

G A M E

CHANGER

WILSONCUSTOMGLOVES.COM

OZZIE ALBIES
Atlanta Braves™ 2B
Custom A2K 1786

Fortune favors the bold, the risk-takers, the ones who pour their heart and soul into their craft. Atlanta Braves™ second baseman Ozzie Albies and his custom A2K 1786 have already made a mark on this game – and the best is yet to come.

W

 **AUTHENTIC
COLLECTION**
THE OFFICIAL BALL GLOVE OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Baseball America

JUAN SOTO

Washington Nationals™ OF
Custom A2K 1799

DAWN OF A NEW ERA.

As a 20-year-old last season, Juan Soto and his custom A2K 1799 led the *Washington Nationals™* to their first championship in franchise history. He knows what it's like to stand atop the baseball world now – and he's ready to do it all again in 2020.



MATT CHAPMAN

Oakland Athletics, 3B
A2K1787



HE'S THAT GOOD.

Matt Chapman could keep doing the same thing, year after year and have success. But that's not who he is. Throughout his entire career, he's challenged the status quo and pushed himself to the limit, while staying focused on raising the bar every time he sets foot on the field.



 **AUTHENTIC**
COLLECTION
THE OFFICIAL BALL GLOVE OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

TOP 100 PROSPECTS | 30th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Baseball America

MAJOR LEAGUE PREVIEW

- FUTURE IS NOW FOR PADRES
- BREAKOUT PLAYERS
- BA STAFF PREDICTIONS
- TOP 20 IMPACT ROOKIES
- YOUNG PITCHERS POISED TO POP

PLUS

- EARLY DRAFT PREVIEW
- PRESEASON HIGH SCHOOL ALL-AMERICA TEAMS
- WINTER BALL STANDOUTS
- SHEEHAN: THE TEAM WITH THE MOST AT STAKE IN 2020

CHICAGO HOPE

NO. 2 OVERALL PROSPECT LUIS ROBERT JOINS A YOUNG, TALENTED WHITE SOX CORE THAT IS READY TO WIN



\$9.99 US/\$10.99 CAN

MARCH 2020 | ON SALE UNTIL 4/01/2020

BA TOP 100 PROSPECTS



SWING LIKE THE PROS



THE CHANDLER DIFFERENCE

Dedication to the precise technique and craft is evident in each bat created at Chandler Bats. From specialized youth models to the inventive line of game, training, and softball bats — nothing has been left to chance, everything is modeled to enhance the game.



NEW Premium Padded
Batting Gloves



OWN IT! ADD XP TO YOUR NEXT BAT. THE HARDEST BAT FINISH BASEBALL HAS EVER SEEN.

chandlerbats.com

MARCH

Leading Off

MARCH 2020 VOLUME 40, ISSUE 03

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

14. The Ranking

This year's Top 100 Prospects marks the 30th anniversary of our first ranking in 1990.

23. On Deck

We identify 20 prospects most likely to appear on the 2021 edition of the Top 100.

25. By The Numbers

The Rays lead all organizations with eight Top 100 Prospects—and other facts and figures.

26. Count On It

The top two prospects in the game get results with radically different plate approaches.

MLB PREVIEW

29. Bank On It

The 2020 World Series will have a familiar ring to it—if our editors are correct.

30. BA Crystal Ball

We predict teams' order of finish, award winners, breakout players and much more.

30. Chicago Hope

A talented young core and busy offseason have the White Sox positioned to win after wrapping a three-year rebuild.

34. Now Or Never

After years of stockpiling prospect talent, the Padres are done being patient as they their sights on 2020.

38. Devil Magic

No organization maximizes the value of overlooked college players quite like the Cardinals.

ZACK WHEELER

The Phillies have been one of the most aggressive teams in free agency the past two off-seasons. This year they added Wheeler and Didi Gregorius.

29

MARCH

Leading Off

MARCH 2020 VOLUME 40, ISSUE 03

“He posted the lowest swinging-strike rate in the minors last season and hit .311 as he raced to Triple-A in his first full season.”

WHITE SOX SECOND BASEMAN **NICK MADRIGAL**,
OUR NO. 12 PRESEASON ROOKIE



PROSPECTS

41. A Tale Of Two Halves

A focus on his changeup and curveball helped Tigers lefthander Joey Wentz step up his game in the second half.

■ All 15 American League organization reports—**Page 40**

46. Bright Future

D-backs first-round lefthander Blake Walston showed improved stuff and physicality at instructional league.

■ All 15 National League organization reports—**Page 45**

MAJORS

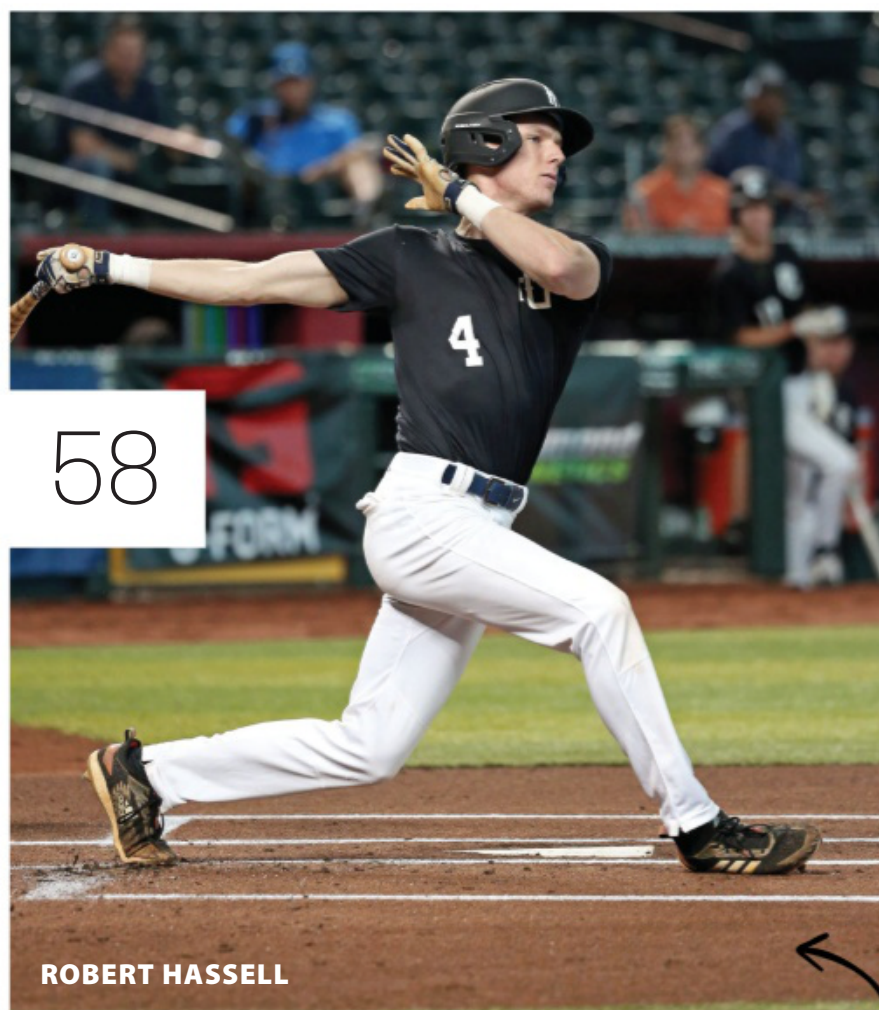
51. Top 20 Rookies

We round up the first-year players we expect to be the biggest difference-makers.

MINORS

54. Gas Camp

The Mariners see instant results from their dedicated offseason pitching instruction.



ROBERT HASSELL

COLLEGE

56. Two-Way Gopher

Max Meyer takes his first steps toward leading Minnesota back to Omaha.

HIGH SCHOOL

58. All-America Teams

Our preseason first team traditionally forecasts first-round picks in June.

DRAFT

60. Coming Attractions

Our top 100 draft prospects, plus an overview of the class from draft guru Carlos Collazo

INTERNATIONAL

62. Winter Wonders

Ten prospects who shined in Latin American winter leagues looking to carry momentum into 2020.

EXTRAS

7. Where Are They Now?

Oil Can Boyd wants to draw black fans to the ballpark.

10. Numbers Game

How the toolsiest players compare with Top 100 Prospects of yesteryear.

11. Fantasy

Nine major league pitchers poised to break out.

COLUMNS

12. Cooper

How coach Robert Woodard established analytics at UNC Charlotte.

13. Ringolsby

Remembering longtime juco coach John Altobelli.

66. Sheehan

The major league team with the most at stake in 2020.

ON THE COVER

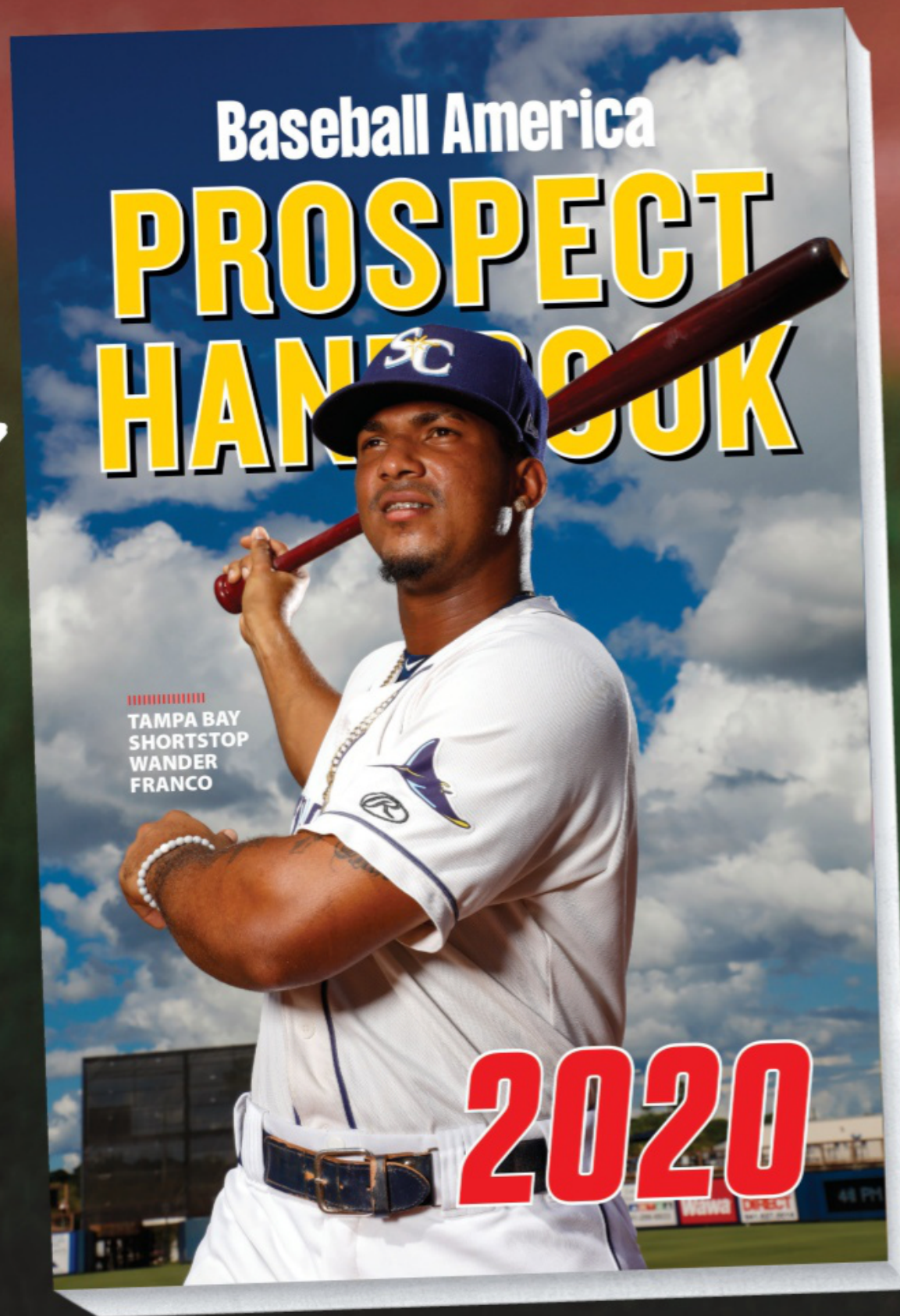


COVER PHOTO BY
RON VESELY/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

ON DECK FOR APRIL: With the arrival of spring comes our annual Minor League Preview. This year we focus on the Dodgers' player development machine, organization talent rankings and the ongoing PBA negotiations.

Baseball America

AVAILABLE
NOW



PROSPECT HANDBOOK

The **2020 Prospect Handbook** is a must-have for superfans and fantasy players. You will find yourself returning to the book—now in its 20th edition—all year to see what we wrote. Get the scoop on big league callups, trade acquisitions or even prospective additions to your dynasty team.

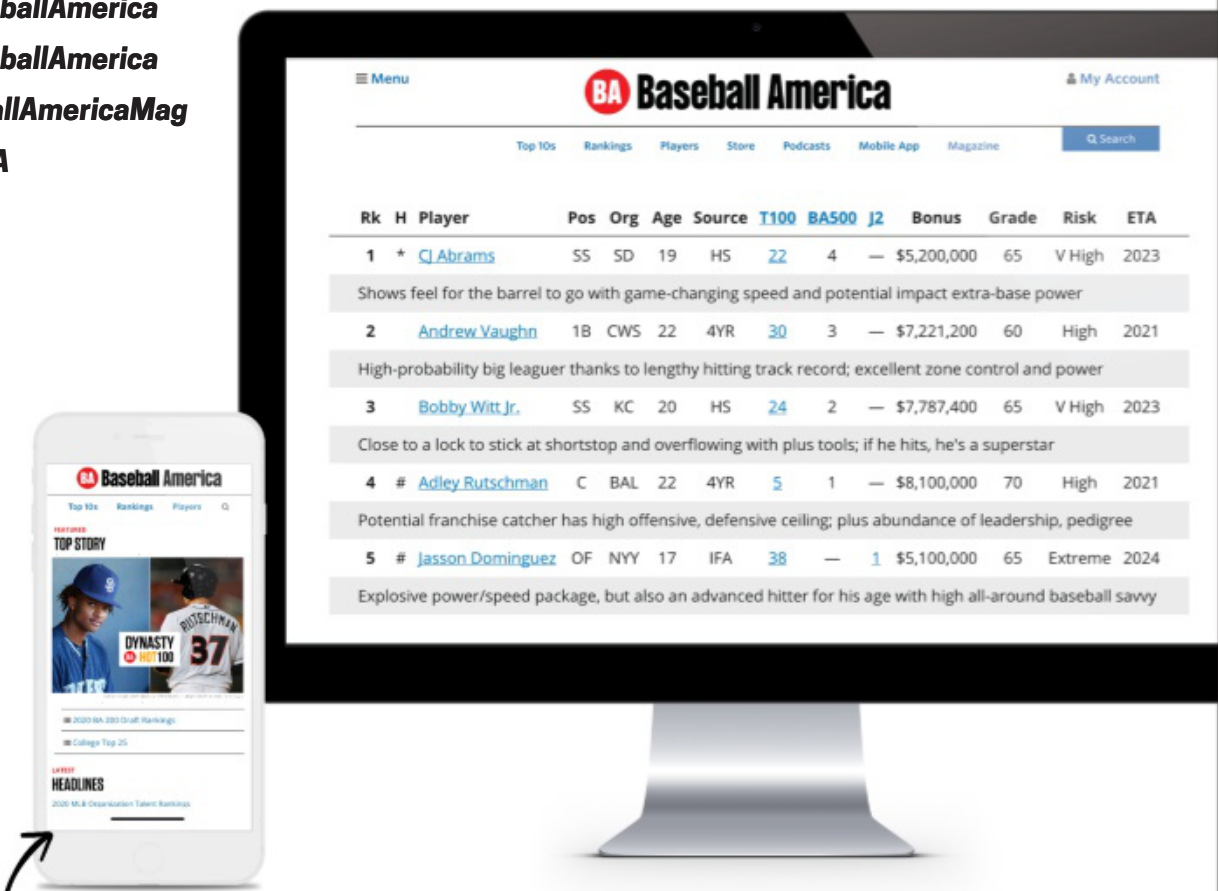
BaseballAmerica.com

OR CALL **800-845-2726** 9 A.M. – 4 P.M., MON-THURS ET

BA Online

WHAT'S NEW AT BASEBALLAMERICA.COM AND OUR SOCIAL ACCOUNTS

- @BaseballAmerica
- @BaseballAmerica
- BaseballAmericaMag
- ReadBA



YOUR FANTASY DRAFT GUIDE TO FIRST-YEAR PLAYERS

Baseball America reports on the draft and international amateur market year-round. That's why we decided to focus our collective scouting intel and intuition into the first-ever **Dynasty Hot 100** to help inform fantasy players during dynasty draft season—and all season long.

Senior writer **Ben Badler** covers the July 2 international market for BA. National writer **Carlos Collazo** covers the draft. The two combined their expertise to rank the top 100 first-year prospects for dynasty leagues from a BA point of view.

The vast majority of players covered in the **Dynasty Hot 100** were either 2019 draft picks or Latin American amateurs who signed during the 2019 international signing period. These talent sources supply the most coveted prospects in typical 2020 dynasty drafts.

For year-round fantasy content tailored to dynasty players:
BaseballAmerica.com/fantasy/stories
Podcasts: **BaseballAmerica.com/podcasts**
@MattEddyBA

SOCIAL BUZZ...



BA readers lobbied for their favorite baseball movie of all time.

The Yankees' Jasson Dominguez is one of the most heralded international prospects of recent memory.

GO ONLINE FOR EVEN MORE TOP 100 RANKINGS

This may be the Top 100 Prospects issue, but BaseballAmerica.com unveiled **four top 100 prospect** rankings in January alone.

- Top 100 Prospects
- Top 100 draft prospects
- Top 100 international prospects
- Dynasty Hot 100

Trap Toon by PAUL TRAP

paultrap@BaseballAmerica.com

A TIP OF THE BALLCAP TO
CARTOONIST & ANIMATOR



A former Disney animator, Henderson created cartoons for the **Houston Astros**, appearing on the Astrodome's huge 'Astrolite', precursor to today's Jumbotron.



According to Texas Monthly, Henderson's work was "sometimes witty, occasionally savage but never subtle".



Astros fans rallied behind Henderson's '**CHESTER CHARGE**', the Astros mascot appearing both on the scoreboard and on the field.



Author James McMurtry suggests Henderson's work was the Astrodome's main attraction, stating "The game's true function is to provide material for the man who operates the screen".

While Jim Wynn hit moonshots in the dome, Henderson would help NASA with the real thing by developing instructional animation used in Apollo 11 training.



Where Are They Now?

CATCHING UP WITH A NOTABLE PLAYER FROM BASEBALL AMERICA HISTORY



Boyd tries to get black fans back at the ballpark

by **RON MORRIS**

Oil Can Boyd continues to love baseball, a game he played for 10 seasons in the major leagues. What Boyd does not like about the game is the declining number of black Americans playing it.

African-Americans accounted for just 13 percent of Opening Day major league rosters in 2019, but Boyd has an idea that could change that.

“When the black parent is not involved in the game, the kids are not going to be involved in the game,” Boyd said. “So we’re trying to get the fan base back.”

Boyd, now 60, failed several years ago in an attempt to revive minor league baseball in his hometown of Meridian, Miss. Now he is out to organize and build a Meridian community baseball academy that appeals to parents as well as black youth.

He wants baseball in Meridian to again be the focal point of the community as it was in his youth.

“It was a home-based community,” Boyd said of Meridian. “The community was behind you. The community came out and supported the kid who played baseball. It’s not that way anymore. The kids have traded in Little League baseball for the streets.

Oil Can Boyd relied on control of four pitch types to fashion a 10-year big league career, primarily with the Red Sox.

“We’re trying to get the black fan back at the ballpark. That’s what’s going to put the black ballplayer back on the field: the black fan. The kid won’t come and participate in the game unless he has some encouragement from the home.”

Boyd’s father Skeeter played and loved baseball.

“You knew about the Satchel Paiges, and the Josh Gibsons and the Cool Papa Bells,” Boyd said of the Negro League superstars. “We knew about baseball growing up because our grandparents and parents would tell us about it.”

So when Boyd appeared on the cover of Baseball America May 1, 1983, as “The Second Coming of Satchel Paige,” he was well aware of the Hall of Fame pitcher and his impact on the game. Boyd was also aware of Paige’s similar stature at 6-foot-1 and 155 pounds.

“My dad played against him,” Boyd said of Paige. “I got a chance to meet him as a kid. We knew the history of the game. It inspired us to be like those guys.”

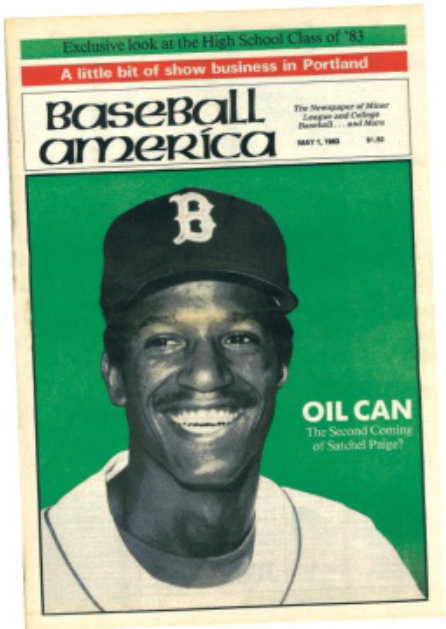
Boyd entered 1983 ranked as the No. 2 prospect in the Red Sox organization and would finish the season in Boston. He won 12 games for Boston in 1984, 15 in 1985 and 16 in 1986 when he started Game 3 of the World Series.

By the time his big league career concluded in 1991, Boyd had compiled a 78-77 record with a 4.04 ERA with the Red Sox, Expos and Rangers. His career ERA was almost exactly league average when adjusted for ballpark.

Boyd later admitted to pitching under the influence of cocaine and spent two months in prison following a dispute with a former girlfriend.

That is distant part of his past, Boyd said. He now lives with his wife Karen in Providence, R.I. He participates in Red Sox fantasy camps, autograph signings and fundraisers for cancer research. His focus, though, is on getting the baseball academy off the ground in Meridian.

“Wherever the baseball takes me,” Boyd said, “that’s where I’m going.” ■



FROM OUR ARCHIVE

ISSUE

May 1, 1983

RUNDOWN

“I like to carry myself like Satchel did. My uncle played with him on the Kansas City Monarchs and my father knew him personally,” Oil Can Boyd said of Hall of Famer Satchel Paige, his boyhood idol.

Baseball America

ESTABLISHED 1981 - PO BOX 12877, DURHAM, NC 27709 - (800) 845-2726

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER B.J. Schecter @bjschecter
EXECUTIVE EDITORS J.J. Cooper @jjcoop36, Matt Eddy @MattEddyBA
CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER Don Hintze
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Ben Leigh
DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY Mark Chiarelli @Mark_Chiarelli

EDITORIAL

SENIOR EDITOR Josh Norris @jnorris427
SENIOR WRITER Ben Badler @benbadler
NATIONAL WRITERS Teddy Cahill @tedcahill, Carlos Collazo @CarlosACollazo, Kyle Glaser @KyleAGlaser
ASSOCIATE EDITORS Justin Coleman @justincolemanba, Chris Hilburn-Trenkle @ChrisTrenkle
STAFF WRITER Joe Healy @JoeHealyBA
WEB EDITOR Kayla Lombardo @KaylaLombardo11
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR Tim Newcomb @tdnewcomb

PRODUCTION

CREATIVE DIRECTOR James Alworth
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Leah Tyner

BUSINESS

TECHNOLOGY MANAGER Brent Lewis
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Kellen Coleman
MARKETING/OPERATIONS COORDINATOR Angela Lewis
CUSTOMER SERVICE Melissa Sunderman

COLUMNISTS

RON MORRIS Columbia, S.C.
TRACY RINGOLSBY Cheyenne, Wyo.
JOE SHEEHAN New York

WHERE TO DIRECT QUESTIONS

BACK ISSUES To order, visit <https://www.baseballamerica.com/back-issues/>
ADVERTISING ben.leigh@baseballamerica.com
COLLEGES ted.cahill@baseballamerica.com
DESIGN/PRODUCTION james.alworth@baseballamerica.com
DRAFT carlos.collazo@baseballamerica.com
HIGH SCHOOLS carlos.collazo@baseballamerica.com
INDEPENDENT LEAGUES jj.cooper@baseballamerica.com
INTERNATIONAL ben.badler@baseballamerica.com
MAJOR LEAGUES kyle.glaser@baseballamerica.com
MINOR LEAGUES/BUSINESS josh.norris@baseballamerica.com
PROSPECTS kyle.glaser@baseballamerica.com
REPRINTS angela.lewis@baseballamerica.com
SUBSCRIPTIONS/CUSTOMER SERVICE customerservice@baseballamerica.com
WEBSITE mark.chiarelli@baseballamerica.com

CORRESPONDENTS

GABE BURNS Atlanta Journal-Constitution; **TJ COTTERILL** Tacoma News Tribune; **SHI DAVIDI** Sportsnet Canada; **MIKE DIGIOVANNA** Los Angeles Times; **ALAN ESKEW** Kansas City, Mo.; **JACK ETKIN** Denver; **DERRICK GOOLD** St. Louis Post-Dispatch; **DOUG GRAY** RedsMinorLeaguers.com; **SCOT GREGOR** Daily Herald (Arlington Heights, Ill.); **TOM HAUDRICOURT** Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; **JIM INGRAHAM** Cleveland; **GEORGE KING** New York Post; **STEVE KRONER** San Francisco Chronicle; **ROCH KUBATKO** MASNSports.com (Baltimore); **LACY LUSK** Washington, D.C.; **PHIL MILLER** Minneapolis Star Tribune; **JEFF SANDERS** San Diego Union-Tribune; **JIM SALISBURY** NBC Sports Philadelphia; **ALEX SPEIER** Boston Globe; **CASEY TEFERTILLER** Santa Cruz, Calif.; **MARC TOPKIN** Tampa Bay Times; **WALTER VILLA** Miami Herald; **EMILY WALDON** Grand Rapids, Mich.; **JEFF WILSON** Fort Worth Star-Telegram; **TIM WILLIAMS** PiratesProspects.com.

STATISTICAL SERVICE

Major League Baseball Advanced Media

BASEBALL AMERICA ENTERPRISES



CHAIRMAN & CEO Gary Green
PRESIDENT Larry Botel
GENERAL COUNSEL Matthew Pace
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING Amy Heart
INVESTOR RELATIONS Michele Balfour
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS Joan Disalvo
PARTNERS Jon Ashley, Stephen Alepa, Martie Cordaro, Brian Rothschild, Andrew Fox, Ian Ritchie, Dan Waldman, Sonny Kalsi, Glenn Isaacson, Robert Hrenreich, Craig Amazeen, Peter Rupprecht, Beryl Snyder, Tom Steiglehner



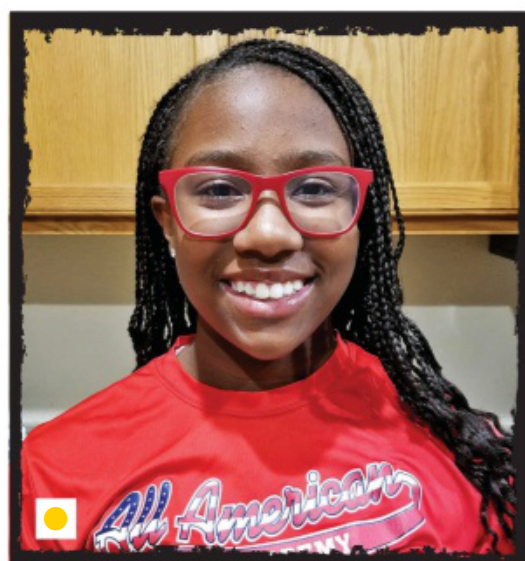
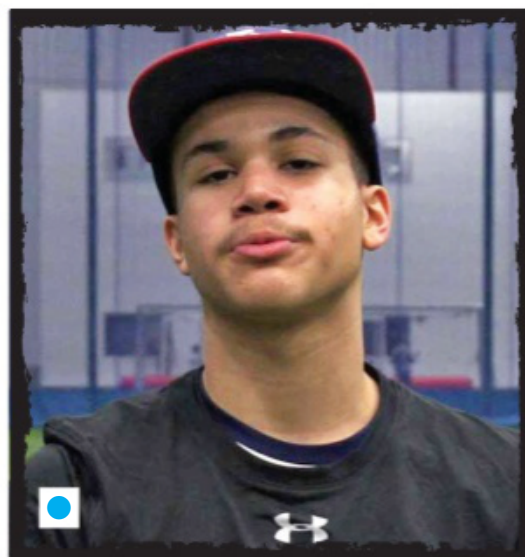
MANAGING PARTNER David Geaslen
CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER Jonathan Segal
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Sue Murphy

BASEBALL AMERICA (ISSN 0745-5372/USPS 591-210) November, 2019, Vol. 39, No. 11 is published monthly, 12 issues per year, by Baseball America Enterprises, LLC, 4319 South Alston Ave, Suite 103, Durham, NC 27713. Subscription rate is \$89.97 for one year; Canada \$102.97 (U.S. funds); all other foreign \$115.97 per year (U.S. funds). Periodicals postage paid at Durham, NC, & additional mailing offices. Occasionally our subscriber list is made available to reputable firms offering goods and services we believe would be of interest to our readers. If you prefer to be excluded, please send your current address label and a note requesting to be excluded from these promotions to Baseball America Enterprises, LLC, 4319 South Alston Ave, Suite 103, Durham, NC 27713, Attn: Privacy Coordinator. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (See DMM 707.4.12.5); NON-POSTAL & MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to Baseball America, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. CANADA POST: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to IMEX Global Solutions, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Please contact 1-800-381-1288 to start carrying Baseball America in your store.

For The Love of The Game

CELEBRATING YOUTH STARS WHO EXCEL ON AND OFF THE FIELD

FACTORY
ATHLETICS™ is BA's *For the Love of the Game* Selection Partner



● **ABIGAIL SLIMAN, 13**

CYPRESS, TX
Abby works hard on and off the field. She plays for the **Gulf Coast Bombers** and is an honor roll student while taking pre-advanced placement courses. She also plays flute in the band and participates in volleyball and basketball for her school teams. Abby somehow finds time to volunteer to those in need, which includes delivering Christmas toys to kids who are less fortunate. Abby would like to one day have a career as a teacher or a nurse and continue to find ways of helping others.

● **ETHAN KRENEK, 15**

MT. ENTERPRISE, TX
Ethan broke his wrist playing basketball in early 2019 and missed most of spring tournament baseball. The superintendent of the **Cushing Independent School District** recommended a local PONY league that he coached. In the championship game, Ethan was the winning pitcher after taking over in the first inning with his team down 4-1. In that moment, however, Ethan showed a will to compete and battle, striking out 15 consecutive hitters on the way to the championship.

● **JOSHUA GARCIA, 15**

PALISADES PARK, NJ
Josh was invited to the Dominican Republic to train and play in the **Latin American Prospect League** last summer. While training and playing, Josh did incredible things to help players, such as distributing baseball shirts, pants and baseball equipment to donate all over Santo Domingo. On the field, he competed with some of the best Latin American baseball prospects and he did so well that former major leaguer Melvin Mora invited him back to compete again in 2020.

● **MADISON EVERS-LYLES, 13**

PITTSBURG, CA
Madison currently plays for **All American Sports Academy**. She helped set the tone for her 12U team and was the most electrifying hitter in Northern California. In a national tournament-level league, she led in most offensive categories, hitting over .400 with 12 homers and 78 RBIs. In January 2019 at an event, she won the 12U home run derby. Outside of softball, Madison is a first degree black belt in Kajukembo Karate and has made honor roll every grading period from sixth through eighth grade.

● **PIERSON COOPER, 14**

BETHESDA, MD
Pierson, a freshman at **Georgetown Day School** in Washington D.C., is a rising all-star, both on and off the field. As a catcher, Pierson embraces his role as a field general, both motivating and leading his teammates. He is a player with a mix of offensive and defensive skills, and one who understands that the team always comes before the needs of any individual player. He applies this same work ethic to his studies. Pierson is a consistent "A" student and an accomplished classical piano player.

Slow the game down

by STEVE BERNHARDT

BASEBALL FACTORY'S
CHIEF BASEBALL OFFICER

We have all heard that the best players have a way of "slowing the game down" when they are in the midst of competition. It allows them to see more, to anticipate, to make better decisions and to perform at a high level. How do we get there? How do we slow the game down?

As with everything else, it starts with our preparation. We at Baseball Factory are firm believers that you have to speed things up in practice to be able to slow them down in the game. Too often, baseball workouts are done at a slow, relaxed pace which leads to excellent workout performance that doesn't carry over to the pressure and speed of the game.

Batting practice is a great example. How do we hit velocity if we never see it? Bringing the BP pitcher and L-screen in closer and throwing a bit harder limits the reaction time of the hitter. This forces hitters to be on time and make sure they are able to get the barrel to the baseball with less time to make decisions and react. A pitching machine can do the same thing. Cranking up the velocity and taking a few rounds can get the eyes, brain and body working more quickly and efficiently in order to catch up to the speed of the pitches. Once the machine is backed down a little, it seems like the hitter has an eternity to read the pitch, make a decision and swing—thus slowing the game down.

These ideas can work on the defensive side as well. It starts with practicing at game speed and the next step is to bring in baserunners or even a count-down clock. Set the clock at a challenging 4.3 or 4.4 seconds, hit a fungo to an infielder and see if the out is recorded before the buzzer sounds. This gets infielders to be aggressive to the ball, make sure they are efficient with their exchange/release and finish the play with a strong, accurate throw. Varying the time on the clock (or the speed of the baserunners) will help them to get in the frame of mind to be aware of the speed of the batter each time a new hitter steps into the box. These workouts help to train the all important internal clock that infielders need to react to situations in games.

Getting outfielders accustomed to the speed they need to close on the ball as well as the release of a strong, accurate throw necessary to cut down a runner or prevent them from taking an extra base can be a game-changer. Again, if it hasn't been practiced in a demanding setting, it's tough to expect a perfect play with the pressure on in a game.

Catchers throw to second on the watch quite a bit, but how often with an actual runner trying to steal? Are they forced to block outside of a defined blocking drill when they know the ball is going to be in the dirt? These situations can be set up for catchers as well. Add into their blocking a quick recovery and throws to different bases to prepare them for what will happen in a game. Finally, let's challenge pitchers to throw more "meaningful" pitches from the stretch outside of the game. The clock can also give immediate feedback to pitchers who need to improve their release time to the plate.

Mix some of these ideas into future workouts. We think it will help players to better prepare for the speed and pressure of the game. Before long, the game will "slow down" for them. ■

GET STARTED WITH **BASEBALL FACTORY** LIKE MAJOR LEAGUER **NICHOLAS CASTELLANOS**

UNDER ARMOUR NATIONAL TRYOUT TOUR - 2006
BASEBALL FACTORY PLAYER DEVELOPMENT TOURNAMENT - 2006
UNDER ARMOUR ALL-AMERICAN - 2009
FIRST ROUND MLB DRAFT PICK - 2010



BASEBALL FACTORY NATIONAL TOUR **#1 SKILLS EVALUATION EVENT IN THE USA**

Baseball Factory's National Tour gives you the most accurate reading of where you stand nationwide against your peers.



PHOTO CRED: PATRICK GORSKI, USA TODAY SPORTS



When I first entered the scene, Baseball Factory helped me all along the way through high school. By the time they sent the invitation for the All-America Game, they were familiar with me as a player and a person.

- Nicholas Castellanos



REGISTER NOW: BASEBALLFACTORY.COM/EVENTS

Enjoy 20% Off Registration When You Use Promo Code **BA20**

Numbers Game

AN ANALYTICALLY INCLINED LOOK AT THE GAME

MAKING THE GRADE

How the toolsiest prospects in baseball compare with Top 100 Prospects from yesteryear

by **MATT EDDY**

One of the joys of evaluating prospects for Baseball America is dreaming about how young players could develop. Since you’re reading BA, the same is probably true for you. And there’s no better group of players to begin dreaming on than the toolsiest ones in this year’s **Top 100 Prospects** ranking.

One way to estimate how prospects might pan out is to compare their scouting grades with those of prospects past. BA is equipped to do that because we have 10 years of data—tools grades—for the top prospects in baseball. So let’s dive into the archives and see how the toolsiest prospects of 2020 compare with those of yesteryear. But before we get started, a disclaimer: these are not comps made by scouts or even computer models. These are simply comparisons of tools grades on the 20–80 scale as evaluated when players were prospects.

LUIS ROBERT, OF, WHITE SOX

Robert finished runner-up to Gavin Lux for the 2019 Minor League Player of the Year award to acknowledge a season in which he climbed from high Class A to Triple-A. He hit .328 with 32 home runs and 36 stolen bases and enters 2020 as the No. 2 prospect in baseball. Robert shares similarities with Braves outfielder **Ronald Acuña Jr.** when he was a prospect.

	Age	Year	Hit	Pow	Run	Fld	Arm
Luis Robert	22	2020	55	70	70	60	70
Ronald Acuña Jr.	20	2018	60	70	70	70	60

Acuña won Minor League POY honors in 2017, when he also climbed from high Class A to Triple-A and hit .325 with 21 homers and 44 steals. He entered 2018 as the No. 1 prospect in baseball and went on to win National League Rookie of the Year that season. The key differences between the two players are that (1) Robert, because of his Cuban heritage, was three years older than Acuña when he signed, and (2) Robert is not viewed as the same caliber hitter as Acuña was as a prospect.

WANDER FRANCO, SS, RAYS

Franco enters 2020 ranked as the No. 1 prospect in baseball based on his otherworldly hitting acumen and power potential as a teenage middle infielder who is ready for Double-A. Last season he hit .327 with nine homers, 27 doubles and more walks (56) than strikeouts (35).

	Age	Year	Hit	Pow	Run	Fld	Arm
Wander Franco	19	2020	80	60	50	55	50
Bo Bichette	21	2019	70	60	50	50	55
Jurickson Profar	20	2013	70	60	55	65	60

Given Franco’s unique characteristics, including his youth, it’s difficult to find an exact match in the prospect annals. However, the Blue Jays’ **Bo Bichette** is a direct contemporary who has a similar offensive profile with good but not outstanding defensive potential. Though **Jurickson Profar’s** career has not met expectations—in part because he lost the better part of two development years in his early 20s to injury—he was a phenom who like Franco ranked as the No. 1 overall prospect in the game in 2013. The year before, Profar had hit .281 with 14 homers, 26 doubles and nearly as many walks (66) as strikeouts (79) at Double-A.

JULIO RODRIGUEZ, OF, MARINERS

Rodriguez appears to be the latest in a line of young Dominican hitting prodigies, e.g. Juan Soto, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Fernando Tatis Jr., who are rewriting the rules of player development. Rodriguez is coming off a season in which he hit .326 with 12 home runs and 26 doubles in 84 games while reaching high Class A in his full-season debut.

	Age	Year	Hit	Pow	Run	Fld	Arm
Julio Rodriguez	19	2020	70	70	45	50	70
Bryce Harper	19	2012	60	80	55	60	80

Rodriguez’s tools and trajectory most closely resemble another wunderkind with a right field profile: **Bryce Harper**. Harper spent all but the first month of his age-19 season in Washington. Rodriguez has a chance to factor for the Mariners in 2020, albeit with a second-half ETA a best-case scenario.



White Sox shortstop **Tim Anderson** found his footing in pro ball at Double-A Birmingham in 2015.

Padres shortstop **CJ Abrams** hit the ground running in pro ball, hitting .401 in the Rookie-level Arizona League.

