Beck's Top 100 Prospects for 2024

Tailored for Fantasy Baseball Points Formats

It's November as I sit down to start my top 100, which signals that it has been a full calendar year since I made the head-first dive into covering minor league baseball and the players who are the future of our sport. This process is a silly endeavor at its core – even the most accomplished baseball writers of our time are frequently wrong when it comes to evaluating minor leaguers – but I'm enamored with it.

I started writing in large part because I had moved away from friends and family to support my fiancée in a new pursuit. I found the volume of baseball and baseball-adjacent thoughts bouncing around my head deafening and I was without my usual outlet: people close to me allowing me to talk at them ad-nauseam. Over the last year I've found a new community of people to connect with over our shared passion. It has been incredibly fulfilling.

Thanks for letting me talk, write, and spew various other forms of baseball nonsense at you this year.

with gratitude,
Beck

Before we dive in, a few notes and reminders:

- Age is as of June 30th, 2023 to reflect their season age
- Height and weight are their official listing, not indicative of my estimations
- Defensive ability and versatility matter less as the list is fantasy-oriented
- Position is my best guess where they'll play at the big-league level
- Listed stats represent 2023 minor league or international play only

---

TIER 1

---

1. Wyatt Langford, OF, Texas Rangers (Tier 1)

Age: 21
Level(s): A+, AA, AAA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 225 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
200	0.360	0.480	0.677	17%	18%	10	12	0.407

Why he's here:

Langford narrowly missed being the second player in MLB history to make their major league debut in the World Series in the wake of Adolis Garcia's game four oblique injury that would ultimately hold him out for the remainder of the series. The first was Adalberto Mondesi in the 2015 World Series (hold on to that for your bar trivia). It's an outrageously rare occurrence that would have been further accentuated by the reality that Langford was drafted a mere three months prior. His rapid ascent through the Rangers' system confirmed what some evaluators believed on draft day: Langford could have contributed to a big-league club on day one. He figures to play a significant role in 2024 in the heart of the order.

His college batted ball and plate discipline data was sterling and rivaled or surpassed that of Dylan Crews across the board. He made ample contact on pitches in the zone, avoided chasing pitches out of the zone at an elite rate, and punished baseballs he put in play to the tune of a 108 mph 90th percentile exit velocity. Those figures held strong through the transition to wood bats against professional pitching as he tore through High-A and Double-A in quick succession. He stole far more bags in a much smaller sample post-draft, and while he's an above-average runner, that pace likely isn't representative of his future output.

This is a special offensive talent. Not only does he have plus-plus raw power, but his swing is already optimized to get the most of it in games. He's an exceptionally good fastball hitter with natural loft that maximizes extra base damage when he squares one up. He doesn't waste hard-hit balls by beating them into the ground very often, and his ability to spit on pitches he cannot impact with authority – as well as identify the ones he can – should translate to quality at-bats from the get-go.

My take:

Langford has a special combination of power, contact ability, and plate discipline. His situation can't be ignored; he's on the precipice of debut in a potent lineup that features Corey Seager, Marcus Semien, Adolis Garcia, and Josh Jung.

---

2. Yoshinobu Yamamoto, RHP, Los Angeles Dodgers (Tier 1)

Age: 24
Level(s): NPB
Height: 5'10
Weight: 176 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
171	1.16	1.72	0.86	26.7%	4.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Why he's here:

Editors' note: The original blurb was written over the course of November prior to Yamamoto's signing with the Los Angeles Dodgers. He received a 12-year, $325M contract with opt outs after year six that will keep him in LA through his age-30 season.

The Orix Buffaloes of Nippon Professional Baseball have officially announced Yamamoto would be posted to MLB, giving front offices 45 days to negotiate and come to terms with the three-time Sawamura award winner. The news broke just 48 hours after he fired a 138-pitch complete game with a single-game record 14 strikeouts in the Japan Series. He's projected to command a contract cresting the $300M threshold and six or more years.

Yamamoto has been one of the best pitchers in the world for several seasons and he'll be just 25 when he debuts in MLB, similar to previous NPB imports Masahiro Tanaka and Yu Darvish. He's the only pitcher in NPB history to throw a no-hitter in consecutive seasons by achieving the feat in each of the last two years, and he took a step forward in 2023 both in terms of quality of stuff and ability to work efficiently.

He'll immediately join the front of the rotation wherever he lands, and without certainty on which club he'll join, we'll be treating him as context-neutral. It's incredibly unlikely that a team like Colorado or Cincinnati signs him and he's subject to poor park factors; it's far more probable he ends up with a contender. In terms of arsenal, Yamamoto commands five pitches with three that play as plus or better.

My take:

It's been some time since we've had an international signee from Asia as exciting as Yamamoto. That he'll be immediately ready and eligible to contribute at the big-league level is a differentiator that makes him the most attractive pitching prospect in baseball. His fastball has unique release height and induced vertical break characteristics that should translate to MLB without turbulence, and both his splitter and 'rainbow curve' are plus pitches he can command with supreme confidence.

His floor is relatively high for an international player, too. The most common concerns surrounding players coming from NPB or KBO are culture adjustments, level of competition, and how well their repertoire will play against the best hitters in the world. The first concern is valid; we do not know how Yamamoto, specifically, will adjust to the United States. The latter two aren't as scary as usual – his performance has been pristine, he has excellent stuff, and his control is otherworldly. His 4.2% walk rate in 2023 was behind just George Kibry, Zach Eflin, and Logan Webb.

I would take him ahead of Langford in first-year player drafts if my team were a good starting pitcher away from competing for a league championship.

---

3. Junior Caminero, 3B, Tampa Bay Rays (Tier 1)

Age: 19
Level(s): A+, AA, MLB
Height: 5'11
Weight: 157 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
510	0.324	0.384	0.591	20%	8%	31	5	0.355

Why he's here:

Hitting the baseball hard is good. Caminero does it more often than any player in minor league baseball. His 90th percentile exit velocity led all minor leaguers and would be fifth in the entire sport behind just Aaron Judge, Shohei Ohtani, Ronald Acuña Jr., and Giancarlo Stanton. His 31 home runs in the regular season are the thirteenth-most by a teenager in history.

Unlike most mashers, Caminero gets to his prodigious power without sacrificing bat-to-ball ability. His 20% strikeout rate is the product of an 80% zone-contact rate, and his all-fields approach means he's unlikely to be one-dimensional at the big league level. He has lightning-quick hands capable of putting baseballs over the fence to all spots between the foul poles.

From a purely offensive standpoint, Caminero is one of the most promising players in our sport. Circumstances beyond his control like team context have him in bronze position in ordinal rank, but positional scarcity and the narrowest of advantages over Langford and Yamamoto in age make him an attractive option at the very top. He'll likely outperform Langford on batting average with similar surface power output but lag in stolen base contribution.

My take:

You don't find a power/contact combination like this often. Usually you'll get one or the other – impact with whiff á la Joey Gallo and Kyle Schwarber or contact sans thump like Luis Arraez and Steven Kwan – but Caminero has the right mix of both. His relative deficiency in stolen base contribution slots him just behind Wyatt Langford, but I wouldn't argue with anybody who feels strongly that he's the top prospect in the format.

---

4. Jackson Holliday, SS, Baltimore Orioles (Tier 1)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+, AA, AAA
Height: 6'0
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
581	0.323	0.442	0.499	20%	17%	12	24	0.408

Why he's here:

Holliday has enjoyed a meteoric rise through Baltimore's system since last July by way of merit. Climbing four levels in one season is a feat without further qualification. That Holliday did it in his age-19 season, ending the year in Triple-A Norfolk without interruption to surface-level production, is astonishing. He carried an OPS north of .900 until reaching his final destination and nearly walked more than he struck out, all while being significantly younger than his competition at all times.

Holliday has special ability to drive the ball to all fields and has shown the aptitude to put a good swing on the ball even when fooled. He is discerning beyond his years, boasting a pristine 21% chase rate in his short Triple-A sample while making contact on 88% of swings in the zone. His pitch recognition, swing decisions, and ability to battle through an at-bat give him a staggeringly high on-base floor.

He finds himself at fourth overall with only one demerit – it's unclear how much power he'll ultimately tap into. His 102 mph 90th percentile exit velocity is solid for his age but not not eye-popping, and while there is certainly room for his frame to expand and support good weight, I'm not willing to treat a significant jump in impact as a certainty. His surface numbers were buoyed by an unsustainable .408 batting average on balls in play.

My take:

While Holliday is listed third among hitters, I'd be comfortable dealing Langford or Caminero for him in the right circumstance. His profile is tailor-made for the format and his only crime was failing to be an above-average power threat at 19 years old. He should be with the Orioles soon and he'll compile points in an exciting young lineup when he joins them.

---

5. Jackson Chourio, OF, Milwaukee Brewers (Tier 1)

Age: 19
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 5'11
Weight: 165 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
583	0.282	0.338	0.467	18%	7%	22	44	0.312

Why he's here:

Milwaukee snagged Chourio with a $1.8M signing bonus in the 2021 international class, tied with Larry Ernesto in 2017 for most money committed to an international signing by the organization in the last seven years. He immediately made good on the investment by slashing .296/.386/.447 in the DSL that summer, then lighting the baseball world ablaze by reaching Double-A as an 18-year-old the following year.

The introduction of a pre-tacked baseball in the Southern League (alongside a host of other rule changes) during the first half of the 2023 minor league season created an interesting wrinkle in player evaluation on both sides of the ball. Chourio contended with it until the All-Star break, and, as the youngest player in that league, managed to tread water until going nuclear in the second half. He was one of three hitters aged 20 or younger to accrue 50 or more plate appearances in Double-A and one of four teens since 1963 to tally 20 home runs and 40 stolen bases in a single season.

Of all of his tools, Chourio's laser-fast hands stand out. It's rare to see the kind of all-fields impact he displays, especially for a player of his size, and it's directly related to his superlative bat speed. The Brewers have reported Chourio's average bat speed to be 85 mph, which is a full three ticks higher than the average among major league players. It allows him to spray line drives and fly balls into both power alleys and over the fence regardless of pitch location. The double-plus bat speed combined with his double-plus foot speed are likely to combine for higher than average BABIPs.

My take:

What Chourio lacks in plate discipline presently he makes up for in contact and athleticism. He projects to be a 20-30 candidate annually and will join the Brewers early in the 2024 season. His ceiling rivals any player in all of minor league baseball. He doesn't turn 20 until March of next year.

T I E R   2

---

6. Dylan Crews, OF, Washington Nationals (Tier 2)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A, AA
Height: 6'0
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
159	0.292	0.377	0.467	24%	9%	5	4	0.365

Why he's here:

Crews has been a known entity in baseball circles for well over five years as a Florida prep and a projected first-rounder ahead of the 2020 draft. He opted to forego the draft and enroll at Louisiana State where he compiled 58 home runs, 23 stolen bases, and a near 1.200 OPS as a three-year starter before becoming the second overall pick in the 2023 draft. He won the Golden Spikes award for best amateur player in the nation, led the Tigers to a national championship alongside teammate Paul Skenes, and inked a $9M signing bonus – the second largest in draft history – all in six months.

He's a five-tool player, and fortunately the tools that translate most directly to fantasy are the strongest in his belt. He makes a ton of contact and has elite plate discipline that forces pitchers to either beat him in the zone or issue him a free pass, both of which constitute a double-plus grade on the hit tool when combined. His average exit velocity of 96 mph and 90th percentile exit velocity of 110 mph were the best among all college draftees, albeit with aluminum. His batted balls are at optimal angles as evidenced by an eye-popping 26% barrel rate with LSU.

The Nationals promoted him twice in rapid succession following the draft with stops in the Florida Complex and Low-A Fredericksburg prior to his ultimate destination with Double-A Harrisburg. Over half of his 159 professional plate appearances were at Double-A where his overall slash took a beating and turned some prospectors away, but he was largely inhibited by an extreme pitcher's park and a well below-average BABIP that exaggerated his struggles.

My take:

If you find yourself changing your evaluation of a player significantly based on an 85 plate appearance sample, it's probably best to re-evaluate your process. We indeed learn more about every player every day but I'm inclined to believe the largest sample size we have – his college performance and associated underlying data – and more or less disregard the results that arrived while adjusting to three new teams within weeks of each other.

Crews has nearly everything fantasy players covet. His situation is less attractive than those of Langford, Caminero, Holliday, and Chourio, and his debut didn't live up to the expectations that were set for him, but he's still an elite fantasy prospect.

---

7. Evan Carter, OF, Texas Rangers (Tier 2)

Age: 20

Level(s): CPX, AA, AAA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
513	0.288	0.413	0.450	21.6%	15.8%	13	26	0.362

Why he's here:

Carter featured at 13th on my post draft prospect rankings that were released in late July before his debut with the Rangers. His time with the big league club solidified a lot of what was already known: he has remarkable zone awareness, makes contact in the zone at a solid clip, and has enough speed to impact the game on the basepaths and in the field. It's a nice bonus to see skills translate against major league competition even if it occurred in a meager sample.

Most would be tempted to push Carter aggressively based on the success he had to conclude the regular season and during the Rangers' World Series run, but his performance was not without some red flags. He struck out in 32% of his plate appearances after promotion as a byproduct of his zone contact rate shrinking to 75% from 91% in Triple-A. He found difficulty against both breaking pitches and lefties, famously going 0-10 against southpaws at the big-league level after struggling to contend with them in both 2022 and 2023. He ultimately outperformed his xWOBA by nearly a full 100 points.

These are not irreparable issues. It's important to note he's only recently turned 21 years old and the paint is far from dry on his profile. He has the frame, pedigree, and underlying skill set to be a strong fantasy asset for many years, but there are more apparent warning signs for Carter than there are for the players that precede him.

My take:

Carter has the strappings of an excellent points league player. His discernment maximizes his ability to do damage and provides floor in the event of a slump. His team context is stellar. He can likely be moved for more than he's valued here based simply on his performance on the biggest stage in a very small sample. Shrewd managers will take advantage of the disconnect between his most likely outcome and the return he is probable to fetch.

8. Walker Jenkins, OF, Minnesota Twins (Tier 2)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'3
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
115	0.362	0.417	0.571	12.2%	7.8%	3	6	0.398

Why he's here:

As a North Carolina prep, Jenkins struck fear into opposing coaches such that he was the recipient of the Bonds treatment on more than one occasion in his final high school circuit run. The Twins opted for him with the fifth pick after the top three collegiate players in the class came off the board and the Tigers selected Max Clark. He had only been available primarily because of the hamate injury that held him out from competition throughout the early summer and led to fewer live scouting looks.

Jenkins has the best combination of hit and power of any prep player in the 2023 draft class. His smooth lefty swing is quiet and concise and he doesn't have to sacrifice power to preserve his mechanics. He's already big and is still filling out which should portend further power gains as he progresses through the minor league ranks. The prevailing thought is that his above-average speed should remain at least average as he grows, though his fantasy value is tied largely to the stick and not his legs. As an advanced high school pick, Jenkins should not be subject to the typical lengthy incubation period most teens require before debuting with the big league club.

He's drawn Larry Walker comps for his size and handedness, and while comps can be dangerous, he has a prototypical offensive skill set for a corner outfielder. His short post-draft sample was impressive, though his exit velocities didn't wow immediately which may be a lingering after-effect of his hand injury.

My take:

High school draftees are a notoriously difficult demographic to pin down. Development is not linear and placing tool grades on prep hit and power is uniquely challenging due to a lack of underlying data combined with vast disparities in quality of pitching. Jenkins and Clark were valued similarly in my post-draft top 100, but Jenkins has separated himself as the clear top offensive talent from the high school ranks. Jenkins would be a first-overall

candidate in most years but this class happened to include three of the best collegiate prospects of the last several cycles.

---

9. Jordan Lawlar, SS, Arizona Diamondbacks (Tier 2)

Age: 20
Level(s): AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'1
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
490	0.278	0.378	0.496	20.6%	11.4%	20	36	0.320

Why he's here:

An early-season slump in May that produced a .188/.290/.300 slash line masks what was otherwise an outright dominant campaign from Jordan Lawlar. Sure, it came in the notoriously hitter-friendly Pacific Coast and Texas leagues, but his under-the-hood metrics took a step forward from 2022 both in terms of contact ability and power output. He racked up 20 home runs and 36 stolen bases in 40 attempts over 105 games.

Drafted sixth overall as the third prepster (and second high school shortstop) off the board in 2021, Lawlar has blossomed into a very promising offensive talent and reached the Majors after just 207 games in the minors. He suffered a labrum tear in his left shoulder after recording a measly six plate appearances following the draft and later missed time due to a fractured scapula resulting from a hit-by-pitch. He came back healthy in 2022 and has remained so through the conclusion of this year, allowing him to display his tools without interruption.

Lawlar has demonstrated proficiency against fastballs, including high-velocity fastballs, but exhibits some difficulties with chase on breaking pitches. It's probable that he experiences choppy waters early in his major league tenure (beyond the minuscule 34 plate appearance sample we already have) as a result. His athleticism provides ceiling potential commensurate with his draft pedigree.

My take:

Lawlar profiles strongest in rotisserie formats where his stolen base impact is felt fully, but with the gulf in value between points and roto formats dissipating under new rule

changes he's very attractive regardless of league settings. It's unclear whether he'll start next season with Arizona despite making his debut late in 2023 and he may not return value immediately, but it's enticing to imagine him alongside Corbin Carroll atop the lineup in short order.

---

10. Jasson Dominguez, OF, New York Yankees (Tier 2)

Age: 20
Level(s): AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 5'9
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: S/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
544	0.265	0.377	0.425	24.4%	15.3%	15	40	0.340

Why he's here:

The Jasson Dominguez story has been told a thousand times over: the prince who was promised, the overrated bust, the youngster making surprisingly easy work of Double- and Triple-A competition, and his latest chapter as the late-season spark of hope in what was otherwise a lost season in New York. It's supremely unfortunate that he suffered a torn UCL in September and was forced to undergo an internal brace procedure projected to hold him out for nine or ten months.

What Dominguez accomplished in 2023 is worth celebrating, narratives aside. He won't turn 21 until February of 2024 and nearly went 20-40 in 577 plate appearances across Double-A, Triple-A, and MLB. He's better as a lefty but has been passable against southpaws in the right-handed batter's box while exhibiting plate discipline and zone contact proficiency from both sides. His value as a runner is often underrated simply because he doesn't look like he should be able to move as well as he does, and while stolen bases aren't quite as valuable in points formats, they proved to be a reliable scoring source as a result of the league-wide attempt rate spiking in 2023.

Dominguez featured at 39th on my post-draft list before his blistering July and August. He moves up in the wake of several graduations and after seeing all of his tools coalesce into surface performance against advanced competition.

My take:

He will never be what Yankees fans unwisely preordained him to be, and that's okay. He's still developing, performing well, and has the peripheral metrics to support it. His home park is a plus that gets washed out a bit by his UCL injury, but he should pay dividends when healthy.

---

11. Paul Skenes, RHP, Pittsburgh Pirates (Tier 2)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A, AA
Height: 6'6
Weight: 235 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
6.2	5.40	1.51	1.05	35.7%	7.1%	15%	64%	0%

Why he's here:

Touted as the best college pitching prospect since Strasburg, Skenes has the stuff to make good on the reputation. Under the tutelage of legendary pitching coach Wes Johnson, Skenes honed his craft into a broader and more lethal arsenal at LSU. He has premium, upper 90s fastball velocity that he regularly maintained well beyond the 80-pitch threshold. His slider is double-plus based on its velocity and movement profile, and his curveball and seldom-used changeup both project as average or better when all is said and done.

Skenes' six-foot-six, 235-pound frame is ideal for handling a starting pitcher's workload and is integral to generating velocity. His delivery is smooth and effortless. His combination of size and repeatability should mean less risk of injury, but he had a heavy workload in back-to-back collegiate seasons that took some tread off the proverbial tire. It was perplexing that the Pirates asked Skenes to pitch at all following a campaign that totaled 122.2 innings.

Fortunately, their risky business only lasted 6.2 innings and 102 total pitches spread across five appearances, which could have been in service of acquiring additional data for their internal models after the draft or for biomechanics to be leveraged in off-season training. His bloated 5.40 ERA was the result of a single blow-up start and should be entirely dismissed based on the sample size alone.

My take:

It takes a lot to rank a pitcher this highly, let alone one with such a diminutive professional track record. Skenes checks all the boxes for a frontline starter: a frame capable of handling innings, a four-pitch mix with two plus or better offerings at present, an exceptional college track record, and proximity. There isn't much use in letting Skenes fester in the minor leagues. Use the bullets while you have them.

---

12. Coby Mayo, 1B, Baltimore Orioles (Tier 2)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 6'5
Weight: 230 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
614	0.290	0.410	0.563	24.1%	15.1%	29	5	0.353

Why he's here:

A shrewd bit of draft pool management allowed Mike Elias and company to lure Mayo away from a verbal commitment to play at the University of Florida with a $1.75M signing bonus in the fourth round of the 2020 draft. They accrued the savings to do so by opting for Heston Kjerstad at number two overall ahead of higher-regarded prospects like Austin Martin, Asa Lacy, and Emerson Hancock, a move that feels savvy in retrospect. Baltimore's front office has been planting seeds and waiting to reap the harvest for some time now and it all seems to be blossoming faster than anticipated.

