

2010 Tony Awards: Comeback Player of the Year

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Friday, October 08 2010 8:00 PM - Last Updated Friday, October 08 2010 12:36 PM



We continue on with the year end Cleveland Indians minor league player awards. The [Offensive Player of the Year](#) was announced on Monday, the [Pitcher of the Year](#) was announced on Tuesday, the [Reliever of the Year](#) was announced on Wednesday, and the [Defensive Player of the Year](#) was announced yesterday.

Today we continue the postseason awards with the announcement of the Comeback Player of the Year. This award goes to the player who came back from a rough 2009 season – be it due to injury or performance – and put up a very good 2010 season.

Again, just a quick reminder that these awards are awarded 100% based on performance as prospect standing is not factored in. So just because a guy is or is not listed does not mean anything from a “prospect” status. These awards are simply for fun to hand out at the end of the year. Also, the Cleveland Indians in no way whatsoever had any input in these awards. In the coming days the Rookie of the Year, Biggest Breakthrough, Biggest Disappointment and the All-Tony Team will be announced.

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Comeback Player of the Year Nominees:

Rob Bryson (RHP – Lake County/Kinston/Akron)

2009: 0-0, 12.00 ERA, 3 G, 3.0 IP, 4 H, 2 BB, 5 K, 2.00 WHIP, 6.0 BB/9, 15.0 K/9

2010: 7-2, 2.53 ERA, 33 G, 53.1 IP, 31 H, 21 BB, 80 K, 0.98 WHIP, 3.5 BB/9, 13.5 K/9

Bryson missed almost all of the 2009 season after undergoing offseason shoulder surgery the previous offseason and only managed to pitch in three Arizona Summer League games before going out to the Parallel League in the fall to make up some innings. He came back this year healthy and back on top of his game and again looks like the top flight relief prospect the Indians were high on acquiring in the C.C. Sabathia trade.

Chun Chen (C – Lake County/Kinston)

2009: .215 AVG, 24 R, 15 2B, 0 3B, 1 HR, 19 RBI, 31 BB, 42 K, 9 SB, .635 OPS

2010: .315 AVG, 58 R, 38 2B, 3 3B, 12 HR, 69 RBI, 55 BB, 74 K, 5 SB, .924 OPS

After a promising pro debut as a 19-year old in the rookie-level Gulf Coast League in 2008 where he hit .261/.336/.409, Chen struggled mightily at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley last year. He bounced back this season with an incredible display of patience and gap power seemingly getting better and better as the year wore on, and showed why the Indians nabbed him as a free agent out of Taiwan in September 2007.

Jared Goedert (3B – Akron/Columbus)

2009: .224 AVG, 34 R, 22 2B, 1 3B, 5 HR, 37 RBI, 34 BB, 47 K, 1 SB, .657 OPS

2010: .283 AVG, 80 R, 37 2B, 1 3B, 27 HR, 83 RBI, 53 BB, 112 K, 4 SB, .890 OPS

After an amazing breakout performance in the first two months of 2007 where he hit .364/.475/.715 with 16 HR and 51 RBI in 46 games at Low-A Lake County, ever since then Goedert's career had been on the rapid decline. He has had health issues the past few years mostly relating to his shoulder, but finally healthy again this season he got back to producing like he did in 2007 and has made himself noticed as a potential big league option down the road.

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Vinnie Pestano (RHP – Akron/Columbus)

2009: 2-3, 2.86 ERA, 34 G, 24 S, 34.2 IP, 30 H, 13 BB, 31 K, 1.24 WHIP, 3.4 BB/9, 8.0 K/9

2010: 2-3, 1.81 ERA, 57 G, 17 S, 59.2 IP, 47 H, 16 BB, 77 K, 1.06 WHIP, 2.4 BB/9, 11.6 K/9

Pestano's comeback is more from injury than poor performance. He was off to a record-breaking start last year where by the first week of July he had racked up 24 saves for Double-A Akron, but an elbow injury sidelined him for the rest of the season. Things did not get better early in the offseason as his elbow was still hurting, but after some rest and a change to his arm slot he was able to get healthy in time to open the season with Double-A Akron on time and the rest is history.

Josh Rodriguez (SS – Akron/Columbus)

2009: .295 AVG, 18 R, 4 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 12 RBI, 23 BB, 30 K, 2 SB, .760 OPS

2010: .297 AVG, 60 R, 30 2B, 1 3B, 13 HR, 57 RBI, 51 BB, 85 K, 6 SB, .862 OPS

Rodriguez is another player who was bitten by the injury bug and had his season ruined by it in 2009. He missed 101 games because of a nasty hamstring injury, and because of that injury it ruined what looked to be a good season for him and one where the season he had this year may have occurred last year. He came back healthy this year, showed the power as a middle of the diamond player that is hard to find, and is back on the radar.

Bryce Stowell (RHP – Kinston/Akron/Columbus)

2009: 4-6, 4.76 ERA, 22 G, 0 S, 70.0 IP, 68 H, 37 BB, 77 K, 1.50 WHIP, 4.8 BB/9, 9.9 K/9

2010: 3-1, 2.14 ERA, 42 G, 7 S, 67.1 IP, 42 H, 36 BB, 102 K, 1.16 WHIP, 4.8 BB/9, 13.6 K/9

Stowell's pro debut in 2009 did not get off to a hot start thanks to an injury in spring training which sidelined him for about the first two months of the season. He spent the rest of the season playing catchup and never really appeared a 100% on the mound. He came back this season and from day one just dominated at all levels and showed a significant increase in his fastball velocity of about 4-5 MPH where he was up to 100 MPH.

Jeremie Tice (1B/3B – Lake County/Kinston)

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2009: .266 AVG, 31 R, 16 2B, 1 3B, 3 HR, 30 RBI, 31 BB, 69 K, 2 SB, .723 OPS

2010: .282 AVG, 57 R, 34 2B, 3 3B, 14 HR, 79 RBI, 31 BB, 106 K, 1 SB, .810 OPS

Tice battled all kinds of injuries in 2009 to his wrist and elbow, which in turn caused him to miss a lot of time and when he did play it sapped his power and ability to drive the ball. He came back much healthier this season and looked much better and was a run producer at both Low-A Lake County and High-A Kinston. With the move to first base midseason, if he can continue to hit the position is his for the taking considering not much is above him there.

And the 2010 Tony Award goes to...Jared Goedert

The return from injury plagued 2009 seasons for Pestano, Tice, Rodriguez, and Bryson was particularly encouraging and great to see. All appear to at least be at the level of performance they were at prior to their injuries (and any surgeries), and in some cases they are even better. Stowell and Chen had great bounce back seasons after disappointing campaigns in 2009, but all that said it was hard to ignore the power and production of Goedert.

Goedert was one of the more popular players to follow in 2007 because of his out of nowhere breakout performance, and then after his poor 2008 and 2009 seasons he was pretty much in prospect purgatory where he was an afterthought to many and no longer considered of much value. The Indians never thought this though as they felt that if he could get his shoulder healthy that the swing was still there and that the production would show itself again.

To the satisfaction of the Indians, when Goedert came to camp this past spring he proved he was finally 100% healthy and the swing had returned. He had a monster spring training hitting .426 with a .726 slugging percentage in 53 plate appearances (4 HR, 15 RBI). He used that awesome performance during spring training as a springboard to a great start to his 2010 season at Double-A Akron where in 44 games he hit .325/.382/.540 with 7 HR and 32 RBI. He went on to Triple-A Columbus and bashed his way to a line of .261/.345/.528 with 20 HR and 51 RBI in 81 games.

There is no question that Goedert has a lot to work on still as a defender as it is what prevented him from getting a big league chance in 2010, but he has proven himself to be an interesting bat. He is expected to continue working on his defense at third base this offseason playing

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winter ball in Venezuela, and may dabble some in the outfield where the Indians experimented with him in a handful of games this past season.

Goedert's power display this season was clearly better than anyone in the system, and even after hitting just .222/.322/.394 in 26 games in August and .130/.200/.174 in six games in September he still managed to finish hitting above .280 with an OPS just under .900. A comeback season indeed, and one that has vaulted him into consideration for the third base or corner utility gig in Cleveland next year. At this time last year, who would have thunk it?

Up Next: Rookie of the Year

Photo courtest of Ken Carr

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