CJ ABRAMS, SS, PADRES

The sixth overall pick in June, Abrams shredded the Rookie-level Arizona League in his debut, winning the batting title (.401), swiping 14 bases and finishing second in on-base percentage (.442) and slugging (.662). While the AZL is a hitter’s league, batting .400 at any level is an achievement, especially for a teenager making his pro debut.

	Age	Year	Hit	Pow	Run	Fld	Arm
CJ Abrams	19	2020	70	55	70	60	55
Tim Anderson	23	2016	60	55	70	55	55

Abrams shares similarities with White Sox shortstop **Tim Anderson**, who in 2015 hit .312 with five homers and 49 stolen bases at Double-A. Anderson has always been held back by low walk rates and high chase rates, which were not evident for Abrams in his pro debut, thus the more optimistic view of his hit tool.

NATE PEARSON, RHP, BLUE JAYS

Pearson drew buzz in his draft year for hitting 100 mph in a bullpen session while at JC of Central Florida. The 6-foot-6 righthander has improved the touch on his slider as he has climbed the ladder and now sits at the precipice of the big leagues despite missing essentially all of 2019 with a fractured forearm.

	Age	Year	FB	CB	SL	CHG	CTL
Nate Pearson	23	2020	80	45	60	55	55
Jon Gray	22	2014	80	—	70	55	60

Heading into the 2013 draft, **Jon Gray** ranked as the No. 1 prospect on the BA board. He fell to the Rockies at No. 3 but zoomed to the majors by the end of 2015. Coming out of college, Gray was a big-bodied righthander who had hit 100 mph in his draft year while throwing an outstanding slider. Thus the similarities with Pearson are easy to see.

JARRED Kelenic, OF, MARINERS

Kelenic’s wide-ranging tool set has prospect hounds and Mariners fans excited. He began his full-season debut last year at low Class A and finished it at Double-A, hitting .291 overall with 23 home runs and 20 stolen bases.

	Age	Year	Hit	Pow	Run	Fld	Arm
Jarred Kelenic	20	2020	70	60	55	50	60
Oscar Taveras	22	2014	75	60	50	55	60

The Cardinals’ **Oscar Taveras** entered 2014 ranked as the No. 3 prospect in baseball and made his big league debut that May 31. He scuffled more than expected but made the postseason roster and went 3-for-7 with a homer. Less than two weeks later he died in a traffic collision in his native Dominican Republic. In other words, we will never know what type of player Taveras might have become, though it’s fair to map his abilities to those of Kelenic, right down to being lefthanded-hitting center fielders who might fit best in a corner in the big leagues.

JESUS LUZARDO, LHP, ATHLETICS

Luzardo has ranked as the No. 1 lefthanded pitching prospect in 2019 and 2020. He remains prospect eligible only because a lat injury limited him to 43 minor league innings and six September big league relief appearances.

	Age	Year	FB	CB	SL	CHG	CTL
Jesus Luzardo	22	2020	60	55	—	70	60
Julio Urias	19	2016	60	60	—	60	60

Given Luzardo’s pitch mix and poise, scouts have no problem projecting him to the role of a No. 2 starter in the big leagues. The same was true of Dodgers lefthander **Julio Urias** when he was a prospect, and both southpaws are similar in stature. Urias was waylaid by shoulder surgery in 2017 and 2018 and then a domestic violence suspension in 2019. ■

Angels righthander Griffin Canning rocketed from UCLA to Anaheim less than two years after being drafted. His blend of fastball velocity, power breaking stuff and feel for a change-up give him high upside in the Angels' rotation.

FANTASY

NINE BREAKOUT PITCHER CANDIDATES

Where low cost and high value potential intersect

by MATT EDDY

Speculating on young arms to round out your fantasy pitching staff is often fun and sometimes profitable. It only takes one success to cancel out all the misfires.

The arms I focus on are unestablished—often young—pitchers who have bat-missing stuff and a realistic big league rotation opportunity.

Pitchers like this could be one tweak—or one extended opportunity—away from breaking through and establishing themselves. Perhaps the pitcher needs improved pitch sequencing. Perhaps he needs to modify his fastball usage or improve command of the pitch. Sometimes a breakthrough is as close as throwing strike one more frequently.

Those are areas that pitchers tend to improve with age and experience, and that growth potential represents upside if you know where to look.

That's why I studied all pitchers who threw at least 10 innings as starters in 2019. I assigned them percentile rank scores (where higher is better) for fastball velocity, chase rate (O-Swing), zone contact (Z-Contact), first-pitch strike rate (F-Strike) and swinging-strike rate (SwStr).

Based on these criteria, I picked nine starting pitchers who I believe combine low cost and high value potential.

1. JULIO URIAS, LHP, DODGERS

Velocity: 89% | **O-Swing:** 67% | **Z-Contact:** 89% | **F-Strike:** 10%
Projected role: No. 4 starter | **Age:** 23

Urias made his major league as a 19-year-old in 2016, a season he entered as the No. 4 prospect in baseball. Four years later he is still unestablished, owing to shoulder surgery in 2017 and a domestic violence suspension in 2019. Urias enters 2020 penciled into the Dodgers' rotation and stands poised for a big season because of a velocity bump to pre-injury levels (95 mph) and a strong slider (15 percent) and changeup (21 percent) that both generate swinging strikes.

2. DINELSON LAMET, RHP, PADRES

Velocity: 94% | **O-Swing:** 77% | **Z-Contact:** 72% | **F-Strike:** 41%
Projected role: No. 3 starter | **Age:** 27

Lamet looked sharp in the second half of 2019 as he returned from Tommy John surgery, particularly in August and September when he generated an elite swinging-strike rate of 14 percent. His high-80s slider is one of the best breaking pitches in baseball, and he allowed a .116 average when throwing it last season. Lamet throws his slider more than his fastball or changeup, an over-reliance that opens the door to vulnerability against lefthanded batters.

3. JOSE URQUIDY, RHP, ASTROS

Velocity: 65% | **O-Swing:** 55% | **Z-Contact:** 96% | **F-Strike:** 63%
Projected role: No. 4 starter | **Age:** 24

Urquidy pitched sparingly—and under the name Jose Luis Hernandez—in 2018 as he returned from Tommy John surgery. The reins came off in 2019, when he totaled 154 innings, counting the postseason. Urquidy had always been known as a four-pitch starter with guile, but he began sitting 93 mph and touching 97 last season, which helped him compile one of the highest swinging-strike rates in the minors. The effectiveness of his changeup (.163 average) and slider (.200) against major league batters indicate his rotation upside.



4. GRIFFIN CANNING, RHP, ANGELS

Velocity: 75% | **O-Swing:** 61% | **Z-Contact:** 84% | **F-Strike:** 25%
Projected role: No. 5 starter | **Age:** 23

Canning had a first-round arm coming out of UCLA in 2017 but fell to the middle of the second round. He raced to Anaheim at the end of April last year and is the first pitcher from his draft class to return meaningful major league value. However, he didn't pitch after mid-August because of elbow inflammation. Canning is a true four-pitch starter with good velocity and bat-missing breaking stuff. He averaged 94 mph in his debut and should be able to deploy his outstanding curveball and slider—even his changeup plays—more effectively as he learns to work ahead of batters.

5. DYLAN CEASE, RHP, WHITE SOX

Velocity: 96% | **O-Swing:** 32% | **Z-Contact:** 75% | **F-Strike:** 34%
Projected role: No. 4 starter | **Age:** 24

Cease garnered attention as a prospect with his quick arm, high-end velocity and innate feel to spin a power breaking ball. He showed as much in his big league debut last season. The caveat with Cease has always been syncing his delivery, commanding his fastball and throwing strikes. If that ever comes together for Cease, he could be lethal thanks to his plus mid-80s slider (15 percent swinging-strike rate) and dramatically improving changeup (14 percent). Refining his curveball will be essential to give him a secondary weapon in a lower velocity register.

6. TONY GONSOLIN, RHP, DODGERS

Velocity: 68% | **O-Swing:** 47% | **Z-Contact:** 94% | **F-Strike:** 34%
Projected role: rotation depth | **Age:** 25

Gonsolin played both ways at St. Mary's but quickly adapted to becoming a full-time pitcher in pro ball. He reached the majors in his fourth pro season and enters 2020 as the No. 82 prospect in baseball. The Dodgers' seemingly endless supply of rotation options makes Gonsolin a risky gamble for his starts, but he is a sound long-term play based on his wide repertoire. Not only did he throw four offerings with positive pitch value in his debut, but his unique split-changeup gives him a different look.

7. RANDY DOBNAK, RHP, TWINS

Velocity: 68% | **O-Swing:** 92% | **Z-Contact:** 71% | **F-Strike:** 37%
Projected role: No. 5 starter | **Age:** 25

Undrafted out of Division II Alderson Broaddus (W.Va.) in 2017, Dobnak not only reached the majors in 2019 but started a Division Series game. The Twins signed him out of the United Shore League after just six starts, and he became the first player from that small independent league to reach the majors. Dobnak's mid-80s slider played effectively as a chase pitch in his major league debut, generating a .222 average and 26 percent whiff rate, and he sets up the pitch well with his sinker and four-seam fastball. While his ceiling is modest, his floor is high.

8. AUSTIN VOTH, RHP, NATIONALS

Velocity: 53% | **O-Swing:** 35% | **Z-Contact:** 84% | **F-Strike:** 49%
Projected role: rotation depth | **Age:** 27

Drafted in 2013, Voth made progress toward the majors before backsliding in 2017. He recovered to make an unremarkable big league debut in 2018 before making an eye-opening 43-inning run in 2019. The caveat: Voth spent time on the injured list last summer with a shoulder injury, though he returned in September to record a 2.35 ERA with a strong 15 percent swinging-strike rate. He enters 2020 out of minor league options, but if he's healthy, Voth's 93 mph fastball and high-spin curveball headline a sneaky four-pitch mix.

9. PATRICK SANDOVAL, LHP, ANGELS

Velocity: 57% | **O-Swing:** 24% | **Z-Contact:** 95% | **F-Strike:** 9%
Projected role: rotation depth | **Age:** 23

Sandoval's outstanding changeup and high-spin curveball helped him strike out 11 batters per nine innings at Double-A and Triple-A last season. His strikeout rate held up in the majors (nearly 10 per nine) following his August callup. The issue for Sandoval is that batters tend to see his 93 mph fastball well, which resulted in a .286 opponent average and .932 OPS in his big league debut. The problem was compounded by a poor first-pitch strike rate. If he can minimize his fastball and emphasize his strengths, Sandoval has attributes worth speculating on. ■

PERSPECTIVE

A NEVER-ENDING EFFORT TO KEEP UP

The pace of change speeds up in college baseball

J.J. COOPER
@JJCOOP36



When UNC Charlotte hired Robert Woodard as head coach last July, the program knew it was getting a tech-savvy coach.

When he was asked to explain his prospective plans for the 49ers in his job interview, Woodard laid out his plan for a data-driven approach. It's something he had helped do as an assistant coach at North Carolina as the Tar Heels become one of the most analytically-inclined teams in college baseball.

The Charlotte administration was sold. Woodard was hired. And from his first day, he and his new staff set about to answer the question: how quickly can a mid-major program go from an old school approach to a data-heavy one?

As is being seen at college programs all around the country, the answer is very quickly. Analytics have gone from being barely seen in college baseball to being pervasive in just a matter of a few years. What was cutting edge in 2016 is normal now. And programs around the country have gotten up to speed very quickly. Which means that even a coach like Woodard, who has made his name in part by being at the front end of the college analytics revolution, has a lot of work to do to be up to speed with a new program in 2020.

"I think there was a time maybe five years ago where you could have a coaching staff that had more information or smarter information, and you could play a certain way or pitch a certain way to where you would have a significant edge," Woodard said. "Now there are so many good coaches out there that have so much information. There's so many companies that are slicing and dicing the data a thousand different ways.

"This is moving really fast. I feel like five years ago if you were shifting you could improve your defensive efficiency against teams that were not necessarily at that level yet. In 2017, I think our shift (at UNC) stood out. In 2018, we stood out way less and then by last year it was like you're not really gaining much of an edge because it was so common."



UNC Charlotte head coach Robert Woodard and his staff are focusing on using tech to improve training in 2020.

Shifts are now normal. Most college teams have detailed scouting reports on their opponents. And tech that was unknown just a few years ago is now commonplace.

Walk into the 49ers indoor facility and plyoballs (durable balls in a variety of weights both heavier and lighter than normal baseballs), Jaeger tubing and Axe bats for underload and overload training are all readily apparent. There are Rapsodo systems for the hitters and pitchers, allowing them to see data from their pitches or swings on mobile TVs set up next to the cages.

The 49ers new BATS video system (which syncs together video from multiple cameras positioned around the stadium) is scheduled to be ready for Opening Day. A pair of high speed cameras are also on their way.

The P3 Sports Science team was on site the weekend before Opening Day to do individual assessments of each player on the team. They are at Charlotte every couple of months, seeing how each player is progressing and then tweaking the individualized training programs.

Similarly, Blast bat sensors help the Charlotte coaches to tailor swing programs to improve bat speed, strength or bat control, depending on what each player needs.

The administration approved a significant amount of funding to allow Woodard and his staff to add tech, but it was not a blank check.

So Woodard and his staff prioritized. The idea was to set a foundation in 2020 where the vast majority of money spent would help players ability to train. Measuring in-game performance and the scouting data that can come from that will wait.

Charlotte does not have a TrackMan doppler radar, which provides a bounty of in-game

information. That will wait until next year.

While North Carolina had a flock of students providing the manpower for an analytics team when Woodard was there, Charlotte will be looking to fill out its analytics team more next year.

The 49ers are getting a lot of analytical support from Dr. Benny Rodriguez, a professor in the department of electrical and computer engineering.

So all the tech purchased so far has been acquired with the primary focus of helping the 2020 team perform better.

"The training area is the one where you set and build the foundation there. That's got to be step one," Woodard said. "We want to do everything in our power from the player development side so every player who shows up here on campus, whatever his ceiling is, we are helping him get there as fast as possible.

For a new staff, maximizing the potential of the current roster has a variety of benefits. It's focused on the players who are there—with a few exceptions, the ingredients of a new coaching staff's first team are set before they ever arrive. So getting the returning players to new levels of performance is key to a successful first year.

It's also useful for future recruiting. Having examples of players making significant improvements because of a team's individualized training programs helps attract future players.

After an offseason of training, the 49ers have collected a lot of data. But with a new season beginning, a more important data point is being logged.

Said Woodard, "Whatever our win-loss record is this year, that tells us just how much farther do we have to go. ■



PERSPECTIVE

REMEMBERING JOHN ALTABELLI

The respected coach improved the lives of countless players in his 27 years at Orange Coast JC



John Altobelli was to embark on his 28th season as the head coach of Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Jan. 28.

Two days before Opening Day, however, he was killed, along with former NBA great Kobe Bryant, in a helicopter crash that also took the lives of Altobelli's wife and daughter, who was a teammate of Bryant's daughter on a youth basketball team.

The news about the crash focused on the death of Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna "and seven others," to the point that Rockies scout Walker Monfort was at a game on Sunday when he saw a tweet about Bryant's death and mentioned the helicopter crash to the scouts seated near him. The scout next to him, who had just received a brief call, nodded his head.

"My dad was one of them," Red Sox scout JJ Altobelli said.

And John Altobelli was more than "one of seven others." He may not have been in the limelight, but in his role as a junior college coach he had direct impact on the lives of many young men.

The values Altobelli taught his players were evident.

Orange Coast College officials left it up to the members of the baseball team whether to play the opening game against Southwestern College, and the members of the team left no doubt when they voted to play.

It was "play ball" at Orange Coast College, which won four California state junior college titles under Altobelli.

"The more normal you can keep things, the better," assistant coach Ron La Ruffa said after the vote was announced. "And I think Alto would want us to play."

For Altobelli, life wasn't about him, it was about what he could do to help teenagers grow, not just on a baseball field but in life. Those who knew Altobelli will tell you he certainly wouldn't want life to be put on hold for even the briefest of times in the wake of his death.

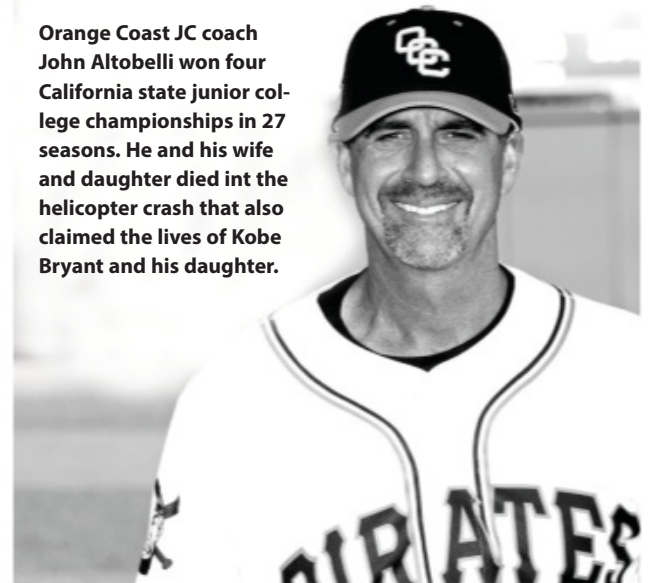
For Altobelli, and other longtime junior college coaches, the job isn't about money or national television. It is about working far from the mainstream with a focus on not only winning battles on the field but helping players win battles for success in life.

That's the driving force behind anyone who spends more than two successful decades at the junior college level.

Junior colleges don't get the five-star recruits, by any stretch.

There's no longer the January draft nor the June secondary phase, both of which ceased to exist in 1987, when the draft was streamlined into one event. Those phases drew attention to junior college programs and the athletes who might not have been ready for pro ball out of high school but who didn't want to delay draft eligibility for three years by going to a four-

Orange Coast JC coach John Altobelli won four California state junior college championships in 27 seasons. He and his wife and daughter died in the helicopter crash that also claimed the lives of Kobe Bryant and his daughter.



year school.

Don Sneddon knows the drill. He had a winning record in all 32 seasons he coached Santa Ana College before stepping down to manage what was then the Rockies' high Class A California League affiliate in Modesto. His team had a .700 winning percentage or better in 22 of those 32 seasons. He won 16 conference championships and three state titles.

"I use the term, 'We get kids with baggage,'" Sneddon said. "It could be they didn't have the grades, they weren't quite good enough, they aren't ready for the four-year challenge or they didn't make the grade at a four-year school and (they) step back. Our job is to coach them up and get them to that next level."

Rockies scouting director Bill Schmidt, an Orange County native who briefly coached in junior college, spoke in glowing terms about Altobelli and the success he had in the challenging world of junior college baseball.

"He was a great person who did an impressive job," Schmidt said. "There's not a lot of stability at the junior college level. No player is there for more than two years, and a lot are there for just one. Your team changes every year. A lot of times you get a bounce-back kid from a four-year school."

"He won four state titles. Not many junior college coaches get a chance to manage in the Cape Cod League, but he did for three summers."

Longtime Sacramento City College coach Jerry Weinstein, now a special assistant with the Rockies, did not know Altobelli, but he knew of him.

"The kids you get, most of them are on edge," Weinstein. "It's a job where you rake the field every day. You run fundraisers for your program. He was one of the better guys around."

Altobelli was one of those guys who made the kids who played for him into men, and they left his program better people than they were the day they arrived. ■



JO ADELL
OF

LUIS ROBERT
OF

TOP 100 PROSPECTS



**WANDER
FRANCO**
SS

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

A WANDER-FUL NUMBER ONE

Wander Franco leads an eight-player contingent of Rays prospects

This year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our first Top 100 Prospects ranking in 1990. We hope it will come close to matching the pedigree of that 1990 list, which now includes a pair of Hall of Famers in Frank Thomas (No. 29) and Larry Walker (No. 41).

This year's ranking is led by Rays shortstop Wander Franco, who is the fifth shortstop to rank No. 1. The others include Hall of Famer Chipper Jones (1993) and Alex Rodriguez (1995). The most recent was 2016 National League Rookie of the Year Corey Seager. Jurickson Profar (2013) is the other.

Franco turns 19 on March 1 and is the second-youngest No. 1 overall prospect ever, bested only by Braves center fielder Andruw Jones, who was still 18 on Opening Day 1996.

Franco also becomes the third Rays prospect to rank No. 1 overall. Outfielders Josh Hamilton (2001) and Delmon Young (2006) are the others.

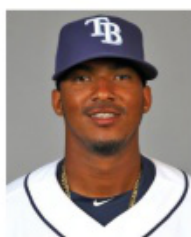
We improved our Top 100 Prospects display this year by including 2019 values for average exit velocity for batters and fastball velocity for pitchers, both in miles per hour.

Scouting grades represent future potential on the 20-80 scale, where 50 is average. For batters, we include grades for the five traditional tools: hitting (HIT), power (POW), speed (RUN), fielding (FLD) and throwing (ARM).

For pitchers we grade their pitches—fastball (FB), curveball (CB), slider (SL), changeup (CHG), cutter (CUT), split-finger fastball (SPLIT)—as well as their control (CTL).

All ages are players' baseball ages in 2020.

TOP 100 PROSPECTS



1. WANDER FRANCO RAYS, SS

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 19
HIT: 80 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 50

Franco was locked in all season and continued to show his elite hit tool and plus power. He hit above .300 every month and was promoted in late June to the Florida State League, where he slashed .339/.408/.464 with 16 extra-base hits. Franco drew more walks (56) than strikeouts (35) in 114 games, proving once again that the 19-year-old's advanced approach to hitting is well beyond his years.



2. LUIS ROBERT WHITE SOX, OF

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 70 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 70

Robert tore up the minors in 2019 and hit a career-high 32 homers. He smashed through the Carolina League before crushing Southern League pitching for 56 games and made it all the way to Triple-A Charlotte, where he tacked on another 16 homers in a hitter-friendly home ballpark. The outfielder also recorded a 30-30 season, possibly the first of many for the rising star.



3. JO ADELL ANGELS, OF

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 60

Adell managed to navigate his way through a sprained ankle and strained hamstring which cost him the first six weeks of the season. He bounced back in a big way, showing extra-base power and an improved knowledge of the strike zone in the upper minors. Adell's .944 OPS against Southern League pitching got him a promotion in early August to Triple-A before accruing some more at-bats in the Arizona Fall League.



4. GAVIN LUX DODGERS, SS/2B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 55

Lux cruised through the Double-A Texas League to earn himself a spot in the Futures Game before receiving a promotion to Triple-A Oklahoma City in late June. His power continued to develop as he hit a career-high 26 homers before getting called up to the big leagues on Sept. 2. Lux hit .240/.305/.400 in 23 games down the stretch with Los Angeles and should have a chance to make an impact alongside the Dodgers' other youthful infielders.



5. ADLEY RUTSCHMAN ORIOLES, C

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 70 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 70

Rutschman brings excellent leadership skills along with an impact profile on both sides of the ball at a key position on the diamond. The start of his pro career was delayed due to a bout of mononucleosis he dealt with after the draft. He finished the season with low Class A Delmarva after 37 games. Rutschman should move quickly through the minors, where his plus power from both sides of the plate and plus defensive skills behind the dish profile as a cornerstone type of player.



6. MACKENZIE GORE PADRES, LHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 21
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 60 | **CTL:** 60

Gore put his prior blister issues in the rear-view mirror in 2019 and tossed 101 innings, his first time cracking the triple-digit threshold in his pro career. After dominating the California League to the tune of a 1.02 ERA, Gore posted a 4.15 mark in five starts during his stint in the Double-A Texas League. This was more of a speed bump than anything else, as the league is known for its offensively oriented context. Gore's athleticism, four-pitch mix and plus control should land him in the front of the Padres' rotation.

#5 ADLEY RUTSCHMAN



7. NATE PEARSON BLUE JAYS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 97 | **Age:** 23
FB: 80 | **CB:** 45 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 55

Pearson's workload was managed by alternating five- and two-inning starts before July 24, when the restrictions were lifted and he started going deeper into games. He tossed at least five frames in each start after that date to close out the season. Armed with a fastball that touches triple-digits, Pearson works with a plus slider and a changeup that has trended positively and projects as above-average. Pearson has the body and stuff to sit at the front of Toronto's rotation in the near future and stay there for a long time.



SAM SANTILLI

8. JULIO RODRIGUEZ MARINERS, OF

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 19
HIT: 70 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 45 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 70

One of the youngest players in low Class A at the beginning of the 2019 season, Rodriguez's 70-grade hit tool and power were on display all season, only interrupted by a hand injury that sidelined him for two months. After collecting 31 extra-base hits in 67 games for low Class A West Virginia, the 18-year old went on to hit .462/.514/.738 against California League pitching in 72 plate appearances. The future right field masher topped that off with a successful 15-game stint in the Arizona Fall League to close out his year.



DAVID DUROCHIK

9. JESUS LUZARDO ATHLETICS, LHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 96 | **Age:** 22
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **CHG:** 70 | **CTL:** 60

Luzardo struggled with shoulder and lat injuries last season, which caused him to log just 41 innings for high Class A Stockton and Triple-A Las Vegas. After posting a 3.19 mark across seven starts in the offensive climate of the Pacific Coast League, Luzardo was called up to the big leagues on Sept. 7. He worked six games in relief, fanning 16 batters in 12 frames to end the season. With a clean bill of health, Luzardo should challenge for a spot near the front end of Oakland's rotation in 2020 thanks to his three-pitch mix and plus control.



COURTESY OF REDBIRDS

10. DYLAN CARLSON CARDINALS, OF

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 55 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 50

Carlson saw his tools and feel for the game click with Double-A Springfield in 2019. The outfielder clubbed 21 homers before receiving a promotion to Triple-A Memphis on Aug. 7 for an 18-game stint to close out the season. Carlson posted a 20-20 campaign, putting his power and speed profile on full display. He doesn't have many flashy tools, but he is an extremely well-rounded prospect with an advanced feel for the game.



11. JARRED KELENIC MARINERS, OF

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 70 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 55 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

The key player brought back in the Edwin Diaz trade, Kelenic's advanced feel for the game helped him fly through the lower levels of the minors. After just 46 games for high Class A Modesto, Kelenic was promoted to Double-A Arkansas, where he managed to hold his own as the youngest player in the league. After his 20-20 campaign, Kelenic made a brief appearance in the Arizona Fall League but was shut down due to back soreness.



12. CRISTIAN PACHE BRAVES, OF

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 45 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 70 | **FLD:** 70 | **ARM:** 70

Pache's hit tool and power trended positively in the upper minors in 2019. He hit a career-high 11 homers for Double-A Mississippi before receiving a promotion to Triple-A Gwinnett to finish out the season. Pache's range in center and double-plus arm make him an impact defender. That, coupled with his improving feel to hit, should make Pache a key cog for Atlanta at some point in 2020.



13. CASEY MIZE TIGERS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 23
FB: 60 | **CUT:** 55 | **SL:** 60 | **SPLIT:** 70 | **CTL:** 60

Mize continued his domination of the minors in 2019, reaching Double-A Erie with relative ease thanks to his plus stuff and command. He tossed a no-hitter against Double-A Altoona in his first start in the upper minors. Mize was removed from his start on June 13 due to shoulder soreness which in turn caused him to miss a month on the injured list. He wasn't nearly as effective upon his return and was shut down in late August. If Mize shows a clean bill of health, his profile remains as a frontline arm who can impact the club in late 2020.



WILL VRAGOVIC/TAMPA BAY RAYS

14. BRENDAN MCKAY RAYS, LHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 24
FB: 60 | **CB:** 50 | **SL:** 50 | **CUT:** 60 | **CTL:** 60

McKay showed off his advanced feel for pitching and his plus control, issuing just 18 free passes across 73.2 innings for Double-A Montgomery and Triple-A Durham. He made his big league debut on June 29, struggling to the tune of a 5.14 ERA in 13 games during three different stints with the ballclub. McKay's natural strike-throwing ability, coupled with his four-pitch mix, should get him plenty of starts in the middle of the rotation for Tampa Bay. His extremely advanced command and control stands out for a young pitching prospect.



MARY DECICCO

15. CARTER KIEBOOM NATIONALS, SS/2B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 45 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 55

Kieboom opened the season at Triple-A Fresno after performing well at high Class A and Double-A in 2018. He made his big league debut in April, but struggled to the tune of a .128/.209/.282 clip before being optioned back to Triple-A on May 7. Kieboom makes loud contact and his plus power should make him a weapon at the top or in the middle of Washington's lineup. Kieboom also has defensive value.



16. SIXTO SANCHEZ MARLINS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 96 | **Age:** 21
FB: 70 | **CHG:** 60 | **SL:** 60 | **CTL:** 60

Initially a Phillies prospect before being sent to Miami in the J.T. Realmuto deal, Sanchez was the top-ranked pitching prospect in the Southern League, posting a 2.53 ERA with 97 strikeouts alongside 19 walks in 103 frames. He has three plus pitches and advanced control, which should help him debut for Miami in 2020 and become part of the team's young core. Few pitchers in the minors work as efficiently as Sanchez does.



17. MATT MANNING TIGERS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 94 | **Age:** 22
FB: 60 | **CB:** 60 | **CHG:** 60 | **CTL:** 55

Manning has continued to cement his position as one of the game's elite pitching prospects. The Eastern League pitcher of the year fanned 148 batters thanks in part to a step forward with his changeup, which now projects as plus. If he performs well at Triple-A Toledo, Manning should get starts for the rebuilding Tigers in 2020.

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

COURTESY OF LE STORM



18. LUIS PATINO PADRES, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 20
FB: 70 | **CB:** 50 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 55

Patino was selected to the Futures Game and worked his way from high Class A Lake Elsinore to Double-A Amarillo, where he finished out the season. His swing-and-miss arsenal as well as his feel to fill up the strike zone make it likely that he gets a shot to pitch in San Diego.

BILL MITCHELL



19. MARCO LUCIANO GIANTS, SS

ETA: 2023 | **Exit Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 18
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

Luciano was the Rookie-level Arizona League's No. 2 prospect thanks to his offensive outburst. His plus hit-and-power combo led him to a 1.055 OPS, good for fourth in the league. Luciano was promoted to short-season Salem-Keizer for the team's playoff run but was shut down for the season with hamstring woes.

RON VESLEY



20. DUSTIN MAY DODGERS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 22
FB: 70 | **CUT:** 60 | **CB:** 50 | **CHG:** 45 | **CTL:** 70

After posting a 3.38 ERA across two levels of the upper minors in 106.2 innings, May got called up on Aug. 2 and was impactful as both a starter and reliever. His plus sinker and double-plus control drove his success.



21. A.J. PUK ATHLETICS, LHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 97 | **Age:** 25
FB: 70 | **SL:** 70 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 50

Puk returned from Tommy John surgery and made his major league debut in the A's bullpen in 2019. With his high-octane stuff still intact, Puk has a chance to climb to the front of the A's rotation very quickly.

BILL MITCHELL



22. CJ ABRAMS PADRES, SS

ETA: 2023 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 19
HIT: 70 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 70 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 55

The sixth overall pick in the draft hit .401 in the Rookie-level Arizona league in a debut for the ages. With excellent contact skills, elite speed and room to grow into power, Abrams has enormous upside.

ALEX TRAUTWIG



23. BRENDAN RODGERS ROCKIES, SS/2B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 60

Rodgers' major league debut was cut short by a torn labrum in 2019. As long as he is fully recovered from surgery, his supreme bat-to-ball skills will get him back into the Rockies' lineup sooner rather than later. If healthy, he has the potential to provide average and power at an up-the-middle position. He tore up Triple-A Albuquerque before his callup.



#19 MARCO LUCIANO

ZACHARY LUCY/FOUR SEAM IMAGES



24. BOBBY WITT JR. ROYALS, SS

ETA: 2023 | **Exit Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 70 | **ARM:** 60

The draft's second overall pick delivered a middling stat line in his pro debut last year, but his 93 mph average exit velocity and immense athleticism gave evaluators glimpses of his star potential.

COURTESY OF RR EXPRESS



25. FORREST WHITLEY ASTROS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 22
FB: 60 | **CB:** 60 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 60 | **CTL:** 40

Whitley had a season to forget after delivery changes suggested by the Astros ended up costing him his command and control. After an excellent Arizona Fall League, he'll look to right the ship in 2020.



26. ROYCE LEWIS TWINS, SS

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 45 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 55

No one has ever questioned Lewis' athleticism, but longstanding concerns about his hitting ability came to the forefront in 2019. He showed what he is capable of when his swing is mechanically sound with an MVP turn in the Arizona Fall League, and now it's a matter of keeping it up during the regular season in a return to the more advanced pitching at the upper levels.



#20 DUSTIN MAY



#28 ALEC BOHM



27. SPENCER HOWARD PHILLIES, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 94 | **Age:** 23
FB: 70 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 55 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 55

With a triple-digit fastball, a swing-and-miss curveball and the ability to work the edges of the strike zone, Howard flashes front of the rotation potential and will move as fast as his health allows.



28. ALEC BOHM PHILLIES, 3B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 45 | **ARM:** 50

Bohm jumped three levels to Double-A in his first full season, then earned the starting third base job on Team USA's Olympic qualifying team. Even with questions on defense, Bohm has middle-of-the order tools.



29. JORDAN GROSHANS BLUE JAYS, SS

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

A foot injury ended Groshans' season after 23 games in 2019, but he's expected to be ready for the start of spring training. A gifted hitter with growing power, expect Groshans to rise quickly if he stays healthy and shows the skills that impressed scouts in his pro debut and at the beginning of what should have been his first full season as a professional.

BILL MITCHELL; JOHN WILLIAMSON; CLIFF WELCH/ICON SPORTSWIRE; ED WOLFSTEIN



30. ANDREW VAUGHN WHITE SOX, 1B

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 30 | **FLD:** 40 | **ARM:** 50

The No. 3 overall pick in the draft is on the shorter, stouter side, but his thunderous bat makes up for whatever he lacks in physique. After reaching high Class A in his pro debut and excelling for Team USA's Olympic qualifying team, he may start in Double-A and has a chance to hit his way to the majors in his first full season.



31. ALEX KIRILLOFF TWINS, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 45 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 50

A wrist injury put a damper on Kirilloff's 2019 season, but the sweet-swinging lefty still shows impressive feel to hit with room to grow into power. Whether he sticks in right field or moves to first base, he should have enough bat to start on everyday basis as the next generation of the Bomba Squad.



32. JOEY BART GIANTS, C

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

Bart suffered a fractured hand when he was hit by a pitch early in 2019, then suffered another one when he got hit on the hand in the Arizona Fall League. In between injuries, Bart showed the easy power and promising defense that made him the No. 2 overall pick in 2018 and finished at Double-A Richmond despite all the missed time. If he can stay healthy, he's the Giants' catcher of the future.



33. MICHAEL KOPECH WHITE SOX, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** — | **Age:** 24
FB: 80 | **CB:** 50 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 50

After missing all of last year recovering from Tommy John surgery, the flamethrowing Kopech needs to show his electric stuff has come back. If it has, he gives the White Sox a potential top of the rotation righthander to pair with Lucas Giolito.



34. TARIK SKUBAL TIGERS, LHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 23
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 50

The biggest breakout prospect of last season, Skubal jumped three levels, finished third in the minors with 179 strikeouts and struck out an eye-popping 17.4 batters per nine innings at Double-A during a dominant half-season.



35. GRAYSON RODRIGUEZ ORIOLES, RHP

ETA: 2022 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 20
FB: 70 | **CB:** 60 | **SL:** 55 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 60

The latest big, hard-throwing Texas righthander, Rodriguez matches a dynamite 93-98 mph fastball with stunning command. As his secondaries develop, he has a chance to give the Orioles a true No. 1 starter and an anchor of their rebuilding system. Adley Rutschman, Rodriguez and D.L. Hall make for three exciting pieces.



#36 DREW WATERS



36. DREW WATERS BRAVES, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 55

The reigning Southern League MVP reached Triple-A and made Team USA's Olympic qualifying team in 2019, all at 20 years old. He has plate coverage issues and swings and misses worryingly often, but Waters' ability to drive the ball gives him a chance to be an extra-base machine.



37. BRAILYN MARQUEZ CUBS, LHP

ETA: 2022 | **Fastball Velo:** 97 | **Age:** 21
FB: 80 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 50

The big, hard-throwing lefty became the talk of the lower levels last year with his 100-mph fastball and rapidly improving command. As his secondaries and fitness improve, Marquez has a chance to be the Cubs' best homegrown pitcher since Carlos Zambrano.



38. JASSON DOMINGUEZ YANKEES, OF

ETA: 2024 | **Exit Velo:** — | **Age:** 17
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 70 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 60

The Yankees gave Dominguez \$5.1 million as the top player in 2019's international class. His combination of elite tools, athleticism and performance have him primed to follow the path of Ronald Acuna Jr., Juan Soto and other international stars who raced to the majors by the time they were 20 years old.



39. DANIEL LYNCH ROYALS, LHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 94 | **Age:** 20
FB: 60 | **CB:** 50 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 60 | **CTL:** 55

Lynch maintained his post-draft velocity spike and used it to dominate low-level hitters in his full-season debut, despite missing time with a barking shoulder. He'll test his 92-97 mph high-spin fastball and biting slider against upper-level competition in 2020.



40. NICO HOERNER CUBS, SS

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 55 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 50

Hoerner missed two months with a wrist fracture and still reached the majors in his first full season, taking over as the Cubs everyday shortstop in September. With advanced hitting ability and exceptional feel for the game, Hoerner could be another homegrown Cubs hitter.



41. SEAN MURPHY ATHLETICS, C

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 25
HIT: 45 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 30 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 70

Injuries limited Murphy to just 61 games in 2019, but he has hit at both Double-A and Triple-A. He has a short swing, 20-25 home run potential and earns high marks from scouts for his defense, with polished blocking and receiving skills to go with a plus-plus arm to keep runners in check.

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

COURTESY OF BG HOT RODS



42. MATTHEW LIBERATORE CARDINALS, LHP

ETA: 2022 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 20
FB: 60 | **CB:** 60 | **SL:** 45 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 55

Liberatore is a tall, long-armed, 19-year-old lefty with advanced body control for his age and size. Combine that with his stuff and a fairly smooth delivery and Liberatore has the projection to be a mid-rotation or better starter.



43. BRANDON MARSH ANGELS, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 70

Marsh has an exciting mix of physicality and athleticism, with a wide range of tools that includes plus speed and plus range in center field. Swing adjustments helped Marsh cut his strikeout rate while jumping to Double-A in 2019, helping him raise his stock as a prospect.



44. IAN ANDERSON BRAVES, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 22
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 55

For the third straight year, Anderson struck out more than a batter per inning. A Top 100 prospect for the fourth straight year, Anderson has the mix of stuff and pitchability to project as a mid-rotation starter. He should get his first chance to achieve that ceiling early in the 2020 season.



45. TREVOR LARNACH TWINS, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 45 | **ARM:** 45

Minnesota's first-round pick in 2018, Larnach reached Double-A in his first full season, impressing scouts with his combination of hitting ability and power. He's a patient hitter who hits the ball where it's pitched and drives the ball with impact through the middle of the field.



46. JJ BLEDAY MARLINS, OF

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 55

After leading Division I with 27 home runs and leading Vanderbilt to a College World Series championship, Bleday signed with the Marlins for \$6.67 million as the No. 4 overall pick in the 2019 draft and made his pro debut at high Class A Jupiter. Bleday has the potential to develop into an above-average regular in a corner.



47. DL HALL ORIOLES, LHP

ETA: 2022 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 21
FB: 70 | **CB:** 60 | **SL:** 50 | **CHG:** 60 | **CTL:** 50

Armed with high-octane stuff from the left side, Hall pumps fastballs with above-average movement up to 97 mph and can put hitters away with a curveball that flashes plus. The next step is improving his control after issuing 6.0 walks per nine innings last year.