Mayo is poised to be an integral piece of their core moving forward. It's most likely that he will take over first base duties given his defensive limitations and the glut of infielders currently projected to reside on the left side of the infield. Typically a right/right first base profile comes with a higher offensive burden of proof, but Mayo has proven himself beyond a reasonable doubt.

At a hulking 6'5, Mayo has more than enough natural power to accommodate the offensive needs of the position. Critics don't love the swing visually but results carry far more weight until it's proven there is a distinct need to change, and his mechanics aren't a deterrent to unlocking impact or bat-to-ball at present. His 90th percentile exit velocity of 107 mph is well above MLB average and his zone contact at Triple-A was 82% over 280

plate appearances. He's a reverse-splits bat which reduces the risk he finds himself in a platoon.

My take:

Rostering Mayo presents the opportunity to partake in what appears to be the next great MLB dynasty should a true baseball dynasty ever exist. He walks at a solid clip and isn't necessarily a three-true-outcomes hitter as he's maintained excellent batting averages and OBPs throughout his minor league tenure and poured in doubles. His calling card is the long ball and there should be ample points via his run and RBI contribution at the big-league level.

---

13. Roman Anthony, OF, Boston Red Sox (Tier 2)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
491	0.272	0.403	0.466	24.2%	17.5%	14	16	0.351

Why he's here:

Anthony was one of the biggest prospect breakouts this year, only surpassed by Jackson Holliday as former prep selections who made enormous jumps across industry lists. His path for doing so was a little unorthodox; his 42-game sample with low-A Salem produced a seemingly paltry .693 OPS and yet, on the back of his impressive underlying metrics, he was promoted to Greenville, where he went on to scorch pitching to the tune of a .294/.412/.569 slash. He'll start next year in Double-A with an eye toward the majors by the end of the season.

The Red Sox continued their recent tradition of signing second-round picks to first-round money when they took Anthony at 79th overall, inking him with a $2.5M signing bonus. He has a tall, projectable frame that is already very muscular for a 19-year-old and a picturesque left-handed swing that generates tremendous rotational force. His 90th percentile exit velocity already grades as plus. Although clocked as an average runner, he should stick in center field at the major league level by virtue of his jumps and routes and could play above-average corner outfield defense if he fills out and loses a step.

His blemishes are few and correctable; he hits the ball on the ground too often and has difficulty with left-handed breaking pitches, both of which are common for young players and are considered relatively simple to iron out.

My take:

Move over Marcelo Mayer, there's a new top prospect in Boston. Anthony is as exciting as they come and projects as a true five-tool player at the next level. The window to buy shut a few months ago, but I would try again should he get off to a slow start in Portland next year as many fantasy managers weigh early-season slumps far too heavily.

T I E R 3

14. James Wood, OF, Washington Nationals (Tier 3)

Age: 20
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'6
Weight: 240 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
549	0.262	0.353	0.520	31.5%	11.8%	26	18	0.350

Why he's here:

Tall prospects are all the rage these days. An ensemble of James Wood, Eury Perez, Andrew Painter, Elly De La Cruz, and Jordan Walker would be a formidable basketball team, but luckily for us, they choose to display their outrageous talent on the diamond. Wood is listed at six-foot-six, 240 lbs, but there is potential for even more growth given his age. He just celebrated his 21st birthday in September and has already reached Double-A Harrisburg in his third season as a professional.

All of that height comes with long levers. They help Wood generate double-plus power, but can also lead to whiff problems by way of a larger zone and a longer swing. Wood has already made some adjustments to shorten his bat path, though the benefits haven't yet

paid dividends. He struck out in 34% of plate appearances in Double-A because of those levers combined with difficulties identifying and contacting spin.

Wood's huge upside remains. While he's had his share of struggles recently, he's still just 21 years old and is learning to contend with advanced, upper-level pitching. The jump from High-A to Double-A is the biggest in the minors and it doesn't help that Harrisburg is a very pitcher-friendly park.

My take:

I had Wood at six in my post-draft update as he'd just wrapped his first month in Double-A. Others have leapfrogged him as the possibility that he'll run K rates at or above 30% annually has grown. On the other hand, he has freakish raw power and more speed than meets the eye, making him a rare candidate to run lofty slugging percentages and contribute on the basepaths.

---

15. Colt Keith, 2B, Detroit Tigers (Tier 3)

Age: 22
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 211 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
577	0.306	0.380	0.552	21.0%	10.4%	27	3	0.351

Why he's here:

A fifth-round pick in 2020 as a Mississippi high school prospect, Keith got off to a smashing start in his professional career by progressing to High-A in his first season. He returned to West Michigan in 2022 with aplomb, compiling a .301/.370/.544 slash before going down with a shoulder injury sustained sliding back into first on a pick-off attempt in June. He made up for missed time in the Arizona Fall League, appearing in 19 games and OPSing over 1.000. He recently signed a six year, $28.6M extension with the Tigers that should guarantee he starts the year with the big league club.

Though Keith may not have been considered an elite prospect entering the 2023 season, he made leaps on both sides of the ball that translated to on-field performance. His 90th percentile exit velocity in Triple-A was better than the MLB average as a 22-year-old and

he limited strikeouts with strong zone contact and chase figures. He's a legitimate offensive threat who will join a lineup that's only improving with the post-hype breakouts of Riley Greene and Spencer Torkelson.

Defense was a big developmental focus this season. A lot was made of his lacking defensive ability, especially following an AFL stint riddled with miscues, but he's progressed and could have a shot to stick at third base. He played more second as the season wore on and org-mate Jace Jung recently took up third in this year's AFL, and those dynamics combined with his new contract signals that the Tigers are preparing him to take over duties at the keystone.

My take:

While Keith's home park will suppress offense to a degree, his bat is legitimate. He has no troubles with pitchers of either handedness, has plenty of thump, and should hit near the middle of the Tigers' lineup. He should be the opening day second baseman in Detroit.

---

16. Colson Montgomery, SS, Chicago White Sox (Tier 3)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
294	0.287	0.455	0.484	19.0%	19.0%	8	2	0.352

Why he's here:

A two-sport high school star who drew interest from the University of Indiana for both baseball and basketball, Montgomery is an outlier athlete with an exceptional aptitude for hitting. He passed on the opportunity to play for the flagship collegiate program in his home state and instead joined the White Sox as the 22nd overall pick in the 2021 draft. He has since progressed to Double-A with dominant performances at each stop along the way despite missing significant time with injury throughout his minor league tenure.

Montgomery entered the year with an oblique strain and later exacerbated the injury when his back locked up on a swing, delaying his season by two and a half months. Typically a muscle strain for a 21-year-old that occurred 5 months ago would be a

non-story, but he was still wearing a back brace in games when I saw him live at the Arizona Fall League. It didn't appear to inhibit his performance upon return, though it's worth keeping an eye on as the off-season progresses — especially without a solid option at shortstop on the big-league roster.

All of Montgomery's plate appearances are competitive. He has exceptional zone awareness, leading to strikeout figures that only narrowly outpace his rate of free passes. He has a simple swing that generates above-average power at present with the opportunity for more to manifest in games as he matures.

My take:

He may not ever be a burner on the basepaths, but Montgomery's combination of size, barrel control, and athleticism should mean plenty of home runs and doubles in the middle of the White Sox order. Without a true shortstop on the roster, it's possible Montgomery gets the nod on opening day and doesn't look back. His zone recognition and limited chase rates give him a high floor for the format.

---

17. Chase DeLauter, OF, Cleveland Guardians (Tier 3)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 235 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
242	0.355	0.417	0.528	12.4%	9.5%	5	6	0.390

Why he's here:

There was a moment in time when DeLauter was in consideration as a number one overall pick preceding the 2022 draft but a broken foot cut his college campaign short and he ultimately went 16th as the highest selection in James Madison program history. He spent most of this year rehabbing from surgery and returned to play in June at the complex before progressing to High-A and subsequently Double-A.

DeLauter is one of the most physically impressive players on any diamond he steps on. He moves well for his frame and leverages his size to efficiently generate power. While he has a short track record both as an amateur and a professional, the results have been

superb. He earned the Best Pro Prospect designation for his exploits in the Cape Cod league, accrued a career .402/.520/.715 slash line at James Madison, and recently completed a stint in the Arizona Fall League in which he posted a .914 OPS with 5 home runs in 23 games.

Much ado about nothing lately regarding DeLauter's swing is missing the point: it's fundamentally sound through the point of contact and should not be cause for concern until the results stop. His zone contact and overall contact metrics show no ill-effects from the scissor swing (88% and 86%, respectively), and in fact point toward plus bat-to-ball ability. Plenty of previous stars have featured an abbreviated follow-through (Mike Trout et al.), and it clearly isn't impacting his ability to get to power in games. He has an elite bat path that totally mitigates any perceived detriment caused by the finish.

My take:

This ranking is meant to be aggressive relative to the industry. I've seen a lot of DeLauter while video scouting and had the opportunity to catch him live in several games at the AFL. He's passed the eye test on every occasion and the underlying numbers support DeLauter's case as a high-contact, high-power points league star.

All of DeLauter's track record is a small sample. We've yet to see him against upper-level pitching, his numbers are propped up to some degree by a high BABIP, and he's had some issues with lefties on a minuscule sample. Those are the only things keeping me from placing him even higher.

---

18. Jackson Jobe, RHP, Detroit Tigers (Tier 3)

Age: 20
Level(s): CPX, A, A+, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
64.0	2.81	3.15	0.98	32.6%	2.3%	16%	70%	16%

Why he's here:

The Tigers famously took Jobe third overall in the 2021 draft ahead of prep superstars Marcelo Mayer and Jordan Lawlar in a move that caused uproar among the Detroit

fanbase. After two and a half years, that decision has proven the vitriol aimed at the front office was misguided. Prep pitching is inherently risky due to long development timelines and possibility of injury, but Jobe looks like perhaps the best domestic pitching prospect in all of baseball after two minor league seasons.

Jobe entered the season with a back ailment that held him out until June, and while any core injury is concerning, I would much rather see lumbar spine inflammation on the injury report than hear his elbow or shoulder are barking. It limited him to just 16 starts and 64 innings of work in which he walked an infinitesimal six batters and struck out 84. His stuff was uninhibited by the injury and his command was superb.

He returned to game action with an impressive arsenal that stymied offenses across Low-A, High-A, and Double-A by season's end. It features a fastball that sits 96 mph, a cut fastball he introduced in the fall league, a 3,000 RPM slider, and a changeup. At just 20 years old with a six-foot-two frame and a high-90s heater, Jobe's ceiling potential is evident both in the stat sheet and on the hill.

My take:

A strikeout-minus-walk rate of over 30% is impressive no matter how you slice it. That he ended the season at Double-A and was then sent to the fall league to build innings signals to me that he could be a quick mover and find himself in Detroit soon. He has a full array of offerings and his arsenal is big-league quality right now.

---

19. Samuel Basallo, 1B, Baltimore Orioles (Tier 3)

Age: 18
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 180 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
483	0.313	0.402	0.551	19.5%	12.6%	20	12	0.363

Why he's here:

Following the money is often good process when it comes to international prospects. This is especially true when a front office commits to the largest signing bonus to an

international signee in franchise history as the Orioles did when they paid Basallo a hefty $1.3M to lure him away from the Yankees.

Basallo has since blossomed into one of the most intriguing offensive talents in the minors. He's physically matured and now stands approximately six-foot-four, 230 lbs, and is an imposing figure in the left-handed batter's box. He produces prodigious exit velocities that manifest to game power already and he's making more contact than notable young mashers Lazaro Montes and Xavier Isaac. His actions as a hitter are mechanically sound after the Orioles made quieting his front leg load a development priority.

There is some swing-and-miss in Basallo's game at present driven by swing decision miscues. He hasn't yet shown deficiencies in hitting lefties, though he's certainly better with the platoon advantage, but identifying spin from left-handed pitching will be a point of emphasis as he advances through the minor league ranks.

My take:

The top two first-base prospects on this list are both Orioles and neither has played the position as their primary defensive home in the minor leagues. Baltimore has an embarrassment of riches across the diamond in their system and they're bound to make a move to prioritize the big league rotation. It's unclear how Basallo will figure in between Mayo and Rutschman at his two likeliest positions, but this is a bat for which you prioritize plate appearances.

He's 19 years old with double-plus power and the potential to play at least part-time at a scarce position. This placement could feel conservative by midseason next year.

---

20. Cade Horton, RHP, Chicago Cubs (Tier 3)

Age: 21
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 211 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
88.1	2.65	2.89	1.00	33.5%	7.7%	17%	67%	9%

Why he's here:

The Cubs surprised some folks when they took a college arm with a near-5.00 ERA and less than 55 total innings under his belt at number seven overall. A truly special College World Series run that included a record 13 strikeouts in the CWS finals vaulted Horton up draft boards despite a limited track record and previous Tommy John injury. He has been nails since his selection, climbing three levels in 2023 while posting huge strikeout numbers at each stop.

Craig Breslow, former Cubs Assistant General Manager recently anointed as the newest GM for the Boston Red Sox, superintended an overhaul of Chicago's pitching development program that produced breakout seasons from Justin Steele, Javier Assad, Jordan Wicks, Jackson Ferris, and – of course – Cade Horton. There are questions about continuity following Breslow's departure, however, Horton figures to be one of the less needy development projects in their system as his arsenal is already advanced.

Horton's fastball sits mid-90s with cut and he pairs it with a mid-80s slider that features devastating vertical break and depth. Both pitches are at least plus at present and could play in a rotation today. He rounds out his repertoire with a curveball and a changeup that each project as average.

My take:

As a former two-sport high school star and two-way player for Oklahoma, Horton is a premium athlete whose physicality is apparent on the mound. He's close to big league ready today with two pitches that could make him a number 2 starter with time. His biggest hurdle will be building up to a starter's workload as he hasn't yet proven he can handle a significant volume of innings in a single season. The Cubs may ask him to do so as a part of their rotation as early as mid-season next year.

---

21. Adael Amador, 2B, Colorado Rockies (Tier 3)

Age: 20
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 6'0
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: S/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
322	0.287	0.380	0.495	11.5%	12.1%	12	15	0.293

Why he's here:

The Rockies nabbed Amador for $1.5M as the headliner of their 2019 international class, way back when the J2 misnomer actually represented signing day on July second. Billed at the time as an athletic, switch-hitting shortstop with potential for a plus hit and average power combination, that premonition has largely come true. Amador boasts one of the best hit tools in affiliated baseball, evidenced by his ability to maintain an overall contact rate of 89% and zone contact rate of 94% while climbing his way to Double-A as a 20-year-old.

There's something to be said about the quality of pitching in the lower levels of the minor leagues, namely that it isn't particularly good and especially so on the command side, but it's impressive to walk more than you strike out over a 300 plate appearance sample regardless. Amador's combination of hit and patience provides him with a steady floor outcome and bodes well for his future as a top-of-the-order table setter. He's equally proficient from both sides of the plate, though his power comes primarily from the left at present.

Amador's home park should be a boon to his BABIP and provide extra base opportunities. Though his power is average at best, he has posted max exit velocities around 110 mph and can do damage when he gets his pitch. He profiles as an accumulator at a shallow position with less bust risk than other players his age.

My take:

Chicks and baseball analysts alike dig the long ball. In reality, there are a lot of avenues for becoming a valuable fantasy player. Amador's path will not be paved with towering home runs and huge exit velocities, but the fundamentals of hitting will carry him through.

---

22. Matt Shaw, 2B, Chicago Cubs (Tier 3)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 5'11
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
170	0.357	0.400	0.618	14.7%	5.3%	8	15	0.384

Why he's here:

The Cape Cod league is a fantastic place to focus your attention on the next crop of elite college talent, and more specifically the award winners from that league. Over the last few years, the Cape MVP and Outstanding Pro Prospect award recipients have been littered with players who went on to be exceptional minor league talents, including Tommy Troy, Chase DeLauter, Austin Wells, Nick Gonzales, and the latest MVP winner – Matt Shaw.

It's an advantageous circuit to scout for two primary reasons: 1) It's a collection of very good college talent competing against each other, and 2) they use wood bats. It can be difficult to trust college batted ball data at times, because aluminum bats inflate exit velocities and some college programs appear to juice numbers with hot radar guns and trackman systems. Players that shine on the Cape and produce similar power numbers (both surface and underlying) with wood bats get a leg up in my evaluation process.

Shaw tore up the Cape and his underlying data at Maryland stacked up well against other elite college talents. His in-zone contact was near 90% and he had some of the best high-end exit velocities in the class. He hit the ball at ideal angles with regularity, carrying a barrel rate in the same neighborhood as Kyle Teel, Yohandy Morales, and Chase Davis. There's some concern with regard to his swing decisions as an amateur that carried over into pro ball, but they're negated to a certain extent by damage potential.

It doesn't look like Matt Shaw has ever stumbled in his baseball career, Cape or otherwise. He set Maryland's career home run record while compiling a .320/.413/.623 triple-slash. He won the Cape Cod batting title en route to his MVP designation. He had one of the strongest debuts of any draftee, ending the year with a short but dominant vignette at Double-A.

My take:

There's a lot of value in proven college draftees, especially when they continue to prove themselves. The demerits assigned to him in advance of the draft, most prominently that he played in the Big 10 instead of a traditional baseball powerhouse conference, are white noise. Matt Shaw is a very good hitter who could contribute to a burgeoning Cubs team sooner than most expect.

TIER 4

23. Colton Cowser, OF, Baltimore Orioles (Tier 4)

Age: 23
Level(s): AAA, MLB
Height: 6'2
Weight: 220 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
399	0.300	0.417	0.520	26.8%	16.0%	17	9	0.390

Why he's here:

Looking back, the first round of the 2021 draft was loaded. Players taken after Cowser include Jordan Lawlar, Andrew Painter, Matt McLain, Colson Montgomery, Gavin Williams, and personal favorite Sal Frelick. Cowser ultimately signed for $4.9M as the fifth overall pick, nearly $1.2M under slot as part of a broader trend in Baltimore to save money early in the first round and redeploy it to buy players down later in the draft. He drew undue skepticism because he played at Sam Houston State and not a traditional baseball powerhouse, but the Orioles have been very shrewd in identifying undervalued talent in the draft.

Cowser's minor league track record is stellar. He's managed a .298/.420/.489 slash with 38 home runs and 34 stolen bases in 1,174 plate appearances, and we've seen him tap into more game power as he's progressed through the upper minors. He could still work to elevate the ball and maximize impact – he's a line drive and ground ball hitter primarily – but he hits the ball hard consistently. His 105 mph 90th percentile exit velocity paired with an 80% zone contact rate and 24% chase rate should translate to above-average production.

It didn't immediately come together in his first major league stint. He compiled a meager .115/.286/.148 slash in 77 plate appearances and struck out at a 29% clip. All of this, perhaps other than the strikeout rate, was uncharacteristic and a very small sample. It should not be the expectation moving forward, though he could require an adjustment period similar to former top prospects Riley Greene and Spencer Torkelson.

My take:

The most opportune moment to sell a prospect is immediately before they make their debut when the crescendo of hype is at its peak. The best time to buy is when they

struggle in their first taste. That moment has arrived for Colton Cowser. He has plenty of hit, power, and speed to be a contributor in a potent Baltimore lineup that is only improving.

---

24. Curtis Mead, 2B, Tampa Bay Rays (Tier 4)

Age: 22
Level(s): CPX, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'0
Weight: 171 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
292	0.287	0.377	0.502	16.8%	12.3%	9	4	0.318

Why he's here:

Prospect fatigue is part of the territory when it comes to Curtis Mead, especially following a lukewarm major league debut that concluded in an 89 OPS+. Mead has been playing affiliated professional baseball since his age-16 season with Adelaide in the Australian Baseball League, where his potential as an offensive threat was already apparent. He later signed with the Phillies for $200K where he spent two seasons before being dealt to the Rays in exchange for Cristopher Sánchez. Teams should always be wary when Tampa Bay comes knocking for players in the DSL or CPX.

Mead's batted ball numbers took a step back after a dominant 2022 that was cut short by a right elbow strain. It's possible that injury has sapped some of his impact with the bat, but he still profiles as an above-average offensive player who will man a variety of infield positions. His 90th percentile exit velocity of 105 mph is a few ticks above MLB average and his in-zone contact rate of 88% was stellar.

He doesn't profile as a league-winner, but among prospects in this range he's a great bet to return value. He has limited strikeouts throughout his minor league tenure by minimizing zone whiff and making average swing decisions while maintaining solid walk rates, providing considerable floor for the format. The Rays may ease him in via platoons, as they are known to do, but Mead is not a long-term platoon risk.

My take:

Team context and an underwhelming debut in 2023 have depressed Mead's public perception, but he remains one of the best hitting prospects in baseball. He should contribute in some capacity next year, but I would bank on full return occurring in 2025 and beyond.

