps also played third base and shortstop in college. Some scouts feel that he will eventually move to third base at some point, but given the lack of second baseman in the system the Indians will give him every opportunity to stay at second. He does a pretty good job at second base, moves around well, gets good reads on the ball and turns a good double play. He is just a very sound defender.

Coming out of an incredible program in Stanford he is a very mature, hardnosed professional baseball player. He also has excellent instincts as a baseball player on the field and on the bases. Phelps is still in the process of developing a routine and refining his approach at the plate. Also, while he is a patient hitter who often looks for a good pitch to hit, he is working on being a little more aggressive with his approach at the plate and to know what to expect in certain situations.

Outlook: This was an excellent pick by the Indians to fill an organizational weakness, and they may have finally found a solution at second base in the system. For years now second base has largely been the weakest position in their farm system, but that appears to be changing with the addition of Phelps to the mix. He has a pretty clear path to the big leagues, and because of his advanced bat and abilities, barring injury he will likely move fast through the system and has the potential to be an above average major league second baseman. He could be the first position player from the 2008 Draft to make it to the majors. Phelps likely will skip Single-A Lake County and open the 2009 season as the starting second baseman at advanced Single-A Kinston.

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Photo courtesy of Ken Carr

Up Next: #25-21