#50 NOLAN JONES

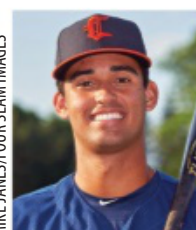


LAURA WOLFF

48. NICK MADRIGAL WHITE SOX, 2B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 85 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 30 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 40

Madrigal's bat control is magnificent. He had nearly three times as many walks (44) as strikeouts (16) in 2019, with a strikeout rate of just 3 percent. It's usually light contact, but his ability to get on base and potential plus defense in the middle of the diamond makes him valuable.



MIKE JAMES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

49. RILEY GREENE TIGERS, OF

ETA: 2023 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 19
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 55 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 55

The No. 5 overall pick in the 2019 draft, Greene has a chance for five average or better tools, but he's at his best in the batter's box. He has a smooth lefty swing and advanced hitting ability for his age to go with plus raw power. In a system stocked with pitchers, Greene's potential will help guide Detroit's offensive future.



DAVID MONSEUR

50. NOLAN JONES INDIANS, 3B

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

Patience and power are the calling cards for Jones, who piles up walks and has the juice to drive balls out to all fields. He needs to cut down on his strikeouts and improve his defense to be able to stay at third base, but he has upside to be a force in the middle of a lineup.



51. VIDAL BRUJAN RAYS, 2B

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 87 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 40 | **RUN:** 80 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 50

An explosive, quick-burst athlete, Brujan is an 80 runner with excellent bat-to-ball skills. He doesn't project to hit for much power, but his hitting ability, wheels and ability to play in the middle of the diamond could make him a valuable table-setter at the top of a lineup.



TONY FERRIOLLO

52. MITCH KELLER PIRATES, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 24
FB: 70 | **CB:** 60 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 45 | **CTL:** 60

Keller has a power fastball that sits in the mid 90s and can reach 99 mph, with the ability to snap off sharp breaking stuff that helped him strike out 28 percent of Triple-A hitters in 2019. If it all comes together, he could pitch in the middle or even toward the top of the rotation in Pittsburgh.



53. DAULTON VARSHO D-BACKS, C

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 55 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 45

Varsho has a short stroke, good hand-eye coordination and a disciplined approach, giving him a chance to get on base at a high clip with enough power for 20-plus home run potential. His defense is a question mark, but he's an excellent athlete for a catcher.

BILL MITCHELL



Baseball America

GET A **LEG UP**
ON YOUR **FANTASY**
TEAM **SUBSCRIBE**
TODAY



UNLIMITED ACCESS TO OUR WEBSITE

Includes Top 100 Prospects, organizational rankings, Top 10 Prospects per team and the most comprehensive coverage of baseball at every level around the world.

 baseballamerica.com

FIND, FRIEND, OR FOLLOW US ON:



@BaseballAmerica



@BaseballAmerica



BaseballAmericaMag



ReadBA

TOP 100 PROSPECTS



54. EVAN WHITE MARINERS, 1B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 24
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 70 | **ARM:** 55

White is the unusual first base prospect who draws superlative reviews for his double-plus defense. But he also took a significant step forward offensively in 2019, and while there are still questions about how much power he will have, he got to it more in games last year after making swing and approach adjustments.



55. NOLAN GORMAN CARDINALS, 3B

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 55

Gorman's plus-plus raw power is a carrying tool, with the bat speed and strength to impact the ball when he connects from a swing geared for lift. That uphill path also leaves him with holes, leading to a high strikeout rate. If he can make the adjustments to keep his whiffs manageable, he can be a dangerous, middle-of-the-order bat.



56. KE'BRYAN HAYES PIRATES, 3B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 23
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 70 | **ARM:** 60

Hayes has an unorthodox skill set for a third base prospect. He's a terrific fielder who could be one of the best defensive third basemen. He makes frequent contact, though his power is light for a third baseman and his approach is geared more for putting the ball in play than driving it for impact.



57. ONEIL CRUZ PIRATES, SS

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

There are few comparisons for Cruz, a 6-foot-7 shortstop (at least for now) with elite power. Cruz reached Double-A as a 20-year-old and has the raw power to be a 35-plus home run threat if it all comes together. His extremely long limbs lead to length and holes in his swing, and he will have to work at to stay in sync.



58. JESUS SANCHEZ MARLINS, OF

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 55

A gifted hitter, Sanchez has moved quickly, reaching Triple-A last year as a 21-year-old. He has the bat speed, plate coverage and plus raw power to develop into an above-average regular in right field and join a cadre of promising youngsters in Miami.



#55 NOLAN GORMAN



#57 ONEIL CRUZ



59. LOGAN GILBERT MARINERS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 23
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 50 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 55

Gilbert has largely come as advertised since the Mariners drafted him out of Stetson with the 14th overall pick in 2018. He's a polished strike-thrower who misses bats and has moved quickly, with a chance to develop into a mid-rotation starter who could reach Seattle by the end of the year.



60. BRUSDAR GRATEROL DODGERS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 98 | **Age:** 21
FB: 80 | **CB:** 60 | **CHG:** 45 | **CTL:** 50

After being dealt to L.A. this offseason, Graterol has two paths to success: With a little more seasoning, he could be a force in the middle of the Dodgers' rotation. With no more seasoning at all, he could jump into the back of the bullpen and overwhelm hitters with his power arsenal.



#59 LOGAN GILBERT



61. SIMEON WOODS RICHARDSON BLUE JAYS, RHP

ETA: 2022 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 19
FB: 60 | **CB:** 50 | **SL:** 55 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 70

One of the prizes received by Toronto in the Marcus Stroman trade, Woods Richardson mixes an intriguing arsenal of four average or better pitches with impeccable control. He'll pitch all of 2020 as a 19-year-old and could find himself on the verge of making the big leagues by season's end.



62. CLARKE SCHMIDT YANKEES, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 94 | **Age:** 24
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **CHG:** 60 | **CTL:** 50

The Yankees knew from the outset that they'd have to wait for Schmidt while he recovered from Tommy John surgery. In 2019, he showed his true potential. He led Double-A Trenton to the league title and now sits as the top pitcher in the Yankees' system.



63. HELIOT RAMOS GIANTS, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 55

Ramos blends five average or better tools and has seen a rise in his prospect stock that corresponds with better body composition and increased power. The better body gives him a chance to stick in center field, but he has the skills to be a valuable corner outfielder.



64. KYLE WRIGHT BRAVES, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 24
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 55 | **CHG:** 55 | **CTL:** 45

Wright has been a bit of an enigma since reaching Triple-A. He has knockout stuff at times—his fastball topped at 99 mph and each of his three offspeed pitches projects to be a tick above-average. His performance, particularly in the big leagues, hasn't lived up to that level, however. Ironing out a few wrinkles could help him live up to his potential.



65. DEIVI GARCIA YANKEES, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 21
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 55

Garcia dominated high Class A and Double-A before running into trouble with command at Triple-A. He still ranks just behind Clarke Schmidt as the second-best pitching prospect in the system, but there are plenty of questions about whether he has the frame to stay in the starting rotation. He'll return to Triple-A for more seasoning but should debut in 2020.



66. RONNY MAURICIO METS, SS

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 87 | **Age:** 19
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 60

The biggest question surrounding Mauricio involves his projection. Yes, he'll spend all season at 19 years old, but some evaluators believe he's already physically maxed out. If that's the case, he's going to require even more offensive development than would be expected from someone his age. His ceiling is as the classic power-hitting corner infielder. Showing improved power at his next stop—the pitcher-friendly Florida State League—would be a big step forward.



67. FRANCISCO ALVAREZ METS, C

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 18
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 60

One of the biggest risers in the game in 2019, Alvarez burst onto the map with a very loud season in the Rookie-level Appalachian League, where he ranked as the circuit's No. 1 prospect. The 18-year-old blends hitability, power and strong defense into a player with tantalizing potential.



68. EDWARD CABRERA MARLINS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 22
FB: 70 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 50

Quietly, Cabrera had one of the best years in a system stocked with powerful pitching prospects. The 21-year-old whiffed 116 hitters over 96.2 innings between high Class A and Double-A. His fastball-slider combination fronts an excellent three-pitch mix.



69. TYLER FREEMAN INDIANS, SS

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 86 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 40 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 55

Like many of the players in this range, Freeman had a very quietly excellent year. He showed hitting and on-base skills at both Class A levels, and his .306 average led all Indians' full-season minor leaguers. He projects as an offensive-minded middle infielder.



70. TRISTON CASAS RED SOX, 1B

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 87 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 60 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 50

Casas has a massive frame and power to match from the left side. He's not an all-or-nothing slugger either, with the ability to hit to all fields and make adjustments within an at-bat. Casas dabbled a little bit at third base in his first full season as a pro, but he's a first baseman all the way. If he hits the way he's projected, he'll still make plenty of impact.



71. SHANE BAZ RAYS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 21
FB: 70 | **CB:** 50 | **SL:** 70 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 40

The third piece in the trade that also netted the Rays Tyler Glasnow and Austin Meadows, Baz could turn a great trade into a masterstroke. The fireballing righthander straddles the line between starter and reliever, and his double-plus fastball and slider should make an impact in either role. He'll move to high Class A Charlotte in 2020 and could move quickly.



72. GERALDO PERDOMO D-BACKS, SS

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 83 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 45 | **RUN:** 55 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 60

After a standout 2018 at the lower levels, Perdomo really began to make noise in 2019. He put together a nearly .400 on-base percentage at both Class A stops and projects as an above-average hitter with fringe-average power who can stick up the middle. His 83 mph average exit velocity in 2019 was the lowest among any Top 100 prospect, however, which suggests a player who might be best suited to spray line drives all over the diamond.



73. TAYLOR TRAMMELL PADRES, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 22
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 50 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 40

Part of the three-team deal with the Indians, Reds and Padres at the 2019 trade deadline, San Diego bet on Trammell's potential rather than his performance and is counting on him growing into a left fielder who can provide value with his bat and his glove. The Padres made some mechanical adjustments that they hope will unlock his potential.



74. KRISTIAN ROBINSON D-BACKS, OF

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 89 | **Age:** 19
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 50

Robinson was one of the most exciting players in the short-season Northwest League, where he combined loud tools with a bubbly, infectious personality to make himself an instant fan favorite as well as a slam dunk for the league's top prospect.

Next Up: Prospects Who Could Make The 2021 Top 100

Every year after we release our annual preseason Top 100 Prospects list, one question invariably rolls in from social media: How close was (Player X) to making the list?

In the past, we answered by listing every prospect who got a vote during the list-making process. This year, we're taking it a step further by including a list of players we expect to see ranked squarely among the Top 100 Prospects in 2021.

Here's who we picked.

MAXIMO ACOSTA, SS, RANGERS: The top shortstop in the 2019 July 2 class draws comparisons with Gleyber Torres. He earns potential plus grades for his hitting, speed and throwing arm and is at least average or better when it comes to power and defense. If he makes the Top 100 in 2021, it means he'll have started to tap into his considerable upside.

JORDYN ADAMS, OF, ANGELS: A two-sport athlete out of high school, Adams has plenty of raw tools that he's working to turn into skills. If he succeeds, he has one of the higher upsidess in the Angels' system and could become one of the coveted players who provides both power and speed.

MATT ALLAN, RHP, METS: Allan was the top prep arm in the 2019 draft and a solid first full season in the minors could catapult him onto the Top 100 with his plus fastball and power curveball combination. He could make his full-season debut on Opening Day 2021, much like the way the Mets handled the since-traded Simeon Woods Richardson.

MIGUEL AMAYA, C, CUBS: A steadily productive hitter with straightaway power whose offense has been muted by pitchers' parks in South Bend and Myrtle Beach. Amaya is still very young, and getting away from pitcher-friendly environments could give him an offensive boost and the corresponding breakout.

SETH CORRY, LHP, GIANTS: Perhaps he was dominating competition he was too advanced for, but Corry seemed to figure it out in the second half with a 1.10 ERA and 2.6 BB/9 to go with 12.2 SO/9. The Giants are still looking for a little more refinement of his command, but Corry has the stuff to land on the 2021 Top 100.

HANS CROUSE, RHP, RANGERS: Crouse pitched through elbow issues in 2019, which hampered his slider and resulted in a lower strikeout rate. If he returns health in 2020 and his stuff has the same zip it showed in 2018, he will return to Top 100 status.

LEWIN DIAZ, 1B, MARLINS: Opened eyes with his defensive acumen and burgeoning power. He more than doubled his career total for home runs while playing in the Florida State and Southern leagues. Diaz was dealt in 2019 as part of the package that sent reliever Sergio Romo to Minnesota.

JARREN DURAN, OF, RED SOX: Duran's plus speed and above-average hit tool should help him adapt in the upper minors while continuing to patrol center field. He struggled early in his first stint at Double-A but rebounded with a strong August.

LUIS FRIAS, RHP, D-BACKS: The lower levels of Arizona's system are dripping with high-end arms, and Frias could have as much impact as any of them. The big righty can overpower hitters with his fastball/curveball combo and has the potential to be an innings-eater or a force in high-leverage relief.

IVAN HERRERA, C, CARDINALS: Herrera is an advanced hitter for a 19-year-old catcher, with a calm, balanced swing that's short to the ball with good strike-zone discipline. He has a strong, athletic frame and an above-average arm, but he will need to tighten up a few things defensively as he goes up the ladder.

KYLE ISBEL, OF, ROYALS: Isbel's 2019 season was marred by a pair of injuries to his hamstring and wrist, but he responded in the Arizona Fall League with a campaign that allowed his table-setter tools to re-emerge.

ALEJANDRO KIRK, C, BLUE JAYS: Built like a shorter version of Pablo Sandoval, Kirk is one of the best pure hitters in the minors, with a short stroke, good plate coverage and a sharp eye for the strike zone. His body raises big concerns about his ability to stay behind the plate, but scouts say he's surprisingly mobile as a backstop. ■

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

COURTESY OF PORTLAND SEA DOGS



75. BOBBY DALBEC RED SOX, 3B

ETA: 2020 | **Exit Velo:** 92 | **Age:** 25
HIT: 45 | **POW:** 70 | **RUN:** 40 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 70

Few prospects in the minors can match Dalbec's raw power—he's smashed 59 homers over his last two seasons—which will be his calling card once he gets to the big leagues. He's an excellent defender at third base and has enough athleticism that he was a two-way talent in college. His biggest remaining question is whether he'll hit for enough average to be an everyday regular in Boston's reimagined lineup.



76. HUNTER GREENE REDS, RHP

ETA: 2022 | **Fastball Velo:** — | **Age:** 20
FB: 80 | **SL:** 60 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 50

Greene's career has been on hold ever since having Tommy John surgery early in 2019. Once he returns to action, the next step will be to sharpen his changeup to give himself the complete three-pitch arsenal he'll need to remain a rotation piece. He should get back on the mound at some point in 2020.



77. NICK LODOLO REDS, LHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 94 | **Age:** 22
FB: 55 | **CB:** 60 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 60

Lodolo was considered the best college pitching prospect in a thin class. His 2019 pro debut did a lot to confirm that assessment. His 30-to-0 strikeout-to-walk ratio was expected for someone of his pedigree.



78. JACKSON KOWAR ROYALS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 23
FB: 55 | **SL:** 50 | **CHG:** 70 | **CTL:** 55

Part of a talented group of pitchers at Florida, Kowar tore through high Class A in his first full season and more than held his own in his first taste of the upper levels. He'll need to improve his slider to complement an above-average fastball and a filthy changeup.



79. LUIS CAMPUSANO PADRES, C

ETA: 2022 | **Exit Velo:** 90 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 55 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 30 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 55

Campusano won the California League batting title with a .325 average. He did so while walking almost as often as he struck out. Campusano hit .422/.636/.788 when he was ahead in the count in 2019, but he also showed he could survive when pitchers got ahead. And he has the defensive skills to be an everyday catcher in the big leagues as well.



#77 NICK LODOLO



80. BRENT HONEYWELL RAYS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** — | **Age:** 25
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 55 | **CHG:** 60 | **SB:** 70 | **CTL:** 55

Two seasons ago, Honeywell was on the cusp of the big leagues. Tommy John surgery followed by a fractured elbow derailed him, however, and he's spent most of the interim in the training room. If he can put those issues behind him and return to form, he should find his way into the Rays' plans in short order.



81. KEIBERT RUIZ DODGERS, C

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 45 | **RUN:** 40 | **ARM:** 55 | **FLD:** 50

Ruiz put himself on the prospect map with an excellent 2017 season that saw him reach high Class A a few days before his 19th birthday. He's shown exceptional contact skills but will need to increase his power.



82. TONY GONSOLIN DODGERS, RHP

ETA: 2020 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 26
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **SL:** 50 | **CHG:** 70 | **CTL:** 50

Gonsolin is a credit to the Dodgers' scouting and player development. A two-way player at St. Mary's, Gonsolin now throws 3-5 mph harder than he did in college. But it's his hard-to-hit split change that gives him a shot to be an effective starter for the Dodgers in 2020.



83. SHANE MCCLANAHAN RAYS, LHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 95 | **Age:** 23
FB: 70 | **CB:** 60 | **SL:** 50 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 45

When he's right, McClanahan can be downright filthy. He brings his heater up to 99 mph and finishes hitters with a plus curveball while mixing in a potentially average slider and changeup as well. He bullied his way from low Class A to Double-A in 2019 and could finish 2020 in the big leagues if he continues to dominate in the upper levels in anywhere near similar fashion.



#78 JACKSON KOWAR



84. JOSIAH GRAY DODGERS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | **Fastball Velo:** 93 | **Age:** 22
FB: 60 | **CB:** 55 | **CHG:** 50 | **CTL:** 55

A shortstop for a good part of his career at Division II LeMoyne (N.Y.), Gray has quickly taken to pitching. His fastball plays better than the 92-94 mph velocity would indicate thanks to solid life. He couples it with a pair of average or better offspeed pitches and above-average control.



85. XAVIER EDWARDS RAYS, 2B

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 84 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 30 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 55 | **ARM:** 45

The Rays love athletic hitters with bat-to-ball skills and defensive versatility. Much like fellow Top 100 prospect Vidal Brujan, Edwards is a potential top-of-the-order bat who can be a valuable defender.



86. JETER DOWNS RED SOX, SS

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 88 | **Age:** 21
HIT: 50 | **POW:** 55 | **RUN:** 50 | **FLD:** 50 | **ARM:** 55

Acquired from the Dodgers in the deal that sent Mookie Betts to Los Angeles at the beginning of spring training, scouts aren't all that sure of where Downs will end up defensively in the majors, but his offensive prowess will get him to the big leagues.



87. ALEK THOMAS D-BACKS, OF

ETA: 2021 | **Exit Velo:** 91 | **Age:** 20
HIT: 60 | **POW:** 45 | **RUN:** 60 | **FLD:** 60 | **ARM:** 45

A plus runner with some gap power, Thomas has a busy swing but it generally works. He squares up balls with gap power and has the potential to post excellent on-base percentages along with plenty of doubles. He's also an excellent outfielder who gets quick, accurate reads on fly balls. His father, Allen, is a strength trainer in the White Sox organization.



88. JAZZ CHISHOLM
MARLINS, SS

ETA: 2021 | Exit Velo: 92 | Age: 22
HIT: 50 | POW: 60 | RUN: 55 | FLD: 55 | ARM: 55

Chisholm is a potential star who could be a 20-20 shortstop if he reaches his lofty ceiling.

There's a lot of concern that he won't come close to that, however, thanks to prodigious swing-and-miss issues that explain why he hit .220 last year.



89. ADRIAN MOREJON
PADRES, LHP

ETA: 2020 | Fastball Velo: 96 | Age: 21
FB: 60 | CB: 60 | CHG: 55 | CTL: 45

Morejon has struggled to stay on the mound because of injuries, including shoulder tendinitis last year. But when he is pitching, he's got a chance to be pretty special. He's a lefty who can touch 98 mph with his fastball and his plus curve and above-average changeup are just as effective.



90. CORBIN CARROLL
D-BACKS, OF

ETA: 2022 | Exit Velo: 90 | Age: 19
HIT: 55 | POW: 45 | RUN: 70 | FLD: 60 | ARM: 45

A speedy center fielder, Carroll showed off a very discerning batting eye in his pro debut.

He has a little pop too, but his ability to get on base, play defense and run is his calling card. He made it all the way to short-season Hillsboro and helped the team win the Northwest League title.



91. LUIS GARCIA
NATIONALS, SS

ETA: 2021 | Exit Velo: 87 | Age: 20
HIT: 55 | POW: 45 | RUN: 50 | FLD: 60 | ARM: 60

Garcia's 2019 statistics weren't nearly as impressive as his 2018 season, but some allowance has to be made for him being one of the youngest players in Double-A. He projects to be a plus hitter who can stay at short.



92. NOELVI MARTE
MARINERS, SS

ETA: 2024 | Exit Velo: 88 | Age: 18
HIT: 60 | POW: 55 | RUN: 60 | FLD: 50 | ARM: 60

It's not just trades that have rebuilt the Mariners farm system. A year after signing Julio Rodriguez, the Mariners nabbed Marte, who has speed and power to go with a chance to stay at shortstop.



93. JOSH JUNG
RANGERS, 3B

ETA: 2022 | Exit Velo: 88 | Age: 22
HIT: 60 | POW: 50 | RUN: 40 | FLD: 50 | ARM: 60

One of the most productive hitters in college baseball in 2018 and 2019, Jung sees the ball well and has significant power potential, but his swing will need a significant overhaul if he's going to pull the ball. As it stands right now, he drives the ball consistently to right and right center.



94. BRENNEN DAVIS
CUBS, OF

ETA: 2022 | Exit Velo: 88 | Age: 20
HIT: 50 | POW: 60 | RUN: 60 | FLD: 50 | ARM: 60

The Cubs were taking a chance when they drafted Davis as he had less of a track record than many of the top prep bats in the 2018 class. So far it looks like they picked a winner. Davis is athletic, fast and strong and he impressed at the plate in an injury-shortened 2019 season.

9

Number of pitchers in this year's Top 100 who have had Tommy John surgery.



95. JORDAN BALAZOVIC
TWINS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | Fastball Velo: 93 | Age: 21
FB: 60 | SL: 55 | CHG: 50 | CTL: 50

It was quite the breakthrough 2019 season for Balazovic. He dominated low Class A, earned a spot in the Futures Game and pitched for Canada in the Pan-American Games. Of the Twins top pitching prospects, Balazovic is the most likely to remain a starter. Now he just has to prove he can do the same against more advanced hitters.



96. JHOAN DURAN
TWINS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | Fastball Velo: 97 | Age: 22
FB: 70 | SPLIT: 70 | CB: 45 | CTL: 50

Acquired from the D-backs in 2018 for Eduardo Escobar, Duran is proving to be an excellent acquisition. His unique "splinker" stands out, but his high-90s fastball is also ferocious and could help him rush to the big leagues.



97. DIEGO CARTAYA
DODGERS, C

ETA: 2025 | Exit Velo: 86 | Age: 18
HIT: 55 | POW: 55 | RUN: 40 | FLD: 60 | ARM: 60

Cartaya was considered one of the best prospects in the 2018 international amateur class. He's lived up to every expectation so far. Cartaya has a chance to be a well-rounded catcher who can be both a productive hitter and an above-average defender.



98. JOE RYAN
RAYS, RHP

ETA: 2021 | Fastball Velo: 92 | Age: 24
FB: 70 | CB: 55 | SL: 40 | CHG: 30 | CTL: 55

Ryan had an up-and-down college career, which explains why he lasted until the seventh round in 2018. Ryan dominated FSL hitters with his double-plus fastball. Now he needs to improve his offspeed stuff.



99. SAM HUFF
RANGERS, C

ETA: 2022 | Exit Velo: 91 | Age: 22
HIT: 40 | POW: 70 | RUN: 40 | FLD: 45 | ARM: 60

Huff had one of the best months in the minors last season. He hit 16 homers over the final four months of the season and raised some concerns about his contact ability, but he has a chance to be a slugging catcher.



100. ISAAC PAREDES
TIGERS, 3B

ETA: 2021 | Exit Velo: 88 | Age: 21
HIT: 55 | POW: 50 | RUN: 40 | FLD: 45 | ARM: 50.

Paredes has always been one of the youngest hitters in whatever league he's in, but he's always hit. The Tigers are still figuring out where he best fits defensively. No matter the position, Paredes will have to hit his way to the big leagues.

TOP 100 BY THE NUMBERS

BY ORGANIZATION

RAYS	8	YANKEES	3	REDS	2
DODGERS	7	ROYALS	3	RANGERS	2
PADRES	6	PIRATES	3	PHILLIES	2
TIGERS	5	ORIOLES	3	NATIONALS	2
MARINERS	5	GIANTS	3	INDIANS	2
D-BACKS	5	CUBS	3	ANGELS	2
MARLINS	5	CARDINALS	3	METS	2
TWINS	5	BLUE JAYS	3	ROCKIES	1
WHITE SOX	4	ATHLETICS	3	ASTROS	1
BRAVES	4	RED SOX	3	BREWERS	0

Notable

- The Rays are at least tied for the most Top 100 Prospects for the second straight season. They had nine Top 100 Prospects entering 2019, tied with the Padres for the most in baseball.
- The Brewers are the only team without a Top 100 Prospect, a year after three teams (Cubs, Red Sox and Yankees) had none. This is the first time since 2011 that the Brewers have not had a Top 100 prospect.
- The Dodgers have at least four Top 100 Prospects for the seventh straight year. Their seven Top 100 Prospects this year are their most since 2016, when they also had a class of seven that included Corey Seager, Cody Bellinger, Julio Urias, Alex Verdugo and Kenta Maeda.

BY POSITION

CATCHER	9	THIRD BASE	8	RIGHTHANDER	28
FIRST	3	SHORTSTOP	14	LEFTHANDER	12
SECOND BASE	6	OUTFIELD	20		

Notable

- The nine catchers in the Top 100 this year are the most since 2011, when there were also nine (Jesus Montero, Gary Sanchez, Travis d'Arnaud, Tony Sanchez, Wilin Rosario, Devin Mesoraco, Derek Norris, Austin Romine and Wilson Ramos.)
- Nine of the 40 pitchers in the Top 100 (22.5 percent) have had Tommy John surgery. Another 10 pitchers (25 percent) have had seasons shortened by arm, shoulder, oblique or hand injuries.
- While there is an increase in the number of Top 100 shortstops from last year, many project to move off the position. They are currently counted as shortstops because it remains their primary position.

BY NATIONALITY

UNITED STATES	70	PUERTO RICO	1
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	17	PERU	1
VENEZUELA	4	MEXICO	1
CUBA	2	COLOMBIA	1
BAHAMAS	2	CANADA	1

Notable

- Luis Garcia was born in New York, but signed as an international free agent from the Dominican Republic.
- Wander Franco is the second straight Dominican to be Baseball America's No. 1 prospect, following Vladimir Guerrero Jr. last year. The previous international No. 1 prospects were Ronald Acuña Jr. (2018, Venezuela), Andruw Jones (1996 and 1997, Curacao), Jurickson Profar (Curacao, 2013) and Daisuke Matsuzaka (Japan, 2007).
- There are four sons of former major leaguers in the Top 100. Bobby Witt Jr. is the son of former pitcher Bobby Witt, who ranked as the Rangers No. 1 prospect in 1986; Daulton Varsho is the son of former outfielder Gary Varsho; Ke'Bryan Hayes is the son of former third baseman Charlie Hayes, who ranked as the Giants No. 9 prospect in 1986; and Garcia is the son of Luis Garcia, who played for the Tigers in 1999. ■



Luis Robert fell behind the pitcher much more often than the average minor league hitter in 2019, but he hit much better than the average hitter when in disadvantage counts.



Angels Double-A outfielder Brandon Marsh hit ahead in the count in 43.4 percent of his plate appearances, which was tops among Top 100 Prospects.

TWO GREAT SEASONS, TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES

By JJ COOPER

Rays shortstop Wander Franco ranks first on the Top 100 Prospects and White Sox center fielder Luis Robert ranks second. Both had exceptional 2019 seasons, but they took wildly different paths to get to that success.

Franco was a maestro of controlling his at-bats. Thanks to his selective eye and exceptional hand-eye coordination, he generally got ahead in counts, got the pitcher at a disadvantage and then found a pitch to hit.

Forty percent of Franco's plate appearances ended with him ahead in the count. And he hit .326/.510/.543 when he was ahead.

Among Top 100 Prospects with 100 or more plate appearances in full-season ball last year, Franco ranked sixth in percentage of plate appearances where he was ahead in the count. Angels outfielder Brandon Marsh was tops with 43.5 percent.

Franco's youth (18 years old) and level (a half season at each Class A level) adds to the impressiveness of his ability to get ahead.

Robert's approach was different. He took big swings, doing damage when he connected. He often fell behind in the count, but even when he did, he continued to drive balls because of an exceptional ability to make hard contact when behind in the count.

Both Robert and Franco had roughly one-third of their plate appearances end after zero or one pitches. But in 51 percent of Robert's plate appearances he faced

a two-strike pitch. Franco got to two strikes in just 35 percent of his plate appearances. While 12 percent of Franco's PAs finished with him being up 2-0, 3-1 or 3-0 in the count, just 5.7 percent of Robert's PAs finished in those counts.

Among Top 100 Prospects with 100 or more plate appearances in full-season ball last year, only Oneil Cruz had a higher percentage than Robert of PAs that finished with him behind in the count. Robert's percentage of PAs when he was ahead in the count (26 percent) was also second worst among the 49 hitters studied (Cruz was again worst).

For most hitters, hitting consistently while behind the count is a recipe for disaster. The reason is simple: hitters generally succeed when ahead in the count and struggle when hitting while behind in the count. But Robert made it work because he had exceptional numbers in disadvantageous counts.

In 74 plate appearance resolving on an 0-2 pitch, Robert hit .257/.263/.460. On 1-2, he hit .211/.220/.400. Those numbers might seem unremarkable until you realize that almost nobody is a decent hitter in 0-2 and 1-2 counts. In the major leagues last season, hitters batted .149/.159/.234 on 0-2 and .161/.169/.256 on 1-2.

Robert's 34 total bases on 0-2 counts was second-best in the minors, behind the Orioles' Ryan Mountcastle. Robert's 124 total bases when hitting from behind was tops in the minors by a large margin. ■

AHEAD IN THE COUNT

Here's a look at which Top 100 Prospects had the highest percentage of plate appearances when they were ahead in the count when the PA resolved. The study included those hitters who had 100 or more plate appearances in full-season ball in 2019.

Player	Ahead	Even	Behind
Brandon Marsh	43.4%	30.3%	26.2%
Nolan Jones	42.1%	33.1%	24.9%
Carter Kieboom	40.9%	29.1%	30.0%
Jarred Kelenic	40.6%	30.6%	28.8%
Alec Bohm	40.4%	33.0%	26.7%
Wander Franco	40.0%	32.5%	27.5%
Gavin Lux	39.2%	35.0%	25.8%
Geraldo Perdomo	38.7%	34.9%	26.5%
Sean Murphy	38.6%	40.0%	21.4%
Isaac Paredes	38.0%	34.4%	27.5%
Top 100 Average	34.4%	34.5%	31.1%

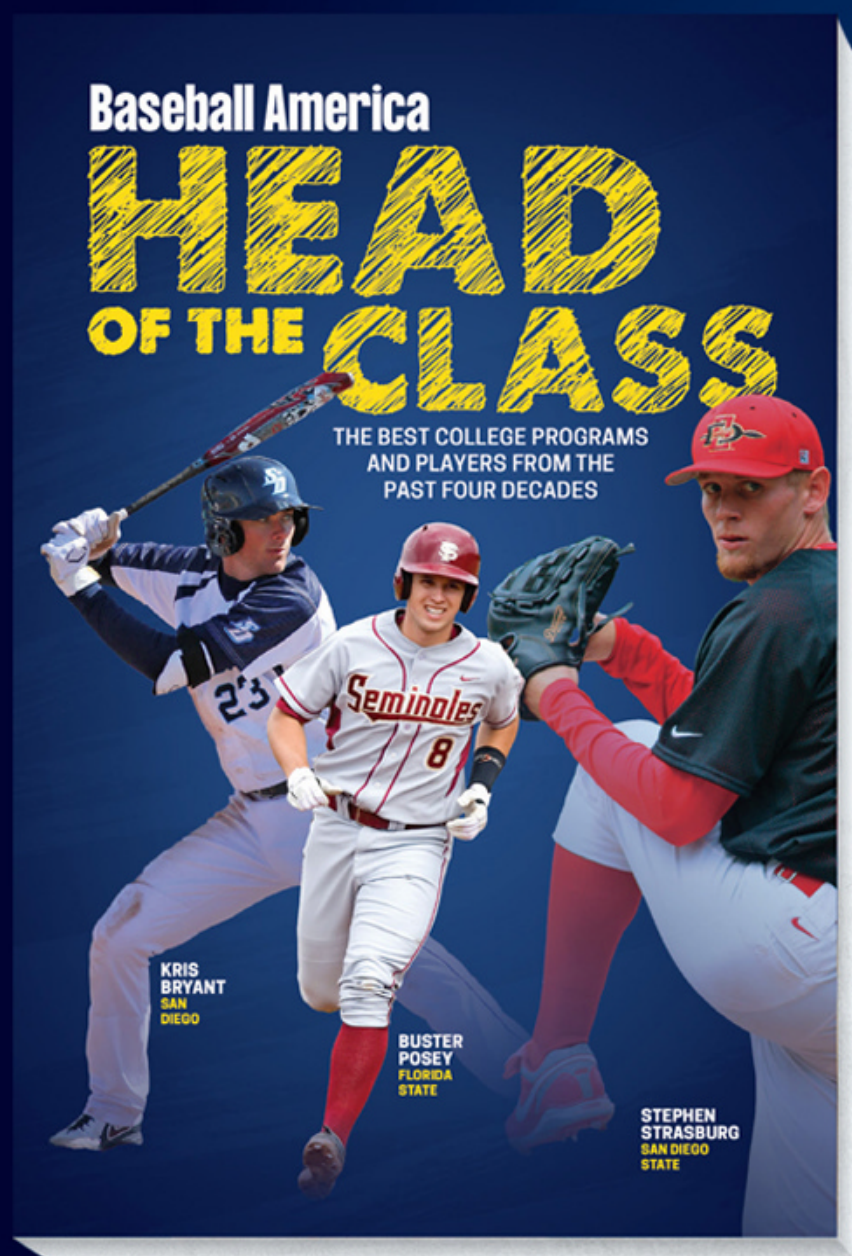
BEHIND IN THE COUNT

Here's a look at which Top 100 Prospects had the highest percentage of plate appearances when they were behind in the count when the PA resolved. Again the study includes Top 100 Prospects with 100 or more plate appearances in full-season ball in 2019.

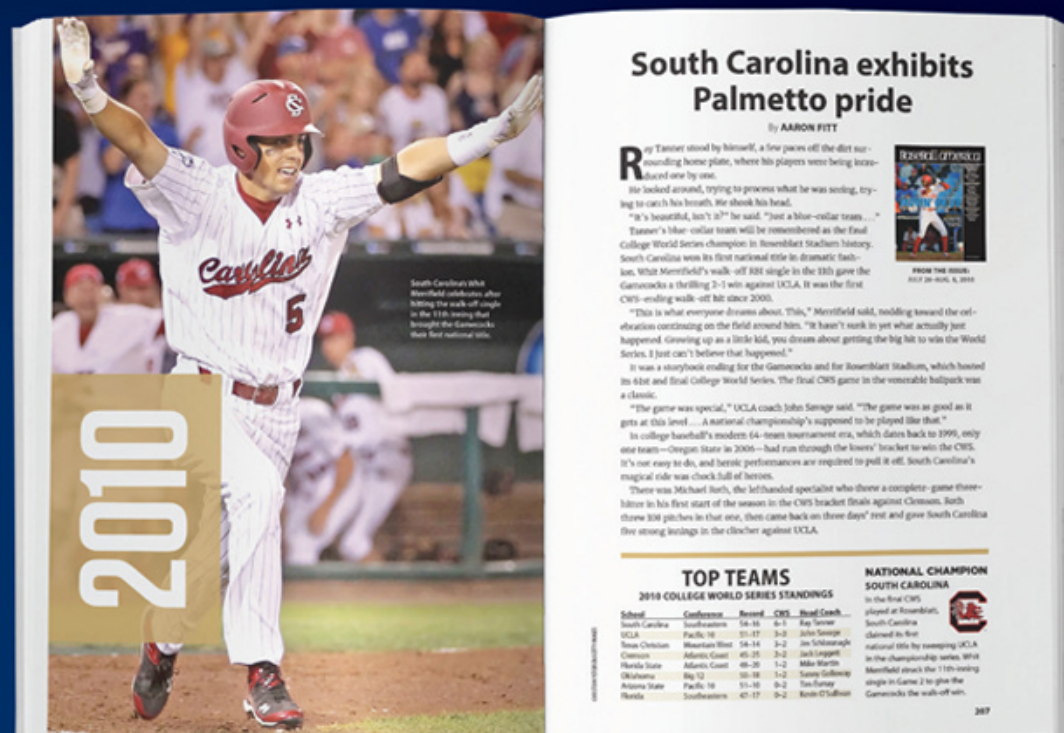
Player	Ahead	Even	Behind
Oneil Cruz	26.7%	33.1%	40.2%
Luis Robert	24.7%	35.8%	39.6%
Ronny Mauricio	28.4%	32.7%	38.9%
Tyler Freeman	29.6%	31.6%	38.8%
Nico Hoerner	30.3%	31.6%	38.1%
Josh Jung	35.2%	26.8%	38.0%
Drew Waters	28.8%	33.3%	37.9%
Joey Bart	32.8%	31.7%	35.5%
Alex Kirilloff	30.4%	34.5%	35.0%
Nolan Gorman	32.4%	32.6%	35.0%
Top 100 Average	34.4%	34.5%	31.1%

HEAD OF THE CLASS

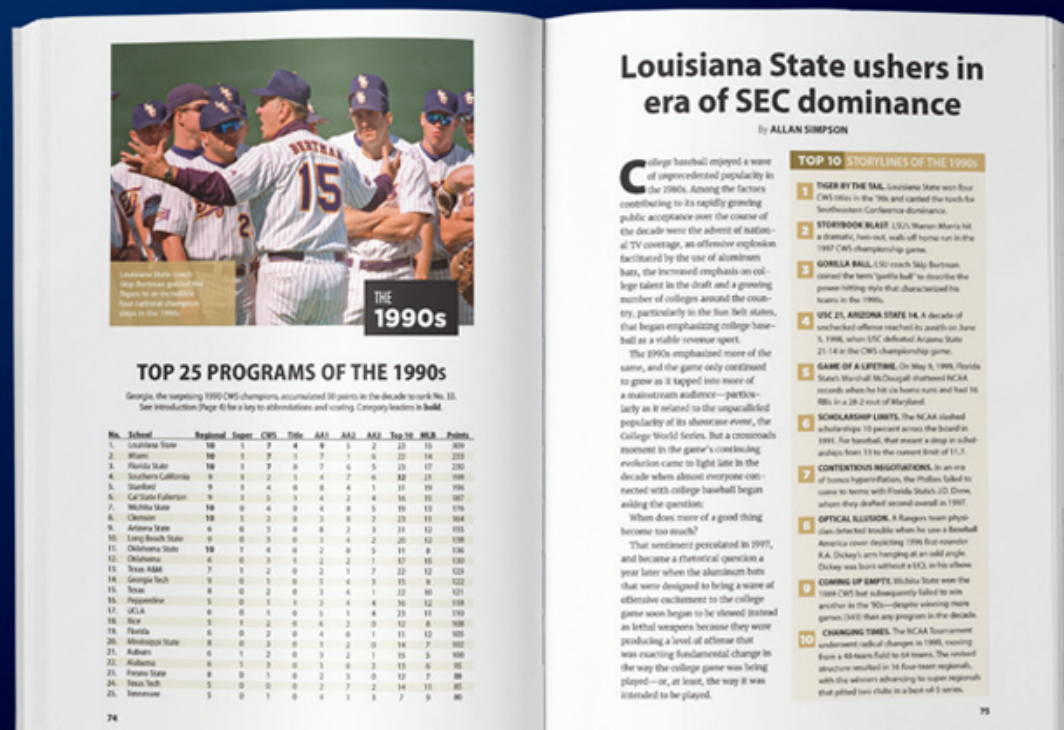
The best college programs and players from the past four decades



Head Of The Class collects 39 seasons—1981 through 2019—of college baseball reporting and analysis by Baseball America and its industry-leading voices.