---

25. Noelvi Marte, 3B, Cincinnati Reds (Tier 4)

Age: 21
Level(s): Rk, AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'1
Weight: 216 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
399	0.279	0.358	0.454	17.5%	10.8%	11	18	0.316

Why he's here:

There's a tiny little ballpark in downtown Cincinnati just off of East Third Street and Barry Larkin Way where baseballs find seats beyond the outfield fence with more regularity than any other stadium. That's where Noelvi Marte will be playing 81 games a year in a burgeoning Reds offense, making for one of the most attractive team and ballpark contexts of any prospect on this list. He's been a known entity since the Mariners signed him for $1.55M in July of 2018 and has remained a top-100 prospect for the last several years.

Marte's minor league tenure was marked by streakiness. Two separate evaluators who watch him in different weeks could walk away with entirely incongruent evaluations as he struggles to find his footing or locks in to carry an offense. His performance in aggregate has been strong, culminating in a .282/.367/.467 triple-slash in over 1,700 plate appearances. He's grown considerably stockier since his signing, helping him unlock above-average underlying power (106 mph 90th percentile exit velo) that could portend multiple 30+ home run seasons for the Reds.

He made his major league debut on August 19th and collected 114 total at-bats, narrowly maintaining his prospect eligibility. He demonstrated strong zone contact and passable chase while with the big league club, though his strong debut was buoyed by a .380 BABIP that outpaced both his minor league figure and the league-wide BABIP by a fair margin.

My take:

Marte faced unfair criticism about his frame over the last two years, all of which distracted from his true offensive output. While he'll certainly move off of shortstop, I'd rather have the production at third base, and he'll be in a great situation to contribute immediately in 2024. The Reds ballpark, an improving lineup, and his proximity – already playing in MLB – add logs to Marte's fire.

---

26. Andrew Painter, RHP, Philadelphia Phillies (Tier 4)

Age: 20
Level(s): N/A - Injury
Height: 6'7
Weight: 215 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Why he's here:

A healthy Andrew Painter wouldn't be on this list, instead he'd have been a large part of Philadelphia's rotation in 2023. Word broke in early March that Painter had been experiencing elbow tenderness following a Spring Training start which turned out to be a UCL sprain that couldn't be remedied by rest and rehab, ultimately leading to UCL repair surgery in July that will hold him out until 2025.

Painter's one full minor league season tallying 103.2 innings with 155 strikeouts and a 1.56 ERA rivaled the best statistical campaigns in Minor League history, including Madison Bumgarner's 2008 season (1.46 ERA, 164K, 141.2 IP) and Matt Cain's 2004 (2.67 ERA, 161K, 158.2 IP). He moved from Low-A to Double-A rapidly while maintaining his dominance, pitching to a sub-1.00 WHIP while striking out 11.8 or more batsmen per nine innings at all three stops. His combination of stuff and sterling command was unrivaled.

Painter's best pitch is his heater that sits in the mid-90s but can be dialed up to 101 mph and features rise generated by a 2,500 RPM spin rate. His secondary offerings trailed the fastball in terms of effectiveness, but he would confidently deploy a slider, curveball, and changeup, of which the most promising was the slider that projected as plus at the big league level.

My take:

Nobody on this list has more upward mobility than Andrew Painter. I had previously had him inside the top 10 as my number one pitching prospect but Tommy John is not riskless and the procedure will have delayed his debut by two years when all is said and done. If he comes back healthy with full command of his arsenal, the value of acquiring him now will be astronomical, especially in points formats.

---

27. Ricky Tiedemann, LHP, Toronto Blue Jays (Tier 4)

Age: 20
Level(s): CPX, A, AA, AAA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 220 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
44.0	3.68	1.68	1.23	44.1%	12.4%	16%	64%	5%

Why he's here:

Ricky Tiedemann is a good example of why it's nearly always worth paying attention to reports of dramatically improved velocity. There was buzz percolating around his name before he ever took the mound in a meaningful professional contest as word spread that his velocity and stuff had taken a leap forward with the Blue Jays. He proceeded to break out with a microscopic 2.17 ERA over 78.2 innings spread across three levels in 2022. He wasn't as highly regarded at draft time, ultimately going 91st overall in 2021, but his ascendance is a good corollary for how to discern which arms are benefiting most from professional pitching development.

Tiedemann's performance was superlative when healthy, though those stretches were scant. He battled both a shoulder ailment and biceps inflammation at different points throughout the year and managed just 62 innings between the regular season and a short fall league stint. Injury risk is the primary driver of his placement. His command was spotty as he worked back toward full health, especially during his rehab starts in late July and early August following the biceps issue.

The fall league saw Tiedemann pitch beyond the fifth inning and throw 70 or more pitches in three of his four appearances – a feat he had not accomplished all year prior. His strong

performance in those 18 innings netted him pitcher of the year honors but more importantly hinted toward entering the 2024 season at full health.

My take:

While his injury history is concerning, his trajectory toward health has been encouraging. His stuff remains intact and his command should return with added innings. His repertoire is devastating – I'd be remiss not to mention his 44% K-rate, the highest among all minor leaguers who completed at least 40 innings – and it's led by a trio of above-average offerings. His fastball sits 93-95 mph, touching 96 mph, while his sweeper and changeup registered called-strike-plus-whiff rates (CSW%) of 49% and 45% on small samples in statcast-enabled stadiums.

---

28. Emmanuel Rodriguez, OF, Minnesota Twins (Tier 4)

Age: 20
Level(s): A+
Height: 5'10
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
455	0.240	0.400	0.463	29.5%	20.2%	16	20	0.332

Why he's here:

Rodriguez joined the Twins by way of international free agency in 2019 but didn't make his professional debut until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. He managed 17 extra base hits including ten home runs, 2 triples, and 5 doubles in 153 plate appearances that year, demonstrating the pop we've become accustomed to over his short minor league tenure to date. His 2022 was cut short by a meniscus tear in his right leg, but he had catapulted himself into the top 100 conversation with an enormous power outburst to the tune of a .556 slugging percentage while walking more than he struck out.

This year was his most complete campaign and engendered a stark sense of division among evaluators. As one of the most passive players in all of affiliated baseball, Rodriguez only took the bat off of his shoulder for a little over a third of pitches thrown in his direction, a stunningly low figure especially for his age cohort that is typically chock full of aggressive players pressing to make something happen at the plate. His passivity is one of many characteristics that make him a rather polarizing player. His low swing rate

comes with a low chase rate, offering at just 15% of pitches outside of the zone, but also strongly contributes to his near 30% strikeout rate. A combined 49.7% of his plate appearances ended in a walk or a strikeout, a figure that led all minor leaguers (filtered to remove players with a K-rate north of 30% so as to avoid the Erick Pena types).

His leading tool is power. A 90th percentile exit velocity of 109 mph in 2023 would have placed him 12th among major league hitters. With enough speed remaining post-knee injury, Rodriguez could contribute 30 home runs and double-digit steals with regularity while posting sub-par batting averages but strong on-base percentages.

My take:

Rodriguez is already on the 40-man roster and spent the entirety of his season at High-A. He should be in AA early, and with some adjustments to approach – largely aimed at identifying his pitch in the zone and turning passivity into aggression – he could unleash huge home run totals en route to contributing at the big league level. His K-rate may scare some folks, and while it's possible he always runs a high 20% strikeout rate, I would be looking to acquire where I can.

---

29. Spencer Jones, OF, New York Yankees (Tier 4)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'6
Weight: 235 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
537	0.267	0.336	0.444	28.9%	9.1%	16	43	0.359

Why he's here:

Jones started his collegiate career as a two way player and was shelved for a significant amount of time after undergoing Tommy John surgery in 2020. He didn't become an everyday player until 2022 but the year he had was scintillating. He slashed .370/.460/.644 for an 1.104 OPS while putting 22 balls in play over 110 mph and smoking 45% of his batted balls over 100 mph. The Yankees took him at 25th overall later that summer.

His frame may lead you to believe that he's a plodder destined for relegation to first base where he would be an excellent target for throws across the diamond but his outlier athleticism for his frame will keep him in the outfield. Jones underwent testing with Loden Sports prior to the 2022 draft and measured as a 9 on their 1-10 scale, a composite score composed of measurements in Power, Quickness, and Speed. His score put him in the top 0.82% of all athletes. Even more impressive: he classified as a 9 in both Power and Speed, something only 0.22% of athletes accomplish. There might not be a higher ceiling in minor league baseball.

While Jones carried a near-30% strikeout rate this year, it isn't a contact issue. In fact, Jones' overall contact percentage improved as the months wore on before regressing slightly once at Double-A in September. His swing decisions are below-average, but he also has less experience as an everyday hitter than most collegiate draftees as a result of his Tommy John surgery and rehab.

My take:

Hard to find a better ballpark for a guy who hits the ball as hard as Spencer Jones. He's an 80 athlete at his size, and even though I'm not always a bet-on-the-athlete guy, there are a lot of reasons to believe it'll come together for him. The AL East will have a big problem If his swing decisions improve by even a half grade and he starts hitting the ball out front in the air.

---

30. Kyle Manzardo, 1B, Cleveland Guardians (Tier 4)

Age: 22
Level(s): CPX, AAA
Height: 6'0
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
415	0.236	0.337	0.464	19.3%	13.3%	17	1	0.253

Why he's here:

One of just two prospects from Idaho I can name by memory (the other being Zach Penrod of the Boston Red Sox), Manzardo was selected in the second round of the 2021 draft on the back of a dazzling junior campaign at Washington State that culminated in a .366/.437/.640 triple-slash. He had previously impressed in the Northwoods League, a summer collegiate wood-bat league akin to the Cape Cod circuit, reinforcing the

small-sample performance with the Cougars the season prior and assuaging fears that his bat may not translate beyond aluminum bats. He went on to win Rays prospect of the year honors from Baseball America in his first full professional season.

Manzardo's 2023 numbers don't sketch an accurate picture of the player he is nor the performance we've come to expect. He spent much of the summer dealing with a family matter that would distract even the most indomitable. Even so, he managed to improve his average exit velocity and position himself as the potential opening-day starter at first base in Cleveland. Beyond showing more promise as a power hitter, Manzardo's contact and plate discipline metrics were strong. He put the bat on 88% of pitches in the zone and managed a chase rate of just 24%. His swing is naturally geared for line drives and solid contact over maximizing pulled fly balls, but he has enough power to manage 25 or more home runs annually.

An interesting interview Manzardo gave during First Pitch Arizona revealed that he considers himself a low ball hitter with specific struggles against high velocity. The automated ball-strike system in Triple-A may have masked some of those issues as it produces a more restrictive and made high strikes harder to achieve.

My take:

He's a good hitter and he's knocking on the doorstep of a full-time role in a Guardians lineup that could be much improved with a swell of young talent. He makes a lot of strong contact against minor league pitching but may struggle as major league pitchers seek to exploit his self-confessed high fastball deficiency. His price is likely depressed based solely on surface-level performance. I'd be looking to acquire shares where I can.

---

31. Jackson Merrill, SS, San Diego Padres (Tier 4)

Age: 21
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 195 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
511	0.277	0.326	0.444	12.1%	6.8%	15	15	0.289

Why he's here:

This is a story of projectability. Merrill, a former under-slot first round pick in the 2021 draft, is a data darling whose six-foot-three frame leaves plenty to dream on. While his surface level production doesn't scream future star – he posted an OPS that starts with seven in 2023 – his underlying data is elite for his age and level.

Merrill's entire offensive operation is smooth and without superfluous movement, leading to exceptional bat-to-ball and barrel maneuverability. His 88% zone contact and 83% overall contact rates are elite and come with stellar bat speed, leading to top-end exit velocities that signal more power potential than his minor league totals suggest. His .289 BABIP is the product of a high ground ball rate, something he improved on significantly year-over-year (59% down to 40%), lending credence to the idea that he can adjust to lift the ball with regularity.

Aside from his inclination to hit the ball on the ground, the other area of opportunity in Merrill's offensive profile is declining to swing outside of the zone. His 30% chase rate in 2023 didn't hurt him in the strikeout column because he makes contact on just about everything he swings at, but it does lead to plenty of softly hit balls in play. Even so, his average and 90th percentile exit velocities remained above average.

My take:

Merrill is a high-floor, high-probability big leaguer who could make an impact as early as midseason in 2024. He'll join a Juan Soto-less lineup that still features plenty of offensive firepower in Fernando Tatis Jr., Manny Machado, and Xander Bogaerts, where he'll figure to find his way to the top third of the lineup. With a few small adjustments Merrill could be an outlier offensive talent.

---

32. Colt Emerson, SS, Seattle Mariners (Tier 4)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'1
Weight: 195 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
114	0.374	0.496	0.549	17.5%	14.9%	2	8	0.464

Why he's here:

Emerson was the first of three prepsters Seattle took in the first round of the 2023 draft at 22nd overall, followed shortly thereafter by outfielder Jonny Farmelo (31st) and shortstop Tai Peete (32nd). Though initially lauded as a high-floor high schooler (presuming there is such a designation) for his barrel control and sure-handed actions on defense as a member of USA Baseball's U18 team, he's already sparked optimism for more offensive firepower in the months following the draft and is much more physically imposing than reported this spring.

Immediately evident on video is his aforementioned otherworldly barrel control. He was by far the most consistent prep I video scouted this summer at making solid contact regardless of pitch location and adjusting his barrel position to drive the ball to all fields. He's exceptionally judicious and doesn't leverage his contact ability as a crutch for poor swing decisions, but rather maximizes his opportunity to do damage by staying within the zone, a skill that is rare for his age cohort. His underlying data was extremely encouraging; he made contact on 80% of total pitches he swung at and 86% on pitches in the zone, his 90th percentile exit velocity was already 105 mph at just 18 years old, and he chased at a 20% clip. It's clear he has room yet to grow – he's already taller and heavier than he was during his spring campaign – and that directionally alludes to the possibility of more power in the future.

Emerson's scintillating short sample between the Arizona Complex and Low-A Modesto made him a rapid post-draft riser. While his .464 batting average on balls in play is certainly unsustainable, Emerson's bat path is engineered for line drives (28% in 114 pro plate appearances, average among the 77 bats that appear here is 22%) and could lead to an above-average BABIP as he climbs the minor league ranks. He'll be treated to one of the most hitter-friendly environments in affiliated baseball at Funko Field as he ascends Seattle's system, creating a perfect storm for his stock to explode once at Everett.

My take:

I haven't been particularly shy about my affinity for Colt Emerson. He featured prominently in my post-draft FYPD ranks primarily because of how impressive I found his film. This is an aggressive placement, but I firmly believe more writers will have him in this range come next summer and that he has rare ingredients for his age that could make him a difference-maker in points formats.

---

33. Max Clark, OF, Detroit Tigers (Tier 4)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX, A

Height: 6'1
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
107	0.224	0.383	0.376	23.4%	19.6%	2	5	0.293

Why he's here:

Detroit surprised some by selecting Max Clark over Wyatt Langford and Walker Jenkins with the third overall pick in the 2023 draft. That's not to say Clark is undeserving of that caliber of pick, especially considering his future value as a defender, but consensus had him closer to fifth or sixth among draft prospects than top three. He's arguably the most famous of that bunch having amassed 381,000 instagram followers as a baseball sensation throughout his high school career.

Clark is likely the best defender and perhaps the best athlete of that group, too. He has true 70 grade wheels evidenced by a 100th percentile 60-yard dash among Perfect Game participants. He was up to 92 mph on the mound in a Perfect Game showcase, a 99th percentile reading among his class, with reports that he was later up to 94 mph. These raw tools give him a chance to be a dynamic center fielder whose glove gives him strong MLB likelihood.

Already displaying an advanced feel to hit, Clark has outstanding barrel control and regularly sprays line drives from foul pole to foul pole. His pre-swing operation is simple and concise and his bat stays through the zone for a long time, allowing him to make plenty of contact. His power is a question mark exacerbated by his future home park, but a 25 home run ceiling isn't out of the question especially as he works with professional hitting development. His 90th percentile exit velo was a smidge above MLB average in a very small sample post-draft.

It's anecdotal and may be a symptom of his massive social media exposure, but you'll be hard pressed to find a more diligent worker on and off the field. Make-up is a nebulous term thrown around haphazardly that can be hard to parse from prospect to prospect, however the unanimous praise from coaches and teammates is noteworthy especially when it comes to a young player entering his first stint in professional ball.

My take:

We're getting to the point where Clark may actually be underrated by most of the fantasy community based on a small sample in professional ball that was a product at least in part of a poor BABIP. The first few months of any pro career can be rocky and don't change

my opinion of him substantially. He projects for more value in rotisserie formats on the basis of speed, but I like his batting average floor as a compiler.

---

34. Heston Kjerstad, OF, Baltimore Orioles (Tier 4)

Age: 24
Level(s): AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'3
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
543	0.303	0.376	0.528	18.4%	7.7%	21	5	0.343

Why he's here:

It's hard to find many minor leaguers who had a better last 18 months than Kjerstad did, both from a statistical and human perspective. He battled back from a scary case of myocarditis that held him out from his first two professional seasons after being selected second overall in the 2020 draft to produce an OPS over 1.200 with Delmarva and over 1.000 in the AFL. Simply returning from a condition like that to play at all would be heartwarming and commendable, but his production since return has not wavered.

Kjerstad's unique case raises the question of what's more important with regard to age-to-level: actual age or baseball age. Does his being 24 years old outweigh the relative lack of professional track record and therefore require more aggressive regression when forecasting his future performance? My contention is that it should not and his surface production may be unnecessarily dinged in age-to-level projections.

Batted ball data exonerates Kjerstad in this regard. He hits the ball exceedingly hard and exceptionally often, boasting a 105 mph 90th percentile exit velocity and 88% zone contact rate in Triple-A. That power was on full display in the 2022 AFL Home Run Derby where he finished in second place behind Robert Perez Jr. of the Mariners. It's rare for that kind of impact to come with exemplary contact rates and batting average especially when you consider how many moving parts Kjerstad has in his swing.

He'll need to tighten up his swing decisions. He carried a 37% chase rate in 334 Triple-A plate appearances which led to a lot of soft contact. He's still relatively inexperienced as a professional, particularly for his age cohort, and out-of-zone swing is something that can still be improved upon.

My take:

We're all waiting with bated breath for the Orioles to make a splashy trade for major league pitching and open up roster spots for their young bats. Kjerstad has already accrued 30 plate appearances at the big league level and there's nothing left to prove in the minors. He has the ingredients to be a corner masher and, if you can believe it, Baltimore should be a very good lineup in very short order. I'm buying Kjerstad where I can get a discount.

---

35. Joey Ortiz, SS, Milwaukee Brewers (Tier 4)

Age: 24
Level(s): AAA, MLB
Height: 5'9
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
389	0.321	0.378	0.507	17.7%	8.2%	9	11	0.373

Why he's here:

The O's new ownership group wasted no time improving the big league club, sending Ortiz, DL Hall, and the compensatory pick for Gunnar Henderson's ROY campaign to Milwaukee in exchange for Corbin Burnes. Though he was often overlooked in the Orioles' system, Ortiz would rank as the number one prospect on this list for 11 organizations. He was sixth for Baltimore, exemplifying the absurd depth they have both before and after this trade.

Ortiz should be in the opening day lineup for Milwaukee. He's a plus defender and can play second, third, or shortstop with ease. It's likely the Brewers trade Adames before opening day. Offensively, Ortiz has stellar underlying power and contact numbers. His 90th percentile exit velocity outpaced boppers like Heston Kjerstad, George Valera, and Michael Busch, and his in-zone contact rate of 90% at AAA is elite.

He is hindered greatly by a sub-optimal chase rate. He offered at pitches outside of the zone 34% of the time, which often produced weak batted ball events with poor launch angles when combined with his bat-to-ball ability. If he's able to improve his swing

decisions by half a grade, he could see an outsized jump in in-game power output that would project him as an above-average to plus regular on the offensive side of the ball.

My take:

His price is likely depressed by an uninspiring short-sample MLB debut, but the ingredients point toward a strong contributor who holds equivalent value in real-life baseball. He should get substantial run with the big league club, and Miller Park (I know it's Am Fam now but I refuse) will be friendlier to him than Camden Yards.

---

36. Marcelo Mayer, SS, Boston Red Sox (Tier 4)

Age: 20
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 188 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
354	0.236	0.306	0.433	24.3%	9.0%	13	9	0.277

Why he's here:

The 2023 season proved rather tumultuous for Mayer who entered his third professional campaign with an eye toward the upper minors and an outside shot at contributing with the big league club late in the year. He was markedly improved in his second stint with High-A Greenville before scuffling with advanced pitching at the Double-A level and ultimately being shut down with a shoulder impingement in early August.

There is going to be a wide array of opinions on Mayer as a natural side effect of his injury and lackluster performance at Double-A. The real differentiator between camps is which you believe culpable for an out-of-character slash line: his injury or that he simply struggled to adjust as he made the jump between levels. The answer is probably a little of both; but Mayer's splits before and after his injury make a compelling argument for health as the primary culprit – his OPS fell .377 points, his K-rate ballooned to 26% after previously sitting around 21%, and his contact rate fell from 74% to 71%. That split of course includes the promotion to Portland, but given how stark the pre-post contrast is and the severity of his injury, it's fair to index toward his shoulder as the driver.

There's reason to believe Mayer can be an above-average contributor offensively on the left side of the infield. Amid his tepid 2023, he managed to improve his 90th percentile exit velocity by a mile and a half and his total contact rate by 5%, both of which are meaningful improvements. He has a picturesque, optimized swing that could be cleaned further with simplified actions between set and load that makes it easy to dream on 20-plus home runs and modest stolen base impact annually.

