

The 1st round of the MLB Draft kicks off tonight at 7pm when the Pittsburgh Pirates go on the clock. The Indians select 8th overall, and then don't pick again until



the 2nd round, after all of the supplemental picks. So there's going to be an awful long wait from #8 to #67, including 10(!) picks for the Tampa Bay Rays.

Last week, I did a two-part profile of some of the players the Indians are likely considering for the #8 pick, [first focusing on the college players](#) and [then looking at the high schoolers](#) who are options for the Tribe in the 1st round. I cannot stress enough how important it is for the Indians to nail this pick, as the draft really is the most affordable way to build a team. Lefty Drew Pomeranz, last year's 1st round pick who is dominating high A right now, signed for \$2.65 million. That sounds expensive until you realize that they will have him under club control for SEVEN years. For the sake of comparison, we're paying Austin Kearns half that for one season to be the 4th OF. So while bonuses at the top of the draft have been escalating over the past few years, it's still bargain IF you get the right guy.

Due to popular demand, I'm going to put up my mock draft for the first 10 picks of the draft. This is who I think will go in these slots, not necessarily who I think *should* go. If you're interested in how I see the players talent-wise, my personal board will be included (free of charge!) at the end. With that being said, on to the mockery:

1. Pittsburgh Pirates: Gerrit Cole, RHP-UCLA

Cole has been at or near the top of everyone's board all season long. He has two pitches that already grade out as plus; his 96-98 MPH four-seam fastball that touches triple digits, and a nasty changeup that he throws between 84-97. The change is especially effective because he throws it with the same arm speed as his fastball. His slider is already above average, and

could develop into a third plus pitch. He's a tremendous competitor, and at 6'4"/220lbs has a workhorse body. He's pretty much everything you'd want in a #1 starter, and will arrive on the scene before last year's blue-chipper Jameson Tallion.

2. Seattle Mariners: Anthony Rendon, 3B-Rice

Rendon went into 2011 as the top position player in the draft, and he maintained that status despite a shoulder injury that sapped him of some of his power. The injury isn't expected to effect him past this season, and he should be back to his old self by spring training next year. Rendon has played some 2B for Rice this spring, but is expected to be a plus defender at 3B in the pros. He'll hit for average and power, and has an advanced approach at the plate to the point that he rarely swings at a pitch outside the strike zone. Seattle made some waves by giving high school SS prospect Francisco Lindor a private workout and there's some speculation that he could end up going here, but in the end I think Rendon will be too tough to pass up. He'll slot in well in a future infield with Justin Smoak, Dustin Ackley and Nick Franklin.

3. Arizona Diamondbacks: Trevor Bauer, RHP-UCLA

Here's where it gets interesting. Arizona has been high on Hultzen throughout the process. He's a polished lefty who doesn't have a sky-high ceiling, but he also has a very high floor and is considered as close to a sure thing as there is in the draft. But Bauer might be too tempting to pass up. He had a dominating season for UCLA, striking out in IP. He'll move quickly through the system, although he probably won't pitch anywhere this year regardless of when he signs. The UCLA coaching staff rode him hard down the stretch, and he threw over 120 pitches in a number of outings. The smart money is for him to rest in 2011, then open 2012 at high A or even AA.

4. Baltimore Orioles: Danny Hultzen, LHP-Virginia

Baltimore would be thrilled for Hultzen to make it to #4, given that he was projected just a month ago as a possible choice for #1 overall. High school righty Archie Bradley has more upside, but Baltimore is a little gun shy towards prep arms given their past draft history. Hultzen is similar to Brian Matsuz, and will move quickly through their system to join an already young and talented rotation in a year or two. Hultzen has made it know that he wants upwards of \$10 million to sign, but college juniors don't have a whole lot of leverage and he'll likely settle for less than that.

5. Kansas City Royals: Dylan Bundy, RHP-Owasso HS (Oklahoma)

The Royals want an advanced college arm to arrive on the scene sooner rather than later because they have a "wave" of prospects that are already close to major league ready. With Bauer and Hultzen off the board in this scenario, they take the next best thing; an advance high school arm that should move quickly through the system. Bundy has as much upside as any pitcher in the draft, and that includes Cole. He has a four-pitch mix including a plus fastball that touches triple digits, and has shown outstanding command and control. One thing that could cause the Royals to pass; he's made it known that he wants a \$30 million signing bonus. That would shatter the current record, and he'll probably end up signing for more like \$7 or \$8 million.