New content exclusive to **Head Of The Class** analyzes the college game in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s.



Includes the top 25 programs for each decade, the top storylines that shaped each decade and the top major league stars from each college class.



**GERRIT
COLE**
RHP

MLB PREVIEW



**DAVID
PRICE**
LHP

**MOOKIE
BETTS**
OF

MAJOR LEAGUE PREVIEW

BANK ON IT

The well-heeled Dodgers and Yankees made splashy offseason moves that make them the favorites to meet in the World Series—again

Of the 115 World Series ever played, the Dodgers and Yankees have opposed each other in 11 of them. That accounts for 9.5 percent of total World Series matchups and is by far the most common.

It’s also the matchup forecast by Baseball America in a near-unanimous vote by our editorial team—and it’s easy to see why.

The Dodgers traded from their wealth of prospects to acquire right fielder Mookie Betts and lefthander David Price from the Red Sox. Betts and reigning National League MVP Cody Bellinger co-headline a Los Angeles lineup that led the league in runs scored last season.

Price slots in as the No. 3 starter behind Walker Buehler and Clayton Kershaw in the Dodgers’ deep

stable of rotation arms.

The Yankees advanced to the American League Championship Series in 2017 and 2019, only to lose to the Astros both times. Houston’s accomplishments have since been called into question by its sign-stealing scheme, but the Yankees left no question with their free agent signing of former Astros co-ace Gerrit Cole.

With Cole heading the rotation, New York should improve its middle-of-the-pack showing in ERA and now has an ace for October.

While the Yankees have won eight of the 11 previous World Series matchups with the Dodgers, the BA editorial team predicts that the Dodgers will emerge victorious this time. ■



Yankees center fielder Mickey Mantle celebrates the grand slam he hit in Game 5 of the 1953 World Series against the Brooklyn Dodgers.



Commissioner Bowie Kuhn presents Dodgers owner Peter O'Malley (left) and manager Tommy Lasorda with the 1981 World Series trophy.

SO WE MEET AGAIN

The Dodgers and Yankees have matched up 11 times previously in the World Series, the last time coming 39 years ago, in Baseball America’s first year of existence.

Year	Champion	Games	Runner-Up
1941	New York Yankees	4–1	Brooklyn Dodgers
1947	New York Yankees	4–3	Brooklyn Dodgers
1949	New York Yankees	4–1	Brooklyn Dodgers
1952	New York Yankees	4–3	Brooklyn Dodgers
1953	New York Yankees	4–2	Brooklyn Dodgers
1955	Brooklyn Dodgers	4–3	New York Yankees
1956	New York Yankees	4–3	Brooklyn Dodgers
1963	Los Angeles Dodgers	4–0	New York Yankees
1977	New York Yankees	4–2	Los Angeles Dodgers
1978	New York Yankees	4–2	Los Angeles Dodgers
1981	Los Angeles Dodgers	4–2	New York Yankees

The Teams To Beat

The Baseball America editorial team predicted the order of finish, postseason participants and award winners as players reported to spring training in mid-February. Please see our **BA Crystal Ball** throughout the **MLB Preview** for offseason winners and losers, biggest storylines, breakout players and more.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

EAST	CENTRAL	WEST
1. New York Yankees	1. Minnesota Twins	1. Houston Astros
2. Tampa Bay Rays	2. Cleveland Indians	2. Oakland Athletics
3. Boston Red Sox	3. Chicago White Sox	3. Los Angeles Angels
4. Toronto Blue Jays	4. Kansas City Royals	4. Texas Rangers
5. Baltimore Orioles	5. Detroit Tigers	5. Seattle Mariners

Wild Cards: Athletics, Rays.
Pennant: Yankees.
MVP: (1) Mike Trout, OF, Angels. (2) Francisco Lindor, SS, Indians. (3) Aaron Judge, OF, Yankees.
Cy Young Award: (1) Gerrit Cole, RHP, Yankees. (2) Mike Clevinger, RHP, Indians. (3) Justin Verlander, RHP, Astros.
Rookie of the Year: (1) Luis Robert, OF, White Sox. (2) Jo Adell, OF, Angels. (3) Jesus Luzardo, LHP, Athletics.



The Cardinals’ Jack Flaherty went 7-2, 0.91 in 15 second-half starts in 2019.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

EAST	CENTRAL	WEST
1. Atlanta Braves	1. St. Louis Cardinals	1. Los Angeles Dodgers
2. Washington Nationals	2. Chicago Cubs	2. Arizona Diamondbacks
3. New York Mets	3. Cincinnati Reds	3. San Diego Padres
4. Philadelphia Phillies	4. Milwaukee Brewers	4. Colorado Rockies
5. Miami Marlins	5. Pittsburgh Pirates	5. San Francisco Giants

Wild Cards: Cubs, Nationals.
Pennant: Dodgers.
MVP: (1) Mookie Betts, OF, Dodgers. (2) Ronald Acuña Jr., OF, Braves. (3) Cody Bellinger, OF, Dodgers.
Cy Young Award: (1) Jack Flaherty, RHP, Cardinals. (2) Walker Buehler, RHP, Dodgers. (3) Luis Castillo, RHP, Reds.
Rookie of the Year: (1) Gavin Lux, 2B, Dodgers. (2) Dylan Carlson, OF, Cardinals. (3) Dustin May, RHP, Dodgers.



Baseball America staff predictions for the most notable players, teams and storylines of 2020.

Contributing editors are Ben Badler (BB), Carlos Collazo (CC), J.J. Cooper (JJ), Matt Eddy (ME), Kyle Glaser (KG), Joe Healy (JH), Josh Norris (JN) and Chris Hilburn-Trenkle (CT).



Nick Castellanos

Which Team Will Be the Biggest Surprise Of 2020?

Cubs: They're coming off an 84-win season, but there's more underlying talent there, with the advantage of being in a division without a juggernaut team. —BB

Phillies: There's a lot of talent on hand, and they have a shot to make some noise in a competitive NL East. This one relies heavily on Zack Wheeler helping improve the rotation and Bryce Harper having an MVP-caliber season. —CC

Reds: In a division where the Cubs haven't gotten better and the Brewers seem to be regressing, the Reds pitching staff and suddenly deep lineup could surprise. And a win-now approach means they will likely be aggressive at the trade deadline. —JJ

Indians: The spotlight shines on the Twins and White Sox in the AL Central, but the Indians have the best *team* in the division. Cleveland has a deep rotation fronted by Cy Young candidates Mike Clevinger and Shane Bieber, supported by a talented bullpen and a lineup anchored by future MVP Francisco Lindor. —ME

White Sox: Chicago has one of baseball's best young cores (Yoan Moncada, Tim Anderson, Lucas Giolito, Eloy Jimenez), made numerous impactful offseason additions (Yasmani Grandal, Dallas Keuchel, Nomar Mazara, Edwin Encarnacion, Gio Gonzalez, Steve Cishek) and has a talented group of rookies ready to contribute (Luis Robert, Michael Kopech, Nick Madrigal). That's the formula for a breakthrough season, and one that should end with a playoff berth. —KG

GRAND OPENING

A talented young core and busy offseason have the White Sox positioned to win after wrapping a three-year rebuild

by SCOT GREGOR

Under general manager Rick Hahn, the White Sox have “won” the offseason before. Before the 2015 season, they were viewed as instant contenders after a winter haul of veterans brought in righthander Jeff Samardzija, first baseman Adam LaRoche, outfielder Melky Cabrera and relievers David Robertson, Zach Duke and Dan Jennings.

When it was time to prove it on the field, the White Sox went 76-86 and finished fourth in the American League Central.

Before the 2014 season, Chicago added first baseman Jose Abreu, outfielder Adam Eaton, third baseman Matt Davidson and pitchers Scott Downs, Felipe Paulino, Ronald Belisario and Javy Guerra. The White Sox finished fourth in that season, too, going 73-89.

It was a classic case of rinse, wash, repeat and fail, and Hahn finally became fed up with filling the roster with unreliable veterans.

Before a 2016 game in late July, the White Sox GM admitted the patch-and-plug plan that helped them win the 2005 World Series was no longer viable.

“We’re mired in mediocrity,” Hahn said. “That’s not the goal. That’s not acceptable. That’s not what we’re trying to accomplish for the long term.”

After the 2016 season, the White Sox traded ace starter Chris Sale to the Red Sox for a package of prospects headed by Yoan Moncada and Michael Kopech. One day later, Eaton was sent to the Nationals



for three promising pitchers, including Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez.

The rebuild continued into the 2017 season and Hahn agreed to a big trade with the crosstown Cubs, getting Eloy Jimenez and Dylan Cease for Jose Quintana.

Along the way, the White Sox also signed monster prospect Luis Robert

and used their high first-round draft picks on Oregon State second baseman Nick Madrigal (No. 4 overall in 2018) and California first baseman Andrew Vaughn (No. 3 overall last year).

For years, Chicago chairman Jerry Reinsdorf thought the best way to assemble a large-market team was spending on free agents and trading



minor leaguers for veterans.

In early June of 2016, Chicago sent Fernando Tatis Jr. to the Padres for James Shields. The outcome of that trade—Shields ran up a 5.31 ERA in three seasons with the White Sox; Tatis developed into one of the top young players in the game—likely proved to be the tipping point.

“We’ve had these (rebuild) conversations over a number of years,” Hahn said. “Obviously, in the past, we made the decision as a group not to head down this path.

“When the decision was finally made to head down the rebuild route, Jerry felt the same frustration that all of us had, and all White Sox fans had felt, with

Luis Robert (right) ranks as the No. 2 prospect in baseball this year. Eloy Jimenez ranked No. 3 a year ago. Both young sluggers will patrol the Chicago outfield this season.

what seemed to be on paper some solid efforts but obviously in terms of results and bottom lines were disappointments.

“So he got it. I think his competitiveness and impatience are a constant presence through this in that he hopes it’s done right and hopes it’s done quickly. But he knows where we’re at.”

Chicago has been at the bottom for an extended stretch. The White Sox haven’t had a winning season since 2012 and they haven’t been to the playoffs since 2008.

Patience is a big part of rebuilding, and the White Sox have paid most of that price.

After three lean years in the major leagues—manager Rick Renteria is 201–284 (.414) over that stretch—it looks like Chicago is finally ready to launch.

“I would be disappointed if we don’t make the postseason, that would be accurate,” Renteria said at the club’s annual fan gathering in late January. “We want to break through. We want this to be an impactful season. I think, man for man, now we at least have a little bit more ammunition to be able to go out and compete, hopefully, on a consistent basis, and put those victories on the board.”

Just like in years past, the White Sox are widely viewed as winter winners.

After shedding veterans for three years and restocking a barren farm system, the White Sox had a busy offseason. They signed all-star catcher Yasmani Grandal, former AL Cy Young Award winner Dallas Keuchel, Edwin Encarnacion, Gio Gonzalez and Steve Cishek. Chicago also acquired right fielder Nomar Mazara in a trade with the Rangers.

That’s an appealing package of proven talent, but there’s a big difference. Unlike seasons past, the new veteran faces are joining a stout young core that features third baseman Moncada, ace Giolito, defending AL batting champion and shortstop Tim Anderson and left fielder Jimenez.

“I can definitely tell that lineup is ready to go this year,” Keuchel said. Prospects Robert, Vaughn and Madrigal



DAVID BANKS/GETTY IMAGES

Yasmani Grandal will provide invaluable offensive and defensive contributions to the White Sox.

Which Team Had The Best Offseason?

Dodgers: They were already the heavy favorite in the NL West, then added right fielder Mookie Betts and lefthander David Price without giving up anyone who was a core part of their future, maintaining a farm system that still stacks up among the best in the game. —BB

Dodgers: They haven’t won a World Series since 1988, but after acquiring Mookie Betts, Los Angeles has a solid chance to win 100 or more games for the third time in four seasons. Just four teams have accomplished that since baseball went to the 162-game schedule. —JJ

D-backs: The Angels, Dodgers and White Sox made splashier moves, but the D-backs stealthily attacked weak areas in the outfield and pitching staff by importing Starling Marte to play center field, Kole Calhoun to play right field, Madison Bumgarner to front the rotation and Hector Rondon to work high-leverage relief. —ME

Angels: The Halos added the durable starters they badly needed in righthanders Julio Teheran and Dylan Bundy and solved their decade-long third base problems by signing Anthony Rendon. Add in the hiring of Joe Maddon as manager and the penalties laid down on the division rival Astros, and the Angels altogether had a lot go their way in the offseason. —KG

White Sox: Adding catcher Yasmani Grandal and lefthander Dallas Keuchel, getting 23-year-old righthander Michael Kopech healthy again after Tommy John surgery and preparing for a second season of left fielder Eloy Jimenez—to say nothing of adding center fielder and No. 2 prospect in baseball Luis Robert—should add up to big things. —JN

FAST FACT

The White Sox haven’t had a winning season since 2012 and haven’t been to the playoffs since 2008.



Theo Epstein's Cubs failed to address holes on their roster because they faced payroll restrictions.

Which Team Had The Most Disappointing Offseason?

Mets: Mets fans thought they were one step closer to escaping the worst ownership in the game, only to get kicked in the teeth yet again. —BB

Astros: Houston essentially wrote the perfect script for how to have the worst off-season in baseball. The Astros followed one PR disaster after another before losing the World Series, became the focal point of one of the biggest scandals in baseball history and soured a historic 2017 World Series championship. Oh yeah, they also lost Gerrit Cole to an American League rival. Bravo. —CC

Red Sox: While Houston's sign-stealing scandal got most of the attention, Boston faced its own investigation as well, traded away Mookie Betts, the best player it's produced in a generation, brought in no significant reinforcements and moved years away from its next serious playoff run. —JJ

Astros: Losing Gerrit Cole to the American League-rival Yankees wasn't even the biggest calamity to befall the Astros in the offseason. Houston's sign-stealing scandal disgraced its players, called into question the club's accomplishments and cost general manager Jeff Luhnow and manager A.J. Hinch their jobs and reputations. —ME

Cubs: The Cubs' offseason was nothing to be proud of. The North Siders badly needed to upgrade their outfield, bullpen and back of the rotation, and did none of it. They still have the talent to contend in the National League Central, but they could have done more and willingly chose not to. —KG

Major League Baseball: Last offseason, MLB shot itself in the foot with its free agency freeze out. Now, a the Astros' sign-stealing scandal led to the firing of two of the last three World Series-winning managers and a general manager and has raised questions about the integrity of the sport itself. Throw the looming contraction of dozens of minor league teams and a round of contentious Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations on the horizon, and it all adds up to one of the most toxic offseasons in recent memory. —JN



Shortstop Tim Anderson (right) and third baseman Yoan Moncada finished first and third in the AL batting race in 2019 after they anchored the top half of the lineup in the second half.

figure to make the lineup even deeper over the course of 2020 and 2021.

Bringing in a proven pitcher like Keuchel is a big reason the White Sox are heading into the upcoming season with such high hopes, but Moncada, Giolito, Anderson and Jimenez taking such big steps up in 2019 is even bigger.

"Part of what made being a little more aggressive this offseason make sense was the progress we saw from the Giolitos and Moncadas and TAs last year," Hahn said.

The GM also pointed to Jimenez acclimating himself in the big leagues, Robert's readiness to contribute and feeling strong about the young core overall.

"There's still growth there and for some," Hahn said. "There may be a half-step backward in certain instances before

they take their next step forward. It's just the nature of development, especially at the big league level.

"But the strength of that young group not only put us in a position to be aggressive this offseason but also is going to continue to be key to where this team goes for the long term."

In 2018, Moncada didn't look much like the decorated prospect he was with Boston. The switch-hitter batted .235/.315/.400 with 17 home runs in his first full season and nearly set the major league record with 217 strikeouts.

After the season, Moncada headed to the White Sox's spring training complex in Glendale, Ariz., and worked on his game.

"I went there trying to fix a few things I was doing wrong," Moncada said. "When I left Arizona, I was in a good

spot and I kept working."

The extra effort paid off in 2019. Not only did the 24-year-old Moncada hit .315 and finish third in the AL batting race, he also established career highs with 25 home runs, 34 doubles, 79 RBIs and 83 runs. He also reduced his strikeout rate from 33 to 28 percent.

Like Moncada, Giolito looked himself in the mirror after the 2018 season. The righthander was not happy about his 6.13 ERA, which was the worst among qualified major league starters.

Giolito addressed the mental side of his game. On the mechanical side, the 6-foot-6 righthander shortened his arm stroke.

The combination helped the 25-year-old Giolito take off, and he went 14-9, 3.41 while cutting his walk rate per nine from 4.7 to 2.9.



Lucas Giolito shortened his arm stroke and threw more strikes and finished sixth in AL Cy Young Award voting in 2019.

“The biggest focus was making the changes I needed to make and just being a more consistent pitcher,” Giolito said. “I showed I can do that and more, and that’s all I concern myself with. I just want to take the ball every five days and win.”

Anderson led the AL with a .335

average, a whopping jump of 95 points over 2018, and the shortstop somehow won the batting title while ranking last among qualified major league hitters with 15 walks.

There is a sturdy base in place, and Robert, Madrigal and Vaughn represent the next wave of young talent rolling

toward Chicago.

Based on Robert’s showing last season—he hit .328/.376/.624 with 31 doubles, 11 triples, 32 homers, 92 RBIs and 36 stolen bases in a combined 122 games at Triple-A Charlotte, Double-A Birmingham and high Class A Winston-Salem—he could emerge as the club’s best player.

After Robert signed a six-year, \$50 million contract in early January, the coast is clear for the 22-year-old to be in the lineup and in center field on Opening Day.

Robert has set goals to match his substantial set of skills. “I want to be Rookie of the Year and win a championship,” he said.

While he might very well achieve the first objective this season, Chicago is not going to panic if Robert has some early struggles like Jimenez did a year ago.

“Early last season, you saw how teams treated Eloy,” Hahn said. “They treated him like a seasoned veteran in terms of setting him up and trying to exploit some weaknesses off the plate with breaking balls.

“I think you’re going to see Luis get that same treatment. I don’t think you’re going to see too many guys challenging him early with fastballs because they’re going to know the scouting report.

“He’s not a finished product at age 22. Obviously, he’s a guy who’s played pro ball for a little over two full seasons, basically. But that acclimation period, I think could well come together fairly quickly. We’ll find out together, but we’re certainly very excited to see that development.” ■



HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

The D-backs’ Carson Kelly could be poised to become the next great National League catcher.

Meet The Breakout Hitter Of 2020.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr., 3B, Blue Jays

Jays: After a solid rookie campaign in his age-20 season, Vlad Jr. has all the attributes to be one of the elite hitters in the game. There’s no way to know whether it will all click for him in 2020, but Guerrero has the bat speed, swing, plate coverage, strike-zone discipline and outstanding power to be a high on-base, high-slugging masher. —BB

Bo Bichette, SS, Blue Jays

Bichette’s big league debut included a .311/.358/.571 batting line with 11 home runs in 46 games. He’s been overshadowed by Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Juan Soto, Ronald Acuña Jr. and Fernando Tatis Jr., but Bichette belongs right in that phylum of young stars. —CC

Vladimir Guerrero Jr., 3B, Blue Jays

Jays: Guerrero has some adjustments to make against major league pitchers. With the acclimation period behind him, it’s time for Guerrero to show why scouts have described him as one of the best pure hitters they have seen in years. —JJ

Carson Kelly, C, D-backs

Kelly could be on the verge of becoming the next great National League catcher, following Yadier Molina, Buster Posey, J.T. Realmuto and Willson Contreras at the position. At 25 years old, Kelly is just entering the sweet spot for catchers and does many things well. He swings at strikes, hits the ball hard and hits it in the air. Behind the plate, he is a strong pitch-framer who throws well. —ME

Lourdes Gurriel Jr., OF, Blue Jays

Gurriel quietly had an excellent offensive showing in 84 games last year wrapped around two injured list stints. Now about to begin his third major league season at the prime age of 26, Gurriel is in position to emerge as an offensive force—if he can stay healthy. —KG

Eloy Jimenez, OF, White Sox

Though overshadowed by the play of other dynamic youngsters, Jimenez quietly hit 31 home runs as a 2019 rookie, and his continued development will be key to Chicago’s turnaround. Jimenez could deliver and earn the first of many all-star nods this season. —CT

HOW THE 2020 WHITE SOX WERE BUILT

Age is baseball age in 2020. First indicates first season with White Sox organization.

Pos	Lineup (Age)	Acquired	First
C	Yasmani Grandal (31)	Free agent	2020
1B	Jose Abreu (33)	Cuba	2014
2B	Nick Madrigal* (23)	Draft	2018
3B	Yoan Moncada (25)	Trade	2017
SS	Tim Anderson (27)	Draft	2013
LF	Eloy Jimenez (23)	Trade	2017
CF	Luis Robert (22)	Cuba	2017
RF	Nomar Mazara (25)	Trade	2020
DH	Edwin Encarnacion (37)	Free agent	2020

* Madrigal should push 29-year-old Leury Garcia into a utility role at some point in the first half

Pos	Rotation (Age)	Acquired	First
SP	Lucas Giolito (25)	Trade	2017
SP	Dallas Keuchel (32)	Free agent	2020
SP	Gio Gonzalez (34)	Free agent	2020
SP	Dylan Cease (24)	Trade	2017
SP	Reynaldo Lopez (26)	Trade	2017
SP	Michael Kopech (24)	Trade	2017
Pos	Top Relievers (Age)	Acquired	First
CL	Alex Colome (31)	Trade	2019
RP	Aaron Bummer (31)	Draft	2014
RP	Steve Cishek (34)	Free agent	2020

FAST FACT

The White Sox traded Chris Sale, Adam Eaton and Jose Quintana to acquire key pieces of their young core.



ALEX TRAUTWIG/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES



Dodgers lefthander Julio Urias attempts to rebound from injury and suspension.

Meet The Breakout Pitcher Of 2020.

Nate Pearson, RHP, Blue Jays:

Pearson should quickly find himself at the front of Toronto's rotation. There are still durability questions, but he throws strikes with an elite fastball, a swing-and-miss slider and a solid-average changeup that should translate to immediate success. —BB

Aaron Civale, RHP, Indians: Civale's fastball isn't overwhelming, but he has a long track record of strong control and gets tons of whiffs on each of his secondary offerings. —CC

Julio Urias, LHP, Dodgers: As scary as shoulder injuries can be, Urias showed last year that his stuff has made a full comeback. If he can handle a larger workload, he will fit nicely in the Dodgers' rotation as yet another playoff-caliber starter. —JJ

Griffin Canning, RHP, Angels: Assuming he is recovered from the elbow inflammation that shut him down in his major league debut, Canning has the type of overpowering stuff and wide repertoire to dominate. He wasn't the first pitcher from the 2017 draft to reach the majors, but he was the first to return value. —ME

Dinelson Lamet, RHP, Padres: Now in his second year removed from Tommy John surgery, Lamet's electric arsenal and improving control have him poised to become one of baseball's premier strikeout pitchers. —KG

Michael Kopech, RHP, White Sox: Kopech showed his gifts in his major league debut in 2018 before having Tommy John surgery. Once he returns to Chicago, he should remind everyone why the White Sox made him a high-priority return in the Chris Sale trade. —JN

Jesus Luzardo, LHP, Athletics: Plagued by injuries that forced him to miss much of the 2019 season, Luzardo pitched effectively in relief during the stretch run. This season, the 21-year-old will compete for Rookie of the Year honors and try to help deliver Oakland its third straight postseason appearance. —CT

NOW OR NEVER

After years of stockpiling minor league talent, the Padres cashed in prospects as they set their sights on winning in 2020

by JEFF SANDERS

Padres executive chairman Ron Fowler's big league team had just finished its ninth straight losing season when some of the Padres' most devout fans sidled up to him at Petco Park.

The organization's two-day prospect showcase, now an annual event, served as the backdrop for a gathering with the Padres' most active followers on social media a day after the end of the 2019 season, but the present state of the big league product tugged at Fowler's patience.

A second manager under his watch had been fired just nine days earlier. The off-the-cuff stream of consciousness that poured out of Fowler that last day in September—"heads will roll, beginning with mine"—echoed the frustration he relayed years earlier on a radio program while criticizing pitcher James Shields. That served as the prelude to using a chunk of money owed to the team's highest-paid pitcher to acquire Fernando Tatis Jr., then a 17-year-old shortstop who had not yet made his pro



debut.

Yes, general manager A.J. Preller was still arranging a future built around youngsters like Tatis, Chris Paddack and a wave of talent still on the rise, but no one ever said the waiting game was easy to see through to the end.

"The fact that we played (.347) baseball after the All-Star Game was absolutely unacceptable," Fowler said on Halloween at new manager Jayce Tingler's introductory press conference.

"I watched the team on the field. You saw the team on the field. We were an embarrassment the last three or four weeks of the season and we're not going to do that.

"If we don't perform better in 2020 and 2021, we will make changes. That's absolutely it. A.J. knows that and is comfortable with it and I think so is (Tingler).

"We have to win—and we have to win now. That's the expectation."

DENIS POROV/GETTY IMAGES



The plan, of course, had been re-routed a time or two following the teardown of Preller's first attempt to build a winner via the additions of Shields, Matt Kemp, Justin Upton, Wil Myers, Derek Norris and Craig Kimbrel before 2015.

Only Myers—who signed a six-year, \$83 million extension after his 2016 all-star campaign—remains from that initial push.

The Padres, instead, invested heavily in amateur talent, spending north of

\$80 million in the 2016-17 international class, collecting high first-round picks as the big league team sunk in the standings and flipping what big league assets they could for prospects.

The Padres' trades fetched Tatis (for Shields), Paddack (for Fernando Rodney), Anderson Espinoza (for Drew Pomeranz) and Francisco Mejia (for Brad Hand).

The draft brought in Stanford righthander Cal Quantrill (No. 8 overall

Chris Paddack pitched like an ace as a rookie, recording a 3.33 ERA and 0.98 WHIP, in 26 starts, but he will have much more rotation support this season with full returns from Garrett Richards and Dinelson Lamet plus trade pickup Zach Davies.

in 2016) and high school lefthanders MacKenzie Gore (No. 3 in 2017) and Ryan Weathers (No. 7 in 2018).

The money San Diego spent overseas netted, among others, lefthander Adrian Morejon (\$11 million), outfielder Jorge Oña (\$7 million) and righthanders Michel Baez (\$3 million), Ronald Bolaños (\$2.25 million) and Luis Patiño (\$120,000).

The first significant big league addition didn't arrive until spring 2018, when first baseman Eric Hosmer was still sitting on the market as camps opened.

Armed with the arguably the deepest farm system in the game, Preller convinced ownership to add Hosmer for a franchise-record \$144 million. The circumstances weren't entirely dissimilar last spring when that total was more than doubled to add Manny Machado, at a time when Tatis and Paddack began to state their cases that they could impact the major leagues in 2019.

A traditionally cash-strapped organization suddenly wasn't so concerned about saving potentially millions of dollars by delaying Tatis' debut a few weeks. He and Paddack both made the Opening Day roster, future service time considerations be damned.

The time to win was near, and San Diego—starved for a winner—wasn't about to wait idly by.

"He's not going to get to those free agent years," Hall of Fame closer Trevor Hoffman, a senior advisor in baseball operations, said last March. "Who cares about those 15 days? Who cares that he'll be a year sooner to free agency? If he does what he does, the Padres will make sure he's in uniform much longer than six years."

For his part, Tatis lived up to expectations, slashing .327/.393/.620 through the all-star break despite missing roughly a month to a hamstring injury. Paddack flashed ace-like results while the Padres managed his workload in his second full season removed from Tommy John surgery.



JIM MCISAAC/GETTY IMAGES

Mets closer Edwin Diaz focused on his conditioning this offseason after a disastrous 2019 season.

Which Player Will Bounce Back In 2020?

Giancarlo Stanton, OF, Yankees:

He spent most of 2019 on the injured list, but Stanton played 158 games in 2018 and 159 games the year before. Expect a healthy Stanton to return to the all-star-caliber player he has shown to be in the past, even as he enters his age-30 season. —BB

Carlos Correa, SS, Astros:

This is a risky pick because Correa has only one season of 150 or more games. In his other four seasons, he has averaged just 98 games. But when healthy, Correa is one of the best players in baseball. —CC

Jose Ramirez, 3B, Indians:

Ramirez's numbers were ruined by an awful first three months of 2019. Expect him to be more like the player who dominated in 2017 and 2018 and the second half of 2019. That's good news for the Indians, because they need him and Francisco Lindor to be exceptional to catch the Twins. —JJ

Edwin Diaz, RHP, Mets:

From major league saves leader in 2018 to homer-prone time bomb in 2019, Diaz spent the offseason focusing on nutrition and conditioning as he seeks a rebound. Plus, new Mets pitching coach Jeremy Hefner made Diaz's reclamation a top priority. —ME

Paul Goldschmidt, 1B, Cardinals:

Goldschmidt wasn't quite his usual elite self last year, but he quietly found his form over the season's final two months when it mattered most. Expect year two with the Cardinals to yield greater comfort and a return to MVP-level production. —KG

Luis Severino, RHP, Yankees:

Shelved most of last year with injuries, Severino if healthy will further strengthen a Yankees' rotation that will need an early boost while James Paxton recovers from back surgery. —JN

FAST FACT

The Padres traded for both Chris Paddack and Fernando Tatis Jr. in separate deals in June 2016.



MICHAEL REAVES/GETTY IMAGES

Veteran manager Dusty Baker inherits the reins of a troubled Astros organization this spring.

The Biggest Storyline Of 2020 Will Be?

Integrity of game issues. —BB

104: That's the number of hit by pitches required to break the single-season team record in the integration era. The Astros might have a shot to break the record considering the amount revulsion that most of baseball has for them at this point. —CC

Contentious negotiations: Not only the Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiation between Major League Baseball and the players' union but also between MLB and Minor League Baseball on a new Professional Baseball Agreement. —JJ

The new rules implemented for 2020: How will the three-batter rule, 26-man rosters and much smaller September rosters affect in-game strategy and ingrained managerial tendencies. —ME

The Astros: Are their hitters really that elite, or were they just benefiting from stealing signs? Will the loss of Gerrit Cole going to be too much to bear? How will Dusty Baker navigate a new clubhouse under the circumstances? Can Lance McCullers Jr. stay healthy in his return? Is Forrest Whitley still the future ace hoped for? So many questions, so much still to be answered in Houston. All eyes—fans, media, opponents—will be watching, and scrutinizing, every move. —KG

The Astros: Will all the drama of the off-season galvanize the team, will things start to crumble under the weight of all that scrutiny, or will it be business as usual? —JH

The Dodgers finally capturing that elusive World Series title: Los Angeles won the National League pennant in 2017 and 2018 but fell short in the World Series. Last year they bowed out in the Division Series to the eventual champion Nationals. —CT



General manager A.J. Preller (left) has spent years building the Padres' talent base. New manager Jayce Tingler, who was hired away from the Rangers in October, is tasked with helping that talent win in the big leagues in 2020.

Slugging corner outfielders Hunter Renfroe and Franmil Reyes emerged as legitimate power threats. Kirby Yates continued his transformation into one of the best closers in the game.

With Machado and Hosmer at least serving as steadying presences, the Padres penned their first .500 first half since 2010, coincidentally their last winning season.

It didn't last.

The front office seemingly didn't even suspect it to, signaled by their decision to trade away Reyes and young lefthander Logan Allen at the deadline for outfield prospect Taylor Trammell. Renfroe's numbers sagged as he played through injuries.

The rotation that out-pitched early expectations came back to earth. Tatis went on the injured list for a second time in mid-August, this time for good with a back injury. And neither Machado (109 OPS+), Hosmer (93) nor Myers (95) picked up enough slack.

The growing pains that followed cost manager Andy Green his job.

"With the young team we have, it's a great experience to go through that," said Machado, who hit .231/.331/.410 over his final 40 games of the season. "Speaking with a number of players throughout the offseason, everybody is hungry. We have that little taste in our months of letting it slip out of our hands (after the) break and we don't want that

to happen again . . .

"We're not going to forget how bad we played in the second half. We're going to use that as motivation."

Even with ownership turning down the temperature on Fowler's immediate postseason remarks, the front office appears equally motivated to fast forward the rebuild into the win-now phase.

They moved second base prospect Luis Urias and 2016 first-round lefty Eric Lauer to the Brewers to add experience to the rotation (Zach Davies) and a center fielder with better on-base skills (Trent Grisham).

They used Renfroe and second base prospect Xavier Edwards to acquire

DENIS POROV/GETTY IMAGES; JENNIFER STEWART/GETTY IMAGES



The Padres spent big on free agents Eric Hosmer (left) and Manny Machado the past two offseasons. Both veterans had down seasons in 2019, and how much they rebound will determine the San Diego's fate.

veteran outfielder Tommy Pham from the Rays. They seriously pursued both Francisco Lindor and Mookie Betts, though their restraint in both trade talks demonstrated a commitment to blue-prints largely drawn around homegrown talent and a semblance of fiscal responsibility.

The likes of Gore, Patiño and 2019 first-round shortstop CJ Abrams—three of the game's top prospects at their positions—headline their untouchables. The Padres would like to move the dis-

appointing Myers but are unwilling to eat too much of a bad contract. They might be more inclined to give up the farm to add an ace or impact bat if they weren't so confident in a young core contributing to a winning formula in the not-too-distant future.

Maybe that starts with Tatis—who needed just half a season to lead all Padres with 4.2 wins above replacement—staying on the field. A deeper lineup (Pham, Grisham and Jurickson Profar) will certainly take the pressure

off Machado, Hosmer and Myers. The bullpen, with the additions of Drew Pomeranz and Emilio Pagan, is positioned to be the strength of the club, and the farm system remains poised to supplement the big league team.

Trammell, for instance, might be a half-season away from contributing somewhere in the outfield. Cather Luis Campusano was co-MVP of the high Class A California League and looks like he will force his way into catching conversation along with Austin Hedges and Mejia before too long. The organization's most impressive arms (Gore and Patiño) could find themselves in the rotation alongside Paddack before the end of the 2020 season.

Win now? The Padres? For real this time?

It may just be about time.

"I think this is a plan," Preller said in December, "that really started four years ago in terms of looking at this as getting to a point in time—honestly, probably at the 2020 season—that we had put together enough talent and started to have those talented players get to the big leagues together . . .

"I think everybody's anxious to start to see that and start to see us move up the standings."

Preller added: "(We're) going to start playing some very meaningful baseball here." ■



DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES

A full season from Garrett Richards would change the complexion of the Padres' young rotation.

Which Losing Team From A Year Ago Has The Most Upside For 2020?

White Sox: The combination of free agent signings, breakout potential from the team's homegrown young players and the chance for rookies like Luis Robert and Nick Madrigal to make an impact all point to a big up arrow on the White Sox. —BB

Angels: They added star power to the lineup with Anthony Rendon, and they should get dynamic internal help when Jo Adell is ready. With some innings-eaters added to the rotation, it wouldn't be surprising to finally see Mike Trout in the playoffs again. —CC

Padres: San Diego played like a fringe wild card contender in the first half of 2019 before disintegrating with a 7-20 record in September. A deeper pitching staff, including full seasons from Garrett Richards and Dinelson Lamet and bullpen imports Drew Pomeranz and Emilio Pagan, combined with the addition of on-base-focused outfielders Tommy Pham and Trent Grisham, should improve the team's functionality. —ME

White Sox: If the young players and veterans click, the South Siders have the talent to contend for the American League Central title and possibly even make an Championship Series run. —KG

White Sox: Their window is beginning to open thanks to a weak division and smart trades beginning to pay big dividends. Adding Yasmani Grandal behind the plate, Dallas Keuchel to the rotation and the imminent debuts of top prospects like Luis Robert and Nick Madrigal should help get the White Sox closer to the playoffs. —JN

FAST FACT

The Padres haven't qualified for the postseason since 2006 and have the third longest playoff drought in baseball behind the Mariners (2001) and Marlins (2003).

HOW THE 2020 PADRES WERE BUILT

Age is baseball age in 2020. **First** indicates first season with the Padres organization.

Pos	Lineup (Age)	Acquired	First
C	Francisco Mejia (24)	Trade	2018
1B	Eric Hosmer (30)	Free agent	2018
2B	Jurickson Profar (27)	Trade	2020
3B	Manny Machado (27)	Free agent	2019
SS	Fernando Tatis Jr. (21)	Trade	2016
LF	Tommy Pham (32)	Trade	2020
CF	Trent Grisham (23)	Trade	2020
RF	Wil Myers (28)	Trade	2015

The Padres have the option of playing young lefthanded-hitting outfielders Josh Naylor (23) and Franchy Cordero (25) to balance the lineup

Pos	Rotation (Age)	Acquired	First
SP	Chris Paddack (24)	Trade	2016
SP	Garrett Richards (32)	Free agent	2019
SP	Dinelson Lamet (27)	Dominican Republic	2014
SP	Zach Davies (27)	Trade	2020
SP	Joey Lucchesi (27)	Draft	2016
SP	Cal Quantrill (25)	Draft	2016

Pos	Top Relievers (Age)	Acquired	First
CL	Kirby Yates (33)	Waivers	2017
RP	Drew Pomeranz (31)	Free agent	2020
RP	Emilio Pagan (29)	Trade	2020



Repeating as NL East champs will be challenging for the Braves given the quality of opposition.

Which Division Winner From A Year Ago Has The Most Downside For 2020?

Braves: They're still good, but the level of competition between them and the rest of the NL East is greater relative to what the other 2019 division winners face. —BB

Braves: Atlanta could be a better team than the ones that won the NL East in 2018 and 2019 and still fall back because the division is so competitive. —JJ

Twins: Adding Josh Donaldson was a boon to a deep and excellent lineup, but failing to add a durable rotation anchor leaves the club in a similar spot as 2019, when the Twins' starting corps ranked ninth in the AL in ERA. The issue could be magnified by the improvements made by other AL teams, including the Angels and White Sox as well as the up-and-coming Blue Jays lineup. —ME

Twins: The Bomba Squad can still mash, and the addition of Kenta Maeda helps, but the back of that rotation is awfully scary with its reliance on injury-riddled veterans (Homer Bailey, Rich Hill, Michael Pineda) and unproven late-bloomers (Randy Dobnak, Devin Smeltzer). —KG

Astros: I still have them projected to win their division, but it's not difficult to see the 2020 season going in a different direction altogether. —JH

Astros: Losing Gerrit Cole and the expected dimming of the dark arts should add up to a bit of a drop in Houston. —JN

Astros: Many variables at play here. They lost one of the best pitchers in baseball and one of the best managers in the sport and now have a huge target on their backs. —CT

Rookie Tommy Edman and short-stop Paul DeJong (right) were both overlooked college infielders who provided an instant spark to the Cardinals when called up.



CARDINALS DEVIL MAGIC

St. Louis keeps maximizing overlooked college draft picks

by KYLE GLASER

A rival scout sat in the stands at Busch Stadium last summer, watching Tommy Edman rack up hit after hit.

The veteran scout has had Cardinals organization coverage for years. He liked Edman as a prospect. When it came to write his report, he turned Edman in as a future utility player. A big leaguer, but not a starter.