My take:

While I'm down on Mayer relative to where I was entering the season, I tend to fall in the camp that believes his injury was the primary cause for his depressed surface-level production. His underlying data remains strong, though his home ballpark may suppress offense to a degree. It's difficult to see a true star profile when all is said and done, but above-average regular is within the realm of possibility.

---

37. Drew Gilbert, OF, New York Mets (Tier 4)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 5'9
Weight: 195 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
513	0.289	0.381	0.487	18.9%	11.3%	18	12	0.332

Why he's here:

Gilbert is the kind of player both new-age data-heavy analysts and old-school hard-nosed evaluators can appreciate, a weird and rare overlapping of the scouting venn diagram that seems to diverge continuously. He plays with the throttle wide open and was the unquestioned leader of the best college team in the nation in 2022, traits that your high school coach would use to tout make-up and character. Grit, determination, and motor, they'd say.

Before opting for collegiate competition, Gilbert was once thought a valuable pitching prospect and was selected in the 35th round by the Minnesota Twins in the 2019 draft, only falling that far because of his strong commitment to Tennessee. Once on campus his focus largely shifted to developing as a hitter, though he did make 11 appearances for the Vols out of the bullpen and pitched to a 2.76 ERA across 16.1 innings in 2020 and 2021.

During his final college season, Gilbert led his team in batting average and was second in on base percentage and slugging among Vols with 200+ PAs. That in itself is impressive, but it's even more so when you remember that team also featured Jordan Beck (1st round, #38 overall), Trey Lipscomb (3rd round, #84 overall), and Jared Dickey (MLB Pipeline's #112 draft prospect for 2023).

Since turning pro, Gilbert has surprised some with how well his game translated to a wood-bat environment. While his power usually manifests to the pull side in games, he has enough raw pop to get by and his 104 mph 90th percentile exit velocity is a tick above MLB average. He makes above-average contact and his bat path is designed to keep the barrel through the zone for a long time, which isn't always conducive to slugging output. He profiles as a compiler who could find his way in the top third of an MLB lineup.

My take:

While it's unlikely Gilbert transforms into a league winner at the big league level, he is a high-probability major leaguer without any obvious red flags. The player he is today is like who he'll be upon debut considering his 5-foot-9, 195 lb frame is mostly maximized at present. If safety and upside are two ends of a spectrum, Gilbert indexes toward the safe end.

---

38. Ethan Salas, C, San Diego Padres (Tier 4)

Age: 17
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
290	0.248	0.331	0.421	25.9%	10.3%	9	5	0.312

Why he's here:

You can throw away the slash line when evaluating Ethan Salas and instead focus on his age and the levels he competed at in 2023. Signed in January for $5.6M, Salas made his first appearance for the viewing public in Spring Training when he participated in a game despite being just 16 years old and handled the challenge with aplomb. He would not relinquish the spotlight all summer, seemingly appearing everywhere you turned your

gaze and climbing all the way to Double-A in his age 17 season. Whether warranted or not, that's an immensely rare feat and worthy of attention.

Salas is the latest in a long lineage of baseball talent. His brother Jose, a talented young shortstop prospect who had difficulty finding his footing this year, was part of the trade that sent Luis Arraez to Miami. His father, uncle, and grandfather all made inroads in professional ball during their time, playing in the Braves, Blue Jays, and Astros systems respectively. Ethan was billed as a five-tool talent and paid like the top international prospect in the last signing period. He lived up to the reputation in his first season as a pro.

It's hard to say what Salas will be at this juncture. He's still just 17 but he's shown exceptional aptitude behind the plate and will almost certainly stick at the position despite having the athleticism to move if necessary. He's a mature hitter, chasing rarely and connecting at an 85% rate in-zone. He has solid pop at present that should project to average as he ages, especially when considering his wiry frame. It's easy to imagine him as a plus hitter with average power from a thin position and it's also likely he moves through the upper minors faster than the average teenager given AJ Preller's proclivity for pushing top prospects to the bigs.

My take:

I tend to fade the catching position rather aggressively for points formats. The difference between the top overall catcher and the tenth at the position is marginal relative to that delta at other positions (e.g., second base, third base) and they tend to play fewer games. That Salas features within the top 40 at just 17 years old is a testament to his potential and in no way an indictment of his talent.

T I E R 5

---

39. Pete Crow-Armstrong, OF, Chicago Cubs (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 5'11
Weight: 184 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
500	0.283	0.365	0.511	25.8%	9.2%	20	37	0.356

Why he's here:

The Mets sent PCA to Chicago as the return for a pure rental on Javier Baez and Trevor Williams at the 2021 trade deadline. It was the same summer that saw Chicago deal the core of its 2016 World Series roster and enter a period of rebuilding that appears to be entering its final stages. The Cubs secured their manager after stealing away Craig Counsell from the Brewers and his various suitors and look poised to make a splash in free agency. Pete Crow-Armstrong will be a big piece of their return to championship contention.

Most of the hubbub with regard to Crow-Armstrong is about his defense, which is otherworldly in center field and will keep him on the field , but he brings offensive value too. He has a knack for finding the thick part of the bat, posting a 10% barrel rate in his 34 game Triple-A sample while putting 50% of his batted balls in the air over the duration of the season. His 90th percentile exit velocity was a touch over MLB average and that power should play up when combined with his proclivity for elevating the ball. He projects to impact the game on the basepaths, too, as the wheels that make him an elite defender also translate offensively.

All prior praise considered, if his quality of contact metrics regress even slightly and his already dubious chase rates worsen like they did in a small MLB sample, there is risk that the paint on his profile dries and he's simply a very good major league center fielder whose value comes nearly exclusively on defense.

My take:

I'm not one for player comps, but given PCA's underlying swing decision, contact, and exit velocity data, the outcome you're hoping for is similar to Ozzie Albies-level production. Both have potential for above average power output and stolen base contribution while managing an exorbitant chase rate, the difference is that Crow-Armstrong plays a far more important defensive position and does it well. That matters more for the Chicago Cubs than it does for fantasy managers.

---

40. Carson Williams, SS, Tampa Bay Rays (Tier 5)

Age: 20

Level(s): A+, AA, AAA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 180 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
503	0.257	0.356	0.497	31.4%	11.7%	23	20	0.349

Why he's here:

Drafted 28th overall out of Torrey Pines High School in San Diego, Williams was initially considered a glove-first shortstop whose bat may one day catch up. That has materialized more rapidly than anticipated as he posted a 20-20 season in just 500 plate appearances in 2023 while jumping between three levels amidst roster woes for the big league club. The leather and laser are what will get him a starting gig and should keep him on the field even when he's slumping, but he has the potential to be a plus bat, too.

Williams just turned 20 in June and has added considerable strength since leaving high school, but he remains long and lean with obvious room to continue filling out. He has natural loft in his swing that promotes extra-base potential and he's thus far produced barrel rates commensurate with a big-league shortstop. His 90th percentile exit velocity was a very impressive 107 mph, four full ticks above major league average, made even more so by his stringy stature. He's a plus all-around athlete with speed that translates to both sides of the ball, contributing to rangy defense and above-average stolen base potential.

The biggest blemish in Williams' profile is his bat-to-ball ability. He has tremendous difficulty with right-handed sliders and will routinely swing through them as he hunts fastballs. It wasn't uncommon for him to go entire at-bats without seeing a fastball while in the AFL. Ideally the Rays would be able to help him identify breaking balls out of the hand such that he's at least able to fight them off until he gets a pitch he can do damage on.

My take:

Usually I'm a stickler about prospects ranked this highly having a superb hit tool, but every other tool in Williams' belt is really exciting. He's still young and there is potential for his pitch recognition to improve. Any risk that he'll struggle in the batting average department is offset by the certainty that he'll be a big leaguer due to his defensive prowess as well as his massive ceiling potential, which could be seasons totaling 30 home runs and 20 stolen bases.

41. Jacob Misiorowski, RHP, Milwaukee Brewers (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'7
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
71.1	3.41	3.40	1.18	35.0%	13.4%	15%	59%	3%

Why he's here:

The Brewers took Misiorowski in the second round of the 2022 draft out of Crowder College, a junior college in Missouri, based on the huge stuff he displayed and their relative strength developing pitching prospects. As a raw arm he has big command concerns but an even bigger arsenal, leading some to question whether he's a true starting pitcher or a back-of-the-bullpen reliever.

From Misiorowski's 6-foot-7 frame explodes a heater that regularly reaches 100 mph and features plus induced vertical break and exceptional run. Demonic fastballs help set up breaking and off-speed offerings, which is why pitching models grade secondaries based on how they play in tandem with the fastball, and his is double-plus or better based on velocity and shape. His curveball is the primary beneficiary, and while a good pitch on its own, it's nigh impossible for hitters to adjust for either pitch once in flight. He mixes in a cutter and a changeup, both of which trail his primary offerings in quality.

Optimists believe Misiorowski has frontline starter potential while pessimists are certain he's a surefire reliever. There's risk in his profile; his delivery is inconsistent and his release is high-effort, both of which lead to difficulty throwing strikes. He landed 59% of all pitches for strikes, a figure that narrowly trails Hurston Waldrep and Connor Phillips and ties Kyle Harrison for worst on this list.

My take:

A ceiling that includes front-of-the-rotation outcomes paired with a floor of shutdown reliever makes his profile a little more palatable. Some managers argue that rostering pitching prospects without significant upside is a waste given their inherent injury risk, which may make Misiorowski a premium target for those willing to take a gamble. There's reason to believe Milwaukee's pitching lab can clear up his mechanics, and it's a good bet

they do everything they can to keep him in the rotation before acquiescing to a bullpen outcome.

---

42. AJ Smith-Shawver, RHP, Atlanta Braves (Tier 5)

Age: 20
Level(s): A+, AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'3
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
62.0	2.76	3.50	1.13	31.3%	13.1%	14%	61%	7%

Why he's here:

Smith-Shawver made his major league debut in his age 20 season, which is a pretty rare feat. Between 1993 and 2008, just 27 pitchers made their debut before their 21st birthday and went on to accrue either 30+ starts or had at least 50% of their career appearances come as a starter, which illustrates just how uncommon it is for teams to push their youngsters as aggressively as Atlanta did with AJSS. Not shabby for a seventh round draftee, albeit one that garnered a near $1M signing bonus.

Prior to 2023, Smith-Shawver had pitched just 76.1 total innings spread across Rookie Ball and Low-A over the course of two years, all of which came with lackluster results. He was still very raw and more of a thrower than a pitcher, partially because he was a prep but exacerbated further by the fact that he was not a single-sport athlete until turning pro. He was a three star quarterback recruit as well as a two-way player on the diamond, limiting his reps both during the season and in the baseball offseason. He's a great athlete (and pitchers are athletes, to be clear).

His arsenal is led by an excellent fastball that sits mid-90s and regularly gets 19 inches of ride, making it play exceptionally at the top of the zone. He has the ability to dial it up to 100 mph when necessary but his locations were inconsistent in 2023. He complements it with a late-breaking slider in the mid-80s, an upper-70s curveball he added this season, and a changeup that garnered a 53% whiff rate this year.

My take:

Smith-Shawver made the playoff roster for the divisional series, and though he had just one appearance it was a big vote of confidence to carry him at all. There will be innings up for grabs in Atlanta and both he and Waldrep will be in line as they arise. It's exciting to think about what a full offseason with the major league pitching department could mean for him.

---

43. Hurston Waldrep, RHP, Atlanta Braves (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): A, A+, AA, AAA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
29.1	1.53	3.04	1.19	33.3%	13.0%	17%	60%	8%

Why he's here:

Atlanta was perhaps the best landing spot for Waldrep outside of Los Angeles. Taken with the 24th pick in last summer's draft despite a 4.16 ERA and command issues with Florida, Waldrep may be one of the quickest arms of the entire class to make the show. His lethal arsenal was poorly managed in college and his stuff stacks up favorably against the other top right-handed pitchers in this class.

Part of Waldrep's surface performance at UF was driven by astonishingly bad sequencing. The Gators called for his heater 72% of the time when he was behind in the count and just 23% when he was ahead, making him remarkably predictable and therefore more hittable than any arm with three plus pitches should be. Fortunately that is a very easy issue to remedy and the Braves addressed it immediately in his short post-draft sample.

Strike throwing has been a yellow flag throughout his college and pro career but his repertoire is full of bat missing offerings, most notably his splitter that carried a 64% whiff rate in his last collegiate season. His fastball is up to 99 mph, averaging 95 mph, and plays as above average largely due to velocity though it does have a respectable 16 inches of IVB. The Braves had him focus on his slider as his third pitch and it now features sharp break horizontally as well as vertically and is getting results that place it as plus. He's mostly dropped his curveball from consideration because of his difficulty commanding it, but it had promise prior to the draft.

My take:

The Braves have pushed Waldrep aggressively (albeit in a 29.1 inning sample) culminating in a single start for Triple-A Gwinnett. Their big league rotation has question marks even after the trade to acquire Chris Sale, and both Waldrep and AJ Smith-Shawver will likely contribute innings in 2024. Waldrep's ceiling is as high as Paul Skenes', but he's a touch less polished. Honing his ability to land pitches for strikes will be instrumental.

---

44. Tommy Troy, 2B, Arizona Diamondbacks (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A+
Height: 5'10
Weight: 197 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
115	0.271	0.374	0.469	24.3%	13.9%	4	9	0.333

Why he's here:

Troy was a standout at Stanford for three years prior to being selected 12th overall by the Diamondbacks and signing for under slot value. He has a well-rounded skill set offensively and was among the leaders in Division 1 baseball in chase rate, in-zone contact, and 90th percentile exit velocity. Though on the small side and almost certainly a second baseman, his compact swing and ability to generate torque allows him to get to more power than his frame suggests.

He has thus far avoided the labrum injury that is seemingly complimentary when drafted by Arizona like Jordan Lawlar, Corbin Carroll, and Druw Jones experienced. His short pro debut saw the skills he demonstrated at Stanford hold or improve; he managed four home runs in 115 plate appearances, demonstrating that the power outburst with metal bats in college will carry over with wood. Given his status as a 21-year-old college draftee and solid all-around approach and batted ball data, he's likely to be a quick mover as the Diamondbacks solidify their status as a contender in the NL West.

My take:

Arizona has a pretty decent track record when it comes to top picks panning out over the last few years, Druw Jones notwithstanding. Troy is a high-floor option in FYPDs who profiles well in points formats based on his zone contact ability and excellence against fastballs.

---

45. Chase Hampton, RHP, New York Yankees (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 220 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
106.2	3.63	3.38	1.14	33.1%	8.4%	15%	66%	11%

Why he's here:

Hampton was a draft-eligible sophomore out of Texas Tech that the Yankees scooped up in the 6th round of the 2022 draft but paid nearly double the slot value to sign. For those keeping score at home, there are three prospects on this list that the Yankees took in 2022 alone. Hampton looks like another good investment after he had an outstanding first taste as a pro, showing off a demonic fastball with 20 inches of induced vertical break and a brand new pair of pitches courtesy of New York's pitching development team.

Though he entered the org with a fastball, curveball, changeup repertoire, he exited fall instructs with a cutter and slider that made up a lot of his usage this year. The slider became one of his go-to punchout pitches, which was how 33% of all plate appearances against him ended. Usually with a broad array of pitches command can be spotty, but Hampton landed 66% of offerings for strikes in 2023 and is adept at throwing his fastball, cutter, and slider in the right parts of the zone to induce whiffs.

It was encouraging to see Hampton throw 106.2 innings across 20 starts, equivalent to 5.1 innings per outing. He had thrown 101 innings in two years at Tech with just a touch over half of his appearances coming as a starter. It's clear he belongs in the rotation now, evidenced both by the length of his starts and the depth of his arsenal. The average outing length among pitchers whose only appearances came as the starter in 2023 was a smidge over 4 innings.

My take:

Three above average pitches, one of which is elite, and a strike rate in the mid-60s is extremely encouraging. I like to target outlier fastballs and Hampton's squarely fits the bill based primarily on shape – heavy ride and run out of a three-quarters release is a challenging matchup for batters of both handedness.

---

46. Shōta Imanaga, LHP, Chicago Cubs (Tier 5)

Age: 29
Level(s): NPB
Height: 5'10
Weight: 176 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
159.0	2.66	2.95	1.02	29.5%	3.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Why he's here:

An eight year veteran of NPB, Imanaga would be the top-flight free agent option in most international signing periods. He has a sub-3.00 career ERA and is coming off of a season in which he led NPB in strikeouts (176). The Chicago Cubs won the bidding for his services with a four year, $53M contract that includes club options escalating to a total of $80M if exercised.

Imanaga's biggest audition for Major League baseball came in March when he took the mound against the United States in the World Baseball Classic final in which he threw 30 pitches over two innings, surrendering one run on four hits while striking out two. It was a rare opportunity to dive into his repertoire with full public statcast data and it corroborated the eye test. What his fastball lacks in velocity it makes up for in shape and deception and his delayed delivery with a long leg kick adds to the effectiveness of his repertoire. That pitch in particular averaged over 19 inches of induced vertical break, making it a potent pitch when located up in the zone.

He also relies heavily on a splitter, as is common for pitchers in NPB and other foreign leagues, which is perhaps his most effective pitch. It comes in a few variants that he uses against hitters of different handedness and in different situations and is emblematic of his advanced pitchability. His slider similarly features different variations and is his go-to

offering against same-side hitters. A cutter and curveball round out his kitchen sink approach that generated even more whiffs than Yamamoto albeit in fewer innings.

My take:

While he walks a thinner tightrope than Yamamoto given their differences in age and velocity, Imanaga offers strikeout upside and immediate fantasy impact. He'll plug immediately into the Cubs' rotation and is a strong choice for teams competing in 2024.

---

47. Brock Wilken, 3B, Milwaukee Brewers (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 225 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
203	0.285	0.414	0.473	23.2%	16.3%	5	4	0.368

Why he's here:

The Brewers continued their recent trend of targeting college bats with their first round selection of Wake Forest's slugging third baseman Brock Wilken, a streak which started with Garrett Mitchell out of UCLA in 2020 and progressed through Sal Frelick (Boston College), Tyler Black (Wright State), and Eric Brown Jr. (Coastal Carolina). It's clear that pursuing this particular demographic is firmly part of the regime's draft philosophy, which, to their credit, has produced two big leaguers already.

Wilken has the biggest upside of any of those picks. His college numbers were astounding; he managed a .345/.506/807 line with 31 home runs in 320 plate appearances (a 58 home run pace when extrapolated to 600 PAs), all while walking more than he struck out. The underlying data was tremendous too, as he showed one of the best chase rates in the entire class and a 90th percentile exit velocity of 109 mph. Those figures mostly held firm in a rather substantial post-draft sample.

He ended the year with a tiny sample of 6 games at Double-A, and he performed well outside an uncharacteristic spike in strikeout rate. It does signal that the Brewers are interested in testing his mettle and may be inclined to move him quickly through the

system. Milwaukee finished 24th in home runs and 25th in slugging in 2023, trailing a great many teams who were not close to playoff contention.

My take:

There's a little swing and miss in his game, but his contact rates held strong and he's shown proficiency drawing a walk, which gives him some floor protection. The Brewers are starved for power hitting bats and didn't shy away from promoting Wilken quickly. He only needs to be fringe-average in the contact department to realize most of his upside.

---

48. Drew Thorpe, RHP, San Diego Padres (Tier 5)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 212 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
139.1	2.52	3.05	0.98	34.0%	7.1%	19%	65%	12%

Why he's here:

Sunny San Diego appears to be the land of opportunity for Drew Thorpe. He packed his bags in early December alongside Michael King, Jhony Brito, Randy Vásquez, and Kyle Higashioka as the return for Trent Grisham and a one-year rental of Juan Soto. He'll have more opportunity in the Padres' rotation and a better run environment for 81 of his 162 games, both of which bolster his value as a fantasy prospect.

Thorpe was a second round selection in 2022 out of Cal Poly and enjoyed a scintillating 2023 season, ranking top-10 in ERA, top-5 in FIP, and number one in K-BB% among all minor league pitchers who logged at least 100 innings this year. He's a sure-fire candidate to start and could find opportunity early in the year with plenty left in the tank; a combined 244 innings over the last two years split between college and professional ball mean a May or June ETA could portend healthy volume without risk of having his innings limited late in the year.

He spent the months following the 2022 draft at the Yankees complex working to improve both his velocity and his stuff in lieu of making his professional debut. It resulted in a small jump in fastball velocity that enabled him to sit a respectable 92 mph. His marquee

offering is a changeup that flummoxed hitters all year to the tune of a 53% strikeout rate and it grades as a double-plus pitch. It tunnels extremely well with his fastball before diving arm side and has significant velocity separation from the heater. His other out pitch is the slider that features two distinct shapes that are at least average on shape and much better on results.

My take:

I was initially skeptical that Thorpe's changeup-led arsenal would translate against big league hitters in part because of the unraveling we saw from Gavin Stone this year, but film study really proved that he can succeed with that pitch and has enough of a 'kitchen sink' approach to get by. I gave him a bump after the move to San Diego. He rates as one of the best options on the list for 2024 impact.