6. Washington Nationals: Bubba Starling, OF-Gardner-Edgerton HS (Kansas)

Washington is picking all the way down at #6 after selecting 1st overall the past two drafts. If they pick Starling here though, they could get the best talent in the draft for the third year in a

row. Starling is committed to Nebraska on a football scholarship, but he's a potential 5-tool superstar in centerfield. A smooth defender with a cannon for an arm, Starling also has the hitting tools to bat 3rd on a championship level team. He's going to cost a bundle to sign, but the Nationals have seen a nice fan boost in the past after taking Strasburg and Harper so they know what it would mean to the franchise to walk away from this draft with a talent like Starling. I know a lot of Indians fans want him, but I just don't see him falling to #8 overall.

7. Arizona Diamondbacks: Francisco Lindor, SS-Monte Verde Academy (FL)

This pick is a huge wildcard for me. It's an unprotected pick that Arizona was given for their failure to sign last year's 1st round pick, Barrett Loux. So if they take a guy here and can't come to terms with him, they lose the pick entirely with no compensation next year. Still, they have a chance to snag two really elite talents, and I can't see how they would pass on Lindor with the board looking like it does here. Lindor is a potential impact talent in the field and at the plate, and he's even being considered #2 overall for Seattle. If talent is the main factor here, Lindor is the pick. If not, look for a college arm like Sonny Gray, Matt Barnes or Jed Bradley.

8. Cleveland Indians: Archie Bradley, RHP-Broken Arrow HS (Oklahoma)

I'm trusting Brad Grant to have the authority to spend some \$\$ here and take the best player



available. That player would be high school righthander Archie Bradley. He has a triple digit fastball, and what ESPN's Keith Law and others have stated is the "best curveball in the draft." He's a big, physical guy at 6'3", 215lbs and offers a lot of projection. He's committed to play QB at Oklahoma and wants a big signing bonus, but should sign eventually. He offers more projection than even Drew Pomeranz, and has true ace potential. It would be a few years before he made it to the majors, but the payoff down the road could be tremendous. If the Indians decide they would rather go slot here and spend more money later in the draft, look for a college arm. There has been some talk of Jed Bradley to the Tribe here, but that doesn't make sense to me. Jed Bradley is a collegiate lefty with a good fastball and a decent changeup, but really no third pitch. Jed has struggled for Georgia Tech this year, and doesn't have a great track record of success. I'll be really, really upset if they Indians walk away from this draft with Jed Bradley in the first round.

9. Chicago Cubs: Javier Baez, 3B-Arlington Country Day HS (FL)

Baez is a name that the Indians were reportedly considering at #8. He's a high school shortstop that is expected to outgrow the position and move to 3B. He's got possibly the quickest bat in the draft, and projects to have plus power at the major league level. He has soft hands and a strong arm, and should be a plus defender at 3B. Teams are a little worried about his makeup, as he's seen as a "me first" guy on the field and aloof off of it. Still, he's a top-15 talent no doubt, and would fit well in a Cubs system that doesn't have a lot of position player prospects.

10. San Diego Padres: Taylor Jungmann, RHP-Texas

Another unprotected pick, San Diego will likely go with a college arm here. Jungmann has a great track record of success with Texas, and is seen as a surefire #3 or possibly a #2. Like Hultzen, he's seen as a very safe pick with a very high floor. He doesn't have the ceiling of a Hultzen, but should be a productive member of a major league rotation in a couple of years. He's got outstanding makeup, and scouts rave about his composure and competitiveness on the mound. He profiles as a Justin Masterson type guy, with a heavy, sinking fastball and above average slider. Jungmann is a possibility for the Indians at #8 if they end up going with a college arm.

My Board:

So if I had a chance to send a draft board to Brad Grant and company to use today, here is what it would look like:

1. Gerrit Cole
2. Anthony Rendon
3. Bubba Starling
4. Dylan Bundy
5. Trevor Bauer

6. Francisco Lindor

7. Archie Bradley

8. Danny Hultzen

9. Javier Baez

10. Taylor Jungmann

11. Taylor Gurrieri

12. Alex Meyer

13. Sonny Gray

14. Matt Barnes

15. George Springer

We'll see who they end up with. Only the first round is tonight, with rounds 2-30 tomorrow and then 31-50 finishing up on Wednesday. Regardless of who is selected in the 1st round, there's plenty of talent out there that can be acquired in rounds 2-50. But the 1st round pick is the best chance to land an elite talent, and we're all hoping that the Indians pick the right player with that choice. Because if all goes as planned the rest of this summer, we'll be picking about 23 spots later in next June's draft....

-Got a draft or prospect question? Ask AI on Twitter, @gotribe31