Now, watching Edman start at third base and hit leadoff for the play-off-bound Cardinals, the scout just sat back and chuckled.

"Just call it the 'Cardinal Way,' " the scout said. "A lot of people sit there and say the same thing: it's pixie dust. They

sit there and sprinkle it on them and they perform."

Welcome to "Cardinals Devil Magic."

Throughout the last decade—and even before it, really—the Cardinals routinely turned college infielders with little draft or prospect pedigree into productive major leaguers. Some, like Matt Carpenter (13th round), Matt Adams (23rd round), Allen Craig (eighth round) and Paul DeJong (fourth round), became everyday regulars. Others, like Skip Schumaker (fifth round), Daniel Descalso (third round) and Greg Garcia (seventh round) settled into multi-year careers as utility players.

The latest two, Luke Voit (22nd round) and Edman (sixth round) were starters on playoff clubs, the former with the Yankees.

Just three—Adams, Craig and Descalso—ever ranked among the Cardinals' Top 10 Prospects. And yet, like clockwork, all exceeded their projections.

Around 2012, the phrase "Cardinals Devil Magic" first began to surface on social media to describe this frequent

outcome. Now, even rival scouts and front office officials use the expression freely.

"I wish we had some sort of magic," Cardinals general manager Michael Girsch said, chuckling. "It's a compliment, right? People are saying that we tend to find players where they didn't expect us to. That's a good reputation to have."

Satanic mysticism, naturally, has nothing to do with it. While none of the players fit the same profile—some were undersized middle infielders, others burly catchers and corner infielders—they all had two things in common: a long track record of performance the Cardinals valued, and the makeup the club sought.

"There's no overarching plan that we have that says, 'Let's find up the middle, not quite toolsy college guys who can make good contact and it will all work out,' " Girsch said.

"I do think that we, especially a decade ago, were probably using college stats in a way that might have been aggressive at



Matt Carpenter was a 13th-round draft pick in 2009. He would later develop into a star for the Cardinals who finished fourth in National League MVP voting in 2013.

the time, and using that as a bigger part of our process than other teams were at the time. In some cases that, I think, was part of the answer.

“How we were evaluating players was slightly different than other people five, eight, 10, 15 years ago. I’m not sure that it’s true anymore, at least not nearly as much, but I think that might be part of the story.”

As for the makeup part?
“It’s not one size fits all,” president of baseball operations John Mozeliak said. “Skip Schumaker was one of those players who maybe wasn’t blessed with the greatest physical skills, but he did have a lot of desire to play in the big leagues. So he would keep reinventing himself to find new ways to contribute.

“Everybody is sort of different. Matt Carpenter, another guy who was extremely driven to prove he belonged. “If you were to take that whole group and look at them not only from an individual standpoint but from sort of an aggregate, every one of them had that winning attitude.”
Perhaps no player best exemplifies those attributes better than Edman.

Standing at 5-foot-10, 180 pounds and lacking any plus tools save for speed, Edman started all three years at Stanford—winning Most Outstanding Player of the Bloomington Regional as a freshman—and reached Triple-A in two years before posting an .850 OPS as a rookie.
Now, he’s a long-term part of the Cardinals’ plans, which is more than can be said of most of the players who ranked ahead of him on draft boards and top prospect lists.

“To me, it’s a situation where, as a scout, you always get in there and you always get caught up in the big, big tools,” the aforementioned scout said, “and you don’t realize that a lot of times, ‘Hey, baseball players.’
“Edman is a baseball player. Does he have the strongest arm to stay at the position? Probably not. But does he know how to play the game? He does.”
Identifying a player’s track record and makeup is only part of it. Another part is development.

The Cardinals’ player development system has long gotten the most out of their touted prospects as well as their unheralded ones. In the eyes of another opposing scout who covers the St. Louis organization, how the Cardinals handle those unheralded prospects is a key part of the equation.
“I think they like their players, and the players respond,” the scout said. “Those guys play like they’re all prospects. They believe they’re prospects . . . They’re responding to what they think the organization thinks of them.”
In many ways, that has played out. The Cardinals were the only ones who thought Paul DeJong could play shortstop, and he’s done it. They were the only ones who saw Carpenter as an everyday player, and he became one. They were largely the only ones who considered Edman one of their top 10 prospects entering last season, and he was.

All so often, what the Cardinals believe about their players turns about to be true. Some jokingly call it magic. Others credit astute scouting and development. In the Cardinals’ eyes, it all comes down to one, fundamental thing:
Dedication.
“You can talk about devil magic, you can talk about what we do with different hitting approaches,” Girsch said. “But at the end of the day, the credit has to go to DeJong and Edman and Carp and Matt Adams and Luke Voit and all these guys who have dedicated themselves to maximizing all the potential they had.” ■

DEVIL MAGIC

Notable Cardinals infielders who were not high draft picks or top prospects

Player	Draft Year	Round	Peak Top 30	Career Notes
Tommy Edman	2016	6	12	.850 OPS as rookie
Paul DeJong	2015	4	14	2019 NL all-star
Luke Voit	2013	22	16	Career .873 OPS
Greg Garcia	2010	7	14	Six-year big league career
Matt Carpenter	2009	13	11	Three-time all-star
Matt Adams	2009	23	7	Three straight 20-homer seasons
Daniel Descalso	2007	3	9	10-year major league vet
Allen Craig	2006	8	5	2013 NL all-star
Skip Schumaker	2001	5	19	.278 AVG, .337 OBP

ORGANIZATION REPORTS

American League

- The time is now for the Astros' top prospect **PAGE 42**
- Athletics lefthander takes his next step in return from Tommy John surgery **PAGE 43**
- Talented righthander eyes big league debut for Rays **PAGE 44**



PAGE 41 After a rough first half, Tigers lefthander Joey Wentz found late success after focusing on his changeup and curveball.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES

Michael Rucker will report to big league camp as the second of two Orioles Rule 5 picks, but with the same goal of making his major league debut as their first—whether in the rotation or bullpen.

After selecting righthander **Brandon Bailey** from the Astros' system No. 2 overall, the Orioles picked Rucker out of the Cubs' organization. The 6-foot-1, 195-pound righthander made 34 relief appearances last summer at Double-A Tennessee at 25 years old and posted a 4.28 ERA, struck out 89 batters and pitched 75.2 innings.

The conversion to reliever came after Rucker made 26 starts with Tennessee in 2018. He went 9-6, 3.73 in 132.2 innings. Following the conversion last season, the 11th-rounder in 2016 out of Brigham Young occasionally pitched multi-inning outings but also worked fewer than two innings in nine games.

"That kind of transition is something that I've even done throughout college," Rucker said. "My freshman and sophomore year, I pitched in the bullpen and pitched well enough that they extended me out and to where eventually, my junior year at BYU, they had me start."

Considering the Orioles have holes in both the rotation and bullpen, Rucker will have ample opportunities to compete for a role in spring training.

Rucker has recorded a career 3.26 ERA in four seasons. He has struck out 343 batters in 331 innings while walking just 2.3 batters per nine innings.

"I do have a four-pitch mix, but my two best pitches are my four-seam fastball and my curveball," Rucker said. "My curveball is a little bit more of a sweeping action. The slider is a little bit harder but works really well when back-footing to a lefty or getting the righty to chase."

"And then my changeup has definitely been a work in progress, but it's been something that when it's been on, it's been dynamite."

Rucker spent the offseason getting all his pitches big league-ready.

"I think they're well on their way," he said. "I'm looking forward to 2020 for sure."

—ROCH KUBATKO

BOSTON RED SOX

Though the Red Sox brought **Bobby Dalbec** to Fenway Park for a week at the end of his 2019 minor league season, it wasn't as a September callup.

Instead, the team wanted the 24-year-old third baseman to get exposure to the big league environment in which it soon expects him to contribute while also engag-

ing in focused work to help him return.

Some of that work focused on footwork and technique at first base—a position where Dalbec got an increasing amount of playing time late in the 2019 season because **Rafael Devers** anchors third base in Boston. The Red Sox also wanted to work with Dalbec on the consistency of his stride to the ball, something the team's coaches felt might help reduce his strikeout rate.

Dalbec already made significant strides putting the ball in play in 2019, dropping his strikeout rate from 32 percent in 2018 to 25 percent last year. Still, while the righthanded batter can mis-hit the ball yet still drive it out to right-center field, the consistency of hard contact was less than ideal.

Dalbec hit .239/.356/.460 with 27 home runs between Double-A Portland and Triple-A Pawtucket last season.

At times, Red Sox hitting coaches felt that Dalbec got locked up on his back leg in his swing rather than achieving a smooth weight transfer to his front foot. When he stayed on his back leg, he'd reach toward the ball with his front foot and end up spinning off the ball, resulting in either swings and misses or weak contact.

After that behind-the-scenes work, Dalbec had a chance to test his adjustments in the Premier12 international tournament. While hitting .250/.364/.500 with 10 strikeouts in 34 plate appearances, Dalbec felt the adjustments take hold.

"That was the best I've felt hitting, and that was after a month and a half off," Dalbec said. "I think I've had two pretty good back-to-back years, but to me I see them more as developmental years. I feel like I have a ton more in the tank. It's exciting for me."

—ALEX SPEIER

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

The 2019 season was painful for White Sox starting pitching prospects.

Dylan Cease managed to make it to the big league rotation in early July, but **Michael Kopech**, **Dane Dunning** and **Jimmy Lambert** all were in various stages of recovery from Tommy John surgery.

But for one 22-year-old prospect, the year was a big win.

"It's been a pretty big jump for me," **Jonathan Stiever** said.

Stiever, a 2018 fifth-rounder from Indiana, pitched in the Rookie-level Pioneer League after signing and recorded a 4.18 ERA in 13 starts.

"After that first year, it was kind of hard to figure out what sort of plan I should go with," Stiever said. "Now, I have a year under my belt and I was able to finish off last season with some decent success and carry

over some confidence into this offseason."

Stiever, a 6-foot-2, 205-pound righthander, opened the 2019 season at low Class A Kannapolis and moved up to high Class A Winston-Salem midway through the year. He shot up the prospect charts at Winston-Salem, going 6-4, 2.15 with 13 walks and 77 strikeouts in 71 innings.

"I'm always going to be a command type of pitcher," Stiever said. "I'm big on getting ahead, throwing strikes and filling up the zone as much as I can."

Stiever's top two pitches are a mid-90s four-seam fastball and a curveball.

"I figured that combination out a little bit," Stiever said. "Now I'm focusing on working in my slider and changeup, whereas last year I didn't really know I was that kind of pitcher."

A football star and basketball player when he was at Cedarburg (Wis.) High, Stiever didn't give baseball his full attention until his junior year. Now, he's a rising star in the White Sox system with an invitation to big league camp.

"It's exciting to get to experience big league camp and learn from a lot of the older guys—what they do well, how they attack hitters," Stiever said. "Just try to be a sponge and absorb as much as you can."

—SCOT GREGOR

CLEVELAND INDIANS

The Indians went through the offseason with their outfield being their biggest concern. They opened spring training in 2019 with nine outfielders on their 40-man roster, but just three were homegrown—**Greg Allen**, **Tyler Naquin** and **Bradley Zimmer**.

Naquin will miss most of 2020 recovering from a serious knee injury. Zimmer has missed most of the last two years to injuries, and Allen appears to be an outfield extra.

Thus, the Indians probably will rely on outfielders acquired from other teams to fill those positions yet again. Last year, it was center fielder **Oscar Mercado**, acquired from the Cardinals, and right fielder **Franmil Reyes**, traded from the Padres.

This year, that group includes **Daniel Johnson**, **Jake Bauers**, **Delino DeShields Jr.**, **Jordan Luplow** and free agent import **Domingo Santana**.

The 24-year-old Johnson, acquired from the Nationals for **Yan Gomes** in November 2018, finished the 2019 season with a strong showing at Triple-A Columbus.

After starting the season at Double-A, the 5-foot-10, 180-pound lefthanded hitter moved to Triple-A and hit even better. On the year, Johnson slashed .290/.361/.507 with 19 home runs, 34 doubles and 12 stolen bases.

Johnson, the Nationals' 2016 fifth-round



White Sox righthander Jonathan Stiever improved his slider and changeup, leading to a breakout in 2019.

pick from New Mexico State, was added to the Indians' 40-man roster in November. Now, he's positioned to potentially make his major league debut in 2020.

"We're pleased with DJ's development from the standpoint that he improved upon his offensive production at the upper levels in his first year with us," vice president of player development **James Harris** said. "His potential to impact our major league team in the future is equally exciting."

After hitting .161 against lefthanders in 2018, Johnson improved to .241/.345/.434 in 2019.

"We hope to build on that progress and look to develop Daniel as a potential everyday outfielder," Harris said.

—JIM INGRAHAM

DETROIT TIGERS

Joey Wentz knew something was up.

The 22-year-old lefthander knew the Tigers had expressed interest in him. So Wentz and his Double-A Mississippi teammates had their eyes on the trade deadline ticker as they wondered who might be heading from the Braves to Detroit for closer **Shane Greene**.

"I really wasn't too surprised that there was a trade, but I was a little surprised I was the one traded," Wentz said. "Not for any other reason than it just kind of uproots you in about 30 minutes."

Six months later, Wentz was getting ready to head to Lakeland, Fla., for big league camp.

At the time he joined the Tigers organization and was assigned to Double-A Erie last August, Wentz had put a challenging

Organization Reports

first half at Mississippi behind him. Over 13 starts, Wentz generated a 5.37 ERA with 4.2 walks per nine innings.

“My first half was pretty terrible,” Wentz said, laughing. “Then my second half was pretty good, I think. They were polar opposites in that regard.”

In Wentz’s mind, his improvement was tied to more focus on his offspeed pitches. Both his curveball and changeup grade as above-average, but giving them more exposure led Wentz to be more unpredictable to opposing hitters.

In 12 second-half starts, he recorded a 3.11 ERA with 87 strikeouts and 20 walks in 66.2 innings. He allowed just five home runs.

With more confidence in his changeup and his curve, Wentz used the offseason to embellish the two. That process included a week at the Driveline facility outside Seattle.

A supplemental first-round pick out of high school in Kansas in 2016, Wentz had seen Lakeland before as visiting player. He won’t over-complicate things when he returns this spring wearing the Old English “D” on his jersey.

“I’m just trying to improve every day,” Wentz said. “That’ll be my mindset. I’m not too worried about the peripherals or what else is going on. The rest will take care of itself in my mind.”

—EMILY WALDON

HOUSTON ASTROS

The time is now for 22-year-old righthander **Forrest Whitley**, who, even after enduring two terrible minor league seasons beset by injury and suspensions, stands as the Astros’ only Top 100 prospect.

He relocated this offseason and switched trainers to try to rid himself of whatever has ailed him in the last two years.

Whitley will report to his second major league spring training with an outside shot to secure the No. 5 rotation spot in Houston.

More likely, Whitley will begin his season at Triple-A Round Rock, seeking the consistency that has eluded him for two years. He seemed destined to make his major league debut last season, only to encounter numerous setbacks.

Whitley lasted just 24.1 innings in Triple-A last season and ran up a 12.21 ERA while allowing nine home runs. He walked 15, too, prompting the Astros to ship their prized prospect to West Palm Beach, Fla., for a “season reset.”

Officially, Whitley was sidelined with shoulder fatigue. Recently, though, Whitley said the time in Florida was spent healing and cleaning up postural inconsistencies in his delivery. Whitley, who stands 6-foot-8, had a pronounced whip at the end of his delivery, something he worked to eliminate



Royals lefthander Austin Cox helped keep the high Class A Wilmington rotation strong after it lost two first-rounders.

with team officials.

Whitley implemented all the work in the Arizona Fall League where he excelled for a second straight season. He struck out 32 and walked nine in 25 innings and allowed just eight earned runs. In 2018, he struck out 36 in 26 innings during the AFL.

The successes were so pronounced that Whitley moved his offseason home to Phoenix in hopes of sustaining the good mojo. This winter, Whitley trained with the Fischer Institute and reported a clean bill of health during the team’s fan fest in January.

“As we all know, 2019 didn’t really go as well for me as it should have,” said Whitley, the 17th overall pick in 2016 out of high school in San Antonio.

“You take everything with a grain of salt, learn from the mistakes and try to have a better 2020.”

—CHANDLER ROME

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

Six Royals pitching prospects who logged time at high Class A Wilmington in 2019 will be in big league camp this spring—and all six have a chance to reach Kansas City during the season.

Righthanders **Brady Singer**, **Jackson Kowar** and lefthander **Daniel Lynch**, the trio of 2018 first-round picks from major college programs, opened last season in the Blue Rocks’ rotation.

Southpaws **Daniel Tillo** and **Kris**

Bubic also spent most of the season at Wilmington, as did closer **Tyler Zuber**.

Teammates and College World Series champions at Florida, Singer and Kowar moved to Double-A Northwest Arkansas in June after making quick work of the Carolina League.

“Rightfully so,” Wilmington manager **Scott Thorman** said. “They really dominated the league and did exactly what they needed to do—and what we hoped they’d do. They moved on to Double-A and did well there.”

Lynch would have joined Singer and Kowar in the Texas League had he not suffered a shoulder injury that took him out of commission for most of June and July.

“He got derailed a little bit, but he was just as effective as those other two guys,” Thorman said.

Losing those three rotation stalwarts, plus Zuber to a promotion to Double-A, did not deter Wilmington from winning the Carolina League championship.

“That was incredible,” Thorman said. “Once those guys went up (to Double-A), we insert **Kris Bubic**, (righthander) **Jonathan Bowlan** and (lefthander) **Austin Cox**. Those kids came in and were unbelievable.

“Bowlan threw a no-hitter (July 15 against Carolina). Bubic took a no-hitter into the ninth (Aug. 16 against Lynchburg) and led the minors in strikeouts (185).”

Cox, a 2018 fifth-round pick out of Mercer, had a 1.94 ERA in his final 10 starts for the Blue Rocks.

“**Austin Cox** had some huge starts for

us down the stretch,” Thorman said. “He was just an absolute bulldog—pounding the zone. A big, strong, physical lefty.”

That the Blue Rocks could so easily replace the departed talent speaks volumes about the organization’s pitching depth, which was a focal point of the 2018 draft.

“There’s a lot to be excited about for sure,” Thorman said.

—ALAN ESKEW

LOS ANGELES ANGELS

Two seasons lost to a lower back injury may have stunted **Chris Rodriguez’s** growth and development, but not his potential.

The Angels remain high on the 21-year-old righthander because of his vast repertoire and his competitive nature. But Rodriguez needs to put together a full healthy season in 2020 to get his career back on track.

“I’m very confident that we finally found the right procedure to keep him healthy,” said **Matt Wise**, the former minor league pitching coordinator and current big league bullpen coach.

“If that’s true, he’d be very likely to fulfill his potential. The stuff is so exciting to watch. And he competes.”

The 6-foot-2, 185-pound Rodriguez was a fourth-round pick out of Miami’s Monsignor Pace High in 2016 who signed for a well over-slot \$850,000. Now entering his fifth pro season, he has totaled just nine innings over the past two seasons.

Rodriguez sat out the entire 2018 season because of a stress reaction in his lower back. Last April he was shut down after three dominant starts at high Class A Inland Empire and later had season-ending surgery to repair a stress fracture in his back.

Rodriguez has been rehabilitating for several months, and strength and conditioning will clearly be a focus this spring. He is expected to report to camp with no limitations.

The Angels will monitor Rodriguez’s workload and will likely limit his innings, but if he can stay healthy the Angels believe he can become a front-of-the-rotation starter.

Rodriguez throws a four-seam fastball that averages 94 mph and has touched 97 and a two-seamer with heavy sink and late life.

His two best secondary pitches are a nasty slider that averages 89 mph and has touched 93 and a changeup that averages 87 with screwball-like fading action. His big overhand curveball averages 83 mph, but he uses it sparingly.

Rodriguez will likely open 2020 back in the California League but should reach Double-A in the second half.

“The competitor, the brain, the makeup, the stuff is all really exciting,” Wise said. “He has a good feel for four pitches. He’s one of those guys you really look forward to watching pitch.”

—MIKE DIGIOVANNA

MINNESOTA TWINS

Their scouts were unanimous in praising **Jhoan Duran’s** strikeout pitch, but the Twins wanted a few more voices in their evaluation.

What they got from hitters who had faced the 22-year-old righthander was more questions than answers.

“What hitters were saying about it is, they don’t know what that pitch is. They were asking us,” president of baseball operations **Derek Falvey** said.

“There are times when guys come back to the dugout and say, ‘I don’t know what that was, but it was hard and it just disappeared.’”

That pitch is having the opposite effect on Duran’s status in the Twins’ system. He has become more and more visible to the organization since they acquired him at the 2018 trade deadline when they shipped **Eduardo Escobar** to the Diamondbacks.

Duran features a standard two-seam fastball. He throws a curveball that’s slowly improving, and he’s working to add a changeup. But he’s also got a split-fingered fastball that is as effective as it is unusual.

“You think of a typical splitter these days, and you think of an offspeed pitch like a changeup—the break does most of the work” to fool hitters, Falvey said. “This is not like that. This is hard. It’s a fastball, and it has some of that diving action that just confuses you (because) it has such depth to it. It’s no changeup.”

Duran’s sinker-splitter hybrid reaches the mid-90s and is colloquially known as a “splinker.” The pitch helped him rack up 136 strikeouts in 115 innings at high Class A Fort Myers and Double-A Pensacola last season. His swinging-strike rate of 16.4 percent ranked seventh best among minor league pitchers with 100 innings.

Those numbers convinced the Twins to add Duran, who signed out of the Dominican Republic in 2014, to their 40-man roster in November, putting him on the cusp of the majors, according to Falvey.

“Our message to him will be, ‘Don’t try to make the team on Day One,’” Falvey said. “My biggest concern with young guys like Jhoan is, they want to show that splitter. They want to throw 100 (mph) right away.

“We don’t want him doing that on Feb. 15. Get acclimated, get ready, and we hope to see him (in the majors) someday soon.”

—PHIL MILLER



Yankees righthander Alexander Vizcaino pairs his mid-90s fastball with one of the best changeups in the minor leagues.

NEW YORK YANKEES

Scouts from rival organizations arrived at low Class A Charleston games last summer focused on righthanders **Luis Gil** and **Luis Medina**, but they left asking about another young Dominican power pitcher.

“Who is this guy?” was a common response from the talent evaluators after seeing righthander **Alexander Vizcaino**, whose high-octane fastball and tantalizing changeup have led to some lofty comparisons.

“Power fastball with a really good changeup—a changeup like King Felix’s early in his career,” vice president of baseball operations **Tim Naehring** said.

Vizcaino, who turns 23 early this season, tops out at 98 mph and sits in the mid-90s. His velocity is the perfect complement to his deceptive changeup that ranges from 87-90 mph.

“It’s one of the best changeups in baseball,” Naehring said. “Not the minor leagues. Not in the Yankees’ system. In all of baseball.”

Naehring backed up that claim by pointing to the depth and splitter-like action that Vizcaino imparts on his changeup, meaning that it’s not merely the separation from his fastball that makes it effective.

The strength of Vizcaino’s changeup forces batters to look for the pitch, so they are frequently caught off-balance when he fires a mid-90s fastball.

Vizcaino signed a few days before his 19th birthday out of San Cristobal in 2016 and is something of a late-bloomer. He is

older than Gil and Medina even though he signed a year after them.

“Good looking kid. He is definitely a prospect,” a scout said of Vizcaino, who made 16 starts for Charleston last season, going 5-5, 4.41 with 101 strikeouts in 87.2 innings.

“There were good arms at Charleston. He was a little more polished and has a feel for pitching.”

Vizcaino finished the season with five starts at high Class A Tampa. On the season, his swinging-strike rate of 16.2 percent ranked inside the top 10 for minor league pitchers with at least 100 innings.

At 6-foot-2, 160 pounds, Vizcaino drew body comparisons with the Yankees’

Domingo German.

Gil, Medina, Vizcaino and fellow Dominican righty **Roansy Contreras** will move in tandem to high Class A Tampa this season.

—GEORGE KING

A's OAKLAND ATHLETICS

When lefthander **A.J. Puk** came to the majors late last summer, he took on the American League with only half his arsenal of weapons.

During Puk’s recovery from Tommy John surgery, the Athletics limited him to using just his fastball and a slider/cutter.

“He did not have many setbacks during recovery,” minor league pitching coordinator **Gil Patterson** said. “He only had one,

which made us make sure he only threw two pitches.”

Puk came to Oakland in August to pitch 11.1 innings of relief during the club’s race to the wild card. He struck out 51 hitters in 36.2 innings in the majors and minors combined.

This spring, the 25-year-old Puk will be using his full four-pitch mix when he competes for a job in the rotation. And those pitches are high-quality. His fastball averaged 97 mph in his debut and sometimes hits triple-digits. It has both life and movement, and some scouts rank it as high as 70 on the 20-80 scale.

Patterson said Puk’s cutter/slider has “some teeth and a little tilt.” While some scouts grade the pitch as high as a 70, Patterson is more conservative in his assessment. He believes Puk’s changeup may become his best weapon and grades it as an above-average pitch.

The lefty also throws an occasional average curveball, just enough to let hitters know there is something else in his arsenal.

The four-pitch mix makes for an ominous combination.

The big question Puk faces will be control, which had improved as he moved through the minors after being drafted sixth overall in 2016 out of Florida. When Puk first came to camp, A’s coaches began streamlining his delivery to improve his control.

“His front knee collapsed too much,” Patterson said. “He was right on board, doing the drills, and he was able to throw against his front leg. That helped his control.”

The A’s can see their future every time they watch Puk throw. They believe they have the makings of what could be a potent rotation, fronted by Puk and fellow rookie lefthander **Jesus Luzardo**.

—CASEY TEFERTILLER

SEATTLE MARINERS

The Mariners kept providing assurances and hope that **Kyle Lewis** was going to bounce back.

It’s about all they could do after injuries had sidelined their 2016 first-rounder from Mercer for the majority of the 24-year-old’s first three professional seasons.

Now, their former No. 1 prospect is entering 2020 with the left field starting job in Seattle his to lose, thanks to a scintillating September. The 6-foot-4, 210-pound outfielder bashed home runs in five of his first eight big league games and six of his first 10. He hit .268/.293/.592 in 18 games.

Mariners manager **Scott Servais** was asked what he learned most from after Lewis was called up from Double-A Arkansas.

"He knows he belongs," Servais said. "That's half the battle in this league. 'I belong in this league and I can play.' That's step one.

"The flip side is he knows he has things to work on. 'I've got to slow the game down, not try too hard to hit the long ball every time.' Sometimes (pitchers) don't let you. You just put your bat down and you walk to first base and trust the guy behind you. He'll learn."

Lewis hasn't played at Triple-A, but barring a disastrous spring he will begin 2020 in the big leagues. Starting outfielder **Mitch Haniger** is recovering from core surgery and unlikely to be ready for Opening Day, paving the way for Lewis.

Lewis' debut dovetailed nicely with the organization's push to focus on prospect development in pursuit of playoff contention in 2021. Now, the proverbial torch seems to have been passed to Lewis and his prospect cohorts to lead the team to the postseason for the first time since 2001.

He simply shrugged that notion off.

"I don't think you can put a torch on somebody after a week of games," he said. "It's hard to live in that back-and-forth when this is such a roller-coaster ride. There are ups and downs and you've got to live with it and be who you are."

—**TJ COTTERILL**

TAMPA BAY RAYS

One of the most intriguing players in Rays camp won't even get into a game.

But the progress 25-year-old righthander **Brent Honeywell Jr.** makes will be a major story line now and in the future.

Not that long ago, Honeywell was one of the game's most promising pitching prospects, combining a polished and deep arsenal, including a screwball, with a brash cockiness that had him ticketed for stardom.

But Honeywell tore his elbow ligament in the first live batting practice of big league camp in 2018, resulting Tommy John surgery kept him out for a year.

Last June, after battling through several delays stemming from nerve issues, Honeywell fractured his elbow throwing a pitch during a bullpen session. As a result, he had a surgery that is much tougher to come back from.

So as Honeywell measures his progress by adding 15 feet to the length at which he can play catch, he heads to Port Charlotte, Fla., not having pitched in a game since the end of the 2017 season, but confident he will make it to the majors this season.

"No doubt," Honeywell said.

"I've still got some things to prove and I know that. Coming out of two years of surgery, there's going to be some bumps in the



Mariners outfielder Kyle Lewis' September power surge puts him firmly in the discussion for the left field job in Seattle.

road. I'm not looking ahead. I'm not searching for the bumps by any means.

"But like I always do, I'm going to try to stay one step ahead of the bumps and try to get the biggest advantage I can into my throwing program, and try to win my throwing program and try to win my way here."

The track record for pitchers coming off medial epicondyle bone fractures is neither extensive nor encouraging, but Honeywell is confident he will make it—and soon. "It's feeling better each time," he said.

The Rays are pleased with what they've seen.

"The training staff have talked about how hard he's worked," Rays manager **Kevin Cash** said. "Sometimes these injuries can really make you change as a person or mature (quicker). It seems like Brent has done that, because he's worked so hard to get to this point."

—**MARC TOPKIN**

TEXAS RANGERS

The addition of **Corey Kluber** to the Rangers' rotation, via a three-player December trade with the Indians, took away the pain of missing on free agent third baseman **Anthony Rendon** and boosted expectations.

It also gave the Rangers a fifth proven starter, which they believe will give them a chance to win every game and contend for

the postseason.

But the acquisition also effectively dashed the Opening Day roster hopes for a group of prospects who at the end of last season were expected to occupy at least one spot in the rotation.

"We're stacked," lefthander **Joe Palumbo** said.

Palumbo and fellow southpaws **Kolby Allard** and **Brock Burke** are now likely to start the season at Triple-A Nashville.

What they will give the Rangers for the first time in many seasons is quality rotation depth. Manager **Chris Woodward** said that he quickly picked up the phone after the December trade for Kluber to remind the young pitchers of the value they can bring to the club.

How many teams watch their five starters on Opening Day avoid the injured list for an entire season?

"Someone may go down. It's just a fact," Woodward said. "If we don't, we're one of the few teams in the history of baseball that's ever gone through an entire season without a sixth guy pitch."

"One thing I've stressed to them is to be ready and to expect that they're going to make an impact on our major league team. Whether that's in April or June or July, a lot of that has to do with circumstance."

Palumbo said that his plan this spring is to compete, not just with Allard and Burke but with the big league rotation of Kluber, **Mike Minor**, **Lance Lynn**, **Kyle Gibson** and **Jordan Lyles**.

"I'm just looking forward to going to spring training and competing alongside those guys," said Palumbo, who made his big league debut last season. "You compete with everybody. We're all competing for the same thing."

"I'm just going to control what I can control. I'm just going to go out there and make the best possible impression I can."

—**JEFF WILSON**

TORONTO BLUE JAYS

On the morning of Dec. 12, **Hobie Harris** had just completed his workout warmup and was about to hit the weights when the music streaming from his phone suddenly stopped.

A call was coming in, but the 26-year-old righthander missed it, only to notice a string of texts from his agent. The last one really captured his attention.

"You're a Blue Jay," it read.

"It had slipped my mind that the Rule 5 was taking place," Harris said. "As soon as I read that, I called my agent and he told me I'd been selected in the Triple-A phase and that I'd be going across the bridge from Tampa to Dunedin for spring training."

With that, Harris went back to work, motivated by a new opportunity with Toronto after he had hit a wall after five seasons in the Yankees' system.

Unlike the major league Rule 5 draft, in which players selected must stick in the majors or be exposed to waivers and then offered back to their original club, the minor league portion has no such restrictions.

Save for five appearances at Double-A Trenton in 2018, Harris had essentially plateaued at high Class A Tampa. The Blue Jays are intrigued by his combination of big velocity and north-south plan of attack featuring high fastballs and low curveballs.

Last season, the 26-year-old pitched to a 4.62 ERA in 48.2 innings over 29 games with Tampa—but with a strikeout rate of 10.9 per nine innings that suggests the potential for upside.

"One word I would use is just 'aggressive,'" Harris said in describing himself on the mound. "I typically don't like to tip-toe around guys. I don't like to necessarily use their weaknesses as much as I like to use my strengths."

"I rely on my being able to use my fast-ball up in strike zone, especially late in the count. And then I can complement that with a curveball and a split-finger."

Harris said his new opportunity with the Blue Jays prompted an "a-ha" moment. "I'm going to get to continue trying to climb the ladder and reach the ultimate goal of pitching in the big leagues."

—**SHI DAVIDI**

ORGANIZATION REPORTS



National League

- *Two Braves prospects could become permanent fixtures in the outfield*

PAGE 54

- *Dodgers lefthander rewards club's patience with success*

PAGE 55

- *A Cardinals outfielder eyes big league role this season*

PAGE 56

PAGE 54 D-backs lefthander Blake Walston, a 2019 first-rounder out of high school, showed improved stuff and physicality at January instructional league.

Organization Reports

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

The Diamondbacks' five-player contingent in this year's Top 100 Prospects does not include a pitcher. If there's one whom club executives are most optimistic could be there next year, it's 18-year-old lefthander **Blake Walston**.

Walston, the 26th overall pick in 2019, is new to the organization, but the D-backs already have seen improvements in his stuff and physicality.

"It was kind of what we were hoping for, but it happened even faster than we expected," farm director **Josh Barfield** said. "Knowing there's room for more growth in there makes him really, really interesting."

After signing last summer, Walston already was touching the mid-90s. He also added weight, going from about 170 pounds to 197 during instructional league in January. He said his goal is to be at about 205 pounds.

"I think if I get bigger and stronger and gain some more weight," Walston said, "I'll have more velocity on my fastball and my other pitches."

He said his focus during instructs has been on trying to get all of his pitches coming from the same release point.

"The fastball has its own arm slot, the changeup is a little lower and the curveball is a little higher," he said. "If I can figure out how to put all of it together, I think I'll be effective."

Walston also starred as quarterback at New Hanover High in Wilmington, N.C., and his athleticism was part of what drew Arizona. Last year marked his first fall away from football in years. He missed the game, he said, and watching his older brother **Garrett** play collegiately at North Carolina only made him miss it more.

"I thought about it," he said of playing college football. "I had an opportunity from a couple of schools. But I just decided baseball is probably a little easier on the body."

Walston is expected to open the season in extended spring training before possibly making his way to low Class A Kane County. He said his goal is to finish the season at high Class A Visalia.

"If I do what I'm capable of, I think all of it will fall into place," Walston said.

—NICK PIECORO

ATLANTA BRAVES

After placing eight players inside the Top 100 Prospects ranking in both 2018 and 2019, the Braves this year have just four. But the quartet is instrumental to the organization's immediate and distant future.

While the Braves' depth in the upper minors has been depleted by graduations,

they still boast two elite outfield talents—**Cristian Pache** and **Drew Waters**—who are expected to debut in Atlanta this season.

Righthanders **Ian Anderson** and **Kyle Wright**, meanwhile, will vie for big league innings.

Both Pache and Waters will open the season at Triple-A Gwinnett, where they finished 2019, but the Braves are preparing for their arrivals. Atlanta has declined to invest in the big league outfield because of the duo's presence, though it signed free agent **Marcell Ozuna** as a one-year bridge.

Only **Ronald Acuña Jr.**, who ranked as the No. 1 prospect in baseball heading into 2018, has cemented an outfield spot at Truist Park over the long haul. It might not be long until the same is said of Pache in center field.

The 21-year-old Pache, who ranks as the No. 12 prospect in baseball, possesses a high floor because of his stellar defense. He is growing at the plate, as well as physically, and there are plentiful reasons to be encouraged of by his offensive upside.

That leaves Waters as the Braves' potential left fielder of the future. A switch-hitting prep hailing from Georgia, Waters is a well-rounded player whom some believe could wind up superior to Pache. He's also capable of manning center; he just isn't Pache defensively.

The duo will continue playing together until one gets the call, but that could require circumstances outside their control. Two of the three outfield spots belong to Acuña and Ozuna, with three-time Gold Glover **Ender Inciarte** currently set to play center.

It's fair to wonder if the Braves will commit to a Waters-Pache-Acuña outfield—from left to right—or instead use one of the youngsters as a trade chip while the team is contending.

It's undoubtedly in the organization's best interest to see both Pache and Waters in the majors before making a decision.

—GABE BURNS

CHICAGO CUBS

As spring training approached, the Cubs wouldn't say whether **Nico Hoerner** will be on the Opening Day roster, much less anoint him leadoff hitter or everyday second baseman.

But Hoerner—the first player from the 2018 draft to reach the majors—has already shown the wide range of skills that will make him a factor in the team's 2020 plans.

The 23-year-old Hoerner, drafted 24th overall out of Stanford, made a strong impression last September when a series of injuries forced him to take over for all-star



Braves outfielder Drew Waters has his eyes on Atlanta after winning the Southern League MVP award in 2019.

shortstop **Javier Baez**. Hoerner skipped Triple-A Iowa and jumped into a playoff race, hitting .282 with three home runs and 17 RBIs in his first 20 games.

"He knew that the league didn't know him," said **Matt Dorey**, the scouting director who drafted Hoerner and now is the organization's senior director of player development.

"He wanted to try to get off his 'A' swing as soon as he could early in an at-bat" to avoid hitting with two strikes.

"A big part of his development plan moving forward will be his—I don't want to say 'plate discipline'—but just making better decisions and having the ability and the comfort to grind at-bats and hit with two strikes."

The Cubs believe Hoerner has the contact skills to help diversify their lineup, and the athleticism to play up the middle, an area where they will need someone to step forward this year. While Hoerner profiles as a second baseman, the Cubs don't have a definitive answer in center field, either.

"On paper, he definitely runs enough (to play center)," Dorey said. "His baseball instincts are off the charts. We toyed around with it last year (which he spent at Double-A Tennessee), and all the feedback and reports were really positive . . .

"It's also repetition and having the ability to play there on back-to-back days and learning swings and tendencies and how the ball comes off (the bat). Those are all things that take a lot of time to develop.

"I think we'll expose him to some of that again moving forward just to increase his versatility."

—PATRICK MOONEY

CINCINNATI REDS

When the Reds selected 28-year-old **Mark Payton** in the Rule 5 draft in December, the outfielder was coming off of a breakout season at Triple-A Las Vegas in the Athletics' organization.

The Reds were signaling to the lefthanded-hitting outfielder that he was going to be given a chance to earn a big league role if he performs this spring.

Payton earned that chance with a monster season in which he hit .334/.400/.653 with 30 home runs in 118 games.

While offensive production spiked all across Triple-A with the adoption of the major league ball, Payton more than kept pace by ranking second in the Pacific Coast League with a 1.050 OPS.

"Payton is a guy who has enough speed to play center field and you can put him different places," vice president and general manager **Nick Krall** said.

"What we were most impressed with was the quality of his at-bats, especially against righthanded pitching.

"Last year he did a great job of taking at-bats and coming into his power with some differences in his approach to get to the ball, and we felt he was a good fit to come in and compete at least for a bench spot."

The 5-foot-8 Payton's production spiked in the second half, when he hit .361 with 20 of his 30 homers, as he grew comfortable with a shorter swing.

Payton was the Yankees' seventh-round pick in 2014 out of Texas. New York lost him to Oakland in the 2018 minor league Rule 5 draft.

Payton faces plenty of competition for a big league bench spot in Cincinnati. Outfielders **Aristides Aquino**, **Nick Senzel** and **Jesse Winker** all return. On top of that trio, the Reds signed free agent **Nick Castellanos** and Japanese veteran **Shogo Akiyama**.

A trio of out-of-options outfielders—**Phillip Ervin**, **Scott Schebler** and **Travis Jankowski**—will also be in camp.

Even with rosters expanding to 26 players this season, Payton will have to hit his way onto the Reds.