---

49. Robby Snelling, LHP, San Diego Padres (Tier 5)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/L

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
103.2	1.82	3.07	1.12	28.4%	8.2%	13%	65%	4%

Why he's here:

There is a subset of evaluators who rave about pitchers that are athletes on the mound. Snelling fits that description squarely; he was a two-sport star in high school and was committed to Louisiana State University to play both baseball and football before ultimately signing with the Padres for $3M, a full million more than the slot value.

Despite being a member of the 2022 draft class, Snelling didn't make his debut in organized professional baseball until this year as the Padres hid him away on the backfields and introduced him slowly in fall instructs. He advanced rapidly and progressed all the way to Double-A while preventing runs at an elite rate. Despite his peripherals suggesting it was merely a ~3.00 ERA performance largely as the beneficiary of an unsustainable 4% HR/FB rate, to be in Double-A and posting gaudy strikeout numbers as a teen is a feat. He lost his command for a short period in his final stop of the

season in San Antonio and developing consistent control will be a focus of his development.

For his part, Snelling is a bulldog and has worked hard to transform his arsenal and become a more well-rounded pitcher. His fastball is up to mid-90s with good ride and he's added a changeup and slider in the last calendar year. The heater and the curveball he had on draft day remain his best offerings.

My take:

Prep pitchers are inherently risky, but Snelling came out in 2023 with a new repertoire, threw 100+ innings, and showed command all while progressing to Double-A. His timetable is quicker than the average high school arm, especially once you've accounted for the AJ Preller school of prospect development (read: push them fast or trade them to another organization). Good fastballs from the left side are relatively hard to find and tend to play well at the big league level. There are a lot of reasons to be in on Snelling.

---

50. Owen Caissie, OF, Chicago Cubs (Tier 5)

Age: 20
Level(s): AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
528	0.289	0.398	0.519	31.1%	14.4%	22	7	0.407

Why he's here:

The 'Big Maple' moniker belongs to James Paxton for now but it may soon be bestowed upon Owen Caissie. The 2020 second-rounder boasts enormous power, not just among his minor league peers but rivaling that of the most impressive MLB thumpers. His 94 mph average exit velocity and 110 mph 90th percentile exit velocity are silly and indicate that he absolutely scalds baseballs.

Caissie has had a bit of an up-and-down surface level output after exploding onto the scene in a short age-18 season with a .923 OPS in 226 plate appearances. He spent all of 2022 at High-A South Bend and managed a meager .254/.349/.402 slash tarnished by a 28.6% K-rate. Contact has always been an issue in Caissie's profile, and 2023 was no

exception as the tacky ball gave him fits. Prior to its dismissal, Caissie punched out at an astronomical 38% clip while managing contact on just 65% of swings. That figure improved marginally post-tacky ball, with contact coming at a 68% rate and his strikeout rate fell to 28%.

He may also be a platoon candidate. He destroyed righties, whom he faced in 72% of his plate appearances, but struggled to connect or hit for power against southpaws. Single-season minor league splits aren't the sturdiest of grounds to stand on, but this trend has been apparent for the better part of three seasons.

My take:

While Caissie has upside as a middle-of-the-order bopper, he's not without risk. His .289 batting average is a mirage kept afloat by a .407 BABIP, he strikes out more than you'd like and that doesn't figure to improve against major league pitching, and he's vulnerable against lefties. The power is absolutely enticing and he looks the part, but it's unclear how he'll translate.

---

51. Jett Williams, 2B, New York Mets (Tier 5)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 5'6
Weight: 175 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
534	0.263	0.425	0.451	22.1%	19.5%	13	45	0.335

Why he's here:

The Mets used their first selection to nab Williams 14th overall in 2022 as one of the top preps in the class despite a lack of physical upside. His draft billing was that of a consistent contributor with advanced plate skills and contact ability, both abilities that are hard to pin down for high schoolers, but both of which have thus far been true.

Despite his size, Williams is a phenomenal athlete who regularly posts run times that fall between 60 and 70 grade. His most likely position is second base, though there is some optimism that he could play a solid center field if need be given his gap-to-gap coverage.

He played 21 games in the outfield this year. He's a threat to run in nearly any situation and converted 45 of 52 attempts in 121 games in 2023, good for an 87% success rate.

Williams' plate discipline is superlative and his contact ability is above-average, leading to high-floor outcomes. His ceiling as a power threat is relatively capped due in part to his size and minimal projection, but also as a result of his bat path. It's relatively flat and is paired with average-at-best bat speed, which means he'll have to lift and launch a la Alex Bregman in order for power to manifest in games. To his credit, Williams ran a 43% fly ball rate (11th highest of hitters on this list), 41% of which were pulled.

My take:

Jett's underlying plate skills and discipline should mean he moves relatively quickly, and with Jeff McNeil playing more outfield over the last few years, there's an ostensible opening at second base when he's ready. The unfortunate ACL injury Ronny Mauricio sustained further muddies the water in the infield. Drafters are hoping for 12 to 15 home runs annually with significant stolen base upside once Williams finds his way to Queens.

---

52. Termarr Johnson, 2B, Pittsburgh Pirates (Tier 5)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+
Height: 5'8
Weight: 175 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
462	0.244	0.422	0.438	26.0%	21.9%	18	10	0.315

Why he's here:

Pittsburgh selected Johnson fourth overall in the 2022 draft as one of the top prep prospects in the class and paid him slightly over slot for the second largest bonus in team history (at the time – Paul Skenes surpassed him last summer). Scouts were willing – and sometimes even eager – to put an 80 grade on his hit tool, something that is exceedingly rare at any level of the minor leagues and unheard of for prepsters. Termarr is a good hitter, but his bat-to-ball ability appears to fall well short of those prognostications.

As Johnson has stepped further into his pro career, he's transformed into a power-over-hit bat who is exceptionally passive. His in-zone (77%) and overall (68%)

contact rates do not translate to a projectable double-plus or top-of-the-scale hit tool, but he's shown more pop than initially forecasted. His 90th percentile exit velocity was a touch over 105 mph, a very strong figure for his size and age, and his average exit velocity stayed strong in part because of his discipline outside of the zone.

Johnson was very selective in 2023, borderline passive, offering at just 37% of all pitches for a mark that barely edges out Emmanuel Rodriguez (36%). His 21% chase rate appears judicious at first glance, but given how little he swung at all, it's hard to decipher how much of his discipline is a product of true pitch recognition versus simple passivity. Calculated aggression will be a focus of his development as he climbs through Pittsburgh's system.

My take:

Johnson could be a difference-maker at second base where power is scant. There are some questions about his contact ability and passivity, both of which should be answered to some degree in 2024. The talent and pedigree are there, we just need to see a few adjustments and a track record of performance against upper minors competition.

---

53. Harry Ford, C, Seattle Mariners (Tier 5)

Age: 20
Level(s): A+
Height: 5'10
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
563	0.257	0.410	0.430	19.4%	18.3%	15	24	0.307

Why he's here:

Ford spent the entirety of his second full professional season at High-A Everett after playing all of 2022 at Low-A Modesto. He's been an exceptional offensive performer since being drafted 12th overall in 2021, particularly when taking the demands of his position into account. A large portion of any catcher's development will be focused on defensive fundamentals; framing, pitch calling, blocking, and throwing are all extraordinarily important, regardless of whether a robo-zone is imminent, and are given heavy emphasis by big league clubs.

Still just 20 years old, Ford has already demonstrated strong plate discipline, perhaps as a byproduct of his low swing rate but nonetheless showcases his on-base ability. He makes average contact pitches both in and out of the zone and has 90th percentile exit velocities that hover around MLB average. He's a great athlete, not just among catchers, and has shown a willingness to run and is often successful. This matters more for rotisserie scoring, but in most points formats stolen bases are equivalent to a double, so they're a nice bonus.

Ford spent the entire season at Everett and played exactly half of his games at Funko Field, which is an extreme hitters park. He OPSed .906 and hit ten of his 15 home runs at home while managing just a .751 figure on the road. Only his OBP remained stable across environments, illuminating just how beneficial it is to play in a favorable environment.

My take:

Ford's primary position factors into his placement. His points ceiling is capped assuming he stays behind the plate, which limits how high I can push him. The talent here is obvious and it's telling, at least to me, that a 15 home run, 24 stolen base season from a 20-year-old catcher feels underwhelming.

---

54. Brooks Lee, SS, Minnesota Twins (Tier 5)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 5'11
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: S/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
567	0.275	0.347	0.461	16.0%	9.9%	16	7	0.305

Why he's here:

While Walker Jenkins falling in the Twins lap last summer was fortuitous, Brooks Lee making it to pick eight in 2022 may have been even more surprising. The board around him was full of landmines: Kumar Rocker at three, Jacob Berry at six, Gavin Cross at nine, Kevin Parada at eleven and so on. Lee was a rumored top-5 pick with some outlets forecasting him to go first overall coming off of back-to-back college seasons featuring an OPS north of 1.000.

Lee has made quick work of the minors by progressing to Triple-A in a mere 156 games, just under a full season slate on an MLB schedule. It's not particularly surprising given Lee's advanced hit tool and the baseball acumen in his family; Lee is the son of Cal Poly head coach Terry Lee whose father was also a head coach at the same institution. As a life-long student of the game, Brooks has honed his swing from the left side to develop tremendous barrel accuracy and contact ability such that he carried a 90% zone contact rate in 2023. He's a little less polished from the right and has had noticeable splits but the vast majority of his at-bats will come from the left.

There isn't necessarily a carrying tool in his profile, but Lee is an amalgamation of average to above-average tools that create a product that is better than the sum of its parts. His 90th percentile exit velocity was about league average for the MLB level, he has fringe-average speed but is an opportunistic base stealer, he makes a ton of contact from his predominant side of the plate, and he has the defensive chops to stick at short.

My take:

If you roster Lee you're hoping he can turn some of the present contact ability into impact as he progresses into his major league career. He has a tendency to use his aptitude for bat-to-ball as a crutch that results in a lot of ground balls (45% GB% in 2023). Nobody in the history of baseball has ever hit one over the fence on the ground. He's a high-floor proximity play with opportunity to become an above-average contributor in points formats with a few tweaks.

---

55. Noble Meyer, RHP, Miami Marlins (Tier 5)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'5
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
11	4.09	3.04	1.64	29.4%	13.7%	16%	60%	0%

Why he's here:

Drafted 10th overall by Miami this summer, Meyer is one of the most promising prep arms of the last few classes, already supplanting Mick Abel as the top pitching prospect from Jesuit High School in Oregon. He's long and lanky with an efficient, low effort delivery and

premium stuff that is already highly optimized for his age. He worked with his parents, both engineers, to optimize pitch shapes and his mechanics.

His repertoire is led by a low-80s sweeping slider that averages nearly 3000 RPM. He's comfortable throwing it to both righties and lefties as a swing-and-miss offering and his ability to command it may mean it blossoms into a double-plus pitch. His fastball has already touched 100 mph, though he often sits mid-to-low 90s with the ability to dial it up when needed. I expect him to gain a few ticks of average velocity as he fills out on his six-foot-five frame. He'll mix in a curveball that he's comfortable using to steal strikes early in counts and a changeup that is often firm.

Meyer is remarkably polished for a high-school arm. Most respect Miami as an above average pitching development organization despite some recent misses but they can be most trusted to improve Meyer's changeup to feature more arm-side fade and velocity separation from his fastball.

My take:

Noble Meyer has as good a chance as any other arm in affiliated baseball to top this list among hurlers next year. His 11 innings of professional ball isn't a robust viewing sample, but I would encourage readers to purchase an MiLB.tv subscription and watch back his starts. The proof is on video.

---

56. Xavier Isaac, 1B, Tampa Bay Rays (Tier 5)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+
Height: 6'3
Weight: 240 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
433	0.285	0.395	0.521	21.2%	14.8%	19	12	0.331

Why he's here:

Death, taxes, and the Tampa Bay Rays scouting department (or something to that effect). Isaac fell off a lot of scouting radars as a prep due to a lack of showcase participation driven by a foot injury but that didn't stop the Rays from betting on him with the 29th pick in the 2022 draft and signing him with a full-slot $2.5M bonus. While his leading tool is

power and it certainly showed up in his debut, he also showed more hitterish traits than anticipated given his frame.

Isaac is a big guy standing six-foot-three, 240 lbs, which helps him generate top-of-the-scale power. He posted a 108 mph 90th percentile exit velocity this year while managing a 22% chase rate, dispelling the notion that he would be just a free-swinging slugger. He's a better athlete than you might think given his measurements, too, which helps on defense as well as in the box. Contact came and went but he finished with a 77% in-zone contact rate and a sub-70% total contact, which is below-average but not egregious.

Though he's still firmly in the high variance camp of prospects, his on-base floor and huge power give him a reasonable probability to be a threat in the middle of a big league lineup. He only spent 12 games in High-A and should return there to begin 2024.

My take:

Preps who profile strictly as first basemen don't often go in the first round but the Rays' analytical department pegged him as a potential standout talent and marched ahead anyway. Though his underlying data suggests plenty of upside, I don't typically push first base prospects up lists unless the offensive profile is basically flawless and there are nits to pick with Isaac. Regardless, he's still a teenager and can certainly make strides in the contact department.

---

57. Dalton Rushing, C, Los Angeles Dodgers (Tier 5)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+
Height: 6'1
Weight: 220 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
381	0.228	0.404	0.452	24.4%	18.9%	15	1	0.276

Why he's here:

Rushing wasn't a full time starter at Louisville until his Junior year but he had a good excuse. He was stuck behind 2021 first overall pick Henry Davis, and despite going 39 picks later the following summer, you could argue Rushing's offensive performance was

more impressive than Davis' in their respective draft years. He parlayed the success he found at Louisville in 2022 into by far the most impressive post-draft debut in his class.

He opened 2023 at High-A Great Lakes where he tore up the Midwest League for the better part of two and a half months before suffering a concussion on a backswing in the middle of June. His performance tanked in the wake of that injury as he attempted to play through it before going nuclear again in September. This year marked the second consecutive campaign with an OBP over .400 for Rushing despite the brief scuffle, and he now owns a .435 figure through 515 minor league plate appearances.

It doesn't look flukey, either. He has plus swing decisions and a willingness to hunt his pitch. His BABIP was unsustainably low, even for a plodder who puts 82% of his batted balls on the ground or in the air, especially considering his above-average exit velocities. He makes plenty of contact.

My take:

His stock has cooled off since his blistering post-draft sample. I suspect it's because of the ~100 plate appearance slump in the middle of the year surrounding his concussion and the subsequent impact on his batting average, which is weighted entirely too heavily in general. He has more bat-to-ball and impact potential than his 2023 line would suggest. I wouldn't be surprised if the Dodgers are willing to let Will Smith walk following his final arb year in 2025 armed with the knowledge that Rushing, Liranzo, and Cartaya are on the way.

T I E R 6

58. Jung Hoo Lee, OF, San Francisco Giants (Tier 6)

Age: 24
Level(s): KBO
Height: 6'1
Weight: 192 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP

387	0.318	0.406	0.455	5.9%	12.7%	6	6	0.324

Why he's here:

Lee signed a six year, $113M contract with the Giants in early December. He's been on radars for some time as the first player in history to go directly from high school to the KBO in 2017 and subsequently bringing in Rookie of the Year honors. Since his KBO debut, Lee has been a five time gold glove winner and accumulated a .340/.407/.491 slash over the course of nearly 4,000 plate appearances.

Lee's glove and contact ability carry the profile. His in-zone contact rates rival those of Luis Arraez and he's managed a strikeout rate of just 8% in his already tenured KBO career. He does this by starting his load extraordinarily early, sometimes before the pitcher has started his windup, and balances well enough to keep his weight back and avoid leaking out.

Unfortunately there isn't a lot of thunder to go with that lightning. His batted ball profile is akin to that of Brendan Donovan and is further dampened by an extraordinarily high ground ball rate. The likeliest outcome is that he tallies single-digit or low-teens home run totals annually. The upshot is that he should get plenty of plate appearances as a top-of-the-order tablesetter.

My take:

It's always difficult to pin down exactly how free agents coming over from Korea or Japan will translate to MLB. A majority of major league scouts place the level of competition in the KBO somewhere between Double-A and Triple-A according to a survey run by Kyle Glaser of Baseball America and there is a distinct possibility Lee experiences growing pains as he acclimates, similar to those we saw from Ha-Seong Kim.

---

59. Cole Young, SS, Seattle Mariners (Tier 6)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+
Height: 6'0
Weight: 180 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP

606	0.277	0.399	0.448	14.9%	14.5%	11	22	0.315

Why he's here:

Young went 21st overall to the Mariners in 2022, kicking off their early-round prep binge that would continue into the first round of 2023. Seattle paid him the full slot value of $3.3M to lure him away from a commitment to Duke and secure one of the top prep talents in the class. At the time scouts considered him to have advanced zone recognition and bat-to-ball ability and have thus far been correct.

Over the last two years, Young has made quick work of Rookie ball, Low-A, and High-A while maintaining strong contact and chase metrics. His 2023 figures were 81% and 15%, respectively, and are reflected in his sterling K and BB rates. He's mostly a doubles hitter at present with fringe-average exit velocities and doesn't project for much more, but is an above-average runner with the ability to steal bags at a decent rate.

He may eventually have to move off of shortstop and play second instead, which may be a better fit on both sides of the ball as average or worse defensive shortstops usually bear more responsibility on offense. Unfortunately T-Mobile Park ranked dead last in offensive park factors and likely depresses his future offensive output, assuming he stays in the org long enough to debut.

My take:

Look elsewhere if upside is what you seek. Young is a high-probability big leaguer that makes a ton of contact and rarely chases, both of which are attractive traits for points formats that penalize strikeouts, but probably caps somewhere in the mid-teens for both home runs and stolen bases. There is undoubtedly value in safety, but waiting this long for modest surface production isn't everybody's cup of tea.

---

60. Christian Scott, RHP, New York Mets (Tier 6)

Age: 22
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 215 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB

87.2	2.57	2.33	0.86	31.9%	3.6%	17%	69%	6%

Why he's here:

Scott was primarily leveraged as a reliever during his stint at the University of Florida and found mixed results, pitching his way to a 3.72 ERA with a meager 21% K-rate. The Mets saw enough to take him in the 5th round in the 2021 draft and immediately began tinkering with his pitch mix in an effort to stretch him out as a starter. His sinker was replaced with a four-seam fastball with exceptional shape and command and he added a changeup that was instrumental in unlocking another gear this year.

His first foray into a starting role was unspectacular, though his peripherals were strong. He made half of his appearances in 2022 as the starter and accrued a 4.45 ERA despite an impressive strikeout rate and a manageable walk rate largely because he was on the wrong side of poor BABIP luck. Fast forward to this year and Scott finished eighth in K-BB and tied for fourth in walk rate among pitchers who threw at least 50 innings. He had a 32% CSW (called strike plus whiff) rate, showing he's more than a command artist.

There's an argument Scott was the best pitcher in the minor leagues this year on pure performance. Everything coalesced for him: his fastball ticked up to sit in the mid-90s, he mastered command of all three of his offerings, and he took a step forward in sequencing. He credits a lot of his success to simply working quickly and emphasizing attacking hitters early, perhaps a cue he took from Max Scherzer whom he also modeled his slider after.

My take:

Scott is my favorite arm in the Mets system. He shows advanced feel and was going deep in starts to end the year, completing six innings or more in seven of his last 12 appearances. His fastball has plus traits and gained velocity in 2023, his slider is above-average and misses bats with regularity, and his changeup gives him a different look to batters of both handedness. He spent the majority of the year at AA and should see opportunity in Queens in 2024.

---

61. Kyle Harrison, LHP, San Francisco Giants (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'2
Weight: 200 lbs

Bats/Throws: R/L

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
67.2	4.52	5.03	1.48	36.2%	15.9%	13%	59%	16%

Why he's here:

Stuff has never been a problem for Harrison, who has carried a K% north of 35% at every minor league stop since being selected by San Francisco in the third round of the 2020 draft. Prior to the draft, Harrison had pitched for the USA Baseball U18 national team in the World Baseball Cup where logged 10 scoreless innings while striking out 12 and earning a pair of wins, cementing his status as a premier prep arm in the class.

Harrison feels like he's been around for a long time, but he's still just 22 years old. He's demonstrated wipeout stuff in his three years in the Giants' system, with his mid-90s fastball and slurvy slider leading the way. The heater comes from a deceptive release point and has a very low -4 vertical approach angle (the angle at which the pitch approaches home plate where closer to zero means the pitch is flat and generally plays up at the top of the zone, assuming it's of the 4-seam variety). It garnered a 25% whiff rate in Harrison's 34.2-inning major league sample. His slider is a slow, sweeping offering that produced a 24% whiff rate but was relatively hittable for what felt like the first time in Harrison's career.

Command and control have long been issues for Harrison. A slim few minor leaguers with a career walk rate as high as his are able to rein it in enough to be effective at the big league level. He landed strikes on 65% of offerings while with the big league team, though, and strike-throwing is likely the primary focus of his development with major league coaches this offseason.

My take:

The automated ball-strike system in Triple-A produced some weird numbers this year that we're still trying to figure out. Harrison's control has long been a question mark, but it was particularly bad while he was subject to ABS. There's some optimism that he can improve primarily driven by his results in MLB, but history is against him. If the Giants can help him figure it out there is significant upside.

---

62. Noah Schultz, LHP, Chicago White Sox (Tier 6)

Age: 19

Level(s): A
Height: 6'9
Weight: 220 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
27.0	1.33	3.11	0.85	36.5%	5.8%	16%	63%	14%

Why he's here:

Probably the closest pitcher in terms of stature and handedness to Randy Johnson that I can recall (this is not a comp), Schultz is a towering lefty who was taken by his hometown Chicago White Sox with the 26th pick in 2022. He's tossed just 27 innings since draft day sandwiched between a flexor strain and a shoulder impingement but has shown flashes of dominance in that small sample. The Sox were betting on his raw ability with this selection after his availability for much of the spring prior to the draft was cut short by a case of mononucleosis.

This placement is also a bet on his raw ability. Schultz has shown wipeout stuff from an enormous frame with much more command than you'd expect from someone his size. His sinker is sitting in the mid-90s with armside run that is further improved by his natural arm slot. He has a sweeping slider in the low-80s that he's shown ability to manipulate depending on the situation, altering the shape to fit the desired effect in the count. He'll mix in a changeup from time to time but is largely a two-offering pitcher for now.

The risk factors for him are rather obvious. He's a young pitcher, which is already a risky demographic, but he's also racked up a few injuries in a short time. Flexor tendon strains are usually precursors to Tommy John surgery, though he's escaped it thus far. He's also very, very tall, and while pitchers index taller than all other positions, he's significantly larger than the average height of 6-foot-3. That can mean mechanical issues, usually with respect to repeatability, but he's been adept at strike throwing in his pro career.

My take:

You could argue that the only pitching prospects worth rostering are the ones who could be astronomically valuable if they hit their 100th percentile outcome. That would be an argument in favor of Schultz whose frame and stuff could propel him into stardom. I think there's more reliever risk than many are admitting, especially given his injury history, frame, and two-pitch repertoire.

63. Joendry Vargas, SS, Los Angeles Dodgers (Tier 6)

Age: 17
Level(s): DSL
Height: 6'4
Weight: 175 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
208	0.328	0.423	0.529	14.9%	14.4%	7	19	0.360

Why he's here:

Vargas was the crown jewel of the Dodgers' 2023 international class, commanding a signing bonus north of $2M that constituted over half of their bonus pool. He was billed as a projectable athlete with an advanced approach at the time of signing and scouts were not shy about praising his character and work ethic. His first foray in professional ball was a success as he finished in the top 10 in home runs (6th), OPS (9th), and stolen bases (10th) among Dominican Summer League participants aged 17 or younger.

In-person reports carry more weight than the slash line, but it's helpful that they point in the same direction. Though he's still svelte and coming into his frame, Vargas has quick hands and has demonstrated over-the-fence power with high end exit velocities topping out at 108 mph. He's shown discipline and pitch recognition such that he had nearly identical strikeout and walk numbers over 208 plate appearances and enough contact ability to collect more hits than games played.

Projectability is a big part of the profile. There is opportunity for plus power as his six-foot-four frame fills out but he may lose a step or two with added weight and finish as just an average runner. If he's able to improve pitch recognition and avoid flying open early, his hit tool could land above-average to plus, giving him a 6/6/5 trio of tools on the offensive side of the baseball. He may have to move off of shortstop but the bat can support the demands of third base, too.

My take:

Vargas was my favorite of the international crop last winter and he remains close to the top today. He trails just Ethan Salas from the 2023 class on this list, largely due to the praise he's received from evaluators on the ground, but the in-game performance doesn't hurt. He should start 2024 at the Arizona complex, however It's possible he goes the Josue De Paula route and skips directly to Low-A.

64. Michael Busch, 3B, Chicago Cubs (Tier 6)

Age: 25
Level(s): AAA, MLB
Height: 6'1
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
469	0.323	0.431	0.618	18.8%	13.9%	27	4	0.356

Why he's here:

Busch – who is famously older than Juan Soto despite the latter accruing four silver sluggers, three all star appearances, a batting title, and a World Series ring – is still a very interesting prospect despite the fatigue surrounding him. He's been on scouting radars for nearly a decade beginning as a three sport prep star and continuing through his time at UNC. The Dodgers took him 31st overall in 2019 as a polished college bat who walked significantly more than he struck out and hit 29 home runs in his final two years as a full-time starter.

The pandemic and a hand injury screwed with his timeline but he hit the ground running in 2021 when presented with the opportunity at an uninterrupted season. Fast forward to today and Busch had one of the best seasons of any minor leaguer in 2023, finishing second in OPS at the Triple-A level and seventh in all of affiliated ball trailing only Jonathan Aranda and a handful of DSL small sample standouts. His underlying data has always been solid and that was no different this year as he made exceptional contact (89% in zone, 81% total), limited chase effectively (22%), and demonstrated above-average impact (105 mph 90th percentile EV).

The primary issue for Busch was that there was limited opportunity in Los Angeles further exacerbated by his lack of defensive acumen or versatility. Playing time concerns dissipated to some degree with his trade to Chicago alongside org-mate Yency Almonte in exchange for Jackson Ferris and Zyhir Hope. He should figure into the picture at first base as well as third base.

My take:

I've been saying it all year, but just because you're tired of hearing about a guy doesn't mean he doesn't profile well. Busch has found a way to hit for power in games without

chasing out of the zone or whiffing in it, and when paired with his above-average walk rates he's a good points league option. I like his situation in Chicago significantly more than Los Angeles.

---

65. Victor Scott II, OF, St. Louis Cardinals (Tier 6)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 5'10
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
618	0.303	0.369	0.425	15.7%	7.4%	9	95	0.350

Why he's here:

Blink and you'll miss him! Victor Scott II was a fifth round selection in the 2022 draft out of West Virginia and has since run circles (diamonds, if you will) around minor league competition. There were questions about his ability with the bat entering the draft but he's answered the big ones as a professional, adding further intrigue to his pair of carrying tools in speed and defense.

There's an argument that Scott is the fastest man in minor league baseball right now. He stole a mind numbing 112 bases in 155 games between the regular season and the AFL, bringing back memories of Billy Hamilton and Vince Coleman. It was not uncommon for him to hit a single or draw a walk and be standing on third base with a pair of bags under his arm in just a few minutes of game time. While his raw power is below average, he should get to more of it in games than either of Hamilton or Coleman and particularly so against righties.

Scott's defense will keep him in the lineup at all times and his speed will help him run above-average BABIPs with regularity. He's crafty when he's in a matchup where the platoon advantage resides with the pitcher, employing the bunt heavily and finding success at a comical .708 rate (h/t Geoff Pontes, Baseball America).

My take:

I would anticipate the Cardinals call on Scott's services (not Scott Servais, to be clear) some time this summer. If he's up for even half the year he has the opportunity to provide

30+ stolen bases and could lift teams into the fantasy baseball playoffs. He may not have the prototypical profile for a points-based format but he could be a very valuable player.

---

66. Tink Hence, RHP, St. Louis Cardinals (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
96.0	4.31	4.33	1.33	24.5%	8.4%	12%	62%	13%

Why he's here:

Tink was a promising Arkansas prep who vaulted into the Competitive Balance B round at 63rd overall as a 17-year-old on draft day after impressing over the summer circuit. He tore through Low-A with a 1.38 ERA in 52.1 innings in 2022 before shipping to the Phoenix metro area to play for Salt River in the AFL, where he pitched well in an abbreviated sample. The Cardinals had him open the year with High-A Peoria, where everything went swimmingly until the music stopped upon promotion to Double-A.

His repertoire is led by a plus-plus fastball that sits 96 mph with above average carry despite some shape regression in 2023. He changes pitch mix depending on the batter's handedness, opting for sliders and curveballs against righties and more changeup heavy against lefties. All but the curveball show present potential to be above-average or better but he's still largely reliant on his fastball to get through lineups.

Hence has a svelte build, measuring an inch or two below average for starting pitchers at the major league level and almost certainly lighter than his listed weight. He's slender and long-limbed, and given his lightweight stature, some have prognosticated a move to the bullpen. His average outing in 2023 was just a touch over four innings and 17 batters long, which doesn't inspire confidence that he can be more than a five-and-dive arm in the rotation.

My take:

Tink's mom gave him the nickname 'Stinker' when he was five, which naturally evolved to 'Tinker' and ultimately 'Tink'. That has no bearing on his ranking but is a fun tidbit to share with your baseball nerd friends.

Hence is far from a finished product. He's shown willingness to experiment with his offerings and tweaked pitch shapes in 2023. He'll need to prove he can go deep into starts and hold up over a starter's season-long workload. He has the stuff even with some backsliding this year.

---

67. Lazaro Montes, OF, Seattle Mariners (Tier 6)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'3
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
302	0.303	0.440	0.560	25.2%	17.9%	13	2	0.392

Why he's here:

There are a few behemoths on this list and Lazaro is one of them. He was a top IFA in 2022, commanding $2.5M when the period opened, and has since grown to be even more physically imposing than he was at the time of signing. He uses every bit of his size to scald baseballs when he gets ahold of them.

Montes opened 2023 in the Arizona Complex and overpowered the competition for 37 games before earning a promotion to Low-A Modesto where his K-rate actually improved, albeit marginally. His most impressive feat was a 118 max exit velocity that came in the Complex and is emblematic of the kind of impact he can make when he gets his pitch.

Contact concerns are holding his overall ranking back. He started to whiff more after his promotion, particularly against breaking balls and high heat, which will only ramp up as he sees more advanced pitching. He has some tendency at present to chase pitches that dive below the zone, though his chase rates are good given his size and youth.

My take:

Montes could be among the headliners on this list come January of 2025. The zone-contact is a big flag and usually a clear marker of which direction the hit tool is headed, but he's young enough to adjust. If he does, it's top-of-the-scale damage on impact.

---

68. Kevin Alcántara, OF, Chicago Cubs (Tier 6)

Age: 20
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 6'6
Weight: 188 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
435	0.284	0.345	0.465	24.1%	8.3%	13	15	0.353

Why he's here:

The Jaguar (as he's known colloquially) is one of the most fun players in minor league baseball. The extremely toolsy outfielder was originally signed for $1M in 2018 by the Yankees before making his way to the Midwest as one of two prospects the Cubs got in exchange for Anthony Rizzo at the 2021 deadline. He ended the year with 5 games in Double-A before shipping off to Mesa to compete in the Fall League where he performed well despite an inflated K-rate (31%) and showed flashes of brilliance in games I attended.

If this list were solely ranking 100th percentile outcomes Alcántara would feature inside the top 10. He passes the bus test; he looks like he should be the best player on the diamond when he steps off the bus with the team. He's physically imposing with room left to put meat on the bones, has plenty of speed, and absolutely smokes the ball (107 mph 90th percentile exit velocity) as a byproduct of his natural strength and exceptional bat speed.

Alcántara is a free swinger at present with below-average plate skills that impede his ability to get to his tantalizing upside. That problem is exacerbated by his extreme frame that makes it difficult to cover the entire zone and introduces holes in his plate coverage. Long levers mean adjusting to different pitch types at different locations is challenging. Breaking balls have given him trouble in his minor league tenure.

My take:

A true 80 on the fun scale, Alcántara is a joy to watch play. You feel like anything can happen when he's at the dish (good or bad). He has all of the ingredients to be a superstar, but it's unclear how well he'll adjust to advanced pitching in the upper minors. He's been able to bully the lower levels on talent and athleticism alone, but the warts in his offensive profile could be his undoing.

---

69. Sebastian Walcott, SS, Texas Rangers (Tier 6)

Age: 17
Level(s): DSL, CPX, A+
Height: 6'4
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
215	0.246	0.335	0.471	29.8%	10.7%	7	12	0.331

Why he's here:

Walcott signed with Texas in January for a $3.2M bonus, the sixth highest sum in the 2023 international signing class. He played just nine games in the Dominican Summer League before being promoted to the Arizona Complex and coming stateside less than three months after his 17th birthday. The Bahamian was between three and five years younger than the average player at the level for the other 39 games he appeared in and he performed extremely well.

He showed out once he'd arrived at the complex level by swatting seven home runs in just 157 plate appearances, finishing tied for fourth in total dingers despite playing far fewer games than those at the top and tying for second in home runs per plate appearance. At 6-foot-4, 190 lbs, he's strong with exceptional bat speed and additional room to fill out, which puts a huge ceiling on his future output but may also portend a move off of shortstop to third base. His exit velocities for his age cohort are remarkable.

His near 30% K-rate is of some concern, but the underlying indicators for contact don't point to it being the symptom of a bat-to-ball deficiency. He's very aggressive which can lead to some unsavory swing decisions and whiff, but the hope is that he's able to mature into a more tempered approach.

My take:

If all breaks right, Walcott's ceiling is as high as any in the minor leagues. There are some concerns about his approach as well as make-up following some instances where the team removed him from games for throwing helmets and the like. Still, he's 17 and showing outlier traits with the potential to be a top-10 prospect in baseball come this time next year.

---

70. Ronny Mauricio, 2B, New York Mets (Tier 6)

Age: 22
Level(s): AAA, MLB
Height: 6'3
Weight: 166 lbs
Bats/Throws: S/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
532	0.292	0.346	0.506	18.2%	6.6%	23	24	0.323

Why he's here:

Ronny Mo set the Mets record for biggest international signing in 2017 with a $2.1M bonus. Unfortunately it's been reported that he saw very little of that money due to some unsavory behavior from his agent and people close to him. I'd make a 'mo money mo problems' joke, but that financial instability is what ultimately led to his participation in the Dominican Winter League this offseason where he suffered a torn ACL.

Mauricio's raw tools have always been alluring. He's been one of the most prolific home run hitters in minor league baseball over the last three years, putting a total of 79 baseballs over the fence in 1,526 plate appearances. He registered a max exit velocity of 117 mph in his 26 major league games and cleared the double-plus threshold with his minor league exit velocities prior to promotion.

With great power comes great responsibility. It must be wielded carefully to maximize results. Mauricio throws caution to the wind and swings at nearly everything; his swing rate in 2023 was near 50%. It's unbridled aggression both in and out of the zone such that he had a chase rate close to 40%. Fortunately he makes plenty of contact on strikes so the problem is mitigated to some degree, but it's possible the bottom falls out against major league stuff. He did not have instant success in his short MLB sample.

My take:

I had Mauricio much higher on the list prior to his ACL injury. Everything he does is loud and exciting, you just wonder if it's ultimately going to sound like Randy Arozarena (good) or late-career Javier Baez (not good).

---

71. Jacob Melton, OF, Houston Astros (Tier 6)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 208 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
450	0.245	0.334	0.467	22.0%	11.6%	23	46	0.270

Why he's here:

Melton initially found a full-time role at Oregon State as a sophomore after his freshman year was cut short amid the coronavirus pandemic and it was clear he didn't take playing time for granted. He demolished the Pac-12 in back-to-back years, collecting 23 home runs and 29 stolen bases in 424 plate appearances en route to a .364/.428/.660 line. The Astros took him with the 64th overall pick in 2022.

His first year as a professional was a success. He matched his college home run total and far exceeded his stolen base total while managing to make above-average contact and finish the year at Double-A. His batting average doesn't reflect his bat-to-ball ability despite a swing that is rather visually unappealing with a pronounced step and hand plunge. He was weighed down by very poor BABIP results that should normalize over time even with too few line drives at present simply because he hits the ball hard. His 106 mph 90th percentile exit velo is firmly above average, bordering on plus.

Melton runs well and plays a solid center field which may deter some platoon risk, but he did show noticeable splits in 2023. It was just a 65 plate appearance sample, but his .643 OPS and 28% K-rate against southpaws is something worth monitoring. There is hit tool risk here as he sees more advanced pitching.

My take:

There's serious upside in Melton's profile driven by an abundance of physical tools. He's not the most mechanically sound and has been able to mask those quirks primarily

against High-A pitching, but there's some concern it won't translate against better arms. I like his future situation in Houston where he's likely to arrive in 2025 and I've pushed him as far as I can given the variance in his profile.

---

72. Brady House, 3B, Washington Nationals (Tier 6)

Age: 20
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 215 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
374	0.312	0.365	0.497	23.8%	7.0%	12	9	0.388

Why he's here:

House, presumably named as such because he's built like one, was a rumored 1.1 candidate long before his draft year. He eventually went 11th overall in 2021 following a disappointing circuit showing that unveiled a little more swing and miss than evaluators wanted to see but still commanded an over-slot signing bonus.

Though he was drafted as a shortstop, House's frame and cannon arm made a move to third base rather obvious. He played all of his games in 2023 at the position but conceivably has enough offensive upside to DH should he need to rest his legs. He's coming off of his most impressive campaign as a professional after climbing three levels as a 20-year-old and competing in each of them despite being rather young, all while cutting his K-rate year-over-year. The contact skills remain iffy and he's prone to poor swing decisions, but when he connects it is often loud.

House's power metrics have yet to translate to in-game production. His 107 mph 90th percentile exit velocity is a stunning figure that outpaces many of the best power hitters in the minors, but he beat 45% of his batted balls into the ground. The Nationals haven't shown much in the way of position player development over the last several years but the hope is that professional hitting coaches can change his swing plane to allow for more loft and encourage a more disciplined approach. His .312 batting average may be the product of an improved K% but is far more influenced by his .388 BABIP.

My take:

Every once in a while the roulette ball on the high variance wheel lands on black and you've got yourself a great fantasy asset. Though there are flags – take the red numbers on the roulette wheel to represent his chase rate, contact rates, and launch angle in this extended metaphor – the cash out should lady luck iron those wrinkles out is an impressive corner infield slugger.

---

73. Aidan Miller, 3B, Philadelphia Phillies (Tier 6)

Age: 19
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'2
Weight: 205 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
80	0.303	0.425	0.379	18.8%	15.0%	0	4	0.392

Why he's here:

No matter how good Miller ends up being as a pro, he might have peaked in high school. He was a member of the USA Baseball U12, U15, and U18 teams, accruing a 1.594 OPS and two home runs in nine World Cup games en route to a gold medal. The Phillies took him 27th overall and paid him a couple hundred grand over slot value to coax him out of his college commitment.

Miller has a beautiful swing with plus bat speed that helps his already impressive present power play up (say that five times fast). His contact and swing decisions look like they'll be average at worst with opportunity for plus outcomes. He didn't put any balls in seats in his short pro debut, but he hit the ball hard (105 mph 90th percentile exit velocity) and ran a 10% barrel rate, so it's reasonable to expect the surface numbers to come around. What's more impressive is that these numbers were ostensibly dampened by a pre-draft hamate injury.

He was drafted as a shortstop but has more than enough arm for third. Though he was a little old for the class, he should still continue to fill out and profiles strongest as a third baseman.

My take:

I wouldn't be particularly surprised if Miller becomes the most sought-after prep in this class in a year. It's a potential 6 hit, 6 power profile at third base whose price could skyrocket with a strong start in 2024. Ideally his underlying power will manifest to game output and we can put the hamate business behind us.

---

74. Kyle Teel, C, Boston Red Sox (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): CPX, A+, AA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
114	0.363	0.482	0.495	19.3%	18.4%	2	3	0.456

Why he's here:

The Red Sox did quite well to nab Teel at 14th overall and also sign him for an under-slot $4M bonus, the savings from which helped them secure sound-rounder Nazzan Zanetello to a significantly over-slot deal. Teel was a notable prep prospect in 2020 but removed himself from draft consideration to honor his commitment to Virginia. As the top catching option available in the 2023 class, he had one of the strongest post-draft samples of any prospect taken in July and impressed on both sides of the ball while doing so.

The surface line is inflated by his BABIP and is also a very small sample, so it's fair to discount his performance and temper expectations. That said, Teel has demonstrated hitterish traits as an amateur that translated to pro ball. He made contact on 90% of in-zone swings in his last year as a Cavalier while posting a 106 mph 90th percentile exit velocity albeit with aluminum. He's a line drive hitter with gap-to-gap ability and an improved swing plane may lead to more in-game power. He's demonstrated an above-average hit tool thus far.

Teel is a lock to stay behind the plate. He's fundamentally sound with smooth actions and boasts consistent pop times in the ~1.90-second range. The Red Sox pushed him to Double-A rather quickly and given his defensive prowess he could be a fast mover to the big league level. He is the future at the catching position in Boston.

My take:

Teel is probably a better player for real life baseball purposes based on his ability to defend the position at a high level. As I've stated in write ups for other catching prospects, I generally fade backstops in fantasy due to their diminished plate appearance volume. Teel may not be an incredibly high ceiling hitter, but he's one of the better bets to make the majors soon and has near non-existent risk to move off catcher.

---

75. Masyn Winn, SS, St. Louis Cardinals (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): AAA, MLB
Height: 5'11
Weight: 180 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
498	0.288	0.359	0.474	16.7%	8.8%	18	17	0.318

Why he's here:

Best known for his comically impressive throwing arm that produced a cross-diamond toss topping 100 mph in the 2022 Futures Game, Winn has made significant strides on the offensive side of the ball since debuting as a professional. He was a two-way player on the prep circuit before converting to a full-time shortstop in 2022 where he continues to dazzle on defense.

Winn's offensive profile is still in flux. He had a 17 game sample at Triple-A in July wherein he hit eight home runs and had a stratospheric .863 slugging percentage that felt like a true power breakout at the time but his underlying metrics don't agree. A below-average 102 mph exit velocity means he's probably only reliable for 20 home runs at maximum and his 40% ground ball rate depresses his surface power output further. He does make a ton of contact in the zone and has managed low K-rates throughout his minor league tenure, making him a touch more valuable in K-penalty formats.

Winn is still very young. He debuted as a young 21-year-old and has a lot of maturing left to do both physically and with respect to his skills. A poor showing in 137 major league plate appearances has virtually no bearing on how his career will play out and it's possible he makes adjustments that cut his 30% chase rate and improve his launch angle such that he's a productive hitter with stolen base upside who is fantasy viable at shortstop.

My take:

He's as exciting as they come on defense and on the basepaths, but there are questions about his future with the bat. I prefer him in formats that reward stolen bases more heavily than standard points leagues do.

---

76. Luisangel Acuña, 2B, New York Mets (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA
Height: 5'8
Weight: 181 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
569	0.294	0.359	0.410	18.6%	9.1%	9	57	0.353

Why he's here:

Acuña was signed by the Rangers in 2018 at just 16 years old for a $425K bonus, $100K more than the Braves shelled out to sign his brother Ronald in 2014. He was traded to the Mets at the 2023 deadline in exchange for Max Scherzer as the Rangers looked to add firepower in their rotation en route to the playoffs. There are folks who long dismissed the younger Acuña out of hand as a beneficiary of Ronald's prowess, but Luisangel has blossomed into a very intriguing prospect in his own right.

Though he took a significant step forward in 2023 offensively, Acuña's leading tool is still comfortably his glove. He runs solid contact rates (76% in 2023) and is a plus runner but struggles to hit for power in games at present. His underlying power suggests more impact is possible but he hits the ball on the ground far too often at present (49% GB%). He has the athleticism and actions to stay at short as well as impact the game with his legs, evidenced by his 57 stolen bases in 121 games this year that were potentially fueled by a season-long competition with his brother who ultimately finished with 73 in 159 games.

It's possible we see Luisangel in the bigs next year given that he spent all year at Double-A, though the Mets have a number of options in the infield and a platinum glover manning his primary position. Jeff McNeil is currently in line for the starting second base position, and even with him getting more reps in the outfield over the last few years, Joey Wendle is a nice option off the bench.

My take:

Acuña profiles best in formats that will put outsized value on stolen bases. It's possible he unlocks more power in the future by virtue of a change to his swing plane, but at present it's hard to project him for more than 15 home runs annually. He should be a compiler who will be a nice contributor if he is able to find his way to the top of a big league lineup.

---

77. Tyler Black, 3B, Milwaukee Brewers (Tier 6)

Age: 22
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 5'10
Weight: 204 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
558	0.284	0.417	0.513	17.9%	15.8%	18	55	0.328

Why he's here:

Black was among the Horizon League's finest as a three year starter for Wright State. He led the Raiders to a conference title in 2021 on the back of a .383/.496/.683 line with 13 home runs, 11 stolen bases, and significantly more walks than strikeouts. His reputation prior to going 33rd overall in 2022 was as a polished hitter with above-average bat-to-ball and plate skills.

That reputation has largely held true for Black as a professional. He made contact on 89% of swings in the zone while chasing just 19% of the time, both of which manifested in a K-rate under 20% and an on-base percentage of .417. Those foundational skills give him a great floor but the question is upside. Black hadn't hit for consistent power prior to 2023 and the surface production he managed came on fringe-average power at best. He was also susceptible to hitting the ball on the ground (52% GB% at AAA, 42% overall).

Black is a strong athlete with exceptional instincts on the basepaths. He's clocked plus run times in the past and managed to go 55 of 67 on stolen base attempts in the upper minors this year. It's possible he racks up a fair amount of bags in MLB but it's unlikely he manages a total close to this year's high water mark. Unfortunately the athleticism hasn't translated on defense where he profiles as a below-average corner infielder.

My take:

Hit and discipline carry Black's profile in points formats and we've seen that archetype work fantastically in recent seasons. If he lands at first or third you'll probably come short on power output but benefit from his tenacity on the basepaths. You're banking on him translating as a compiler in the top third of Milwaukee's order.

---

78. Thomas Saggese, 2B, St. Louis Cardinals (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 5'11
Weight: 175 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
630	0.306	0.374	0.530	22.9%	8.3%	26	12	0.365

Why he's here:

Saggese was originally selected in the fifth and final round of the 2020 draft out of Carlsbad High School in California. He hit the ground running in professional ball, accruing 25 home runs and 23 stolen bases in 729 plate appearances across his first two seasons. He was off to a sizzling start at Double-A Frisco before being dealt to the Cardinals alongside org-mates Tekoah Roby and John King in exchange for Jordan Montgomery and Chris Stratton.

Production hasn't been an issue in Saggese's minor league tenure, and he's achieving those results without a true standout tool. What he lacks in supreme exit velocities he makes up for in pristine batted ball characteristics. He manages to pull a high percentage of his batted ball events in the air, effectively maximizing damage potential. He's had enough feel for the barrel (94% zone contact in 2023) thus far to negate ill-effects of his aggressive approach (36% chase) but it's unclear how well it'll translate against better pitching without an improvement in discipline.

While Saggese may have the chops to play third or short in a utilityman capacity, he profiles much better defensively at second base. He's an average runner but he shows plus instincts on the basepaths and nabs more bags than the average base stealer with his athleticism does.

My take:

My favorite comp for Thomas Saggese (as a guy who doesn't dish out comps often) is JJ Hardy. Hardy and Saggese both maximize their batted ball output with launch angles and spray and both made significantly above-average contact in the zone, but Saggese lacks the plate discipline Hardy demonstrated throughout his career and projects for more stolen base output despite being an average runner.

---

79. Jordan Beck, OF, Colorado Rockies (Tier 6)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'3
Weight: 225 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
564	0.271	0.364	0.503	25.2%	12.9%	25	20	0.331

Why he's here:

Beck was a member of the 2021 Tennessee team that made its first College World Series appearance since 2005 and lost in the semifinals to the eventual champion Mississippi State. That team included a slew of high-profile prospects, including Drew Gilbert, Blade Tidwell, Chase Dollander, and Ben Joyce. Beck wasn't draft-eligible until the following year, and fortunately he put together his best season on a Volunteer team that went 44-22.

It was a tale of two levels for Beck in 2023. He dominated in Spokane to the tune of 20 home runs in 341 plate appearances and a .944 OPS while running a 21% strikeout rate. Spokane is one of the most hitter-friendly environments in all of minor league baseball (the Northwest League sans Tri-City indexes heavily this way), but it was the age-appropriate level for a 22-year-old college draftee. Once at Double-A, Beck's strikeout rate spiked and struggled to maintain the same impact. Hartford tends to be where rubber meets the road in Colorado's system, as it significantly trails both Spokane and Albuquerque in park factor.

Beck's profile includes some swing and miss and his swing decisions are below average, but he has enough pop for that to matter less than a bat with little-to-no impact. He mashes lefties which gives him a reasonable floor as a short side platoon corner

outfielder with opportunity for more. Playing 81 games in Coors is an ostensible boost for him as it is with all hitters who play in that environment.

My take:

At the risk of being reductive, Beck profiles to me as a toned-down version of Brady House in the outfield. There's some swing and miss and plate skills to iron out, but impact is there, perhaps not to the degree that House has displayed. He'll benefit from the locale of his big league team.

---

80. Jared Jones, RHP, Pittsburgh Pirates (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
126.1	3.85	3.77	1.23	27.6%	9.5%	15%	64%	10%

Why he's here:

There's more pitching in the Pirates' system than just Paul Skenes. Ben Cherington and company have done well accumulating pitching since he joined the organization starting with their second round selection of Jones in the 2020 draft. He had an illustrious career with USA Baseball as well as on the showcase circuit and was topping out at 96 mph pre-draft.

Since then his stuff has only ticked up. His fastball is now averaging the 96 mph he was maxing out at as a prep and it's getting above-average ride and run. His slider is at least plus and he worked throughout 2023 to ensure it separates more from his other breaking ball, a curveball that sits in the low-80s. Altoona's pitching coach, Cal Johnson, worked with him on a new grip that allowed him to throw the slider harder and command it better, allowing for a cleaner distinction from the curveball in two discrete velocity bands. He mixes in a changeup that trails his other pitches in quality by a considerable margin.

Strike-throwing has been an issue for him in years past. He's had issues with command stemming from a high-effort delivery, but that cleared up a bit this year. It led to more

efficiency and a greater ability to go deep in games. In fact, 14 of his 27 appearances were at least five innings long and he threw 75 or more pitches in 18 of them.

My take:

Jones has the stuff to be a #3 in a rotation that's largely unsettled beyond Keller, Pérez, and Gonzales. There will be big league innings up for grabs in 2024 and it'll come down to some combination of Skenes, Jones, Chandler, Harrington, and Ashcraft to fill them, and I think Jones gets one of the first opportunities. There are still questions about his command and durability that must be answered in full.

---

81. Bubba Chandler, RHP, Pittsburgh Pirates (Tier 6)

Age: 20
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: S/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
111.0	4.54	4.78	1.44	26.4%	10.5%	13%	63%	15%

Why he's here:

Chandler is a phenomenal athlete who was committed to play quarterback at Clemson in addition to being a two-way player on the diamond prior to his signing. The Pirates paid him a massive $3M bonus, roughly $2.1M over slot value, to coax him out of his college commitment and play baseball full-time. They entertained his two-way ambitions for parts of two seasons before having him focus on pitching.

It looks like it was the right decision. Chandler had scuffled to a .693 OPS and a 35.4% K-rate through 161 plate appearances as a pro but showed much more promise on the mound even if he was rough around the edges. He spent 2023 working to separate his slider and curveball from one another as they tended to blend together and if he can do so he'll have a true four-pitch mix. The heater is his best offering at present, sitting mid-90s and up to 98 mph routinely, followed closely by his slider.

The most encouraging sign in Chandler's season was watching him mature as the season wore on. He struggled with both command and control early which aligns with frustration toward the pitching-only mandate he's since aired publicly, but made strides in

strike-throwing as the year wore on. He went at least five innings in eight of his last nine starts.

My take:

Chandler is far from a finished product, but what we've seen so far is exciting. A good fastball, an expanding repertoire, and visible growth as a pitcher over the course of his first full season are all extremely positive markers. There is risk that his gains in control were only temporary and if so we may be looking at a 4th or 5th starter that flashes better and frustrates.

---

82. Bryce Eldridge, 1B, San Francisco Giants (Tier 6)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'7
Weight: 223 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
130	0.294	0.400	0.505	26.2%	15.4%	6	1	0.371

Why he's here:

If two is considered a trend, the Giants have shown a propensity for taking high-variance two-way players early in the draft. The newest iteration was Eldridge at 16th overall last summer. He's a hulking six-foot-seven 19 year old with promise on both sides of the ball but probably profiles best as a hitter after showing strides offensively with the USA Baseball U18 team, though his future as a prospect is far from decided.

Eldridge's unwieldy frame allows him to generate impressive exit velocities as a hitter, and despite the size of his strike zone he's managed it well to date. He'll have to prove that his plate coverage holds up against better competition as his contact rates were solid but unspectacular in his first stint as a professional. He refrained from chasing at an above-average rate, offering at pitches out of the zone just 20% of the time, but it was in a small sample and against low-quality breaking balls at the Complex and in Low-A.

He could be a legitimate two-way candidate if he reaches a high-end development outcome. His fastball is low-to-mid 90s and tops at 96 mph and he mixes in a slider and changeup. He's yet to throw in a game as a professional.

My take:

Possessing more than one route to the bigs is an advantage for Eldridge but nothing is guaranteed. He may be best served with a singular development focus – hitting or pitching – and if I were making that decision I'd be pushing him as a hitter with high ceiling outcomes. By stature he looks most like a James Wood or Spencer Jones but ironically lacks similar athleticism.

---

83. Dylan Lesko, SP, San Diego Padres (Tier 6)

Age: 19
Level(s): CPX, A, A+
Height: 6'2
Weight: 195 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
33.0	5.45	4.23	1.55	35.9%	15.2%	17%	60%	11%

Why he's here:

Lesko was the top pitcher in his class for some time before going down with a torn UCL that required Tommy John surgery in his final high school season. He went 15th overall to the Padres in 2022 and signed for $3.9M, just barely under slot value, but a significant sum for a prep who had already undergone major surgery. He struck out 112 batters in 60 innings as a junior prior to the injury and flashed two devastating pitches including a fastball up to 97 mph and a drop-off-the-table changeup.

He's since recovered and tossed a couple dozen innings as a pro without degradation to his stuff. He's back up to 98 mph with his heater and he's spinning it for over 20 inches of induced vertical break with regularity, giving it great life at the top of the zone. His changeup is back in full form and tunnels well with his fastball despite having over a dozen miles per hour of velocity separation. It's a double-plus pitch and has late, cartoonish dive. He has an innate feel for spin and can twirl a 3,000 RPM curveball but it significantly trails his other two offerings in quality and command.

As is common with post-TJ arms, Lesko showed command issues in his short sample. He walked 15% of batters and managed just a 60% strike rate, both of which will have to improve if he's to project as a rotation arm. He'll be nearly two years removed from

surgery at the start of the year with a healthy off-season under his belt and could be leading the conversation for top pitching prospect if he makes strides in strike-throwing.

My take:

Seeing Lesko's velocity and feel for the changeup return was a big deal. It doesn't take a huge sample to see that his stuff hasn't atrophied, and while the command was definitely spotty, that's largely par for the course following Tommy John. It's an open question whether it will return to the level he displayed as a prep, but it's probably worth the gamble if you're looking to acquire him.

---

84. Will Warren, SP, New York Yankees (Tier 6)

Age: 24
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 175 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
129.0	3.35	4.19	1.30	27.0%	10.7%	13%	62%	17%

Why he's here:

Save some first names for the rest of us, Will Warren. He was an 8th round pick out of Southeastern Louisiana and is another feather in the cap of the Yankees' pitching development team. He had a lockdown final year with the Lions, pitching his way to a 2.57 ERA with 95 strikeouts to 25 walks in 91 innings, but the Yankees wanted to further develop his arsenal before turning him loose as a pro.

The first pitch he added after the draft was a dastardly sweeping slider. It's one of the three best pitches on this list, featuring huge break and garnering a 35% called-strike-plus whiff rate in 2023. It's his Pitching Ninja offering and it complements his sinker quite well by offering an opposite lateral movement profile. Beyond the sweeper and sinker he has a kitchen sink arsenal that includes multiple fastball variations (four-seam, two-seam, cut) as well as a traditional slider and changeup.

Warren has had trouble with control at times. Just one of his 25 starts was unblemished in the walk column and even then he plunked a batter. It's not uncommon to have problems

reigning in stuff with big movement, but it'll have to improve for him to project as a mid-rotation arm.

My take:

Warren passes the eye test. His stuff jumps out at you and it's fun to watch him unleash his sweeper + sinker combo on minor league lineups. It's nice that he built up nearly 130 innings in 2023 and finished at Triple-A. He figures to be in the mix for innings with the big league club over the summer.

---

85. Rhett Lowder, SP, Cincinnati Reds (Tier 6)

Age: 21
Level(s): N/A
Height: 6'2
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Why he's here:

Lowder is a product of the Wake Forest program that has emerged as a collegiate pitching factory in recent years. They implemented a pitching lab in 2019 geared toward reducing injury and enhancing performance and have since seen Jared Shuster (2020), Ryan Cusick (2021), and Lowder go in the first round after a 17 year drought of first-round arms.

Lowder's final collegiate season was the most impressive of that trio. He went a perfect 15-0 while striking out 143 batters over 120.1 innings and surrendered just 25 earned runs, good for a 1.87 ERA. His last outing was a duel with number one overall pick Paul Skenes in the College World Series in which he went seven scoreless innings with six strikeouts while the Demon Deacons ultimately lost in extra innings. The Reds did not push him to throw following the conclusion of his college season.

His advanced feel as a pitcher allowed him to be an efficient worker who often went 5 or more innings on very manageable pitch counts. He pounds the zone with a pair of fastballs, a four-seamer in the mid-90s with ride and a two-seamer occupying a similar velocity band but with armside run, but his best offerings are his changeup and slider.

My take:

Lowder landed in a pretty bad ballpark, but he's polished and could be a relatively quick mover in this class with a shorter ETA among arms than all but Skenes and Waldrep. His stuff is a tick behind them but he has much more feel for sequencing and locations, which should translate to a high floor but limited upside as a top-of-the-rotation arm.

---

86. Zach Dezenzo, 3B, Houston Astros (Tier 6)

Age: 23
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 220 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
410	0.304	0.383	0.531	25.9%	10.2%	18	22	0.382

Why he's here:

The Astros are one of the best teams in baseball at plucking players from the depths of the draft and turning them into big leaguers. Chas McCormick was a 21st round pick, JP France was taken in the 14th, and Jake Meyers got scooped up in the 13th, among others. There's quite a bit of evidence they've done it again with Dezenzo whom they took with the 373rd pick.

This year was Dezenzo's first full season in professional ball following a decorated career in the Big Ten. He had a stellar final year with Ohio State, racking up 19 home runs and slugging over .700, but his swing was stiff and full of effort that led to contact issues. The Astros worked with him to make the whole operation a little more fluid, and while there's still more swing-and-miss than is desirable, he made gains in that department and maintained his plus game power. He has great bat speed and regularly lifts the ball with authority, which plays well with his 108 mph 90th percentile exit velocity.

There's a possibility the bottom falls out and he's something like a right-handed Nolan Gorman, but there's enough present contact to keep him out of firm three-true-outcome territory for now. He should stick at third, though he's not blowing anybody away on defense, but a move to the outfield or second base could be possible.

My take:

Dezenzo's 2023 line, particularly his batting average, was buoyed by a truly absurd stretch in Asheville and doesn't reflect the expectation moving forward. With that said, Denzenzo has power in spades and an optimized swing for unlocking it in games. There are worse bets to make than righty power with the Crawford Boxes beckoning.

T I E R   7

---

87. Druw Jones, OF, Arizona Diamondbacks (Tier 7)

Age: 19
Level(s): CPX, A
Height: 6'4
Weight: 180 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
173	0.238	0.353	0.327	26.0%	15.0%	2	9	0.330

Why he's here:

Druw Jones and Jackson Holliday will be forever linked as the 1.1 and 1.2 in the 2022 draft, and thus far their professional careers have gone entirely opposite directions. Jones was handed a complimentary labrum injury shortly after being drafted and subsequently struggled through 2023 with a slew of minor injuries. He has an impressive array of raw tools – as you may expect from the son of a 10-time gold glover and current member of the hall of fame ballot – but he's had difficulty synthesizing those tools into on-field production.

Jones has an ideal six-foot-four build with obvious room to fill out, particularly in his lower half where he remains long and wiry. He's able to generate plus bat speed despite a swing that isn't particularly aesthetically pleasing and often looks entirely out of sync. He makes above-average swing decisions but got impatient at times as he went through challenging stretches in 2023. He had issues with both launch angle and consistent contact, posting a 60% ground ball rate (highest of all hitters on this list) and a sub-70% total contact rate.

Injuries basically erased Jones' season between mid-April and August, but he found a groove in September after getting back into game form. It was just eight games and 36 plate appearances, but he put together 13 hits and nine walks to close out the year and give a brief glimpse of what it could look like if everything comes together.

My take:

Jones is monumentally difficult to evaluate. We have only a miniscule sample shrouded by substantial injury history to pull from, and he didn't look particularly good when he was on the field. The tools and pedigree are all there. A lot will ride on the Diamondbacks development team helping him clean up his swing mechanics.

---

88. Tyler Locklear, 1B, Seattle Mariners (Tier 7)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 210 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
375	0.288	0.405	0.502	20.3%	12.5%	13	12	0.341

Why he's here:

Locklear was a data darling entering the 2022 draft, boasting some of the best batted ball and plate discipline data of any player selected. He was a three-year player and two-year starter at VCU and was nothing short of dominant, posting an OPS over 1.200 with 37 home runs and significantly more walks than strikeouts in 628 collegiate plate appearances. The Mariners took him with their second round pick and he picked up right where he left off before suffering a broken hand on a hit-by-pitch.

Lockbombs (h/t Mason McRae) has big time power and no problem getting to it regardless of horizontal spray. His 20 home runs as a junior at VCU was a school record and translated cleanly to wood bats in pro ball, where his 90th percentile EV was comfortably plus. He has above-average swing decisions to pair with a patient approach that helps provide a floor beyond a prototypical corner infield masher. He spent the majority of the year in Everett, which as discussed previously is a true hitter's park, but he doesn't need a friendly environment to put balls over the fence.

He appeared to develop a pronounced bat waggle over the course of the season that was particularly prominent following the hand injury he suffered on June first. It hasn't impacted his ability to put the barrel on the ball yet, at least not noticeably, but it's an unnecessary quirk that could cause problems down the road. Extraneous movement, particularly with the hands, requires the batter to be perfectly in sync and on time to the ball.

My take:

Some of the shine has worn off for me since his hand injury, but I'm still very much a Locklear fan. The burden of proof is pretty high for a right-right first baseman and I think he's cleared it thus far, though I do have concern about the bat waggle and some whiff on breaking pitches. He ended the year in Double-A, albeit not a large sample, and could be on the move to Seattle quicker than some expect.

---

89. Ryan Clifford, 1B, New York Mets (Tier 7)

Age: 19
Level(s): A, A+
Height: 6'3
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
511	0.262	0.374	0.480	27.4%	12.5%	24	5	0.326

Why he's here:

Clifford isn't the traditional 11th round pick. He has a pair of gold medals with the USA Baseball U-12 and U-15 teams and was committed to Vanderbilt before the Astros bought him out of that obligation with a $1.3M signing bonus. He was dealt to the Mets at the 2023 deadline as part of a package that sent Justin Verlander back to the Astros after fewer than 100 innings apart.

As you may expect just by looking at him, Clifford is very much a power-first prospect. He has a knack for lifting the ball and often does so with authority. His 107 mph 90th percentile exit velocity is at least plus for his age and he's made enough contact thus far (75% total) to stave off grave concerns about his bat-to-ball. Most of his playing time has come in the corner outfield but he profiles better as a first baseman long term.

Clifford's season took a bit of a left turn in terms of performance once in the Mets organization. His contact ability regressed and he struck out in 36% of his plate appearances with Brooklyn. Given his defensive shortcomings, he'll have to be overpowering as an offensive talent to secure a starting gig at the big league level. There are open questions about that possibility at the moment despite clear 30 home run upside.

My take:

The upshot with regard to Clifford's struggles in Brooklyn is that they came primarily at home and there are known issues with visibility at their ballpark (h/t Jarett Seidler, Baseball Prospectus). I'm willing to discount poor performance from a teenager following a trade and cross-country move. He mashes righties and has considerable ceiling but there is risk the bottom falls out as he moves up and sees better pitching.

---

90. Orelvis Martinez, 3B, Toronto Blue Jays (Tier 7)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 5'11
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
538	0.243	0.340	0.496	23.4%	12.5%	28	2	0.266

Why he's here:

Martinez has been hanging around top 100 lists like the guest at a dinner party who keeps chatting up the host while they passive-aggressively wash dishes. He took a brief hiatus from top prospect status as his contact rates plunged into untenable territory only to return as they improved throughout 2023.

The hit tool still isn't great and profiles as below-average at best, but he's a damage on contact darling. His 106 mph 90th percentile exit velocity is firmly plus and it plays up in games as he puts the ball in the air to the pull side with extreme regularity. He'll run low BABIPs as a result of his fly ball tendencies, but he showed improved swing decisions in 2023 and should have enough of an on-base floor to mitigate. He should run into 30 home run seasons as a big leaguer if he hits enough to stick.

The Blue Jays just finalized a deal with Justin Turner for one year and $13M. That will hinder Martinez' path to playing time to some degree, but there should still be at-bats for grabs between 2B, 3B, and DH. Martinez appeared in 26 games at second base and 36 at third base this year.

My take:

Martinez plays up in points leagues that don't penalize for strikeouts. He's going to run low batting averages and manageable OBPs, but you're really here for the home run output which isn't necessarily scarce at third base.

---

91. Bryan Ramos, 3B, Chicago White Sox (Tier 7)

Age: 21
Level(s): A, AA
Height: 6'2
Weight: 225 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
359	0.264	0.358	0.450	22.0%	10.6%	15	4	0.307

Why he's here:

Ramos was scooped up by the White Sox as a 17-year-old out of Havana, Cuba, in July of 2018 for a $300K bonus. He then skipped the Dominican Summer League entirely and spent 2019 at the Arizona Complex where he held up well considering he was nearly three years younger than the average player at the level. Come 2024, he may be in line for reps at third base for the big league club.

He's never lit up the stat page but it's easy to see how he could in the future with a few small tweaks to a sound foundation. His contact rates have stayed solid despite being pushed quickly thus far, and a jump in his K-rate to 22% at Double-A is to be expected as he was adjusting to the level while recovering from an early season groin injury. He does a nice job keeping the ball off the ground and generating loft which should mean more surface power as gets familiar with advanced pitching. His 106 mph 90th percentile exit velocity backs up the notion that there's more in the tank.

I came away largely impressed with him after catching a few games' worth of plate appearances at the AFL. His frame was as advertised, he looked athletic in the batters' box, and I think he has a shot to stick at third base.

My take:

The primary concerns here are that the production has never quite fully come together and that he has noticeable splits against righties, both of which can be explained to some extent by his age-to-level translations. At this point on the list you're looking for reasons why it might work at the big league level and there are enough in Ramos' favor to make him a cost-effective target. A scuffling White Sox team may decide to lean on him earlier than expected.

---

92. Graham Pauley, 3B, San Diego Padres (Tier 7)

Age: 22
Level(s): A, A+, AA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
551	0.308	0.393	0.538	16.9%	10.9%	23	22	0.342

Why he's here:

Pauley had a perfectly cromulent career at Duke, compiling a .278/.385/.452 line and collecting a meager 11 home runs and five stolen bases in 354 plate appearances. He had short stints on the Cape where he floundered a bit with wood bats, all of which amounted to him falling to the 13th round in the 2022 draft.

He's made a lot of strides as a hitter since then. A large focus of his development has been on transforming his swing to stay on plane longer and put the ball in the air more often and he's been successful without compromising his bat-to-ball. He made contact on 87% of pitches in the zone and put 41% of his batted ball events in the air (36% is the average on this list), allowing his average raw power to play up in games. He performed well at all three levels he visited in 2023, ultimately finishing with 20 games at Double-A where he ran a .931 OPS and struck out just 12 times in 88 plate appearances.

There aren't many nits to pick in Pauley's profile. You'd like to see a little more underlying pop, but he puts the barrel on the ball a lot and refrains from chasing outside of the zone. He played the majority of his games at third base but worked predominantly in the corner outfield in the AFL, and he'll likely find time in the grass early given the current roster construction in San Diego.

My take:

Pauley looks like he could be a 15 home run, 10 stolen base bat at the next level who avoids a utility role by putting his plus hit tool to work. He's fairly maximized at present, both in terms of swing mechanics and frame, but if he found a way to get to more power he'd be closer to 50 than 100 on this list.

---

93. Josue De Paula, OF, Los Angeles Dodgers (Tier 7)

Age: 18
Level(s): A
Height: 6'3
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
340	0.284	0.396	0.372	17.9%	13.5%	2	14	0.353

Why he's here:

De Paula emerged from the 2022 international class as one of the more polished hitters in the crop following a full-scale breakout in the DSL where he flashed above-average recognition and swing decisions. The Dodgers got him for a bargain and he now finds himself in a top-tier development organization, an important element of his future projection given the gains he'll have to make to reach his potential on both sides of the ball.

While he has elite athletes in his bloodline in Stephon Marbury and Sebastian Telfair, neither were baseball players and it's not clear that it's translated to his ability to man a defensive position at a passable level. That may mean he's relegated to a DH-only role with the occasional vignette at a corner outfield spot which would put considerable pressure on his bat. Thus far he's demonstrated a discerning eye, above-average contact rates, and patience that can perhaps be construed as passivity. That's translated to a high

on-base percentage floor, but the primary questions are about his ability to do damage on contact thus far.

De Paula's 2023 slugging percentage started with a three, a far cry from the .522 figure he posted the previous year, and the underlying data supports the notion that he's not hitting for impact at present. His 102 mph 90th percentile EV isn't poor for his age, but we are reliant on age and physical maturity to project further in-game power gains. Lifting the ball with more regularity should help, too. In any event, Dodgers player development has very specific focus areas for him.

My take:

He's still very young and has shown potential, but I'm backing off a bit from where we were heading into the 2023 season. He'll need time to marinate and evaluators will have to wait a beat to see how he shows up in 2024. There is a lot of offensive potential here but it's still just potential for the time being.

---

94. Connor Phillips, RHP, Cincinnati Reds (Tier 7)

Age: 22
Level(s): AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 6'2
Weight: 209 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
105.0	3.86	3.71	1.41	33.3%	12.3%	13%	60%	12%

Why he's here:

Phillips has been a stuff-over-command arm since his selection in the 2nd round in 2020 through his major league debut in 2023. The Mariners plucked him from McLellan Junior College where he made just six appearances totalling 25.2 innings but showed enough to warrant a signing bonus north of $1M. He made his way to Cincinnati as the player to be named later in a trade for Jesse Winker in March of 2022.

He has a four-pitch mix with three above-average offerings headlined by an outlier fastball that sits mid-to-high 90s with exceptional IVB characteristics. Along with the heater comes a plus slider with sweep that plays as a chase and whiff pitch, an above-average curveball with a lot of depth and vertical break, and a changeup that trails

the other three offerings by a significant margin. His slider in particular garnered extremely positive results in the form of a near 50% whiff rate at the big league level.

The problem has long been strike throwing. He has a high-effort delivery with a motion that's difficult to repeat, making consistency an issue. His huge stuff would play in the back end of a big league bullpen, which could be where he's headed if it doesn't work out in the rotation.

My take:

It takes a certain type to chase after high variance pitching in a bad ballpark. If it all works out well and he finds a way to harness command of all of his offerings, not limited to the fastball, he has serious upside as a #2 or #3. If it bottoms out he'll be in the bullpen.

---

95. Robert Gasser, LHP, Milwaukee Brewers (Tier 7)

Age: 24
Level(s): AAA
Height: 6'0
Weight: 192 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/L

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
135.1	3.79	3.71	1.28	28.0%	8.4%	12%	65%	9%

Why he's here:

Gasser came to Milwaukee by way of trade in 2022, shipping across the country with org-mates Taylor Rogers, Dinelson Lamet, and Esteury Ruiz in exchange for Josh Hader. Rogers promptly left in free agency following the season, Lamet was immediately designated for assignment, and Esteury Ruiz was later dealt in a separate trade to procure William Contreras, leaving just Gasser as the final vestige of that transaction.

Gasser's stuff doesn't scream overpowering in the way that other lefties on this list do (Ricky Tiedemann and Kyle Harrison, for example), but he has a deep arsenal he deploys liberally and advanced feel for sequencing and locations. Since he debuted in 2021 he's carried a mid-to-high 3's ERA and profiled as a #4 or #5. He's spent the last few years working to expand his repertoire to include multiple fastball variations, flush with each of the four-seam, two-seam, cutter, and sinker variation.

The Brewers rotation is rather uninspiring following the departures of Brandon Woodruff and Corbin Burnes. Their #2 through #4 projects to be a combination of Wade Miley, Colin Rea, and Joe Ross, which is to say that Gasser has an opportunity to seize a rotation spot on opening day. He performed well while spending all of 2023 at Triple-A and has crested the 135-inning mark in each of the last two seasons, proving he can handle a starter's workload.

My take:

A year ago I put Ken Waldichuk in a similar position on the 100 for very similar reasons in terms of immediate opportunity. It hasn't worked out as well as I'd hoped for Waldichuk as he's been shifted to a relief role, but I'm more bullish on Gasser than I was the former. When you're at this point on the list, you're just looking for starter traits and opportunity, both of which Gasser has in spades.

---

96. Mick Abel, RHP, Philadelphia Phillies (Tier 7)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA, AAA
Height: 6'5
Weight: 190 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
113.1	4.13	4.61	1.26	27.4%	13.5%	13%	61%	13%

Why he's here:

Abel was the 15th overall pick in the 2020 draft out of Jesuit High School in Beaverton, Oregon, a school that has become something of a baseball hotbed following a 25-year span without an Oregon prep pitcher going in the first round. He's had big stuff for a long while and found himself one step away from contributing in the Phillies' rotation with a single start at Triple-A to close the 2023 season.

There's never been doubt about the lethality of Abel's arsenal, but rather his ability to harness it. It starts with a huge fastball that averaged nearly 96 mph and generated a 29% whiff rate this year and is complimented by a trio of breaking and off-speed pitches, all of which grade as above-average or better following some tinkering this year. His slider has taken several variations, including a slow, sweeping version, a traditional gyro, and

finally a power slider thrown in the mid-80s. His low-80s curveball is used sparingly but is the breaking offering he commands most confidently.

Despite Andrew Painter's injury seemingly opening the door for Abel to jump into the rotation at some point in 2023, command issues held him back. He has frontline potential if he can improve both his command and control by cleaning up his delivery, but that's a rare development.

My take:

While some of Abel's 2023 line can be attributed to some batted ball luck, in particular a 13% home-run to fly-ball rate, much more of it is self-inflicted. At this point his outlook is #4 or #5 fantasy arm who flashes dominance occasionally, though there is still ace potential in his range of outcomes.

---

97. Tekoah Roby, RHP, St. Louis Cardinals (Tier 7)

Age: 21
Level(s): AA
Height: 6'1
Weight: 185 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

IP	ERA	FIP	WHIP	K%	BB%	SwStr	Strk%	HR/FB
58.1	4.63	3.54	1.20	28.9%	6.3%	14%	65%	12%

Why he's here:

Roby's minor league tenure has been marred by injuries. He missed time in 2021 with a sprained elbow and had his 2023 cut short by a shoulder strain, neither of which inspire confidence that he can sustain a starter's workload. He's electric when he's on, though, and was by far the most impressive arm I saw at the AFL despite his outing lasting just three outs.

His arsenal is led by a high-70s, sometimes low-80s curveball with great depth that often produces swing and miss both in and out of the zone. His fastball is no slouch either, averaging roughly 95 mph with a few extra ticks when he needs it. It's average shape but has produced plus results. He worked to incorporate his cutterish slider more often throughout 2023 and it flashes as an above average second breaking ball to pair with his

curve. He'll throw a changeup to lefties but has struggled to command it well enough to maximize its effectiveness.

All of Roby's 2023 innings came in Double-A and the AFL which sets him up nicely to contribute in the rotation at some point in 2024. It's unclear how many innings he'll be able to withstand in the coming season and health will be a major hurdle on his path to being a viable starter. He does a nice job filling up the zone with strikes and has above-average control but could use some polish commanding all of his offerings.

My take:

I'd push Roby higher if I thought he would throw more than 120 innings maximum in 2024 and I felt more confident he'll eliminate blow-up outings where his feel for the zone is nowhere to be found. He's thrown just 185 innings despite entering his fourth year of pro ball this coming season, so it's reasonable to expect further polish required.

---

98. Everson Pereira, OF, New York Yankees (Tier 7)

Age: 22
Level(s): AA, AAA, MLB
Height: 5'11
Weight: 191 lbs
Bats/Throws: R/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
343	0.300	0.373	0.548	28.6%	9.3%	18	11	0.384

Why he's here:

Pereira originally signed with the Yankees in July of 2017 for $1.5M but didn't receive much attention until he blasted 20 home runs in just 49 games in 2021. He had previously missed significant time with a combination of foot and hamstring issues and later the coronavirus pandemic. He made his major league debut in August of 2023 and had issues with contact en route to a 39% strikeout rate in 103 plate appearances.

He's flush with tools, the most prominent of which is his big power that manifests in exit velocities that rival any in the Yankees' farm system. Between that and the above-average run times he posted at the big league level, there's considerable upside in his profile. He had toasted the upper-minors despite marginal contact rates before his callup but may

have a longer adjustment period at the highest level than hitters without his in-zone whiff issues.

To his credit, he did limit his chase rate effectively and the concern is mostly limited to his ability to put bat on ball. A singular development focus and a healthy offseason with big league hitting coaches lend credence to the idea that he could work it out and his small MLB sample in 2023 should be disregarded.

My take:

If his contact ability were a grade better he'd be close to Emmanuel Rodriguez and Spencer Jones territory, but I'm not sold that he can connect often enough to warrant a full-time role in an outfield that already features Aaron Judge and Juan Soto.

---

99. Sterlin Thompson, 2B, Colorado Rockies (Tier 7)

Age: 22
Level(s): A+, AA
Height: 6'4
Weight: 200 lbs
Bats/Throws: L/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
407	0.293	0.376	0.487	18.2%	9.3%	14	17	0.333

Why he's here:

Thompson was the Rockies' first round pick in 2022 hailing from the University of Florida where he established himself as a contact-first line drive hitter. He accrued a .332/.424/.524 line with just 16 home runs in 517 college plate appearances using aluminum bats, cementing his profile as a high-floor amateur who may leave something to be desired in terms of upside both offensively and defensively.

His improved surface power output as a professional is largely as a result of his home parks. Spokane and Hartford have home run park factors of 123 and 128, respectively, so while he managed a 21 home run per 600 plate appearance pace, it's not reasonable to expect that moving forward. He does a good job pulling his batted balls (45% in 2023), but over-indexed in line drives (26%, average on this list is 22%) and under-indexed in fly balls (34% vs. 36%), which should help influence a strong batting average but limits his

ability to do over-the-fence damage. He exited the Arizona Fall League without a home run in 100 plate appearances.

He has the benefit of playing at Coors where his power might play up a bit and his line-drive tendencies could lead to plenty of extra base hits in the power alleys. His all-fields approach plays well there.

My take:

Thompson isn't a home run option but he'll play better in points leagues where the shape of production is less stringent. Filling up particular categories won't matter as much which is good because he looks like a 15 home run, five stolen base guy who will run solid batting averages by using the vast expanse that is the Coors field grass.

---

100. Roderick Arias, SS, New York Yankees (Tier 7)

Age: 18
Level(s): CPX
Height: 6'0
Weight: 178 lbs
Bats/Throws: S/R

PA	AVG.	OBP.	SLG.	K%	BB%	HR	SB	BABIP
130	0.267	0.423	0.505	22.3%	20.8%	6	17	0.313

Why he's here:

Arias was the feature signing of New York's 2022 IFA class and was trending toward another disappointment before a breakout 2023 campaign. His $4M signing bonus was second in the class behind only Christhian Vaquero and both saw tremendous difficulty in their first stints as professionals. Arias in particular posted a sub-.200 batting average and a 32.8% strikeout rate which was a rather uncharacteristic performance for a top signing in the DSL.

The Yankees didn't seem to mind and maintained his scheduled progression, perhaps signaling that his performance was the result of the injury that cut his season short. Arias came stateside in 2023 and played the entirety of the year at the Florida Complex where his surface figures jumped significantly in congruence with his underlying data markers. He compiled a .267/.423/.505 line in his second season in pinstripes and demonstrated a keen eye to pair with plus exit velocities for his age.

Almost all of Arias' profile is enticing. He looks like he has the range, arm, and actions to stick at shortstop long-term, he's a great athlete with run times that clock as above average, and he showed off more juice this year than last. The big flag in his profile is concerningly bad in-zone contact rates that must improve to project him as a future big leaguer.

My take:

The cost to acquire Arias took a big jump in 2023 and probably would have gone further if not for a thumb injury that cut his season short. I think the market overcorrected on him between December of 2022 and today and there is too much risk that his hit tool doesn't come around for me to buy him as a top-50 fantasy prospect.

L I S T   B R E A K D O W N

Top 100 Prospects by Team	
Team	**# Prospects Appearing (Top 3)**
Arizona Diamondbacks	3 (Lawlar, Troy, Jones)
Atlanta Braves	2 (Smith-Shawver, Waldrep)
Baltimore Orioles	5 (Holliday, Mayo, Basallo)
Boston Red Sox	3 (Anthony, Mayer, Teel)
Chicago Cubs	6 (Horton, Shaw, Crow-Armstrong)
Chicago White Sox	3 (Montgomery, Schultz, Ramos)
Cincinnati Reds	3 (Marte, Lowder, Phillips)
Cleveland Guardians	2 (DeLauter, Manzardo)
Colorado Rockies	3 (Amador, Beck, Thompson)
Detroit Tigers	3 (Keith, Jobe, Clark)
Houston Astros	2 (Melton, Dezenzo)

Kansas City Royals	0
Los Angeles Angels	0
Los Angeles Dodgers	5 (Yamamoto, Rushing, Vargas)
Miami Marlins	1 (Meyer)
Milwaukee Brewers	6 (Chourio, Ortiz, Misiorowski)
Minnesota Twins	3 (Jenkins, Rodriguez, Lee)
New York Mets	6 (Gilbert, Williams, Scott)
New York Yankees	6 (Dominguez, Jones, Hampton)
Oakland Athletics	0
Philadelphia Phillies	3 (Painter, Miller, Abel)
Pittsburgh Pirates	4 (Skenes, Johnson, Jones)
San Diego Padres	6 (Merrill, Salas, Thorpe)
Seattle Mariners	5 (Emerson, Ford, Young)
San Francisco Giants	3 (Lee, Harrison, Eldridge)
St. Louis Cardinals	5 (Scott II, Hence, Winn)
Tampa Bay Rays	4 (Caminero, Mead, Williams)
Texas Rangers	3 (Langford, Carter, Walcott)
Toronto Blue Jays	2 (Tiedemann, Martinez)
Washington Nationals	3 (Crews, Wood, House)

Top 100 Prospects by Position	
Position	# Prospects Appearing
Right-handed Pitcher	22
Left-handed Pitcher	5
Catcher	4

First Base	7
Second Base	11
Third Base	11
Shortstop	14
Outfield	26

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S