

We've made it into the top 10 prospects in the organization here on TCF, and I can only hope that you're as excited about it as I am. There's a nice mix here in the



top ten, as we get an infielder, two outfielders, a catcher and a pitcher in players 6-10. Two of the guys should start at AAA, two at AA and one in low A, so its a nice look at the depth that the organization features. We get into our first big surprise on the list, as I have a guy at #8 overall that most pundits outside of the organization have in the late teens-to-early 20s. As you'll see, I'm really high on this guy and think he could be an impact player in the organization. Oh, and Happy Valentines Day, everyone. I highly suggest printing out this article and giving it to your significant other as a gift today. Procrastinating men (and women) of Cleveland, you're welcome.

As always, if you missed prior installments of our list, here are the [links to #11-15](#) , [#16-20](#) , [#21-30](#)

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[#31-40](#)
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10. Cord Phelps, 2B/3B

DOB: 1/23/1987

Height/Weight: 6-2/200

Bats/Throws: S/R

Acquired: 3rd round pick in 2008

2010 Stats: .308/.368/.457 with 8/54 between AA and AAA



Scouting report: Robert Cord Phelps was a revelation in 2010. Not seen as a top end guy after posting a .749 OPS for high A Kinston in 2009, Phelps nevertheless started 2010 at AA Akron as the starting 2B. He did a nice job with the bat in Akron, putting up a .346 OBP and was moved to AAA Columbus after just 218 Eastern League at bats. Once he got to Columbus, Phelps just exploded to the tune of a .317/.386/.506 line in his 243 AAA at bats. He pounded out 30 XBH for the Clippers, including 20 2B while helping Columbus to the International League and overall AAA title in 2010.

Phelps is the kind of guy who will have to prove himself at every level and will never just be handed a job. He doesn't look the part of an elite athlete at the plate. He hits from a crouch and is a bit hunched over in his stance (see picture on the left), and his hands load very low before he brings the bat through the zone. What this does for him though is helps his bat spend a lot of time in the hitting zone and allows him to put the barrel of the bat on the ball with great consistency. He has solid gap power, but will probably never hit 20+ home runs in the big leagues. He has an outstanding approach, and his on-base skills help him profile as a top of the order hitter, really a classic #2 hole guy.

Phelps was sent to Arizona this past offseason to play in the elite Arizona Fall League. The

Indians wanted him to play exclusively at 3B to increase his versatility and thus his value to the major league club. Reviews of his defense were mixed, but it was his first exposure to the position as a professional and no one expected gold glove caliber defense right away. He hit well in AZ, putting up a .367/.474/.557 with 3 HR and 10 RBI. The batting average was good for 5th in the league, and his OBP was 3rd. With enough experience, Phelps should be able to work his way to being a league average defender at 3B.

It's unclear as to where Phelps will find himself playing to start 2011. He will probably be given at least a token opportunity to earn the big league 2B and/or 3B job in Goodyear, but with the signing of Orlando Cabrera to play 2B, that position should be pretty much locked up. Put me down as a fan of Phelps getting a shot at the 2B job out of Goodyear, but that just doesn't look like it is going to happen. Donald/Nix are ahead of him for the 3B job at this point, and Phelps' defense isn't really at the point where the Indians would feel comfortable handing him the keys to the hot corner. If he doesn't earn a big league job, Phelps will find himself in a crowded Columbus infield that will also likely feature Jason Kipnis at 2B and Lonnie Chisenhall at 3B, both considered the heir apparent to their respective positions in Cleveland. Despite his breakout 2010, Phelps will have to fight for at bats in the infield, and the Indians are talking about getting him some playing time in the outfield as well. All three of these guys need at bats and all three are ready to handle AAA...someone has to get left out. So while Phelps should start in Columbus, make sure you buy a gameday program to find out exactly where in the field he will be on any given night.

Glass half-full: Phelps seizes the 2B job in spring training and never looks back.

Glass half-empty: An offensive-oriented utility infielder who gets about 300 at bats a year between 2B, 3B, DH and even the OF.

9. Joe Gardner, RHP

DOB: 3/18/1988

Height/Weight: 6-5/220

Bats/Throws: R/R

Acquired: 3rd round pick in 2009

2010 Stats: 13-6, 2.75 ERA, 142 K and 62 BB in 147 1/3 IP between low A and high A

Scouting report: Gardner has a devastating, dominating, sinking fastball that sets up everything he does as a pitcher. The pitch generated a lot of swings and



misses last year, and a lot of groundballs as well. I saw Gardner pitch twice for Kinston, and he gave up three flyballs and one line drive in the two outings combined. Everything else was a strikeout or groundball. The pitch sits in the low 90s, and when delivered from his three-quarters arm slot it has a lot of movement. In addition to the fastball, he throws a slider and a changeup, both of which project to be average to slightly above average pitches.

Gardner started 2010 off in Lake County, where he went 1-0 in 6 starts with 38 K in 25 IP. That kind of dominance earned him a quick ticket to high A Kinston, where he didn't miss a beat. His strikeout rate fell with the higher assignment, but so did his ERA and walk rate. He was the ace of a very good Kinston staff, and started the first game of the playoffs for the K-Tribe. He's intense on the mound, but he's a composed, quietly competitive young man who draws rave reviews for his makeup and coachability.

Gardner gets into trouble with his control and effectiveness when he loses his arm slot, which happened on occasion in 2010. When he drops down as more of a sidearmer, his slider loses its depth, flattens out and becomes very hittable. His fastball doesn't sink as much, going more 3-9 than 12-6 and it moves less. Gardner has to be cognizant of his arm slot at all times and make proper adjustments to stay consistent, or he will run into trouble at the higher levels of the minor leagues.

Expect Gardner to open 2011 in the rotation at AA Akron. He's just 23, and a full season at AA wouldn't be the worst thing in the world for his development. Still, if he goes out and gets guys out like he did in 2010, the Indians will have a hard time keeping him from reaching AAA Columbus with an outside shot at the big club as early as 2012.

Glass half-full: His ceiling is likely an innings-eating #3 starter in the big leagues.

Glass half-empty: His floor is likely an innings-eating #4 starter in the big leagues.

8. Chun Chen, C

DOB: 11/1/1988

Height/Weight: 6-1/200

Bats/throws: R/R

Acquired: International FA in 2007

2010 Stats: .315/.404/.521 with 12/69 in 390 at bats between low A and high A

Scouting report: Chen was one of the breakout players in the system in 2010, as he wasn't a guy that many people even had in their top 50 players in the organization. He was considered to be extremely raw as a catcher, and coming off of a .635 OPS in Mahoning Valley, nothing special with the bat. All that changed with his hot start for low A Lake County, and he rode an appearance in the MLB Future's Game into a blistering 2nd half for high A Kinston and the #8 spot on our countdown.



Chen's line in the very pitcher-friendly Carolina League was impressive regardless of his position. In 52 games for the K-Tribe, Chen put up a .320/.442/.523 line with 6 HR and 30 RBI. His OPS was .966. Oh, and he walked 38 times against just 36 strikeouts. For a 21-year old catcher making an adjustment not only to professional baseball but to a new county and language, those stats are flat-out remarkable. It's hot in the Carolina's in the summer, and it's REALLY hot when you don the tools of ignorance and work with young pitchers who will bounce 58-foot curveballs of your chest protector all day. For Chen to actually get stronger as the season wore on...well, I can't say enough about how impressed I am with his batting numbers last year.

Chen has outstanding bat speed. For those who didn't see his appearance in the Futures Game last year, Chen grounded out against Shelby Miller (Keith Law's #9 overall prospect this year) and hit a ball right on the screws against Tanner Scheppers (who touches triple digits with

his fastball) that was unfortunately right at the shortstop. For a guy who was barely out of low A, it was a solid performance and he didn't look overwhelmed at all. He has an advanced approach, and his on-base skills combined with gap power and a solid hit tool make his bat plus for a catcher.

The reason Chen isn't considered an elite prospect by some of the national publications is his defense. He's a converted catcher, and is still fairly raw. He has a good arm, but a bit of a slow release that allows runners to get an extra couple of steps on him. Still, he caught 37% of would-be basestealers in 2010, which is a very good number. His issues lie in blocking pitches in the dirt and handling a pitching staff. He allowed 13 passed balls in 52 games behind the plate for Kinston, a number that is just way too high. But it is something that can be addressed and coached up while he is still in the minors. I saw the Indians coaching staff working with Chen in spring training, and it's clear that Chen wants to learn how to be a catcher. He's a hard worker who would come over to the coaching staff and ask for help, always a good sign in a younger player. So while his defense may never be elite, I think he can be at least a league-average defender behind the plate. And if his bat stays at the level it was at in 2010, league-average defense would make him a star.

Chen seems to be a popular guy around the clubhouse, and all of the Kinston pitchers I talked to last year had good things to say about his receiving skills. He uses an interpreter when dealing with the media, but on the field he speaks enough English to communicate with the pitching staff and his teammates.

Chen should start out 2011 as the starting catcher for AA Akron, and will DH on days that he isn't catching. Catcher at the MLB level is one of the few positions that is set in stone for the Indians, but in a couple of years Chen could be a guy that comes up and lets Santana play 1B and DH more often, which would improve the longevity of both players over the course of their career.

Glass half-full: Chen's defense gets to the point where he can be an everyday catcher, and his bat stays plus for the position

Glass half-empty: Chen can't improve enough defensively to stay behind the plate, and moves to 3B or the OF where his bat isn't as good but should still play

7. Nick Weglarz, OF

DOB: 12/16/1987

Height/Weight: 6-3/250

Bats/Throws: L/L

Acquired: 3rd round draft pick in 2005

2010 Stats: .285/.390/.503 with 13/47 in at 312 bats between AA and AAA.

Scouting report: Weglarz is a big, strong Canadian outfielder that has as much raw power as anyone in the system. He puts on a display in batting practice, and



I've seen him hit balls over a 30+ foot fence that is over 380 feet away from home plate in right center field. He has an extremely advanced approach at the plate, and does an excellent job laying off pitches just outside of the strike zone. He averages a walk every 5.5 at bats throughout his career, an outstanding rate for a player his age. His power/patience combo profiles well in a corner OF position, and his bat will play in the middle of a lineup. His hit tool was once seen as a detriment to his overall prospect standing, but it has been much improved in the past couple of years and most scouts see him as a guy who can at least hit .275 or better in the majors someday. He was a member of the Canadian Olympic team as well as the Canadian World Baseball Classic team a couple of years ago.

Weglarz main problem is his inability to stay healthy for a full season. He had just 312 at bats last year before a thumb injury shut him down early. He's recorded over 400 at bats in a season just once in his minor league career, back in 2007. He's a really big guy, and will have to work hard on his conditioning to stay quick enough to play LF. He has a slightly below-average arm, and will never be more than an average defender. There's a chance that he will have to move to 1B at some point in his career. He's not a fast baserunner, but he's a smart baserunner. He can go 1st to 3rd on a single much quicker than you'd expect from a guy his size.

At this stage in his career, Weglarz really reminds me of Jim Thome. He's a big guy, has a similar stance from the left side of the plate, walks a lot, strikes out a lot and has light tower power. Now by no means am I saying that I expect Weglarz to be a 600 HR guy in the major leagues someday, I'm just saying that he reminds me more of Thome than any other prospect I have ever seen.

Weglarz should start 2011 at AAA Columbus on what will be a pretty loaded squad. If he's healthy and productive, he could get at bats in Cleveland around the all-star break. The key word there though is healthy, and I'd be happy with a 450 at bat season in AAA for Big Red.

Glass half-full: Wegz has his raw power translate to games, he stays healthy and becomes a middle of the order run producer who consistently puts up a .280/.400/.500 line with 30/100.

Glass half-empty: He continues to struggle with injuries and is never able to stay healthy enough to be a consistent hitter at the major league level.

6. LeVon Washington

DOB: 7/26/91

Height/Weight: 5-11/170

Bats/Throws: L/R

Acquired: 2nd round pick in 2010

2010 Stats: .444/.583/.444 in 9 at bats for the Rookie level AZL Indians



Scouting report: Washington is a guy I was expecting to rank in the 10-15 range, but the more I read about the kid the more I like him. He was a first round pick of the Tampa Bay Rays in 2009, but didn't sign. Scouts compare Washington to Carl Crawford at the same stage in his career, and while that is a lofty comparison, it fits. Washington is a burner on the basepaths and in the OF, and despite a very weak throwing arm he projects to be an above-average defender simply because he is so fast. He had surgery to repair a torn labrum in his throwing shoulder, but even once it is fully rehabbed his arm projects to be a tick below average.

Washington has an above-average hit tool, and projects for at least double-digit HR's down the road. He has shown the ability to hit for average, and could bat at the top of a big league order.

He has a good approach and a good feel for the strike zone, and should draw his share of walks. Washington's ceiling is as high as any position player in the system, but he's much less of a sure thing at this point than Kipnis or Chisenhall.

The concern with Washington is that in college he was accused of not always giving 100%, and even taking at-bats off from time to time. Scouts say he looks almost indifferent on the field, and is not the most intense guy. If that lack of effort carries over into the pros, Washington will have a very, very short career. It's also very possible that Washington is just a laid back player who doesn't show his emotions on the field, and his body language might be throwing off some observers. I haven't had a chance to see Washington yet, but will get a chance to watch him in spring training this year. He's a guy I'm really, really excited to get my eyes on and make my own judgments about. He will likely open the season in Low-A Lake County, but could finish 2011 in Kinston.

Glass half-full: A leadoff hitting CF who averages .310/.400/.410 with 15 HR and 40+ SB.

Glass half-empty: A LF who steals lots of bases, but little else, and for a team other than Cleveland after he pulls a Milton Bradley and finds his way out of town.