—DOUG GRAY

COLORADO ROCKIES

The high Class A California League presents an extreme challenge to pitchers, no place moreso than Lancaster.

The JetHawks, who have been a Rockies affiliate for three years, have ranked last in the league each of those seasons with an ERA over 5.00 due to the challenge of pitching at their hitter-friendly, windblown home

ballpark, known as The Hangar.

All of which is remarkable context for what 23-year-old Lancaster closer **Tommy Doyle** did last year. He recorded a 3.25 ERA in 38 games with 19 saves in 23 opportunities. Doyle allowed 24 hits in 36 innings with 13 walks and 48 strikeouts.

The Rockies invited him to big league camp.

“Pitching with those numbers in that type of environment in the highest-leveraged situation—pretty special,” farm director **Zach Wilson** said.

“Not only did he put up the numbers, he’s got the stuff to back it up.”

Doyle’s fastball sits 95 mph and hits 97. A supplemental second-round pick out of Virginia in 2017, Doyle also throws a hard curveball that sometimes acts more like a slurve and is 80-82 mph.

“But it’s a 2-to-7 (o’clock) hard-biting downer,” Wilson said. “It’s his go-to out pitch. He’ll use it in any count, but he definitely uses it for swings and misses whenever he wants. It comes right out of the same slot as his fastball.”

Doyle has a usable 77-78 mph changeup with some fade and deploys it strategically.

“It’s more to keep them off the fastball and definitely to keep the lefties off balance,” Wilson said.

Severe back spasms caused Doyle to miss five weeks beginning in late April, but he was fine upon returning. He has an easy, efficient, repeatable delivery and mound presence, given his imposing 6-foot-6 frame.

“He’s a giant of a man,” Wilson said. “And his confidence was one of the biggest areas of growth in his development last year. He walks right out there wanting the ball late in the game. And he’s going right after you with no fear.

“That is an area where he has really taken a step forward.”

—JACK ETKIN

LOS ANGELES DODGERS

In the summer of 2012, a group from the Dodgers’ scouting department made a trip to Mexico City to evaluate a Cuban prospect named **Yasiel Puig**.

The Dodgers wound up signing Puig—and five other prospects they scouted on the trip. One of those prospects was lefthander **Julio Urias**, who is projected to join the big league rotation this season after being sidetracked by injury and suspensions.

Another lefthander signed on that trip, **Victor Gonzalez**, has now made his way onto the Dodgers’ 40-man roster.

Just slightly older than Urias when he signed in July 2012, the 24-year-old Gonzalez spent his first four seasons in the



Marlins righthander Chris Mokma not only has the stuff to succeed but also a team-first mentality and drive to win.

Dodgers’ system between Rookie ball and low Class A.

He then missed all of 2017 and most of 2018 recovering from Tommy John surgery. After initially struggling in his return in 2018, Gonzalez rose through three levels in 2019. The 6-foot, 180-pound southpaw got his first taste of Double-A and Triple-A and thrived.

In 89.2 innings between three levels, he recorded a 2.31 ERA with 93 strikeouts.

Pitching as a starter and reliever, Gonzalez dominated lefthanded hitters, holding them to a .152 average.

His success led to the Dodgers putting him on the 40-man roster in November to protect him from the Rule 5 draft.

“Coming off Tommy John . . . he just came out on a mission,” farm director **Will Rhymes** said. “His velo was a tick up. He was up to 98 (mph) last year during parts of the season. He’s got a deceptive look from the left side.

“It’s a pretty full arsenal. He has a firm slider, curveball and a good changeup.”

Rhymes also mentioned that Gonzalez has the weapons to get hitters out from both sides of the plate, but Gonzalez’s ability to dominate lefthanded hitters could be his path to the big leagues.

Now, the challenge in front of Gonzalez is to continue advancing after last season’s success.

“I think that’s it,” Rhymes said. “He’s a really good strike-thrower. We’d like to see him continue to work on his pitches, maybe developing some more swing-and-miss stuff and really just keep growing into his stuff.”

—BILL PLUNKETT

MIAMI MARLINS

Three days after 18-year-old righthander **Chris Mokma** signed his first pro contract, his older brother **Mike** did the same, and there’s no question which event meant more to the younger sibling.

“His was more amazing because he had gotten hurt, and things had looked dire,” said Chris Mokma, the Marlins’ 12th-round pick out of Holland (Mich.) High.

In fact, Mike Mokma made just five starts for Michigan State before the 21-year-old righthander missed the rest of the season after having elbow surgery.

That injury was a concern until the Dodgers signed him as an undrafted free agent.

The Marlins are thrilled with the pitcher they got in Chris, a 6-foot-4, 200-pound righty with a fastball that ranges between 90-93 mph as well as a changeup and slider that both sit in the low 80s.

Mokma made five starts in the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League after signing, recording a 2.19 ERA and 12 strikeouts in 12.1 innings.

Mokma lost only one game as a high school senior—on June 5, the day he was drafted.

In fact, Mokma was stretching out his arm about two hours before his start in a state quarterfinal game when his trainer told him the news.

Mokma went on to pitch and was one out away from a victory when Catholic Central rallied for a walk-off victory.

Mokma’s disappointment was soothed when the Marlins signed him for \$557,000.

He finished his prep career with three perfect games, but his favorite moment came off the mound.

Late in his freshman season, Mokma was called up from junior varsity to varsity, where brother Mike had a 15-0 record as Holland’s ace.

The teams’ No. 2 starer was righthander **David Williams**, who now pitches for Louisiana-Lafayette.

To get on the field, Chris caught Williams in the state semifinal and then played first base in the championship game. Prior to that season, Chris had caught just a few games in middle school with pitchers who threw no harder than 80 mph. Williams threw 90 consistently.

“David threw gas, and Chris was the only guy we had who could catch him,” Holland coach **Jim Caserta** said. “But that’s Chris. He’s not just a good athlete . . . he’s very knowledgeable about baseball.”

—WALTER VILLA

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

There was a lot less of **Trey Supak** when the 23-year-old righthander reported to big league camp this spring, which he hopes will lead to bigger things on the mound.

Supak, the 2019 pitcher of the year in the Double-A Southern League, had let his physical conditioning slip. He was listed at 240 pounds but admitted to being closer to 270 by the end of the season.

He was down to about 250 pounds with a couple of weeks to go before pitchers and catchers reported to spring training.

“I’m going into camp in better shape, physically and mentally,” said Supak, a 2014 supplemental second-round pick out of La Grange (Texas) High by the Pirates.

Milwaukee acquired Supak in a trade after the 2015 season in which they sent **Jason Rogers** to Pittsburgh.

“I took what (the Brewers) said to heart to get in better shape,” Supak said. “. . . I changed my meal plan, started eating better, did some different workouts, more cardio. I’ve never felt this good. That’s why I think this camp is going to be different for me.”

In 20 starts for Biloxi last season Supak went 11-4, 2.20 and held opponents to a .192 average with 91 strikeouts in 122.2 innings. He moved to Triple-A San Antonio for his final seven starts but ran up a 9.30 ERA while using the lively major league ball used at the level.

“I’m never going to use the ball as an excuse,” he said. “I didn’t finish the year the way I wanted to. I got away from doing the things I do best. I was a little timid because it’s such a hitter-friendly league . . .

“It was a big learning experience for me,

Organization Reports

dealing with adversity.”

Supak would be happy for any role in Milwaukee that comes his way in what will be his second spring in big league camp.

“I’m ready to go and compete and control what I can control,” Supak said. “My goal is to pitch in the big leagues this year. I’m going to do whatever I can to make that happen.

“I’m feeling great and I’m really excited about the new season.”

—TOM HAUDRICOURT

NEW YORK METS

Franklyn Kilome looks the part of an intimidator and has the raw stuff to match it.

At 6-foot-6, 175 pounds, the lanky 24-year-old Dominican righthander releases close to the plate, boasting a mid-90s fastball, an above-average curveball, a slider and a changeup.

Even with the Mets’ bevy of rotation options, they could soon call up Kilome, who signed with the Phillies for \$40,000 in 2013.

Acquired in a trade with the Phillies for **Asdrubal Cabrera** in July 2018, Kilome made seven starts for Double-A Binghamton before tearing a ligament in his elbow and having Tommy John surgery in October 2018.

Kilome missed all of 2019 rehabbing from the surgery.

“To a fair amount of people in the public, because he didn’t pitch last year, he’s become a little bit forgotten, but he certainly isn’t forgotten to us,” assistant general manager **Adam Guttridge** said.

“The ingredients are there, we feel like. He’s a big guy and he’s an athlete. There is a lot to work with there.

“The way his body moves and the way his arm works, we feel like there might even be an opportunity to extend his velocity somewhat.”

Kilome went 4-9, 4.18 in 26 starts at Double-A in 2018. In 140 innings he allowed 127 hits, struck out 125 batters and compiled a 1.34 WHIP.

Once Kilome returns to health, he could soon get an opportunity at the big league level and join starters **Jacob deGrom**, **Noah Syndergaard**, **Marcus Stroman**, **Steven Matz**, **Rick Porcello** and **Michael Wacha**.

“We used nine starting pitchers last year and that was in a year we did as well as one can hope to do health-wise,” Guttridge said.

“And because (Kilome) didn’t pitch last year his name got lost in the shuffle a little bit, but internally that is not the way we see it.

“We count him as quality depth.”

—MIKE PUMA



Being a lefthanded-hitting outfielder gives Justin Williams an edge in the Cardinals’ Opening Day roster competition.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

As he studied the organization’s talent pool this winter, Phillies first-year pitching coach **Bryan Price** couldn’t help but notice the eye-popping strikeout numbers that some of the relievers in the minor league system had posted over the last couple of seasons.

“Off the charts,” Price said. “Those are things you see in high school ball.”

Mauricio Llovera and **Garrett Cleavinger** are two of those relievers. Both were added to the 40-man roster in November and will be in big league camp.

The Phillies also invited a handful of non-roster relievers who have recorded high strikeout rates, including **Addison Russ**, **Connor Brogdon**, **Tyler Gilbert**, **Kyle Dohy** and **Zach Warren**.

Warren, at 23 years old, is the only one of the group who has yet to reach Double-A, but he projects to make the jump after opening eyes at low Class A and high Class A the last two seasons. He earned 22 saves, pitched to a 2.63 ERA in 116.2 innings, allowed 76 hits and struck out 180 batters over that span.

The 6-foot-5, 200-pound lefthander features a mid-90s fastball, a slider and a changeup.

Warren grew up rooting for the Phillies in Vineland, N.J., less than an hour away from Philadelphia. His two favorite players were lefthanders **Cliff Lee** and **Cole Hamels**.

The former Tennessee Volunteer was thrilled to be drafted as a 14th-rounder in

2014 by his favorite club. He felt that thrill again when farm director **Josh Bonifay** called this winter to tell him he was invited to big league camp.

Warren is eager to learn as much as he can in his first trip there before continuing his progress this season.

“I’m not thinking too far in advance, where I’m going to be and things like that,” he said. “All I can control is working on what I need to work on to get better and becoming the best player I can be. My ideal blueprint for this season is to make strides and get better and help my team win games and get to the playoffs.”

—JIM SALISBURY

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

Following the trade of **Starling Marte**, the Pirates will be searching for their center fielder of the future.

Jared Oliva, their seventh-round pick out of Arizona in 2017, isn’t a frontrunner for that role. However, he has done enough the past two years to be in the discussion.

The 24-year-old Oliva has hit .274/.348/.403 in his two and a half pro seasons. He has stolen 30-plus bases in each of the last two seasons. He spent 2019 at Double-A Altoona and wrapped his campaign with an .886 OPS in the Arizona Fall League, along with 11 more steals, giving him 47 in 58 attempts last year.

What future role Oliva might have will be determined by the one tool he has yet to

show: power.

“I’ve found a way to get on base, work my walks, use my speed, but now it’s kind of, what’s the next step in my baseball maturity?” Oliva asked. “I guess that would be the power.”

Oliva has focused on his power by fine-tuning his mechanics in the last year. The righthanded hitter focused from the ground up, trying to effectively use his leg kick to generate rhythm and power from his lower half.

All of the work was done studying video, looking at certain parts of different hitters’ swings. He mentioned **Joey Votto**, **Paul Goldschmidt** and **Edgar Martinez** as examples of guys he watched often.

“I can pretty much watch any hitter now and see what they’re doing well,” Oliva said, “or what I was working on that they’re doing.”

The new Pirates front office is also putting more of a focus on incorporating analytics and new technology into the development process. Oliva already started that work at a January hitting camp. He received a season breakdown of his numbers and trends, showing him what to look for in the numbers, and also what to work on.

Oliva profiles as a fourth outfielder who could spend a few years as an average starter in the majors. But if he can successfully increase his power, he could increase his chances of one day being a regular major league outfielder.

—TIM WILLIAMS

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

When outfielder **Justin Williams** went to Mexico this offseason, one year removed from a “silly mistake” that put him on the injured list for more than half the 2019 season, the 24-year-old arrived with his gear and one goal.

To stay healthy.

Williams had a reassuring finish to the season at Triple-A Memphis, reasserting himself as a prospect worthy of a 40-man roster spot for the Cardinals just as they started pruning outfielders.

A season that began with a fractured hand because he punched a TV—for “personal” reasons he said—ended with Williams batting .353/.437/.608 in his final 36 games in the Pacific Coast League. He hit seven home runs and did as much for himself as he did for his standing with the organization.

“Just mentally it was good,” Williams said. “I felt more comfortable. I didn’t feel like I need to overdo things. It gives me confidence coming into 2020.”

The Cardinals acquired Williams from the Rays in a swap that sent outfielder **Tommy**

Pham to the Rays. Williams and **Genesis Cabrera**, the pitcher who came to St. Louis with him, appealed to the Cardinals because they are lefthanded, which was something in short supply for the Cardinals.

Even with three different trades this winter to address the depth of outfielders on the roster, the Cardinals have just two outfielders on the 40-man roster who hit lefthanded, Williams and switch-hitter **Dexter Fowler**.

That gives Williams an edge as spring training approaches because the Cardinals have spent the past two seasons looking for a lefthanded bat for the bench and a possible platoon role.

To keep his momentum going from August, Williams played in the Mexican Pacific League.

In 31 games for Mexicali, Williams hit .274/.348/.403 with two home runs and shrank his strikeout rate from the previous summer.

“No one wants to walk guys,” Williams said of the MPL games. “It’s like they didn’t give in, in a sense.”

—DERRICK GOOLD

SAN DIEGO PADRES

Righthander **Luis Patiño** sat in the mid-80s when the Padres signed him out of Colombia for a modest \$130,000, which was a drop in the bucket during San Diego’s 2016-17 international spending spree.

Today, the 20-year-old touches 99 mph because he focused on developing his lower half long before turning pro.

“I run for 45 minutes every single day,” Patiño said. “That’s the best thing I do in the offseason to improve my (velocity). I work on my body a lot in Colombia.”

The origins of Patiño’s regimen stem back to running at local soccer fields with his father. The perks of a professional program—adequate nutrition, properly designed weight training programs and honed mechanics—allowed Patiño’s stuff to trend upwards significantly after joining the Padres.

The gains were so significant that Patiño jumped from the Dominican Summer League to the Rookie-level Arizona League in his debut season of 2017. He reached low Class A Fort Wayne the next season at age 18.

Patiño enters 2020 ranked as the No. 18 prospect in baseball. But his introduction to the California League at high Class A Lake Elsinore in 2019 was bumpy.

“He wasn’t getting the same chases off the plate,” former Storm pitching coach **Pete Zamora** said last year. “Once we funneled everything back to the plate— and he’s done a ton of work with the changeup—it’s



First baseman Logan Wyatt didn’t show huge power in his pro debut, but he shares similarities with a past Giants star.

been dominating.”

Patiño paired his fastball and developing changeup with a swing-and-miss slider and an average curveball to lower his ERA to 2.69 through 87 innings at the time of his late-season promotion to Double-A Amarillo.

Patiño made two starts in the Texas League before the Padres shut him down at a career high 94.2 innings. He also was contending with a blister.

“This is a process,” Patiño said of his initial struggle in the Cal League. “. . . and you need to pay attention to what you do bad and work every single day on the little things.

“I feel good now. I started bad, but I finished good. One of the things we say with the Padres is, ‘I don’t care where you start. It’s where you finish.’”

—JEFF SANDERS

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

Logan Wyatt knows the strike zone. The 6-foot-4, 230-pound first baseman drew 69 walks—with 48 strikeouts—in 326 plate appearances as a Louisville junior in 2019.

Wyatt’s plate discipline was a major reason the Giants made the 22-year-old lefthanded hitter their second-round pick in June.

“He’s a big kid who has great knowledge of the strike zone and he’s got some power that’s probably untapped,” farm director

Kyle Haines said.

Tapping into that power will be key as Wyatt tries to advance. He hit a combined 15 homers in his final two seasons with the Cardinals, then hit three in a 44-game pro debut that was focused at short-season Salem-Keizer and low Class A Augusta.

Wyatt said he’s “slowly working on increasing the power numbers.”

And how can he do that? “Being able to use your body correctly,” Wyatt said. “I think a lot of it comes from your lower half and how your hips work.”

Said Haines: “He doesn’t need to do anything different . . . I think as he just learns himself more and learns what pitches he can drive, he’ll end up able to really blossom into an impactful run producer.”

Haines sees the similarities between Wyatt and **Brandon Belt**, a fellow lefthanded-hitting college first baseman with strong plate discipline.

“Brandon was a guy who definitely had a good eye at Texas and untapped power,” Haines said of the comparison.

“And then he was able to come into the system and then find some more power with some slight adjustments and then blossomed into a very good everyday major league first baseman.”

Though Haines believes Wyatt is “going to be average or above at first base,” the farm director said Wyatt’s defense won’t quite compare with Belt’s.

“Nobody should be compared to Belt” on defense, Haines said.

Haines said Wyatt could begin 2020 at Augusta or high Class A San Jose. He hit

.278/.388/.377 with 26 walks and 29 strikeouts last season in his debut.

“His ability to swing at good pitches should translate to more doubles and homers and, in general, more production,” Haines said.

—STEVE KRONER

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

The way shortstop **Jackson Cluff** sees it, his two years away from competitive baseball helped him become a better player and person.

The 23-year-old Cluff began a two-year Mormon mission in Atlanta in June 2016. In his one season back at Brigham Young in 2019, he hit .327/.458/.518 and went 12-for-12 on stolen base attempts. The Nationals then selected him in the sixth round last year.

“Anytime you’re taken away from baseball, you have the opportunity to reflect,” Cluff said. “I felt an increased urgency to get to a high level just because of my age, but at the same time, I gained more of an understanding after experiencing so many different cultures and meeting all types of people, rich and poor.”

The lefthanded-hitting Cluff said when he returned from the mission he put less pressure on himself at BYU and low Class A Hagerstown, where he hit .229/.320/.367 with a team-leading five triples in his pro debut last summer.

His attitude wasn’t the only thing that changed for him. After playing third base as a freshman for the Cougars, the 6-foot, 185-pound Cluff played almost exclusively at shortstop last year.

“Jackson Cluff made a nice transition into professional baseball, showcasing his tools and impacting the game immediately with his steady defense at shortstop,” farm director **Mark Scialabba** said. “He ranges well both ways, showed an above-average arm with accuracy and showed solid aptitude in his first season with our club.”

Cluff has a compact swing and plus running ability. He went 11-for-16 in stolen base attempts for the Suns and focused this offseason on improving his speed and jumping ability.

Cluff’s father Paul also starred at BYU and was a 1989 fourth-round pick. He played only one year of minor league baseball before embarking on a career in finance. Jackson, who is about 45 hours away from a finance degree, has spent much of this off-season working out with BYU players.

“It was good to get advice from my dad, especially during the transitions,” Cluff said. “Each time, I needed to learn the speed of the game.”

—LACY LUSK

DEPARTMENTS



MAJORS

- ▶ Gavin Lux, Luis Robert and the top 20 rookies who will impact the majors
PAGE 51

MINORS

- ▶ The Mariners' gas camp helps pitchers find velocity—and results
PAGE 54

COLLEGE

- ▶ Minnesota two-way star Max Meyer looks to lead the Gophers back to Omaha
PAGE 56

HIGH SCHOOL

- ▶ Our Preseason All-America Teams reflect industry thinking on top preps
PAGE 58

DRAFT

- ▶ Our early draft preview includes a ranking of the top 100 draft prospects
PAGE 60

INTERNATIONAL

- ▶ The top prospects from the Latin American winter leagues this offseason
PAGE 62

Gavin Lux capped a Minor League Player of the Year campaign in 2019 by making the Dodgers' postseason roster. The second baseman is a favorite to be National League Rookie of the Year this season.

MAJORS

TOP 20 ROOKIES

The rookies who will make a difference in 2020

by KYLE GLASER

While young talent has always been a critical part of winning games and franchise success, the rookie classes of the last half decade were especially impactful.

The 2015 season saw the debuts of Kris Bryant, Carlos Correa and Francisco Lindor. The 2016 campaign brought Corey Seager, Trea Turner, Alex Bregman and Trevor Story. Aaron Judge and Cody Bellinger shattered rookie records in 2017. They were followed by a historic 2018 rookie class that included Ronald Acuña Jr., Juan Soto, Walker Buehler, Jack Flaherty, Gleyber Torres and Shohei Ohtani.

To finish out the decade, Pete Alonso smashed the single-season rookie home run record in 2019 and was joined by fellow debuting players Yordan Alvarez, Fernando Tatis Jr., Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Eloy Jimenez.

As the new decade opens, even more young players are primed to break through and establish themselves as immediate superstars as rookies. Here are the top 20 rookies primed to do that in 2020, plus another 10 rookies to watch.

1. GAVIN LUX, SS/2B, DODGERS

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** 2B

Calling Card: Lux combines an exceptional offensive approach with a fast, powerful swing to make consistent hard contact. He hit .347 with a 1.028 OPS last year, both top 10 in the minors, before making his major league debut in September.

2020 Outlook: Lux will open the season as the Dodgers' starting second baseman. With his advanced skills and feel for the game, he should continue the franchise's tradition of standout rookies.

2. LUIS ROBERT, OF, WHITE SOX

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** CF

Calling Card: A physical freak, Robert combines immense power, speed and athleticism to impact every part of the game. He hit .328 with 32 home runs and 36 stolen bases in the minors last year, all while playing an impressive center field.

2020 Outlook: Robert will be the Opening Day center fielder after signing a six-year, \$50 million contract during the offseason. He is next in line in the White Sox franchise's great Cuban tradition that stretches from Minnie Miñoso to Jose Abreu.

3. JESUS LUZARDO, LHP, ATHLETICS

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** SP

Calling Card: Luzardo dominated every level of the minors with his 93-97 mph fastball, devastating changeup and swing-and-miss curveball. He was beset by injuries last year but still reached the majors at 21, where he struck out 20 and walked five in 15 innings including the postseason.

2020 Outlook: Luzardo will open the year in the rotation as long as his health allows. If he holds up, he will team with Sean Manaea and Frankie Montas to give the A's one of the stronger rotation trios in the American League.

4. JO ADELL, OF, ANGELS

Age: 20 | **Projected Role:** RF

Calling Card: With prodigious power and constantly improving contact skills, Adell hit .289 with 37 extra-base hits in just 76 games last year and starred for Team USA's Olympic qualifying team at Premier12.

2020 Outlook: Justin Upton is the only sure-thing corner outfielder on the Angels' roster, so Adell has a clear path to playing time if he hits the ground running in Triple-A.

5. BRENDAN MCKAY, LHP, RAYS

Age: 24 | **Projected Role:** SP

Calling Card: The two-way star has moved faster as a pitcher than a hitter, with his precise control and polished four-pitch mix allowing him to jump from Double-A to the majors last season.

2020 Outlook: McKay will be one of the Rays' primary starting pitchers this year. He should settle into the back of their rotation and may see occasional at-bats as a pinch-hitter or DH.

6. DUSTIN MAY, RHP, DODGERS

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** SP

Calling Card: May's 95-100 mph sinker and 90-93 mph cutter give him two dominating pitches that simply overpower hitters. Combined with his pristine control, he rose from Double-A to the majors last year and made the Dodgers' postseason roster.

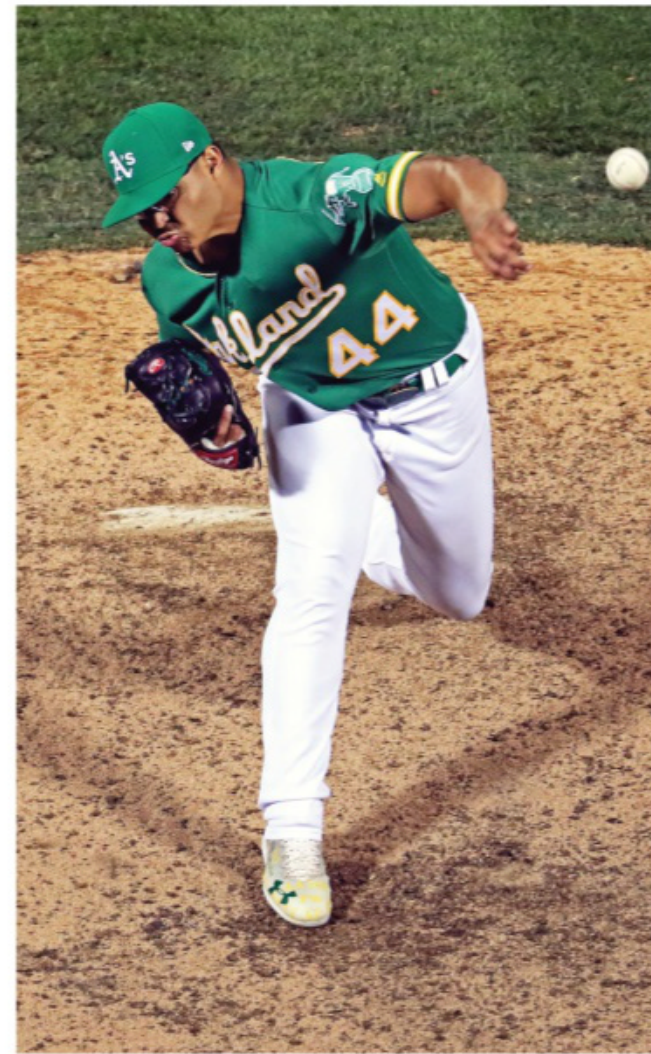
2020 Outlook: Whether it happens on Opening Day or later in the year, May is poised to join the Dodgers' rotation for good.

7. CARTER KIEBOOM, SS/2B, NATIONALS

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** 3B/2B

Calling Card: Kieboom's steady approach and mature hitting instincts have helped him post a career .378 on-base percentage in the minors. He made his big league debut last year at age 21.

2020 Outlook: The Nationals' infield picture



is crowded even after the departure of Anthony Rendon. But Kieboom will have every opportunity to win an everyday job, whether at second base (Howie Kendrick and Starlin Castro) or third base (Asdrubal Cabrera).

8. DYLAN CARLSON, OF, CARDINALS

Age: 21 | **Projected Role:** LF

Calling Card: Carlson's advanced instincts and feel for the game long stood out among his peers, and strength gains allowed him to post a 20-home run, 20-stolen base season last year between Double-A and Triple-A in a breakout campaign.

2020 Outlook: With Marcell Ozuna leaving in free agency and Tyler O'Neill, Harrison Bader and Dexter Fowler all coming off subpar seasons, Carlson will be given every opportunity to win a starting spot in the Cardinals' outfield.

9. NATE PEARSON, RHP, BLUE JAYS

Age: 23 | **Projected Role:** SP

Calling Card: Pearson's 99-104 mph fastball is the stuff of legend, while his slider, changeup and above-average control help make him more than just a flamethrower. He rose three levels up to Triple-A last year, compiling a 2.30 ERA in 25 starts along the way.

2020 Outlook: The Blue Jays fortified their rotation in the offseason—adding Hyun-Jin Ryu, Tanner Roark, Chase Anderson and Shun Yamaguchi—but Pearson is poised to move to Toronto as soon as the need arises.

10. A.J. PUK, LHP, ATHLETICS

Age: 24 | **Projected Role:** SP/RP

Calling Card: Puk's upper-90s fastball and devastating slider returned intact after Tommy John surgery, helping him reach the majors last year and make Oakland's postseason roster.

2020 Outlook: Puk will fit in either the rotation or bullpen depending on team need. He has the stuff to dominate in either role.

The Rays' Brendan McKay (left) and the Athletics' Jesus Luzardo are poised for rotation roles this season after getting their feet wet in the big leagues in 2019. Both southpaws rank as top 15 overall prospects in the game.

Departments



11. SEAN MURPHY, C, ATHLETICS

Age: 25 | **Projected Role:** C

Calling Card: Murphy's defense was regarded as the best among catchers in the minors, and he showed it was more than just talk by taking over as the Athletics' everyday catcher during the pennant race last September.

2020 Outlook: Murphy is set to be the catcher in Oakland on Opening Day. As long as he can stay healthy—which has been a problem in the past—he has Gold Glove potential and a powerful bat.

12. NICK MADRIGAL, 2B, WHITE SOX

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** 2B

Calling Card: The 5-foot-6 Madrigal simply puts the bat on the ball whenever he swings. He posted the lowest swinging-strike rate in the minors last season and hit .311 as he raced to Triple-A in his first full season.

2020 Outlook: With only Leury Garcia in his way, Madrigal should quickly take over as the everyday second baseman for the White Sox.

13. JOSE URQUIDY, RHP, ASTROS

Age: 25 | **Projected Role:** SP

Calling Card: Nothing about Urquidy stands out on paper, but his ability to expertly command his four-pitch arsenal helped him rise from Double-A to the majors last year and post a 3.95 ERA. He then allowed one run in 10 innings in the postseason, including starting and winning Game 4 of the World Series.

2020 Outlook: Urquidy is firmly in the Astros' rotation plans after the free agent departures of Gerrit Cole and Wade Miley. He should open the season as the club's No. 4 starter.



LEFT: Sean Murphy is ready to step up as the Athletics' everyday catcher.

RIGHT: The Rays signed Japanese slugger Yoshitomo Tsutsugo to supply lefthanded power at left field and DH.

14. YOSHITOMO TSUTSUGO, OF, RAYS

Age: 28 | **Projected Role:** LF/DH

Calling Card: Tsutsugo comes to the U.S. after establishing himself as one of Japan's top power hitters in recent years. He averaged 35 home runs per season the last four years with Hiroshima.

2020 Outlook: Tsutsugo will serve as a lefthanded complement to Hunter Renfroe in the outfield and Jose Martinez at DH. He should receive plenty of at-bats with the Rays' penchant for matching up.

15. NICO HOERNER, SS/2B, CUBS

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** 2B

Calling Card: A pure hitter with a simple, sweet swing, Hoerner hit .345 his final year at Stanford and raced to the majors in his first full season on the strength of his bat.

2020 Outlook: Hoerner will be one of many competing for the starting second base job. Even if he opens back in the minors, he'll be back in the majors as soon as injuries hit.

16. EVAN WHITE, 1B, MARINERS

Age: 23 | **Projected Role:** 1B

Calling Card: White's grace and athleticism on defense are that of a perennial Gold Glover, but his sneaky contact skills and growing power make him an offensive threat, too.

2020 Outlook: White is set to be the Mariners' Opening Day first baseman after signing a six-year, \$24 million contract in the offseason. His defense will buy him time to continue growing offensively.

17. NICK SOLAK, 2B/OF, RANGERS

Age: 25 | **Projected Role:** 2B

Calling Card: Solak has simply hit everywhere he's gone, including batting .293/.393/.491 in his major league debut with the Rangers last year.

2020 Outlook: Solak's defense is questionable at best, but his offensive contributions will get him into the Rangers' everyday lineup, whether at second base, third base, center field or even DH.

18. TONY GONSOLIN, RHP, DODGERS

Age: 25 | **Projected Role:** SP/RP

Calling Card: Gonsolin's mid-90s fastball and devastating split-changup allowed him to race from Class A to the majors in two years. He posted a 2.93 ERA in 40 innings with the Dodgers in his debut.

2020 Outlook: Gonsolin excelled both as a starter and reliever for the Dodgers in his debut. Depending on what happens around him, he'll fit seamlessly into either role.

19. MITCH KELLER, RHP, PIRATES

Age: 23 | **Projected Role:** SP

Calling Card: Keller's easy upper-90s fastball and big-breaking curveball long made him the top pitching prospect in the Pirates' system, and helped him make his major league debut last year at 22.

2020 Outlook: Keller will open the year in the rotation for the rebuilding Pirates. A new coaching staff and pitching philosophy should help him get on track after a rough major league debut.

20. EMMANUEL CLASE, RHP, INDIANS

Age: 22 | **Projected Role:** RP

Calling Card: Clase's 99-102 mph cutter helped him rise from high Class A to the majors last year. His cutter became the talk of baseball and led the Indians to acquire him from the Rangers for Corey Kluber.

2020 Outlook: Clase will serve as a late-inning setup man in the Indians' bullpen and is in position to take over as their closer if Brad Hand falters. ■

Ten More Rookies To Know

SHOGO AKIYAMA, OF, REDS

Akiyama set the single-season hits record in Japan and is a solid center fielder who can help Cincinnati on both sides of the ball.

BOBBY DALBEC, 3B/1B, RED SOX

Dalbec is powerful, patient and knocking on the door at Triple-A.

JAYLIN DAVIS, OF, GIANTS

After a breakout 2019, the slugging Davis is primed to contend for a starting outfield spot with the rebuilding Giants.

MACKENZIE GORE, LHP, PADRES

Gore has made just five career starts above high Class A, but his polish, poise and excellent arsenal give him a chance to rise quickly to San Diego.

AUSTIN HAYS, OF, ORIOLES

Hays has generally performed when healthy and is set to open the year as the Orioles' center fielder.

SAM HILLIARD, OF, ROCKIES

Hilliard showed prodigious power in his big league debut last year and has a chance for an increased role.

KWANG-HYUN KIM, LHP, CARDINALS

The Korean import gives the Cardinals a valuable lefty who can bounce between the rotation and bullpen as needed.



RYAN MOUNTCASTLE, 1B, ORIOLES

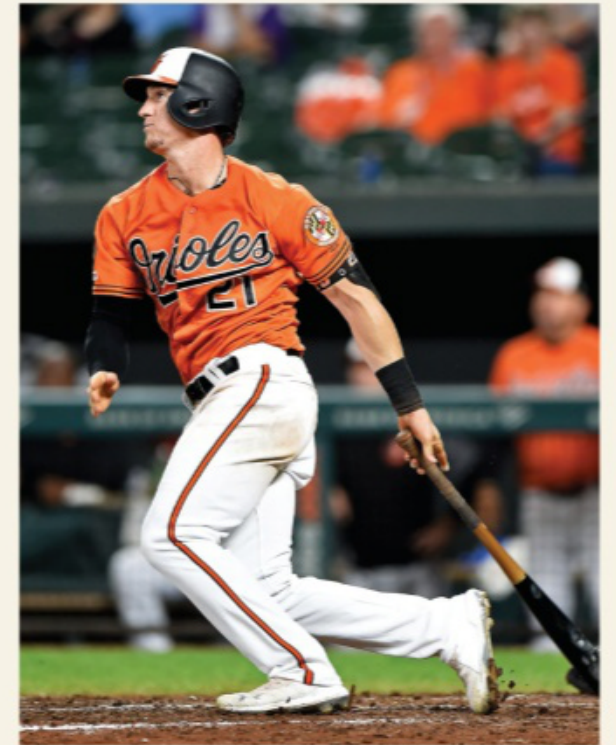
As the Orioles embark on another rebuilding year, the reigning International League MVP has a chance to be one of the club's best hitters as a rookie.

SHELDON NEUSE, 2B, ATHLETICS

With Jurickson Profar gone, second base is open for Neuse to take over in Oakland.

CRISTIAN PACHE, OF, BRAVES

Pache's path is blocked in Atlanta, but his power, defense and speed will make him a valuable contributor if injuries hit. ■



LEFT: The Cardinals signed versatile 31-year-old Korean lefthander Kwang-Hyun Kim.

RIGHT: Center fielder Austin Hays has a clear path to playing time for the rebuilding Orioles.

The best players in the game use wood bats.

The best wood bats in the game are made from Split billets



Understand the process, realize the difference.

learn more @ www.leatherstockinghandsplits.com



MINORS

FILL 'EM UP

The Mariners' gas camp gets big results for a plethora of pitchers

by JOSH NORRIS

The Mariners made progress in 2019. The change wasn't always perceptible in the big leagues, where the team finished last in the American League West and missed the playoffs for the 18th straight season, but there were flashes toward the end of the year of the good things that were happening down on the farm.

Take righthander Reggie McClain as an example. Seattle's 13th-rounder out of Missouri in 2016 got hit around at high Class A Modesto for the first two full seasons of his career and returned there to begin 2019, albeit in the bullpen.

Something was different this time, and he suddenly found success. He made just six appearances at Modesto before moving to Double-A Arkansas, where he continued mowing down the competition. In 31.2 innings between the levels, McClain struck out 38 and walked just four hitters.

McClain's success continued at Triple-A Tacoma, which led to his first big league callup on Aug. 2. The first five pitches out of his hand that day

came in at 94, 93, 94, 96 and 94 mph. And while that velocity might be standard-issue in the big leagues these days, it represented a stark change for a pitcher whose fastball typically sat in the 87-91 mph range in college and throughout his first few pro seasons.

So where did that extra velocity come from? It might have started in the 2018 offseason during a program designed to help Mariners pitching prospects make gains. The program, informally called "Gas Camp," lived up to its name with McClain, who increased his average fastball velocity roughly six miles per hour from 2018 to 2019.

"It changes everything for a pitcher. It changes the mentality. It changes what he's willing to throw in what counts, and it changes how he attacks the strike zone," Mariners farm director Andy McKay said, explaining Gas Camp. "All of those things were happening really right in front of us."

It would be unfair to expect everyone to add six miles of velocity to a fastball and then shoot up three levels in a season, but McClain's season was far from the only success story among

Drafted out of high school in 2015, Ljay Newsome had a breakthrough 2019 season after attending the Mariners' Gas Camp. He climbed to Double-A and ranked seventh in the minors with 169 strikeouts.

Mariners pitching prospects.

Seven of the 38 prospects who struck out more than 150 hitters in 2019 were part of Seattle's system. Those seven ranged from the top prospects (Justin Dunn, Logan Gilbert) to the intriguing (Devin Sweet, Ljay Newsome) to potential late bloomers (Steven Moyers, Nabil Crismatt, Ian McKinney).

The Mariners' Double-A Arkansas affiliate had a 4.16 strikeout-to-walk ratio that led all full-season minor league clubs. The rotation there at times included Gilbert, Newsome, Crismatt and Justus Sheffield, one of the key prizes the Mariners acquired from the Yankees for James Paxton.

High Class A Modesto pitchers recorded 1,479 strikeouts, the second-highest total in the minors.

The Mariners' pitching boom even extended to their relief prospects. Righthander Sam Delaplane struck out an absurd 120 hitters in 68.2 innings. His strikeout rate of 45.8 percent led all minor leaguers with at least 60 innings; only one other pitcher—the Rangers' Demarcus Evans—topped 40 percent.

It also marked the second straight season in which Delaplane, a 23rd-round selection in 2017 out of Eastern Michigan, had whiffed more than 100 hitters without making a start. Operating with a mid-90s fastball and a slider that have improved since turning pro, Delaplane stands as another one of Gas Camp's biggest success stories.

"He understands where to throw his fastball and the movement he has on his slider," said Nathan Bannister, a former Mariners farmhand who will spend 2020 as the pitching coach at low Class A West Virginia. "Once he gets the shape he wants on his fastball and the shape he wants on his slider, he knows when to use them and where to use them. He crushes that part of his game."

Another of Gas Camp's biggest wins has been the development of righthander Ljay Newsome, Seattle's 26th-rounder in 2015 out of high school in Morganza, Md., who best exemplified the organization's "Control The Zone" ethos. Among minor leaguers with more than 100 innings, Newsome threw strikes at the highest rate (72.6 percent), walked hitters at the lowest rate (2.7 percent) and, unsurprisingly, had the best ratio of strikeouts to walks (9.94). His 169 whiffs overall were tied for seventh in the minors.



Mariners righthander Sam Delaplane was one of two minor league relievers with at least 60 innings who struck out more than 40 percent of batters faced.

After going through Gas Camp for the first time, Newsome showed increased velocity in the early portion of the season but didn’t maintain that bump for the entire year. He returned to the camp this offseason with the goal of throwing his fastball harder over the course of a full season.

Beyond throwing his fastball about two miles per hour harder, Newsome also came out of his first round of Gas Camp with a new approach to pitching as a whole. His arsenal and usage patterns were different, which led to a breakout year.

“(The velocity) was a huge piece, but this year was the first year Ljay threw exclusively four-seamers, and Ljay really used the zone and in a really spectacular, beautiful way,” Mariners pitching coordinator Max Weiner said. “His changeup got better by location strategies and his whole goal is how can he use both breaking balls better, which is a usage thing, and then working on the shape of the changeup.

“He really is the evolution of Gas Camp. He’s kind of the embodiment of what you would want, which is, you know, continue to work, understand where your limitations are and keep knocking one rung off that ladder of climbing up each step of the way. He’s very focused on what is right in front of his face. So he’s a great ambassador and he’s a tremendous leader.”

The nuts and bolts of Gas Camp vary depending on each pitcher’s needs but most involve some of the recent industry standards like long toss and weighted balls. One of the program’s biggest keys, however, is intent. Simply put, the Mariners believe that if their pitchers believe they can throw harder and consciously try to throw harder, then they will throw harder.

“It really just came down to: You can control your intent, you can control your velocity, right,” Weiner said while explaining part of the reason McClain, whom the Mariners lost on a waiver claim to the Phillies in the offseason, made such big gains from one season to the next. “There’s a huge mental component to this: just free yourself up. You’re a thorough-

bred, go run, that kind of deal.”

With that in mind, part of the Gas Camp involves the run-and-gun throwing programs that tend to pop up on social media in videos that show pitchers throwing the daylights out of a ball with little regard to location. That might not work in a game, but it shows a pitcher that his body and arm might be capable of more than what it has produced to that point in his pro career.

Once pitchers see the heights they’re capable of, the next step is getting them to take the steps that got them there and translate it to the mound. Ideally, the Mariners want their pitchers to get to the point where they apply the lessons they’ve learned without having to think about it. In other words, they want the intent to become routine.

“You can also take the mental part of it, the subconscious, and that’s what you want to train. You want to train your movement patterns without thinking and just doing,” Bannister said. “We’re definitely trying to train our bodies and our arms and condition them in a way to be able to go on the mound, see a target and throw with intent through the target and strike people out.”

Harder fastballs, sharper offspeed pitches and smarter execution are all fantastic results. And if that’s all Gas Camp produced, the program would be considered a resounding success. But those are just the short-term goals. In the long view, the Mariners want what their prospects learn during their winter program to last a lifetime. Done correctly, they believe the camp can be the beginning of something that could help extend the best years of a pitcher’s career.

“The game is going to evolve and change to where these types of programs are going to not only be the norm,” McKay said, “but it’s also not a ‘I did it one year and it’s over.’”

Building velocity is one goal, but continuing to maintain that velocity is equally important, according to McKay.

“Even if you’re fortunate enough to stick around long enough, your body is probably not going to allow you to continue to build, but it’s going to slow down the regression.

“That’s really an important thing. People see, not only throughout the season, but each year of their career (that) velocity starts decreasing. I’m quite confident we can slow down that curve for pitchers who are willing to invest themselves not only in offseasons but also in altering things during the season a bit.”

Entering the 2018 season, Baseball America ranked the Mariners’ farm system as the worst in baseball. Two years later, the system has jumped all the way to No. 5 and houses five of the game’s Top 100 Prospects.

A great deal of that jump involves the addi-

tions and rapid rises of hitting prodigies Jarred Kelenic and Julio Rodriguez. Beyond those twin peaks, however, is a top-to-bottom pitching group that has made tremendous leaps over the last two seasons.

The pitchers in their system were talented to begin with, but buying into the Mariners’ organizational philosophy has helped turn their raw gifts into tangible results that have helped raise hopes for a brighter future coming soon in Seattle. ■

Mariners Mound Marvels

The Mariners overhauled their pitching development program following the 2018 season. It produced tangible results in 2019.

Seattle’s minor leaguers struck out **9.45 batters** per nine innings last season, a rate that ranked fourth among all 30 organizations. Mariners pitchers walked **3.33 per nine innings**, which was the second best rate.

Added together, the Mariners’ minor league pitchers boasted a best-in-baseball **2.84 strikeout-to-walk ratio**. All 30 organizations are ranked by SO/BB ratio in the table below.

Rk	Organization	Affiliates	SO/9	BB/9	SO/BB
1	Mariners	7	9.45	3.33	2.84
2	Twins	7	9.59	3.40	2.82
3	Padres	8	9.43	3.45	2.73
4	Marlins	7	8.90	3.30	2.70
5	White Sox	7	8.84	3.37	2.62
6	Yankees	9	9.27	3.59	2.58
7	Royals	9	8.77	3.42	2.56
8	Rockies	8	8.58	3.36	2.55
9	Rays	9	8.93	3.53	2.53
10	Rangers	8	8.98	3.59	2.50
11	D-backs	9	9.33	3.77	2.48
12	Brewers	8	9.08	3.72	2.44
13	Dodgers	9	9.39	3.86	2.43
14	Reds	8	8.79	3.62	2.43
15	Athletics	8	8.83	3.65	2.42
16	Giants	8	9.24	3.85	2.40
17	Braves	7	8.58	3.59	2.39
18	Nationals	7	8.41	3.53	2.38
19	Mets	9	8.59	3.65	2.36
20	Orioles	8	9.06	3.87	2.34
21	Tigers	9	8.66	3.73	2.32
22	Pirates	9	8.46	3.68	2.30
23	Phillies	9	8.91	3.88	2.29
24	Indians	9	8.88	3.94	2.25
25	Cubs	9	8.81	3.92	2.25
26	Astros	7	10.31	4.60	2.24
27	Red Sox	8	8.58	3.85	2.23
28	Blue Jays	8	8.30	3.76	2.21
29	Angels	7	9.62	4.40	2.19
30	Cardinals	9	8.66	4.07	2.13

COLLEGE

CENTER OF ATTENTION

Minnesota two-way standout Max Meyer tries to lead the Gophers back to the NCAA Tournament

by TEDDY CAHILL

Max Meyer's fastball tickles 100 mph. His slider may be the best in the country. He's probably Minnesota's best athlete and last year showed solid ability at the plate.

Major league scouting directors voted him a first-team Preseason All-American as a two-way player this year.

For all of that raw ability, however, Meyer's greatest strength may be his competitiveness. He thrived as the Golden Gophers' closer as a freshman in 2018, saving 16 games to help them win the Big Ten Conference and reach super regionals.

The righthander was excellent in back-to-back summers with USA Baseball's Collegiate National Team. Tapped this year as Minnesota's Opening Day starter, he lived up to the hype and impressed for a large group of scouts against Oregon at the Angels College Classic in Tempe, Ariz.

No matter his role, no matter the stage, the moment never seems to be too big for Meyer. He says that's true away from the diamond as well. No matter what he's doing, Meyer wants to win.

"I'll be in the championship for sure for everything," he said. "I like to say that."

That mentality has worked well for him so far at Minnesota. In his first two years of college, he went 7-6, 2.10 with 18 saves and 141 strikeouts in 120.1 innings. With Team USA, he went 1-2, 1.71 with 25 strikeouts and six walks in 21 innings.

Meyer's stuff has played especially well in the bullpen, where he can air out his fastball and slider. Now, he has to learn how to refine that approach, so it plays over the course of the full season as Minnesota's ace.

"He's a fierce competitor," Minnesota coach John Anderson said. "I think that's his greatest strength and weakness. I think sometimes it gets in the way because he doesn't want anybody to hit the ball sometimes.

"You're not going to get deep in games as a starter if you have that mentality. I think that's the next step as a pitcher is to learn how to be a little bit more efficient with his pitch count and get deeper in games."

In addition to refining his approach to be a bit more efficient, Meyer has worked hard since the end of last season to develop a changeup to give himself a third offering.

That development began over the summer with Team USA. Anderson and pitching coach Ty McDevitt sent Meyer with the instruction to hone his changeup and not just use his fastball and slider to blow hitters away. Meyer didn't pitch in the fall but continued the work during the preseason, eschewing his slider to instead work on his fastball command and change-up development.

Meyer said during the winter that his changeup felt like his best pitch.



Minnesota righthander/outfielder Max Meyer hit 100 mph in an electric Opening Day win. He spent the offseason refining his changeup to give him a three-pitch mix as he moves into the Gophers' rotation as a junior.

He didn't use it much on Opening Day against Oregon, but he figures to work it in more often this spring as he becomes more comfortable with the pitch.

What Meyer did show on Opening Day was increased velocity. His fastball registered as high as 100 mph and sat in the mid 90s even at the end of his outing. Meyer said his work with strength coach Scott McWilliams has helped him bulk up—he's now listed at 185 pounds, up about 15 pounds from his freshman year—and helped him increase his power on the mound and at the plate.

Anderson said the work Meyer did on his fastball command also helped improve his arm speed.

That kind of payoff is not out of the ordinary for Meyer. Anderson said throughout his career that any time the Gophers coaches have presented him with an area to work on, he's enthusiastically attacked it.

"Whenever we've challenged him, he's always been willing to learn, grow and try to get better at it," Anderson said. "He's still learning, he wants to learn, he's still growing. It's going to be fun to have him try to put more pieces of

the puzzle together for his career."

Taking that next step is important for Meyer, not just this season so that he can be the Gophers' ace, but also for his professional future. He has talent as a hitter—he bats lefthanded—but he began the season ranked No. 30 on the top 200 draft prospects list for his ability on the mound.

Meyer's fastball/slider combination alone could make him a first-round pick—the program's first since the Twins selected Glen Perkins 22nd overall in 2004. But as a smaller righthander—he's listed at 6 feet—proving that he can hold his electric stuff deep into games and pitch effectively with a third offering would help convince pro teams that he can be a starter at the next level and further raise his draft stock.

For his part, Meyer isn't worried about that aspect of the season. He said he's content to let the process play out and just wants to be picked by a team that wants him.

For some players, that might be lip service. But Meyer's draft experience as a high school senior suggests that it isn't.

Meyer was one of the best prep players in

Minnesota in 2017 but wasn't considered a premium prospect nationally. He didn't expect to be drafted, but the hometown Twins picked him in the 34th round. When it happened, Meyer wasn't sitting around, monitoring the draft. He was on his way home with his friends after shopping at an outlet mall.

"My parents were probably happier (than me)," Meyer said. "I go home to them and my dad's tearing up, and you could tell it was a special moment for them. It was really fun."

Meyer will undoubtedly be a little more locked into the draft this time. Before then, he and the Gophers have a lot of baseball to play. After that banner 2018, Minnesota took a step back last season. They got off to a slow start to the season and so, despite a second-half rebound that saw them finish tied for third in the Big Ten, they finished the season 29-27 and missed the NCAA Tournament.

Minnesota's home regional in 2018 is Meyer's favorite moment during his college career. To get back to that level this spring, he said the Gophers need to stay loose. As an upperclassman and one of the team's jokers, some of that responsibility falls on him.

"We got tight last year, and it didn't feel like a fun environment," Meyer said. "Now, we've got guys just having fun with the game, staying loose out there and I think that's a big factor."

As Minnesota begins the spring, much is resting on Meyer's shoulders. Ace, DH, joker, clubhouse leader, he's ready to help any way he can.

"I just love playing baseball," Meyer said. "It's just important to have fun and help my team in any way I can." ■

Michigan Rises To No. 1

The Wolverines become the first Big Ten team to head the BA Top 25 in its 40-year history

Baseball America has produced a Top 25 ranking since 1981. For the first 39 years of the ranking, no team from the Big Ten Conference had ever ranked No. 1.

That changed following Opening Weekend of the 2020 season. Michigan went 3-1 on the weekend, beating Vanderbilt, Cal Poly and Arizona State before losing its finale against Connecticut. Its three wins came within about a 24-hour period to start season and included victories against the No. 1 (Vanderbilt) and No. 3 (Arizona State) ranked teams in the Preseason Top 25.

Michigan's impressive weekend combined with a sluggish start for the top three teams in the Preseason Top 25—Vanderbilt went 1-2, Louisville lost a series at Mississippi and Arizona State went 2-2—sent it to the top of the rankings. Its three marquee wins, all coming away from home, were unmatched.

The Wolverines, of all teams, understands the importance of continuing to improve over the course of the season with the goal of peaking in May and June. They found their stride late last season and went from being one of the last four teams selected for the NCAA Tournament to the national runner-up in the span of a month.

If Michigan can combine its talent this spring with the magic it found last June, it figures to be a dangerous team all season long.



Michigan head coach Erik Bakich guided the Wolverines to a 3-1 start over Opening Weekend. Overall he was "pleased with the overall capability of (his) team."

"Last year was a magical year and hopefully we can capture some of last year's magic for this year's team," lefthander Steve Hajjar said.

"Everybody in the dugout is pulling for each other. We have a great group of guys who all love each other, are all pulling for each other.

"We have a great group of guys that if we can just capture some of the magic from last year, we'll have a great season."

—Teddy Cahill

THE ALL-STAR CAPTAIN'S CATCHER'S AWARD

The Captain's Catcher's Award recognizes the defensive qualities of minor league catchers. Inspired by the catching skills and character of Jason Varitek, this award is only about catching and who plays the position to the fullest. The best catchers are detail oriented and driven to improve their performance behind the plate. Leadership, dedication, the ability to call a game, blocking, receiving, and making plays are the primary qualities sought after—with the ultimate goal of protecting home.

#MFRA

2020 PREVIEW

Not only is **Adley Rutschman** one of the finest catching prospects in the game, he's one of the finest prospects, period. He ranks No. 5 on this year's Top 100 Prospects list and was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2019 draft because of a standout blend of tools and skills on both sides of the ball. He's the rare catching prospect who seems certain to stick at the position in the long-term. His pro debut was delayed by a bout of mononucleosis. Once he got on the field, he moved from Rookie-level Gulf Coast League to short-season Aberdeen to low Class A Delmarva in short order. He ranked as the No. 1 prospect in the New York-Penn League and looks primed to be a cornerstone of the Orioles' future.

Tools-wise, Rutschman is spectacular. At the plate, he projects as a double-plus hitter with plus power. In the field, he could be a plus defender with a double-plus arm. And he's a strong enough runner that he should only be a tick below-average.

2019 WINNER
ADLEY RUTSCHMAN
ORIOLES

TOM DIPACE

MOVE FORWARD RISE ABOVE™

HIGH SCHOOL

PRESEASON
ALL-AMERICA TEAM

The most talented preps in the nation

by CARLOS COLLAZO

Baseball America annually polls major league scouting departments to vote on our Preseason High School All-America teams. We ask each organization to make its selections based on performance, talent and professional potential. In the past, the BA preseason first team has been a predictor of first-round draft selections.

Last year’s Preseason All-America Team included Dallas area shortstop Bobby Witt Jr., the No. 2 overall pick in the 2019 draft, along with outfielder Riley Greene (No. 5), shortstop CJ Abrams (6), third baseman Brett Baty (12), outfielder Corbin Carroll (16) and righthanders Daniel Espino (24) and Brennan Malone (33).



Texas high school righthander Jared Kelley is one of two unanimous first-team All-America selections. His advanced fastball makes him a likely quick mover in pro ball.

SECOND TEAM

C Drew Romo, The Woodlands	Texas	OF Chase Davis, Franklin	Calif.
MI Masyn Winn, Kingwood	Texas	SP Alejandro Rosario, Miami Christian	Fla.
MI Colby Halter, Bishop Kenny	Fla.	SP Victor Mederos, Monsignor Pace	Fla.
CI Yohandy Morales, Braddock	Fla.	SP Masyn Winn, Kingwood	Texas
CI Drew Bowser, Harvard-Westlake	Calif.	SP Max Rajcic, Orange Lutheran	Calif.
OF Zac Veen, Spruce Creek	Fla.	SP Daxton Fulton, Mustang	Okla.
OF Dylan Crews, Lake Mary	Fla.		

THIRD TEAM

C Kyle Teel, Mahwah	N.J.	OF Petey Halpin, Mira Costa	Calif.
MI Carson Tucker, Mountain Pointe	Ariz.	SP Nick Bitsko, Central Bucks East	Pa.
MI Steven Ondina, Int’l Baseball Acad.	P.R.	SP Cam Brown, Flower Mound	Texas
CI Coby Mayo, Stoneman Douglas	Fla.	SP Kyle Harrison, De La Salle	Calif.
CI AJ Vukovich, East Troy	Wis.	SP Ben Hernandez, De La Salle	Ill.
OF Isaiah Greene, Corona	Calif.	SP Cade Horton, Norman	Okla.
OF Enrique Bradfield, American Heritage	Fla.		



TYLER SODERSTROM, C
TURKLOCK (CALIF.) HS

Soderstrom narrowly edged second-team catcher Drew Romo. He’s a first round-caliber player thanks to the strength of his lefthanded bat, which he showcased last summer against high-level pitching. Soderstrom needs to refine his defensive game, but he’s athletic enough to handle another position—perhaps third base—if necessary in pro ball. He has a strong arm that could fit at a number of positions.



JORDAN WALKER, CI
DECATUR (GA.) HS

A massive, 6-foot-5, 220-pound third baseman who still has room on his frame to add more muscle, Walker has some of the best raw power in the class to go along with a polished hit tool. While he’s an obvious candidate to move to first base in the future, he has good athleticism for his size and moves around well defensively at third base, with a strong arm. Walker is one of the more cerebral players in the 2020 prep class.



ED HOWARD, MI
MOUNT CARMEL (ILL.) HS

The top-ranked shortstop in a prep class that is significantly weaker than usual at the position, Howard is athletic and slick defensively with a reputation as the best defender in the class. He has good range and can throw from a variety of angles. He is raw offensively but has shown flashes of being a good gap-to-gap hitter with above-average bat speed and a frame that could develop more power in the future.



BLAZE JORDAN, CI
DESOTO CENTRAL HS,
SOUTHAVEN, MISS.

Jordan reclassified from the 2021 draft class and is now one of the youngest players in the 2020 class. Despite his youth, Jordan’s raw power stacks up with anyone and he has a long history of getting to that power in games against older arms. He has a professional approach in the box, with quick hands and an all-fields mentality, though he has work to do to stick at third base and is most likely to wind up at first.



MILAN TOLENTINO, MI
SANTA MARGARITA HS,
RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA,
CALIF.

Tolentino handled shortstop for USA Baseball’s 18U National Team last summer after Ed Howard had to leave with an arm injury. He showed an ability to move well to both sides and make impressive plays coming in on the ball and throwing from multiple angles. Tolentino has good hand-eye coordination but a light bat and opposite-field hitting approach.



AUSTIN HENDRICK, OF
WEST ALLEGHENY HS,
IMPERIAL, PA.

Hendrick came one vote shy of being a unanimous first-team selection, and he seems to be in a slightly higher tier than the rest of a strong outfield class. Hendrick has massive raw power and exceptional bat speed, and he showed an impressive ability to adapt to high-quality pitching last summer. Defensively, he likely fits in a corner, where he has plus arm strength and solid glove work.

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>



ROBERT HASSELL, OF
INDEPENDENCE HS,
THOMPSON'S STATION,
TENN.

Hassell is arguably the best pure hitter in the prep class, which he made evident with USA Baseball's 18U National team. He led Team USA in 10 major offensive categories and was the spark plug of the offense in the No. 2 spot in the lineup. He makes tremendous adjustments within at-bats, has exceptional plate coverage and has solid power potential as well.



ALEX SANTOS, RHP
MOUNT ST. MICHAEL
ACADEMY, BRONX, N.Y.

A high-upside righthander out of the northeast, Santos pairs an athletic frame which scouts love with a clean arm action and delivery. There's still a bit of projecting that needs to be done with Santos, but he has a potentially plus fastball and curveball and has shown glimpses of both at times. He will need to refine his strike-throwing this spring in a shorter season than most.



PETE CROW-ARMSTRONG, OF
HARVARD-WESTLAKE HS,
STUDIO CITY, CALIF.

Crow-Armstrong has a solid all-around game as a plus runner with elite defensive ability in center field with an above-average arm. Offensively, he has a solid bat from the left side that is more hit over power, but he swung and missed more frequently than expected last summer. Still, his track record of performance is one of the lengthiest in the prep class.



CARSON MONTGOMERY, RHP
WINDERMERE (FLA.) HS

Montgomery has a loud fastball/slider combination and regularly got swings and misses on both pitches last summer against some of the best hitters in the country. His fastball sits in the low 90s with slight cutting life at times. He lands a high-spin, two-plane breaking slider consistently for whiffs against batters on both sides of the plate. He has a strong, physical frame that scouts like as well.



JARED KELLEY, RHP
REFUGIO (TEXAS) HS

One of just two players to be named unanimous first-team members, Kelley has the best fastball in the prep class and he always knows where it's going. He pairs that with a plus changeup that he has exceptional feel for locating at the bottom of the zone and has shown flashes with a solid slider as well. Kelley is the most polished pitcher in the prep class. Thanks to his stuff and physicality, he could be a quick-mover though the minors.



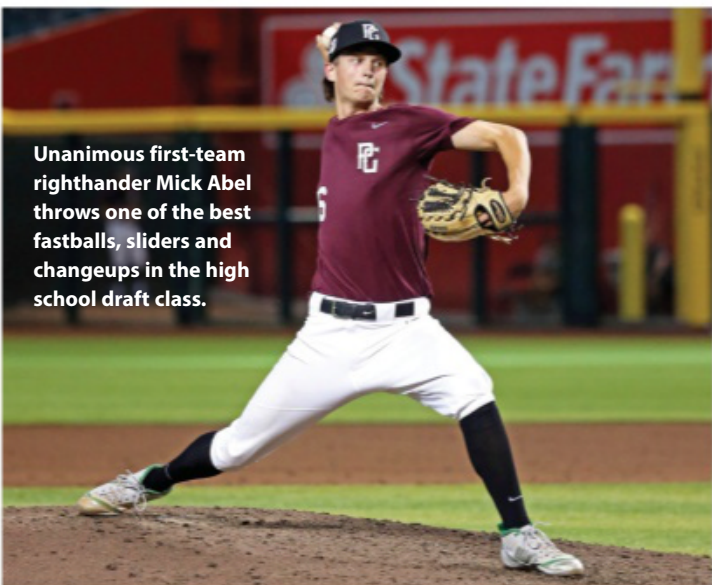
JARED JONES, RHP
LA MIRADA (CALIF.) HS

Jones has some of the best pure arm speed in the class, and while he's shorter than most pitching prospects, he makes up for that in big-time stuff and athleticism. He is one of the most athletic players in the class—pitcher or hitter. His fastball gets into the upper 90s and he's shown the makings of two plus secondaries in a power slider and a changeup that falls off the table at its best. His control is erratic at best.



MICK ABEL, RHP
JESUIT HS, PORTLAND, ORE.

Abel has "now" stuff and plenty of projection remaining as a lanky, 6-foot-5, 180-pound righthander. He's gotten his fastball up to around 97 mph, but he more typically sits in the low 90s. His slider is consistently sharp and ranks as one of the better breaking balls in the class. He has also shown feel for a changeup, giving him three potentially plus offerings. He joined Jared Kelley as a unanimous first-team member.



Unanimous first-team righthander Mick Abel throws one of the best fastballs, sliders and changeups in the high school draft class.

BEST TOOLS

The loudest tools in the high school draft class

BEST ATHLETE (POSITION PLAYER)

Masyn Winn
Ed Howard
Brandon Fields

BEST PURE HITTER

Robert Hassell
Austin Hendrick
Pete Crow-Armstrong

BEST POWER

Austin Hendrick
Blaze Jordan
Jordan Walker

FASTEST RUNNER

Enrique Bradfield
Petey Halpin
Masyn Winn

BEST DEFENSIVE INFILDER

Ed Howard
Milan Tolentino
Steven Ondina

BEST DEFENSIVE OUTFIELDER

Pete Crow-Armstrong
Enrique Bradfield
Petey Halpin

BEST DEFENSIVE CATCHER

Drew Romo
Kyle Teel
Kevin Parada

BEST INFILDER ARM

Coby Mayo
Masyn Winn
Ed Howard

BEST OUTFIELD ARM

Austin Hendrick
Chase Davis
Jared Jones

BEST CATCHER ARM

Tyler Soderstrom
Drew Romo
Corey Collins

BEST FASTBALL

Jared Kelley
Mick Abel
Carson Montgomery

BEST FASTBALL MOVEMENT

Jared Kelley
Mick Abel
Alejandro Rosario

BEST BREAKING BALL

Mick Abel (SL)
Victor Mederos (CB)
Carson Montgomery (SL)

BEST CHANGEUP

Ben Hernandez
Jared Kelley
Mick Abel

BEST COMMAND

Mick Abel
Max Rajcic
Jared Kelley

BEST ATHLETE (PITCHER)

Jared Jones
Masyn Winn
Carson Montgomery

CLOSEST TO THE MAJORS

Jared Kelley
Austin Hendrick
Robert Hassell



Texas A&M's Asa Lacy is the top college lefty for the 2020 draft.

DRAFT

EARLY DRAFT PREVIEW

An early look at the top 100 prospects for the 2020 draft

by CARLOS COLLAZO

The 2020 draft class offers a stark contrast to the 2019 class. The 2019 group had a few elite hitting talents at the top but was historically weak on pitching at both the college and high school levels. Additionally, the overall depth of the class was down.

This spring will be much busier for major league scouting departments, particularly on Friday nights, because the 2020 college pitching group is especially loaded. There are high-upside arms throwing all over the country, but the group is headlined by Georgia righthander Emerson Hancock and Texas A&M lefthander Asa Lacy.

The college hitters are impressive as well, with top-five talents like Arizona State first baseman Spencer Torkelson offering a dynamic hit and power combination, Vanderbilt third baseman Austin Martin bringing elite athleticism and bat speed and New Mexico State second baseman Nick Gonzales possessing arguably the best pure hit tool in the class.

That sort of impact could make the 2020 college crop the best the industry has seen since the 2015 draft class, which featured Dansby

TOP 100 DRAFT PROSPECTS

Age is calculated as of draft day 2020

Rk	Player	Pos	School	HT	WT	B	T	Age	Commit/Drafted
1.	Spencer Torkelson	1B/OF	Arizona State	6-1	205	R	R	20.8	Never Drafted
2.	Emerson Hancock	RHP	Georgia	6-4	215	R	R	21.0	Diamondbacks '17 (38)
3.	Austin Martin	3B	Vanderbilt	6-0	170	R	R	21.2	Indians '17 (37)
4.	Asa Lacy	LHP	Texas A&M	6-4	215	L	L	21.0	Indians '17 (31)
5.	Nick Gonzales	2B	New Mexico State	5-10	190	R	R	21.1	Never Drafted
6.	Jared Kelley	RHP	Refugio (Texas) HS	6-3	215	R	R	18.7	Texas
7.	Austin Hendrick	OF	West Allegheny HS, Imperial, Pa.	6-1	192	L	L	19.0	Mississippi State
8.	Garrett Mitchell	OF	UCLA	6-3	204	L	R	21.8	Athletics '17 (14)
9.	Mick Abel	RHP	Jesuit HS, Portland	6-5	180	R	R	18.8	Oregon State
10.	Carmen Mlodzinski	RHP	South Carolina	6-2	215	R	R	21.3	Never Drafted
11.	Reid Detmers	LHP	Louisville	6-2	210	L	L	20.9	Braves '17 (32)
12.	JT Ginn	RHP	Mississippi State	6-2	192	R	R	21.1	Dodgers '18 (1)
13.	Casey Martin	SS	Arkansas	5-11	175	R	R	21.2	Never Drafted
14.	Ed Howard	SS	Mount Carmel (Ill.) HS	6-2	185	R	R	18.4	Oklahoma
15.	Garrett Crochet	LHP	Tennessee	6-6	218	L	L	21.0	Brewers '17 (34)
16.	Zac Veen	OF	Spruce Creek HS, Port Orange, Fla.	6-5	200	L	R	18.5	Florida
17.	Patrick Bailey	C	North Carolina State	6-2	192	B	R	21.0	Twins '17 (37)
18.	Robert Hassell	OF	Independence HS, Thompson's Station, Tenn.	6-2	190	L	L	18.8	Vanderbilt
19.	Tanner Burns	RHP	Auburn	6-0	210	R	R	21.5	Yankees '17 (37)
20.	Austin Wells	C/1B	Arizona	6-1	200	L	R	20.9	Yankees '18 (35)
21.	Nick Bitsko	RHP	Central Bucks East HS, Doylestown, Pa.	6-4	220	R	R	18.0	Virginia
22.	Tyler Soderstrom	C	Turlock (Calif.) HS	6-2	190	L	R	18.6	UCLA
23.	Drew Romo	C	The Woodlands (Texas) HS	6-1	205	B	R	18.8	Louisiana State
24.	Pete Crow-Armstrong	OF	Harvard-Westlake HS, Studio City, Calif.	6-0	175	L	L	18.3	Vanderbilt
25.	Heston Kjerstad	OF	Arkansas	6-3	200	B	R	21.3	Mariners '17 (36)
26.	Cole Wilcox	RHP	Georgia	6-5	232	R	R	20.9	Nationals '18 (37)
27.	Alex Santos	RHP	Mount St. Michael Academy, Bronx, N.Y.	6-3	185	R	R	18.3	Maryland
28.	Carson Montgomery	RHP	Windermere (Fla.) HS	6-2	195	R	R	17.8	Florida State
29.	Victor Mederos	RHP	Monsignor Pace HS, Miami	6-3	220	R	R	19.0	Miami
30.	Max Meyer	RHP	Minnesota	6-0	185	L	R	21.3	Twins '17 (34)
31.	Jordan Westburg	SS	Mississippi State	6-3	191	R	R	21.3	Never Drafted
32.	Daniel Cabrera	OF	Louisiana State	6-0	180	L	L	21.8	Padres '17 (26)
33.	Alika Williams	SS	Arizona State	6-2	180	R	R	21.3	Yankees '17 (32)
34.	Freddy Zamora	SS	Miami	6-1	190	R	R	21.6	Never Drafted
35.	Blaze Jordan	3B/1B	DeSoto Central HS, Southaven, Miss.	6-2	218	R	R	17.5	Mississippi State
36.	Justin Foscue	2B/3B	Mississippi State	6-0	201	R	R	21.3	Never Drafted
37.	CJ Van Eyk	RHP	Florida State	6-1	185	R	R	21.8	Mets '17 (19)
38.	Masyn Winn	SS/RHP	Kingwood (Texas) HS	5-11	180	R	R	18.2	Arkansas
39.	Cam Brown	RHP	Flower Mound (Texas) HS	6-3	210	R	R	18.7	Texas Christian
40.	Slade Cecconi	RHP	Miami	6-4	212	R	R	21.0	Orioles '18 (38)
41.	Aaron Sabato	1B	North Carolina	6-2	230	R	R	21.0	Never Drafted
42.	Nick Loftin	SS	Baylor	6-1	180	R	R	21.7	Never Drafted
43.	Jordan Walker	3B	Decatur (Ga.) HS	6-5	220	R	R	18.1	Duke
44.	Alejandro Rosario	RHP	Miami Christian HS	6-1	165	R	R	18.4	Miami
45.	Dylan Crews	OF	Lake Mary (Fla.) HS	6-0	195	R	R	18.3	Louisiana State
46.	Petey Halpin	OF	Mira Costa HS, Manhattan Beach, Calif.	6-0	180	L	R	18.1	Texas
47.	Isaiah Greene	OF	Corona (Calif.) HS	6-1	180	L	L	18.8	Missouri
48.	Gage Workman	3B	Arizona State	6-3	185	B	R	20.6	Brewers '17 (14)
49.	Tommy Mace	RHP	Florida	6-6	200	R	R	21.6	Reds '17 (12)
50.	Jake Eder	LHP	Vanderbilt	6-4	210	L	L	21.7	Mets '17 (34)

Swanson, Alex Bregman, Andrew Benintendi and Walker Buehler, among others.

The high school class is deeper in 2020 than 2019 as well, though it lacks the sort of impact, top-end talent that shortstops Bobby Witt Jr. and CJ Abrams provided a year ago. The high school pitching is better than last year's group, particularly among righthanders, and is headlined by Texas righthander Jared Kelley,

Oregon righthander Mick Abel and Pennsylvania righthander Nick Bitsko.

Last summer, the lefthanded prep pitching looked solid for 2020, but the class was weakened when Nate Savino chose to enroll early at Virginia and Oklahoma southpaw Daxton Fulton had Tommy John surgery. Both were likely first-round caliber talents.

There are a number of impressive prep hitters, though that group is more muddled at the top than previous

years, when there were obvious talents standing above the rest.

"The primary currency of the high school class is typically athletic, up-the-middle players," one American League scout said. "There's a wide variance in this year's class depending on the position. It's a strong year for high school catchers at the top, a poor year for high school middle infielders and a solid year for high school center fielders."

Rk	Player	Pos	School	HT	WT	B	T	Age	Commit/Drafted
51.	Cade Cavalli	RHP	Oklahoma	6-4	226	R	R	21.8	Braves '17 (29)
52.	Daxton Fulton	LHP	Mustang (Okla.) HS	6-6	225	L	L	18.7	Oklahoma
53.	Jeff Criswell	RHP	Michigan	6-4	225	R	R	21.3	Tigers '17 (35)
54.	Jared Jones	RHP/OF	La Mirada (Calif.) HS	6-1	180	R	R	18.9	Texas
55.	Cole Henry	RHP	Louisiana State	6-4	214	R	R	20.9	Tigers '18 (38)
56.	Logan Allen	1B/LHP	Florida International	6-0	170	R	L	21.8	Orioles '17 (16)
57.	Chase Davis	OF	Franklin HS, Elk Grove, Calif.	6-1	210	L	L	18.5	Arizona
58.	Kevin Abel	RHP	Oregon State	6-2	195	R	R	21.3	Padres '17 (35)
59.	Chris McMahon	RHP	Miami	6-2	205	R	R	21.4	Braves '17 (33)
60.	Hayden Cantrelle	SS	Louisiana-Lafayette	5-10	175	B	R	21.6	Yankees '17 (40)
61.	Casey Schmitt	3B/RHP	San Diego State	6-2	200	R	R	21.3	Never Drafted
62.	Kevin Parada	C	Loyola HS, Los Angeles	6-0	192	R	R	18.9	Georgia Tech
63.	Drew Bowser	SS	Harvard-Westlake HS, Studio City, Calif.	6-3	192	R	R	18.7	Stanford
64.	Burl Carraway	LHP	Dallas Baptist	6-0	173	L	L	21.1	Never Drafted
65.	Enrique Bradfield	OF	American Heritage HS, Plantation, Fla.	6-0	155	L	L	18.5	Vanderbilt
66.	Milan Tolentino	SS	Santa Margarita HS, Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.	6-1	180	L	R	18.6	UCLA
67.	Justin Fall	LHP	Arizona State	6-6	210	L	L	21.0	Royals '19 (34)
68.	Ian Seymour	LHP	Virginia Tech	6-0	190	L	L	21.5	Never Drafted
69.	Nick Frasso	RHP	Loyola Marymount	6-5	190	R	R	21.7	Never Drafted
70.	Cade Horton	SS/RHP	Norman (Okla.) HS	6-2	190	R	R	18.8	Oklahoma
71.	Kyle Harrison	LHP	De La Salle HS, Concord, Calif.	6-2	200	R	L	18.8	UCLA
72.	Zach DeLoach	OF	Texas A&M	6-2	195	L	R	21.9	Never Drafted
73.	Brandon Fields	OF	Phillips HS, Orlando	5-11	195	R	R	19.1	South Carolina
74.	Ben Hernandez	RHP	De La Salle HS, Chicago	6-2	205	R	R	19.0	Illinois-Chicago
75.	Coby Mayo	3B	Stoneman Douglas HS, Parkland, Fla.	6-5	215	R	R	18.5	Florida
76.	Tyler Brown	RHP	Vanderbilt	6-4	242	R	R	21.7	Reds '17 (26)
77.	RJ Dabovich	RHP	Arizona State	6-3	215	R	R	21.4	Royals '18 (18)
78.	Gavin Williams	RHP	East Carolina	6-6	233	L	R	20.9	Rays '17 (30)
79.	Joe Boyle	RHP	Notre Dame	6-7	220	R	R	20.8	Never Drafted
80.	Max Rajcic	RHP	Orange (Calif.) Lutheran HS	6-0	200	R	R	18.9	UCLA
81.	Nander De Sedas	SS	Florida State	6-2	192	B	R	20.9	Brewers '18 (29)
82.	Yohandy Morales	SS	Braddock HS, Miami	6-4	195	R	R	18.7	Miami
83.	Timmy Manning	LHP	Cardinal Gibbons HS, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	6-2	175	L	L	18.8	Florida
84.	Jason Savacool	RHP	Baldwinsville (N.Y.) HS	6-1	195	R	R	18.1	Maryland
85.	Kyle Teel	C	Mahwah (N.J.) HS	6-0	173	L	R	18.3	Virginia
86.	Tanner Witt	3B/RHP	Episcopal HS, Bellaire, Texas	6-6	195	R	R	17.9	Texas
87.	Colt Keith	SS	Biloxi (Miss.) HS	6-3	195	L	R	18.8	Arizona State
88.	Trenton Denholm	RHP	UC Irvine	5-11	190	R	R	20.5	Red Sox '17 (26)
89.	Bobby Miller	RHP	Louisville	6-5	220	L	R	21.2	Orioles '17 (38)
90.	Steven Ondina	SS	International Baseball Academy, Ceiba, P.R.	5-8	156	R	R	18.2	Florida International
91.	Jack Leftwich	RHP	Florida	6-2	205	R	R	21.7	Tigers '17 (39)
92.	Jackson Miller	C	Mitchell HS, New Port Richey, Fla.	6-0	195	L	R	18.4	Wake Forest
93.	Dillon Dinger	C	Ohio State	6-3	210	R	R	21.7	Never Drafted
94.	Casey Opitz	C	Arkansas	5-11	200	B	R	21.9	Indians '17 (27)
95.	Mario Zabala	OF	International Baseball Academy, Ceiba, P.R.	6-2	195	R	R	18.1	Florida International
96.	Ty Floyd	RHP	Rockmart (Ga.) HS	6-2	180	R	R	18.8	Louisiana State
97.	Marquis Grissom Jr.	RHP	Counterpane HS, Fayetteville, Ga.	6-2	180	R	R	18.9	Georgia Tech
98.	Joey Wiemer	OF	Cincinnati	6-5	215	R	R	21.3	Never Drafted
99.	Ian Bedell	RHP	Missouri	6-2	198	R	R	20.8	Never Drafted
100.	Kalai Rosario	OF	Waiakea HS, Hilo, Hawaii	6-1	200	R	R	18.0	California Baptist



Illinois prep shortstop Ed Howard is a refined defensive player.



UCLA's Garrett Mitchell is might be the toolsiest player in college.

Illinois prep Ed Howard is the top shortstop in the class, and there’s a large gap between him and the next high school prospect at the position. While Howard is an instinctual defender, he’s not at the same overall talent that Witt or Abrams were a year ago.

Drew Romo (Texas) and Tyler Soderstrom (California) are the top catchers in the prep class, and the industry seems mixed on who is the 1A and 1B. Romo is the better defensive pros-

pect and one of the more advanced prep catchers in years, while Soderstrom’s lefthanded bat, power potential and athleticism is somewhat reminiscent of Indians prospect Bo Naylor.

Despite lacking an Adley Rutschman or Joey Bart, the college catching group is strong. North Carolina State backstop Patrick Bailey is one of the better catch-and-throw players in the country and has raw power from both sides, while Arizona catcher Austin Wells is an

impressive hitter from the left side, with good power.

Wells is also one of the many eligible sophomores in a 2020 class that could be one of the better drafts for that demographic. Much of that is because of a deep 2018 high school pitching group that is now eligible after two years of school. Mississippi State righthander JT Ginn is the foremost member of that class and could become a two-time first-round pick, while Georgia righthander Cole

Wilcox and Miami righthander Slade Cecconi could also go in the first round.

South Carolina righthander Carmen Mlodzinski is a redshirt sophomore who is a likely first-round pick if he stays healthy, while North Carolina first baseman Aaron Sabato is another eligible sophomore with the power and hitting ability to reach the first round.

“Based on everything we know so far as an industry,” the scout said, “this looks like a better draft than 2019.” ■

INTERNATIONAL

TOP WINTER BALL PROSPECTS

Ten prospects who captured scouts' attention in Latin American winter leagues

by JUSTIN COLEMAN

The Latin American winter leagues are a chance for players to perform in their home countries while testing their skills against players across different levels of professional baseball. Intense games are the norm, and create a different experience whether a player is a prospect trying to improve his skill set or a former big leaguer hoping to return to pro ball.

The Estrellas Orientales, the champions of the Dominican League last year, did not qualify for the 2020 round-robin playoff tournament. Shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. was not able to play for the club after a stress fracture in his back limited him to 83 games as a Padres rookie.

After a lackluster start, Estrellas manager Fernando Tatis Sr. was let go on Nov. 7, less than a full season after hoisting the championship trophy, the club's first in the six-team Dominican League since 1968.

Here are 10 prospects who captured the attention of scouts this winter, predominantly in the Dominican League.

JOSE SIRI, OF, MARINERS GIGANTES DEL CIBAO (DOMINICAN)

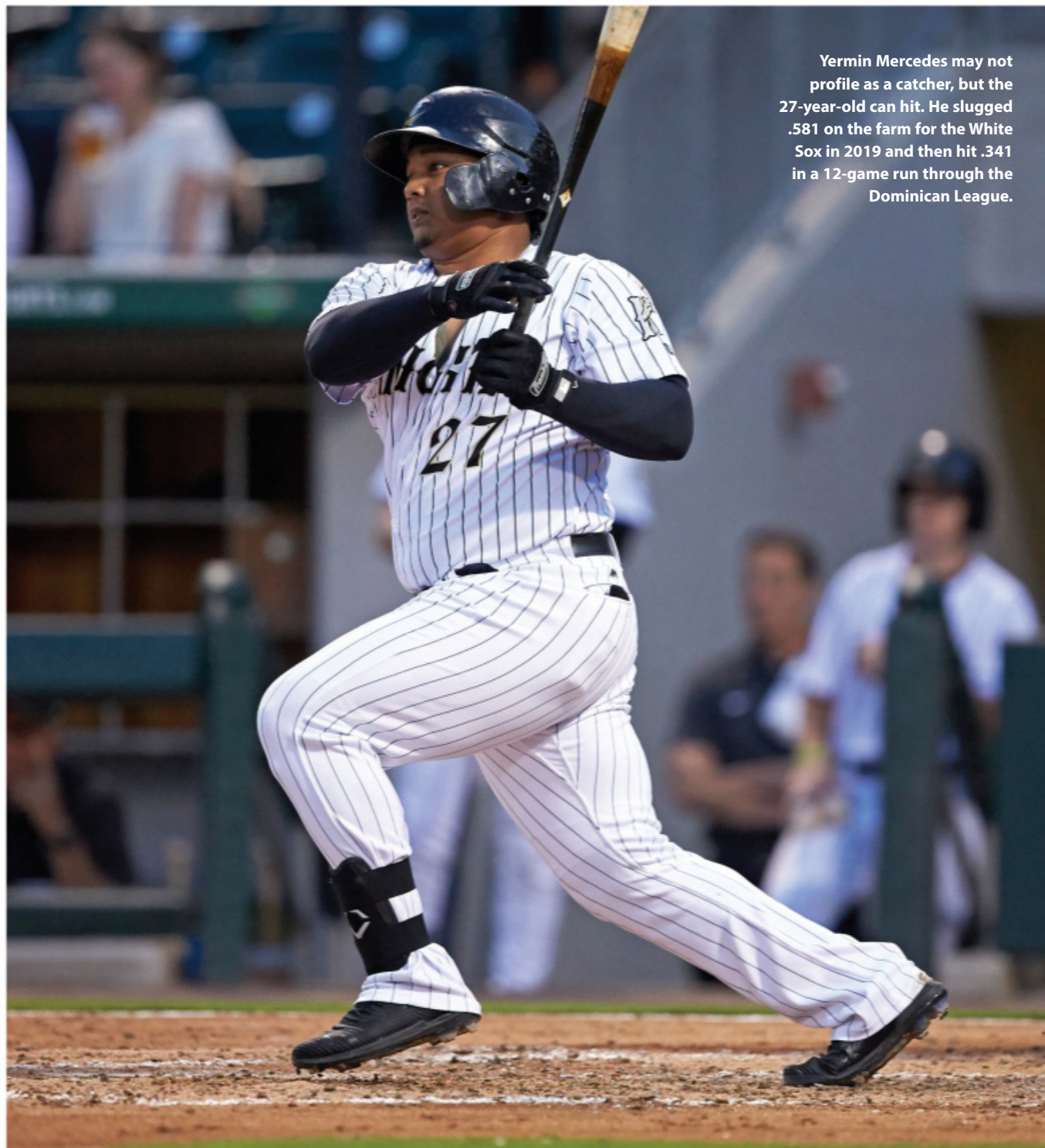
It was more of the same for Siri in the Dominican League. While scouts have noticed an improved approach at the plate, Siri hit just .196/.264/.411 in 31 games for Cibao. He showed the ability to elevate the ball more frequently, which helped him hit six homers. The Reds designated Siri for assignment when they signed outfielder Nick Castellanos, but he was subsequently claimed on waivers by Seattle. Siri is a 24-year-old, righthanded-hitting athlete with power, speed and defensive chops, which could be valuable to the rebuilding Mariners.

WANDER FRANCO, SS, RAYS GIGANTES DEL CIBAO (DOMINICAN)

Despite playing in just six games, Franco's raw talent was on display. "It's a strong body, plus defender at shortstop with hitting prowess from both sides. Pretty remarkable kid," said one evaluator. Franco moves well on the infield and shows rare hitting ability for a teenager. His first taste of the upper minors in 2020 should be exciting, with a callup to the big leagues not far behind.

YERMIN MERCEDES, C, WHITE SOX TIGRES DEL LICEY (DOMINICAN)

Mercedes was a force with the bat in his sixth season with the Tigres del Lince. At the plate, he hit .341 in 44 at-bats, showing feel to put the barrel on the ball with consistency. He uses the gaps well and shows average raw power, which he did not tap into in games. His defense grades as below-average behind the dish, with evaluators thinking that first base will be his future position. The White Sox added Mercedes to the 40-man roster in November, so a big league debut for the 27-year-old could be forthcoming.



Yermín Mercedes may not profile as a catcher, but the 27-year-old can hit. He slugged .581 on the farm for the White Sox in 2019 and then hit .341 in a 12-game run through the Dominican League.

LEODY TAVERAS, OF, RANGERS AGUILAS CIBAÑAS (DOMINICAN)

The cousin of former big leaguer Willy Taveras, Leody was a positive in the outfield for the Aguilas. Evaluators praise his plus athleticism and a more seasoned approach at the dish. Taveras hit .289 in 27 games in the Dominican League after hitting .279 with five homers and 32 stolen bases in the Carolina and Texas leagues. "The defense in center field can be elite there. You see he uses his speed well. It's an interesting tool package," one evaluator said.

ROBEL GARCIA, 2B/OF, CUBS AGUILAS CIBAÑAS (DOMINICAN)

After being released by the Indians in 2014, Garcia worked his way through the Italian Baseball League and got an opportunity with the Cubs. He reached the majors in 2019 after smashing 21 homers at Triple-A Iowa. "That's a utility type, he can play the corners effectively. It's a sweet lefthanded swing, too," one scout said. Garcia has shown good hand-eye coordination and advanced pitch recognition, though his lack of pure arm strength would limit him to a corner position.

LEWIN DIAZ, 1B, MARLINS ESTRELLAS ORIENTALES (DOMINICAN)

Diaz reached Double-A for the first time in a breakthrough season that saw him hit a career-high 27 homers and be traded from the Twins to the Marlins for veteran reliever Sergio Romo. Diaz grinds out at-bats and uses the whole field with developing power. He has good body control and is able to move around the first base bag well with good range and an average arm. With an all-around skill set, Diaz is trending as a first base option who can do a bit of everything for Miami. He could see the major leagues as early as the second half of 2020.

DOMINGO LEYBA, 2B, D-BACKS ESTRELLAS ORIENTALES (DOMINICAN)

Leyba was with the Estrellas Orientales for his second stint after reaching the big leagues in 2019. "His glove work at second base is outstanding," one evaluator said. He doesn't have much pop, but Leyba has shown the ability to control the barrel and hits line drives. He should continue to get at-bats in the big leagues this season after hitting .280 in 25 at-bats last season as a reserve.



Cardinals catcher Julio Rodriguez shows the sort arm strength and catch-and-throw skills to profile as a future big league backup. He played 15 games in the Dominican League.

ERIC FILIA, OF, MARINERS ESTRELLAS ORIENTALES (DOMINICAN)

Filia showed prowess with the bat in 2019, slashing .331/.450/.488 at Triple-A Tacoma. While he didn't hit for power in the Dominican League, Filia was a nice addition atop the Orientales' lineup—he hit .295 with a .406 on-base percentage in 40 games. He shows good coordination during his swing and reacts well to both fastballs and secondary pitches. Though Filia has played the outfield and first base for the Estrellas, he fits well as a DH despite his low power numbers.

JULIO RODRIGUEZ, C, CARDINALS LEONES DEL ESCOGIDO (DOMINICAN)

Rodriguez spent much of his season in the Florida State League before a promotion to Double-A Springfield on July 29. He has proven to be impressive behind the dish, displaying what some evaluators think is a 70 arm on the 20-80 scale. Rodriguez has also improved his game-calling and can be an above-average defender with good catch-and-throw ability. Offensively, he is able to make adjustments but doesn't show much pop in games, making a backup role his likely outcome.

SASAGI SANCHEZ, RHP, FREE AGENT CULIACAN (MEXICAN PACIFIC LEAGUE)

Despite lackluster numbers with Puebla, including a 7.51 ERA, Sanchez has interesting stuff that has garnered recent attention from scouts. The 5-foot-9 righthander shows good arm strength and tops out at 96 mph. He shows some feel for a changeup that is mostly straight with occasional armside run. With his three-quarters arm slot, Sanchez's best secondary offering is a slurvy breaking ball which has natural sweeping action.

CARIBBEAN DREAMS

■ Even though he hit only one homer in 22 games for Escogido, **Josh Naylor's** raw power caught the attention of scouts. Naylor hit eight homers in 94 games as a Padres rookie in 2019. The natural first baseman continued to focus on left field in the Dominican League.

■ Righthander **David Kubiak** made 12 starts for Escogido, posting a 2.81 ERA across 51.1 innings. A 36th-rounder by the Rays in 2011, Kubiak has pitched sparingly in affiliated ball but has stayed active in independent leagues, the Mexican League and various winter leagues. The 6-foot-7 Kubiak creates natural angle on his fastball and has sinking action on his changeup. He also throws a breaking ball with some good vertical depth.

■ Journeyman first baseman **Peter O'Brien** led the Dominican League with nine homers for Toros del Este. Known for his plus power, the 29-year-old O'Brien signed a minor league deal with the Braves after spending last year in the Marlins organization.

■ Outfielder **Colin Willis**, who spent 2019 with the independent Gary of the American Association, signed a minor league contract with the Red Sox after hitting .427/.520/.612 in the Australian Baseball League. The 27-year-old led the ABL in batting and on-base percentage. ■

Team USA Set For Second Try At Qualifying For Olympics

In the moments after Team USA failed in its bid to qualify for the Olympics last November, team officials took one underlying solace: they would get another chance.

Team USA will headline an eight-team field at the **Americas Qualifier in Arizona** from **March 22-27**. The winner will receive a berth to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The second- and third-place finishers will advance to a final, last-chance qualifier in Taiwan in April.

For Team USA, the Americas Qualifier represents a chance at redemption after a fourth-place finish at **Premier12**, the tournament that represented its first qualifying opportunity. Team USA went 4-4 at Premier12, capped by a gut-wrenching, extra-innings loss to Mexico in the bronze-medal game.

Team USA's roster is going to look different than the one it took to Premier12, partly by circumstance and partly by design.

While not yet official, Team USA again expects to be limited to choosing non-40-man roster players. First baseman **Bobby Dalbec**, middle infielders **C.J. Chatham** and **Jake Cronenworth**, outfielder **Mark Payton** and righthander **Cody Ponce** were all added to 40-man rosters in the offseason, and are thus expected to be ineligible to participate. Others, such as outfielder **Jo Adell**, will be vying for major league roster spots in spring training and may not be granted permission to participate.

Even so, Team USA is looking to build a different type of roster than what it took Premier12. Namely, it wants hitters who can make more contact.

With a lineup largely made up of righthanded sluggers, Team USA scored just 10 runs in five games following the first round at Premier12.

"I think any manager will say this: You don't want to be one-dimensional, especially in international play, where you have to rely solely on home runs to score runs," Team USA manager **Scott Brosius** said. "You need on-base guys. You need guys with ability to make contact, especially when you have scoring chances and guys in scoring position."

"So I think we would like to see an offense with a little more balance, in terms of lefthanded and righthanded hitters throughout the lineup, and maybe a little bit more of that veteran presence."

Team USA's other goal is to find pitchers who can give the team length, which will be tricky. With the Americas Qualifier taking place during spring training, pitchers will likely be on pitch count restrictions.

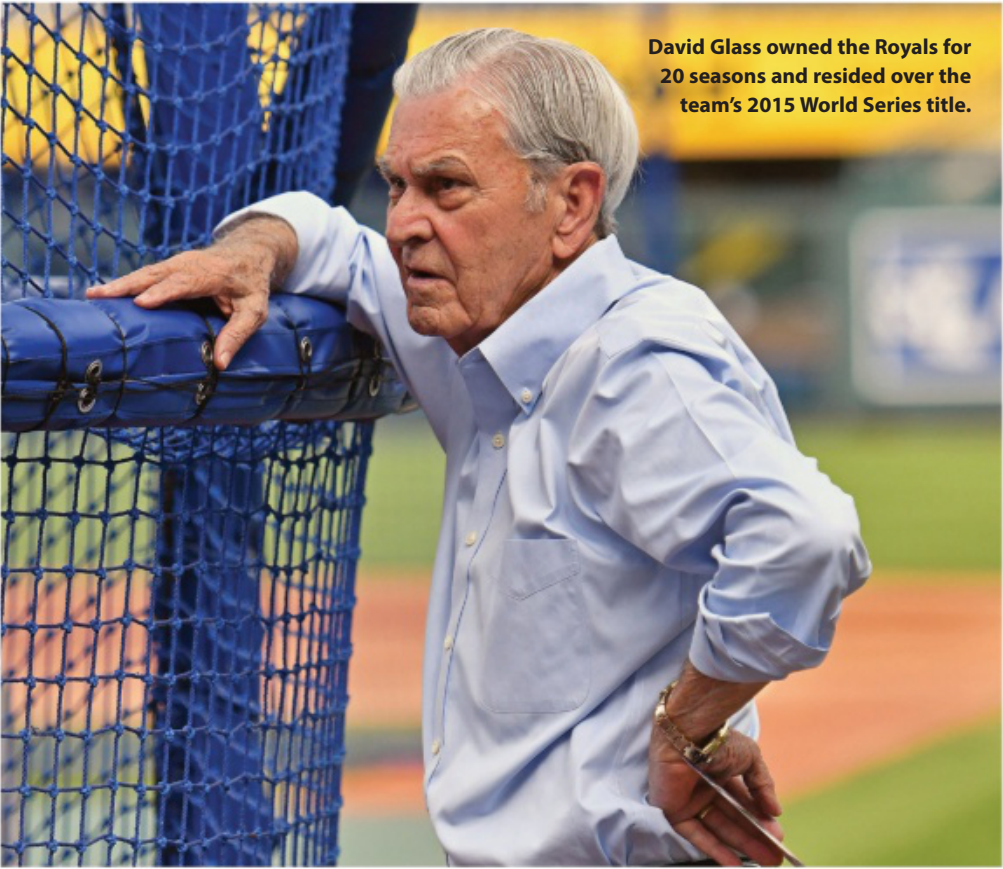
"My concern (is) depth of the staff, and not by talent, but literally by being able to pitch the innings," **Brosius** said. "If guys are only able to throw three innings or four innings max, you're looking at quite a few pitchers to play five games in five days."

Team USA has begun identifying players to target and planned to announce its roster in mid-March. "

—KYLE GLASER

FOR THE RECORD

Obituaries



EDWARD ADAMCZYK, a righthander who served in the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II before pitching for the Indians and Reds organizations in 1947 and '48, died Sept. 24 in Orchard Park, N.Y. He was 96.

JOHN ALTOBELLI, an outfielder who played for the Marlins in the Florida State League in 1985, died Jan. 26 in the helicopter crash that killed former NBA superstar Kobe Bryant and seven others in Calabasas, Calif. He was 56.

Altobelli served as head coach for Orange Coast (Calif.) JC for 27 seasons, winning more than 700 games and capturing five California state junior college championships.

RAMON AVILES, a second baseman and shortstop who played four seasons for the Phillies and Red Sox, died Jan. 27 in Manati, Puerto Rico. He was 68.

Aviles appeared in 117 games and hit two regular season home runs in 1980 for the Phillies' World Series championship team. He appeared in one game in the National League Championship Series against the Astros during the 1980 playoffs and scored a run. Aviles finished his career with two home runs and 24 RBIs.

DONALD BAKKELUND, a righthander who pitched in the Cardinals organization from 1939 to '42 and again in 1946 and '47 after serving in the U.S. Army in World War II, died Jan. 29 in Rockford, Ill. He was 99.

LARRY BARTON JR., a catcher and first baseman who played in the Dodgers organization in 1963 and '64, died Feb. 6 in Louisville. He was 80.

After his playing career ended, Barton served as an amateur scout for 38 years with the Reds. In 2004, Barton was named West Coast scout of the year. He later scouted for the Rangers and Dodgers before returning to the Reds in 2015.

ARTHUR "ART" BENEDETTO, a righthander who pitched in the Orioles organization in 1957, died Sept. 15 in Jackson, Mich. He was 86.

VIRGIL "VIRG" BROUGHTON, who umpired from 1969-71 in the Florida State, Carolina and Southern leagues, died Jan. 19 in Elkins, W.Va. He was 81.

EUGENE CASTIGLIONE, a second baseman who played in the minor leagues for five seasons, including four with the Dodgers organization from 1948-50 and in 1953, died Jan. 7 in Springfield, Ill. He was 91.

HAYES CARGILL, who served as an umpire for 33 years, including in the Cotton State and Kitty leagues in the 1950s, died Jan. 12 in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was 93.

JACK CASTRO, who played in the minor leagues for four seasons from 1948-49 and

again from 1952-53, including a three-year stint with the Indians, died Jan. 26. He was 92.

CHARLES CAUDILL, a catcher who played for the Senators organization in 1959, died Jan. 16 in Urbana, Ohio. He was 82.

GIL COAN, a left fielder who played 11 seasons in the major leagues for the Washington Senators, Orioles, White Sox and Giants from 1946-56, died Feb. 5 in Hendersonville, N.C. He was 97.

In 1954, Coan collected the first major league hit in Orioles franchise history. He finished his career with 731 hits in 918 games. His best season came in 1951 for the Senators when he hit seven triples, nine home runs and knocked in 62 RBIs to go with a .303/.357/.426 batting line.

HAZEN DAVIS, a righthander who spent two seasons in the minor leagues for the Washington Senators and Indians organizations in 1953 and '54, died Jan. 12 in Celina, Ohio. He was 84.

CONRAD DEVLIN JR., a third baseman who played in the minor leagues for the Dodgers organization in 1954 and '55, died Feb. 1 in Waterford, Conn. He was 85.

CHESTER "CHET" DIEMIDIO, who played in the minor leagues in 1952 and '54 for the Phillies, Cardinals and Washington Senators organizations, died Oct. 12 in Philadelphia. He was 89.

In addition to playing in the minor leagues, DiEmidio served as a coach in the White Sox organization in 1988 and '90.

TOM DULMAGE, who played for the Kinston Eagles of the Coastal Plain League in 1951, died Jan. 26 in Henrietta, N.Y. He was 92.

BILL DUNN, a shortstop who played in the minor leagues for the Royals organization in 1993 and spent three more seasons in independent ball from 1996-98, died Jan. 4 in Clinton, Md. He was 47.

ANGEL ECHEVARRIA, an outfielder and first baseman who played seven seasons in the major leagues for the Rockies, Brewers and Cubs, died Feb. 7 in Bridgeport, Conn. He was 48.

Echevarria appeared in 328 games over his career and hit 21 home runs. His best season came in 1999 with the Rockies when he hit 11 home runs and posted a .293/.360/.503 line. Echevarria ran his own business "Simply Baseball" after he retired and gave free clinics to children in Bridgeport.

JOSEPH "JOE" ELBLE SR., who played in the Mississippi-Ohio Valley and Kansas-Oklahoma-Missouri leagues in 1951, died on Jan. 18 in Bloomington, Ill. He was 87.

NARCISO ELVIRA, a lefthander who pitched in four games for the Brewers in 1990, died Jan. 28 in Medellin de Bravo, Mexico. He was 52.

JOHN FERENCHICK, a righthander who pitched for the Tigers and Orioles in 1963 and '64, died Aug. 12 in Flying Hills, Pa. He was 76.

Ferenchick suited up with Hall of Famer Jim Palmer during 1964 spring training with the Stockton Ports.

STEPHEN "STEVE" FORMENTO, who played in the North Carolina State and Gulf Plains leagues in 1950, died Jan. 27, in Mount Lebanon, Pa. He was 88.

BOB GARVEY, who signed a contract to play for the Cardinals organization for the 1951 season, died Jan. 21 in Millsboro, Del. He was 87.

BRADLEY GOODWIN, an outfielder who spent one season in the Pioneer League in 1985, died Dec. 29 in

Fall Creek, Ore. He was 56.

DAVID GLASS, who served as chief executive office of the Royals beginning in 1993 and became the owner in 2000 before selling the team in November 2019, died Jan. 9. He was 84.

During Glass' ownership, the Royals reached the World Series in back-to-back years in 2014 and 2015. In 2015, the Royals won the organization's second title and first since 1985.

DONALD HALL, who signed a contract with the Orioles to play for the organization's minor league Class A farm team in Stockton, Calif., but did not appear in a game, died Jan. 14 in Windsor Mill, Md. He was 74.

ARNIE HALLGREN, a right fielder who played for the Braves, Tigers and Cubs organizations during 10 minor league seasons from 1952-61, died Jan. 14 in Vancouver, B.C. He was 86.

Hallgren was inducted into the British Columbia Hall of Fame in 2005.

JAY HANKINS, an outfielder who played in the major leagues for the Royals in 1961 and '63, died Jan. 20 in Greenwood, Mo. He was 84.

Hankins appeared in 86 major league games over two seasons, hit four home runs and collected 38 hits. After his playing career ended, he continued to stay involved with the game, scouting for the Indians (1967-68), Royals (1969-74), Phillies (1994) and Angels and managing the Kingsport Royals in 1972.

Hankins served as the Phillies' scouting director from 1989-1992.

DON HASENMAYER, a second and third baseman who played two seasons for the Phillies in 1945 and '46 after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, died Jan. 28 in Warrington, Pa. He was 92.

In 30 at-bats over 11 games, Hasenmayer collected three hits and drove in one run. He served as manager of Portsmouth of the Piedmont League in 1951.

DONALD RUDOLPH HARRIS, a shortstop who played for the Cubs organization in the Mississippi-Ohio Valley League in 1955, died Jan. 21 in Hobart, Ind. He was 84.

ROBERT JACOBS, a second baseman who played for the Braves organization for six seasons from 1956-61, died Dec. 23 in St. Louis. He was 82.

JAMES KOVARIK, a righthander who pitched four seasons in the Giants organization from 1950-53, died Jan. 5 in Kirkwood, Mo. He was 87.

RAYMON LACY, who played in segregated leagues including the Negro National League for the Homestead Grays in 1947, died at 97.

After his playing career ended, Lacy and his wife combined to teach for 110 years in the Texas public school system.

EUGENE LEACH, a righthander who pitched in the minor leagues in 1949 and '50, including a stint with the Braves organization in 1950, died Feb. 2 in Shady Spring, W.Va. He was 92.

GEORGE LOTT, a first baseman and catcher who played for the Pirates and Dodgers organizations for 10 seasons from 1963-72, died Jan. 23 in Summit, Miss. He was 76.

SYLVIO MASTROIANNI, a righthander who pitched in the minor leagues for three seasons from 1949-1950 and '54, including with the Tigers and Giants organizations, died Jan. 24 in Stony Point, N.Y. He was 89.

JACK METCALF, a second baseman who played in the Western Carolina League in 1960, died Jan. 25 in Forest City, N.C. He was 84.

FRANK McNULTY, who was the model for the Cubs' batboy in Norman Rockwell's painting "The Dugout," died Jan. 9 in Bloomfield, Conn. He was 88.

KATSUYA NOMURA, a Japanese baseball Hall of Famer who played in the Pacific League for 26 seasons in 1954 and from 1956-80, died Feb. 11 in Tokyo.

Nomura was one of the greatest offensive catchers in Japanese history and finished his career with 657 home runs and 1,988 RBIs to go along with 2,901 hits. In 1965, he won the Pacific League triple crown and hit .320 with 42 home runs and 110 RBIs. He finished his career with five MVP awards.

Nomura also served as a manager for 24 seasons, some of which overlapped with his playing career. He posted a 1,565-1,563 career record with four different teams and won three Japan Series championships for the Yakult Swallows in the 1990s before retiring after the 2009 season.

GEORGE PALATI, who served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II before playing in the minor leagues from 1946-49 and suiting up for the Cubs and Giants organizations, died Jan. 14 in Bridgewater, Mass. He was 98.

PAUL PAVELKO, an outfielder who played nine seasons in the minor leagues for the Tigers and Twins organization from 1962-70, died Feb. 5 in Bethlehem, Pa. He was 76.

PHIL RIZZO, who played in the minor leagues from 1951-56 before becoming a successful scout, died Feb. 1. He was 90.

Rizzo served his son, Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo, as a senior advisor beginning in the 2009 season.

JOE ROBERSON, a righthander who pitched in the minor leagues for the Dodgers organization from 1954-56, died Jan. 13 in Grand Blanc, Mich. He was 84.

Roberson served as the athletic director for Michigan from 1994-97 and resided over the school's national championships in hockey, swimming and diving and football.

EDWARD RULLMAN, a catcher who served in World War II before playing in the minor leagues for four seasons from 1946-49, including stints with the Phillies, Indians and Braves organizations, died Jan. 3 in Clarksville, Tenn. He was 94.

WILLIAM "BILL" SAMS, a righthander who played in the Reds organization in 1941 and with the Dodgers organization in '46 after serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II, died Jan. 8 in York, Pa. He was 96.

JAY SEMKE, an outfielder who played in the Gulf Coast League for the Reds organization in 1989, died Jan. 19. He was 53.

DAVID SMITH, a righthander who pitched in the White Sox organization for two seasons from 1966-67, died Jan. 14 in East Greenbush, N.Y. He was 73.

WALTER SOWERS, who played in the minor leagues in the Georgia State League in 1950 after serving in World War II, died Jan. 24 in Shillington, Pa. He was 93.

DANNY TALBOTT, a third baseman who played in the Orioles organization in 1967 and spent another season in the minor leagues in 1973, died Jan. 19 in Rocky Mount, N.C. He was 75.

Talbott was a two-sport star in baseball and football at North Carolina and won the 1965 Atlantic Coast Conference player of the year as a quarterback. In 1966, he won ACC athlete of the year and was inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 2003. In addition to playing baseball, he was selected in the 17th round of the 1967 NFL draft and played on the

Washington Redskins' taxi squad.

TED TOMASOVICH, a first baseman who played in the minor leagues for the Reds organization in 1969 and '70, died Jan. 26 in Washougal, W.Va. He was 73.

CECIL DWAIN WEST, who played 12 games in the minor leagues for the Athletics organization in 1957, died Jan. 28 in Woodward, Okla. He was 83.

KENNETH WORLEY, a catcher who played in the minor leagues for 11 seasons for the Dodgers, Cubs, Orioles and Athletics organizations from 1950-58 and 1960-61, died Feb. 7 in Canton, Ohio. He was 89.

AL YEARICK, who played in the minor leagues for four seasons from 1948-51, died Jan. 27 in Lewisburg, Pa. He was 91.

In addition to playing in the Little League World Series and becoming the first Little Leaguer to play professional baseball, Yearick spent 25 seasons on the sideline for the Bucknell men's basketball team. ■



Katsuya Nomura played 26 seasons in the Japanese Pacific League and hit 657 home runs. He also won three Japan Series titles as a manager and was elected to the Japanese Baseball Hall of Fame in 1989.



My ABCA Mobile App

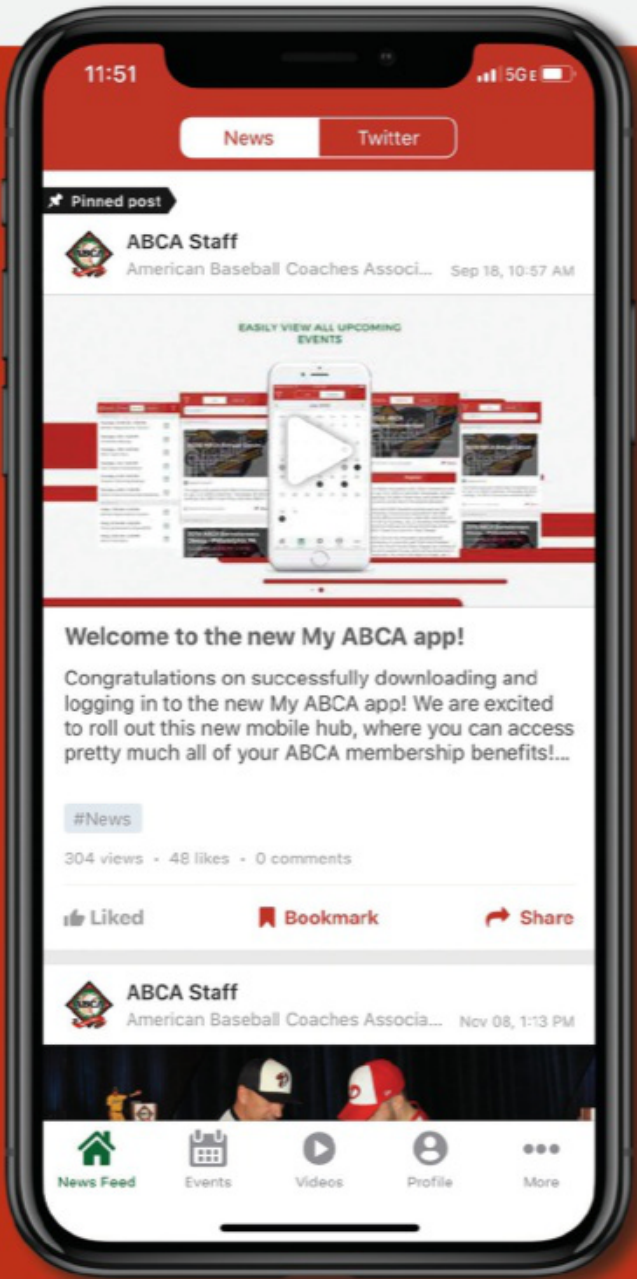
The new "My ABCA" mobile app is now available in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store!

The My ABCA App Contains:

- The new ABCA Coaching Resource Library with videos and information, *all free for members*, updated weekly
- ABCA Clinic Videos
- Charts, diagrams & documents
- Messaging with ABCA members
- Forums for discussion among members
- ABCA Event Information & Schedules
- Update your profile, renew your membership and register for events

It's free to download, then log in with your existing ABCA username and password. New members can create an account in minutes!

Search "My ABCA" in the app store!



AMERICAN BASEBALL COACHES ASSOCIATION



In pursuit of the franchise's first playoff berth since 2014, the Angels committed \$426 million to Mike Trout last March and then \$245 million to free agent Anthony Rendon (pictured) in December.

PERSPECTIVE

HALO EFFECT

After extending Mike Trout, signing Anthony Rendon and installing manager Joe Maddon, the Angels have a lot riding on 2020



JOE SHEEHAN
@JOE_SHEEHAN

One year ago I tagged the Twins as my sleeper team for 2019. The Twins went on to set the major league home run record while winning 101 games and the American League Central. An injury- and suspension-ravaged version of the team was wiped out in three games in the AL Division Series by the Yankees, but the Twins were still one of the best stories last year.

I'm having a hard time identifying a 2020 sleeper. This winter saw the middle tier of baseball teams, the teams that had largely sat out recent winters, get aggressive. The Rangers traded for Corey Kluber. The Angels signed Anthony Rendon. The Diamondbacks added Madison Bumgarner and Starling Marte. The Reds spent for Mike Moustakas and Nick Castellanos. You can't be a sleeper if you spent the offseason drawing attention to yourself.

So let's look for something else: the team with the most riding on the 2020 campaign. There are the usual suspects, of course: The Yankees committed \$324 million to the idea that Gerrit Cole was the difference between

getting past the Astros and not. The Dodgers have seven straight National League West titles but no World Series ring, spoiling their claim to the word "dynasty." The White Sox have invested a lot of money this winter to turn their rebuilding project into a playoff berth. You could pick any of these, as well as the scandal-ridden Astros, the stagnant Cubs, or the talent-laden Padres.

Me, I don't think it's any of them. The team with the most on the line this year is the Angels. This will be Mike Trout's ninth full season, and he has played in just three playoff games, all losses to the Royals in 2014. Trout, now 28, has seen his front office make horrible free agent choices both big (Josh Hamilton, Albert Pujols) and small (Matt Harvey, Cody Allen). He's watched a farm system that was very productive up to the point he graduated from it go fallow at the wrong time. He's watched it all go backward, with four straight sub-.500 seasons dating back to 2016. Forget October; Trout hasn't even played a meaningful game in September since 2015.

Despite all that, the Angels convinced Trout to stay with the team, signing him to a 12-year, \$426 million contract last March that should make him an Angel for life. Then they went 72-90, the team's worst record since Trout was in the fourth grade. Trout's 8.3 wins above replacement, according to Baseball-Reference.com, were nearly a third of what the entire team produced, a ratio that has become all too familiar to him. By contrast, NL MVP Cody Bellinger's 9.0 WAR was just one-sixth of the Dodgers' total.

Arte Moreno tried to change that, committing \$245 million to third baseman Rendon in an effort to give Trout at least one teammate who can match his production. Rendon finished third in the NL MVP voting last year, his third career top-six finish. The 30-year-old is a true .300 hitter who draws walks and has developed excellent power. He was a critical component of the Nationals' playoff run, hitting .328 in 17 postseason games and ripping huge homers in World Series Games 6 and 7.

With Rendon, the Angels' projected payroll of \$187 million is just shy of their highest ever. Rendon might be the best hitter Trout has ever played with, given that Albert Pujols has slugged .500 only once with the Angels, in 2012, and hasn't had an on-base percentage above .340 since that season. Rendon and shortstop Andrelton Simmons form the best

left side combination in the AL. Throw in rookie outfielder Jo Adell, one of the early-line favorites for AL Rookie of the Year, and this projects as the best Angels offense since 2014.

Even with all that, this team looks like little more than a fringe wild card contender. Adding a superstar like Rendon always makes you better; the problem is that Rendon was the consolation prize for missing out on the No. 1 starter the Angels desperately needed. The 2019 Angels were the first team in history to have no starting pitcher reach 100 innings. The reasons for that varied, from tragic (the death of Tyler Skaggs) to mundane (free agents Matt Harvey and Trevor Cahill were awful).

They bring back much of that staff, bolstered only by No. 4 starters like Dylan Bundy, Julio Teheran and Matt Andriese. Outside of 23-year-old righthander Griffin Canning, there's not a pitcher in the organization who reasonably profiles as a playoff starter for most contenders—and even Canning finished his rookie season on the injured list with elbow inflammation. The Angels are paying their hitters \$136 million and supporting that with a \$27 million pitching staff.

It could work. Andrew Heaney could, at 29, stay healthy for a full season for a second time and be a credible No. 3. Shohei Ohtani, who has 10 major league starts and a total of 77 innings in the last three years, could come back healthy and effective. Canning, Patrick Sandoval and Jose Suarez, who all debuted in 2019, have varying degrees of prospect pedigree and showed flashes in the majors last year. Realistically, though, this is a staff of back-end starters looking for a top two that simply doesn't exist. That lack of starting pitching will almost surely eat the Angels' season.

Aside from signing Rendon, the Angels' splashiest offseason move installed a new man in the dugout. Moreno and general manager Billy Eppler moved quickly to sign Joe Maddon in October for three years and at least \$12 million. Maddon began his life in baseball as an Angels minor leaguer and then manager before joining the big league coaching staff in 1994. He famously managed the Rays to the franchise's first winning season and the AL pennant in 2008 and the 2016 Cubs to the franchise's first World Series title in more than 100 years.

It's been six years since Mike Trout got to play in a playoff game. Arte Moreno has made a big bet on Anthony Rendon as the man to change that. Unless Rendon can be an all-star hitter and provide 100 good innings, though, Trout will once again be free to watch his beloved Philadelphia Eagles in October. ■

TURN UP THE NOISE

12 LIVE GAMES & DAILY COVERAGE
OPENING WEEK | BEGINS MARCH 26TH



GO TO [FINDMLBNETWORK.COM](https://www.findmlbnetwork.com) FOR CHANNEL NUMBER
© 2020 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PROPERTIES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

A2000

MIKE CLEVINGER
Cleveland Indians™ P
Custom A2000 B2



BE REAL. TURN HEADS.

Break the unwritten rules. If you think Mike Clevinger and his custom A2000 B2 are planning to conform to your expectations, you're sorely mistaken. He's ready to bring a new edge to the game this season.



SUPERSKIN

PETE ALONSO

New York Mets™ 1B
A2K 2820SS



DO YOU FEEL THAT?

Yeah, neither does Pete Alonso. Armed with his A2K 2820SS ball glove, the reigning *National League*™ Rookie of the Year isn't phased by the weight of expectations. He's ready to bring a title back to Queens – and he won't stop till he gets the job done.



WILSON AND A2000 ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF WILSON SPORTING GOODS CO. MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TRADEMARKS AND COPYRIGHTS ARE USED WITH PERMISSION OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PROPERTIES, INC. VISIT MLB.COM *PROS OFTEN CUSTOMIZE THEIR EQUIPMENT. THIS CONSUMER PRODUCT MAY VARY FROM THE MODEL CUSTOMIZED BY A PRO FOR GAME-PLAY.

 **AUTHENTIC
COLLECTION**
THE OFFICIAL BALL GLOVE OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL