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Sunday, January 29, 2012

Updated: February 9, 9:33 AM ET

Ranking the top prospects (1-25)

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ESPN Insider

Welcome to ESPN Insider's 2012 ranking of the top 100 prospects in baseball.

This is the fifth year I have done these rankings for Insider, and for the first time, we have a repeater at No. 1 (and, as it turns out, at No. 2). There were still a number of high-profile graduations from last year's list, starting with [Eric Hosmer](#) at No. 5 and [Dustin Ackley](#) at No. 7, and a trade that saw last year's No. 4 and 21 prospects, [Jesus Montero](#) and [Michael Pineda](#), respectively, exchanged for each other earlier this offseason. This year's list benefits from a major infusion of high-end talent from the 2011 Rule 4 draft, one of the strongest draft classes in years.

The Guidelines

- The rankings are limited to players who still have rookie eligibility; that means they have yet to exceed 130 at-bats or 50 innings pitched in the majors and have not yet spent 45 days on the active roster of a major league club, excluding call-ups during the roster expansion period after Sept. 1.
- Only players who have signed professional contracts are eligible.
- I do not consider players with experience in Nippon Professional Baseball "prospects" for the purposes of this exercise, which means no Yu Darvish.
- When ranking players, I consider scouting reports on players -- usually my own, supplementing with conversations with other scouts and front-office executives as needed -- as well as performance, adjusted for age and context. I've made one adjustment in my ranking philosophy in recent years, favoring higher-upside prospects over lower-ceiling prospects who are closer to the majors. This better reflects how these players are valued now by front offices and scouting departments, and gives me a chance to deliver more information on prospects whose names or scouting reports might be new to you.
- I use the 20-80 grading scale in these comments to avoid saying "average" and "above average" thousands of times across the 100 player comments. On that scale, a grade of 50 equals major league average, 55 is above average, 60 is plus, 45 is fringy or below average and so on. [Mike Stanton](#) has 80 raw power. [Bengie Molina](#) has 20 speed. An average fastball for a right-hander is 90-92 mph, with 1-2 mph off for a lefty.
- I've included last year's rank for players who appeared in the top 100 last offseason. An "ineligible" player (IE) was still an amateur at this time last January, whereas an "unranked" player (UR) was eligible but didn't make the cut. I've also tagged players who were on last year's sleepers list or list of 10 players who just missed the cut.

Law's complete top 100: [Index](#) | [1-25](#) | [26-50](#) | [51-75](#) | [76-100](#)

Rank**Player**

Rank**Player****1 Mike Trout**

Age: 20 (DOB: Aug. 7, 1991)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Outfield

Organization: Los Angeles Angels
Top '11 Level: Majors (Angels)
2011 ranking: 1

Of the top three prospects on this year's list -- all viable candidates for the top spot -- Trout rose to the top because, in a sense, he's the perfect prospect. He is a position player who affects the game on offense, on defense and via baserunning, and has shown incredible maturity in his approach despite the fact that he entered pro ball at age 17 and still can't legally buy a drink (unless the Angels are visiting the Blue Jays). The next two guys on this list are pretty special in their own right, but Trout remains the top dog -- er, fish -- for 2012.

All Trout did last year was rank in the top 10 in the Texas League in on-base percentage (fifth, .414) and slugging (eighth, .544) despite being the youngest qualifying position player in the league. He's an 80 runner (on the 20-80 scouting scale) who flies out of the box; he tied for the league lead in triples and finished fifth in stolen bases even though a call up to the big leagues -- before his 20th birthday -- limited him to just 91 games at Double-A. And that early call-up is, in and of itself, a good sign: In the past 40 years, just 11 other players have had 100 plate appearances in a year in which their seasonal ages were 19 or younger, a list that includes Hall of Famer Robin Yount; potential Hall of Famers Ken Griffey, Alex Rodriguez and Pudge Rodriguez; and non-slouches Adrian Beltre, Justin Upton and Andruw Jones.

Trout is atop the list because the scouting report lines up with the production he has showed in the minors over the past three years. In addition to that explosive speed, he has great hand-eye coordination; a short, direct path to the ball; and a very advanced approach that combines pitch recognition with good ball-strike recognition. (That approach did fall apart a little in the big leagues, in part as he tried to be more aggressive to keep himself in the lineup, but also as he struggled to adjust to pitchers with better breaking balls changing eye levels on him -- fastballs up, curveballs down, in either order.) He has the hip rotation and leverage to hit for above-average power down the road to go with high batting averages and OBP, and should provide plus defense in any of the three outfield spots. A player such as Trout, who can add so much value to his team in so many ways, belongs on the top of the rankings.

Rank**Player****2 Bryce Harper**

Age: 19 (DOB: Oct. 16, 1992)
Bats: Left **Throws:** Right
Position: Outfield

Organization: Washington Nationals
Top '11 Level: AA (Harrisburg)
2010 ranking: 2

Harper's calling card remains his 80 power to go with an 80 arm from right field, but he's a better overall athlete than he's given credit for. He showed over the course of a year when he was challenged twice by the Nationals with promotions that he can and will make adjustments to pitchers who attack his weaknesses.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM131
- AB353
- HR11
- RBI38
- SB33

- SO76
- BB45
- AVG.326
- OBP.414
- SLG.544

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM109
- AB387
- HR17
- RBI58

His light-tower power produces incredible BP sessions and mammoth in-game shots; he has as much leverage from his lower half as a human can achieve without dislocating his spine midswing. He couples that with both quick wrists and strong hand-eye coordination for higher contact rates than this kind of power hitter typically sees. He's a plus runner who has improved substantially in right field since moving there after signing in 2010.

- SB26
- SO87
- BB59
- AVG.297
- OBP.392
- SLG.501

Harper still struggles with breaking stuff from lefties and continues to adjust to right-handers pitching him soft away, but showed improvement in at-bats against both groups of pitchers in the Arizona Fall League. He should return to Double-A to start the season and spend some time in Triple-A when ready, but a September call-up would be a reasonable timetable, with 30-homer seasons in his very near future.

Rank Player

3 **Matt Moore**

Age: 22 (DOB: June 18, 1989)

Bats: Left **Throws:** Left

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Tampa Bay Rays

Top '11 Level: Majors (Rays)

2011 ranking: 16

Moore throws in the upper 90s about as easily as any left-hander I can remember seeing, sitting 93 to 98 mph like he's playing catch. He complements the heater with a plus slider in the low 80s and an even better changeup that helped him demolish right-handed batters in 2011 -- he struck out just less than 40 percent of right-handers he faced in the minors last year. The changeup is hard, 83-87 mph, and cuts more than fades, so Moore just buries it at the knees to keep hitters who've picked it up from elevating it. The slider is bigger than a typical slider, with tilt but a hint of a curveball's break that can carry it out of the zone, although if that's your third-best pitch, you're going pretty good.

His control took a big step forward this year, and his command of the fastball and changeup is already above average. Moore is only 22 with the frame to get stronger and an easy delivery that should, in theory, keep him on the mound longer. If I had a crystal ball that could promise me Moore would stay healthy for the next decade, he'd be even higher on this list. Instead, he'll have to settle for third place and predictions of Cy Young contention by his third or fourth year in the majors.

Rank Player

4 **Manny Machado**

Age: 19 (DOB: July 6, 1992)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: SS

Organization: Baltimore Orioles

Top '11 Level: A (Fredrick)

2011 ranking: 26

Machado showed he was much more advanced at the plate than even his biggest fans (myself included) thought, jumping to a full-season club and showing strong plate discipline in his first year in pro ball.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM27
- IP155
- W12
- L3
- ERA1.92

- SO210
- BB46
- H101
- HR11
- BAA.184

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM101
- AB382

At the plate, Machado has strong, quick wrists and has mostly eliminated the slight bat wrap he had in high school, although he's started to drift a little early, which might cut off a little of his power. He has great hip rotation and really extends his arm well through his finish, so if he keeps his weight back a little better, he'll have above-average to plus power when he matures physically.

The biggest risk for Machado will be that he outgrows shortstop as his body fills out, but that likely would come with a major increase in power that could carry his bat at third base. He has the arm, the hands and the athleticism to handle short, and the faster pro game didn't faze him on defense or offense. At third, he'd still be an All-Star, but as a shortstop, when he reaches his mid-20s, he could be among the best players in the game.

- HR11
- RBI50
- SB11
- SO73
- BB45
- AVG.257
- OBP.335
- SLG.421

Rank Player

5 **Shelby Miller**

Age: 21 (DOB: Oct. 10, 1990)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: St. Louis Cardinals

Top '11 Level: AA (Springfield)

2011 ranking: 9

Miller is the top right-handed pitching prospect in the minors, with the best combination of stuff, size, delivery and results of any pitcher in the minors not named Matt Moore.

He will sit in the low- to mid-90s and touch 97 mph as a starter with a sharp breaking ball in the upper-70s/low-80s with good depth that misses right-handed hitters' bats. He continued to make progress this year with his changeup, a pitch he rarely needed or used as an amateur, and the pitch has good tailing action that has helped him gets some swinging strikes against lefties. He is very receptive to coaches' suggestions and has proved a quick study so far.

He often lands on the third-base side of the rubber and comes slightly across his body, creating deception but also potentially putting stress on his shoulder. If the Cardinals can keep him more on line, and he sees more improvement in the changeup and command of the fastball, he's a potential No. 1 starter for the Cardinals in two or three years.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM25
- IP139.2
- W11
- L6
- ERA2.77
- SO170
- BB53
- H112
- HR4
- BAA.219

Rank Player

6 **Travis d'Arnaud**

Age: 22 (DOB: Feb. 10, 1989)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Catcher

Organization: Toronto Blue Jays

Top '11 Level: AA (New Hampshire)

2010 ranking: 99

D'Arnaud might turn out to be the real impact player acquired by Toronto in the Roy Halladay trade -- although I think Kyle Drabek is far too young and talented to assume his story is written -- as a plus defensive catcher who produces across the board on offense.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM114
- AB424

The two big keys for d'Arnaud in 2011 were staying healthy -- which he did until he tore a thumb ligament while playing for Team USA in October's World Cup -- and starting to grow into his power, which projects as plus, 25-30 homers in a full season of catching down the road.

His defense, always solid, improved this year with help from his manager in New Hampshire, Sal Fasano, who worked with d'Arnaud on game-calling and footwork. There's still more growth in d'Arnaud's bat, and he has the arm strength and release to improve his modest caught-stealing rates when he reaches the majors. He is expected to be healthy for spring training and will start the year in Triple-A, but since Las Vegas is such a hitters' park to begin with, he might knock the walls down before Toronto calls him up later in the year.

- HR21
- RBI78
- SB4
- SO100
- BB33
- AVG.311
- OBP.371
- SLG.542

Rank

Player

7 Jurickson Profar

Age: 18 (DOB: Feb. 20, 1993)

Bats: Both **Throws:** Right

Position: Shortstop

Organization: Texas Rangers

Top '11 Level: A (Hickory)

2011 ranking: 81

The Sally League's youngest regular was one of its most impressive prospects of any age; Profar showed the selectivity of a player six or seven years his senior, outstanding instincts in the field and more power than anticipated in his full-season debut.

Profar is a plus-makeup, plus-feel, plus-instincts guy who breaks the mold of that type of player by also having tremendous tools. Born in Curacao, he was scouted more as a pitcher than a position player before he signed. His defense projects as plus, if it isn't there already, with good hands, great reactions off the bat and of course a plus arm. At the plate, his approach is very advanced, and he's stronger than I realized, showing the ability to drive the ball the other way. He needs to keep his stride shorter -- I've seen him overstride to the point where his back side collapses -- and might have more pull power if he does so. He is only an average runner down the line but gets more out of his speed through his feel for baserunning.

Profar is also a player to root for, because of the energy he brings to the game and what a potential superstar like him could do for the sport on the global stage.

Rank

Player

8 Devin Mesoraco

Age: 23 (DOB: June 19, 1988)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: C

Organization: Cincinnati Reds

Top '11 Level: Majors (Reds)

2011 ranking: 31

Mesoraco followed up his breakout 2010 season -- after doing nothing

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM115
- AB430
- HR12
- RBI65
- SB23
- SO63
- BB65
- AVG.286
- OBP.390
- SLG.493

in his first two years in pro ball -- with an impressive year in Triple-A in which he showed patience, some power and enough defensive ability to profile as an All-Star backstop in the big leagues.

At the plate, Mesoraco is strong and balanced, rotating his hips very well (despite a very faint hip drift) for future plus power that would produce 15-20 bombs right now in the big leagues. His approach is sound, surprisingly so for a player who faced a low level of competition in high school in Punxsutawney, Pa. Behind the plate, he receives fine and has improved his game-calling; his arm strength is above-average but it's mitigated by a slow release, one factor behind a drop in his caught stealing percentage from 2009-10 to 2011.

He is a rookie of the year contender in 2011 if he gets the playing time and should produce 25-homer seasons down the road at a position where any kind of offense is welcome.

Rank

Player

9 Jesus Montero

Age: 22 (DOB: Nov. 28, 1989)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Catcher/DH

Organization: Seattle Mariners
Top '11 Level: Majors (Yankees)
2011 ranking: 4

Montero, who was traded to Seattle in a January deal that sent Michael Pineda to the Yankees, is a monster bat with a chance to produce MVP-caliber offensive lines from the DH slot, as soon as the Mariners accept that's where he needs to be.

He's exceedingly strong with plus bat speed and great hand-eye coordination, so even though he hits off his front foot, he can drive the ball out to all fields. Early in 2011, he lost his patience at the plate, apparently due to some frustration at returning to Triple-A, but worked it out and showed his previous approach and results during the second half and in a brief but impressive call-up to the Bronx in September.

As a catcher, Montero is not a catcher. He's slow behind the dish, poor at receiving and throwing -- despite some arm strength, he takes a year and a half to get rid of the ball, so the arm doesn't play. The bat is too special to put at risk of injury at the catcher's spot or to omit from the lineup 25 times a year because of routine rest days. Let Jesus hit.

Rank

Player

10 Gerrit Cole

Age: 21 (DOB: Sept. 8, 1990)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Pitcher

Organization: Pittsburgh Pirates
Top '11 Level: AFL (Mesa)
2011 ranking: IE

Cole was the first overall pick in the 2011 Rule 4 draft and the top prospect in the draft class, on the basis of his long-term projection

- GM120
- AB436
- HR15
- RBI71
- SB1
- SO83
- BB52
- AVG.289
- OBP.371
- SLG.484

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM109
- AB420
- HR18
- RBI67
- SB0
- SO98
- BB36
- AVG.288
- OBP.348
- SLG.467

2011 AFL STATS

rather than his performance, which, it should be noted, wasn't the best on his own college team. (He was outpitched by UCLA teammate Trevor Bauer, who is No. 22 on this list.)

He has an 80 fastball, hitting 100-101 mph as a starter and pitching comfortably at 95-98, although the four-seamer doesn't have much life and he needs to learn to locate it better within the strike zone. His changeup is plus, 84-88 mph with good arm speed and hard fade, although his feel for how to use the pitch isn't as advanced as it should be because he threw it less often than his above-average 86-89 mph slider.

Cole can cut himself off a bit, especially when rushing his delivery. When he's right, he uses his lower half to generate arm speed and gets out over his front side after a strong stride toward the plate. He needs to work on his feel for pitching, since his coach always called his games at UCLA, and on command of his fastball; using his two-seamer more might also help him minimize mistakes up with the four-seamer. But the projection here is that of a No. 1 starter who can miss bats with as many as four different pitches, and who has the size and delivery to handle an ace's workload.

Rank

Player

11 Dylan Bundy

Age: 19 (DOB: Nov. 15, 1992)

Bats: Both **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Baltimore Orioles

Top '11 Level: DNP

2011 ranking: IE

How advanced is Bundy, a high school pitcher from Oklahoma taken fourth overall in the 2011 Rule 4 draft? One very senior front-office executive who saw him suggested the only reason Bundy wouldn't make Baltimore's opening day roster this year was his height. Aside from being "just" 6 feet tall, Bundy is about as perfect a high school right-hander as you'll find, boasting plus velocity, plus off-speed stuff, outstanding feel for pitching and a great delivery boosted by a legendary conditioning regimen.

He will sit 93-96 mph and touched 98-99 last spring, with a big, sharp upper-70s curveball and a vicious out-pitch cutter at 86-88 that he uses in lieu of his changeup to left-handed batters. The negatives are few; even his lack of height isn't a major concern, since he gets on top of the ball well and works down in the zone. He was worked extremely hard in high school, including a 180-pitch outing his junior year that earned some criticism on the national level, and no matter how well your arm works, an outing of that length includes some pitching while fatigued, especially for an 18-year-old. I'd like to see Baltimore handle Bundy aggressively, getting him to at least Double-A this year if his performance in the low minors follows our expectations.

Rank

Player

12 Hak-Ju Lee

Age: 21 (DOB: Nov. 4, 1990)

Organization: Tampa Bay Rays

- GM3
- IP15
- W2
- L0
- ERA3.00
- SO16
- BB4
- H10
- HR1
- BAA.179

2011 HS STATS

- GMNA
- IP71
- W11
- L0
- ERA0.20
- SO158
- BB5
- H20
- HRNA
- BAANA

Bats: Left **Throws:** Right
Position: Shortstop

Top '11 Level: AA (Montgomery)
2011 ranking: 49

Lee's breakout year in 2011 carried him to Double-A at age 20 and established him as one of the best true shortstop prospects in the game. He's a four-tool player whose only weakness is power, but because he's a lock to stay at the position, his bat will still make him a potential All-Star. A product of the Cubs' longtime investment in Korea, Lee was traded to Tampa in the Matt Garza deal in January 2011, and I'm guessing the Cubs' new brass would like to have him back.

He is a 70 runner with a plus arm, quick feet and solid instincts at short, along with excellent bat speed and an advanced approach that led him to the 12th-best on-base percentage in the Florida State League despite his being one of its 10 youngest regulars. His swing is slappy, so he's not going to hit for much if any power, but with high batting averages and OBPs and added value on defense, he'll be an All-Star candidate a few years after reaching the majors sometime in 2013.

Rank

Player

13 Wil Myers

Age: 21 (DOB: Dec. 20, 1990)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Outfield

Organization: Kansas City Royals
Top '11 Level: AA (Northwest Arkansas)
2011 ranking: UR

Myers' season got off to a rough start when he suffered a knee injury that ended up infected, costing him about six weeks of playing time and leaving his lower half a little stiff for much of the summer. But after resting it in September, he showed up in the Arizona Fall League looking like his old self.

He is a strong, patient hitter who's going to grow into a physical beast who hits 30-plus homers a year while providing at least average defense in right. Myers' swing is very natural and simple but doesn't produce a ton of power yet because he's young and because his stride is unusually short. His approach is excellent, and even as he struggled during the regular season, he continued to work the count and draw walks. He has an above-average arm in right and is athletic enough to stay there even if he ends up with a body similar to Scott Rolen. Don't be fooled by the off year -- he's still going to mash.

Rank

Player

14 Arodys Vizcaino

Age: 21 (DOB: Nov. 13, 1990)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Pitcher

Organization: Atlanta Braves
Top '11 Level: Majors (Braves)
2011 ranking: 47

Vizcaino, who was acquired from the Yankees in the Javier Vazquez

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM121
- AB500
- HR5
- RBI30
- SB33
- SO94
- BB53
- AVG.292
- OBP.365
- SLG.416

2010 MINORS STATS

- GM99
- AB354
- HR8
- RBI45
- SB9
- SO87
- BB52
- AVG.254
- OBP.353
- SLG.393

2011 MINORS STATS

trade, appeared briefly down the stretch for Atlanta as a fastball-curveball reliever with two plus offerings and erratic command, but long term, he's a three-pitch starter who has a history of plus control, and just needs time and health to become a No. 1 or No. 2 starter.

He will pitch at 92-96 mph as a starter and touched 98 in relief for the big club, with some late life up in the zone. His main secondary pitch is a very hard curveball, breaking down hard at slider velocity with two-plane action and depth. He has good arm speed on his changeup and was much more effective against left-handed pitchers in the minors last year, even though he comes from just under three-quarters and gives those batters a longer look at the ball. He accelerates his arm very quickly and gets on top of the ball well but doesn't get great extension out front.

The righty missed part of 2010 with a partial ligament tear, and the move to the bullpen late in 2011 was to protect his arm as much as to give the major league club another relief option. If he stays healthy, which he did for all of last year, he's got the weapons and the easy velocity to pitch at the top of a rotation, with impact reliever potential if he can't handle the workload.

Rank

Player

15 Bubba Starling

Age: 19 (DOB: Aug. 3, 1992)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Outfield

Organization: Kansas City Royals

Top '11 Level: Prep

2011 ranking: IE

The best athlete in the 2011 draft -- and one of the best I've ever seen pick up a bat -- Starling spurned a scholarship to play quarterback at Nebraska to sign with the hometown Royals and become their long-term answer in center field.

He is a true five-tool player who hit 92 mph off the mound, was consistently the fastest runner at baseball showcases in high school and has above-average present power that will become plus as he fills out. He has some drift at the plate that holds back his power, but he has the hand strength and hip rotation to drive the ball to all fields. He hasn't faced a ton of advanced pitching in his life, and adjusting to pro pitchers who can spin a good breaking ball will be the ultimate test of how mature Starling's approach at the plate is. For now, it's all beautiful upside, a supreme athlete who one day will hit third or fourth in a lineup with above-average defense in center while contending for MVP awards.

Rank

Player

16 Jameson Taillon

Age: 20 (DOB: Nov. 18, 1991)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Pittsburgh Pirates

Top '11 Level: A (West Virginia)

2011 ranking: 30

- GM26
- IP97
- W5
- L5
- ERA3.06

- SO100
- BB28
- H82
- HR7
- BAA.225

2011 HS STATS

- GM21
- ABNA
- HR8
- RBI24
- SB21

- SONA
- BBNA
- AVG.508
- OBPNA
- SLGNA

Taillon still has top-of-the-rotation ceiling, but he has pitched so little in pro ball that he hasn't developed as quickly as the typical top-end teenage pitcher would.

At 6-foot-6, 225 pounds, he looks like a workhorse starter, and has the plus fastball and future-plus slider to complete the story, sitting in the mid-90s (rarely throwing a fastball slower than 93 mph) with the ability to go back and get 98 when he needs it. He's so big at such a young age that his body control is lagging, and he'll need to continue to focus on pacing his delivery and keeping himself on line to the plate.

The Pirates' handling of Taillon's workloads has raised eyebrows across the game. He's been on such tight pitch counts that he faced more than 20 batters in a start just three times all year, never recording more than 15 outs. Despite that, he performed worse as the season went on, with reductions in his command and control. I still see Taillon as a future ace, but at some point, the Pirates will have to take the reins off.

- GM23
- IP92.2
- W2
- L3
- ERA3.98
- SO97
- BB22
- H89
- HR9
- BAA.249

Rank

Player

17 Anthony Rendon

Age: 21 (DOB: June 6, 1990)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Third Base

Organization: Washington Nationals
Top '11 Level: College
2011 ranking: IE

Rendon was the top player in the 2011 draft class going into the spring but played with a nagging shoulder injury all season and fell to the Nationals with the sixth pick. When healthy, the Rice University product is an impressive, advanced hitter who should get on base, hit for at least average power and provide plus defense at third.

He has one of the quickest bats in the minors, coupled with major league-caliber plate discipline, particularly in recognizing pitches on the border of the strike zone. Before the shoulder limited his throwing, he had a plus arm, and his first step at third base is quick and accurate. He does have a lot of excess movement before he gets his swing started, leading to some timing issues, and he's now had three serious injuries in the past three years. There have been questions about Washington potentially moving him to second base because of the presence of Ryan Zimmerman, but the Nats currently have no plans to do so, nor should they -- second base is the wrong position for a player who's already had two traumatic ankle injuries. He could end up on top of this list with a healthy 2012, if he shows the defense, bat and patience to again project as an All-Star at third.

- ## 2011 COLLEGE STATS
- GM63
 - AB214
 - HR6
 - RBI37
 - SB13
 - SO33
 - BB80
 - AVG.327
 - OBP.520
 - SLG.523

Rank

Player

18 Julio Teheran

Age: 21 (DOB: Jan. 27, 1991)
Bats: Right **Throws:** Right
Position: Pitcher

Organization: Atlanta Braves
Top '11 Level: Majors (Braves)
2011 ranking: 6

The Colombian-born Teheran still has one of the best pure arms of any starting pitching prospect in the minors, with a theoretical ceiling as a top-of-the-rotation starter, but the lesson of his 2011 season was that he's farther away than he appeared to be a year ago.

He'll pitch comfortably at 91-96 mph as a starter with very little effort, although he tries to throw his heater up in the zone and doesn't have a matching weapon to change hitters' eye levels. His best secondary pitch is a changeup that grades out as plus, with good fading action, although he showed a moderate platoon split in the minors and was spanked by left-handed hitters in five big league appearances (.968 OPS against).

Teheran's biggest shortcoming is the lack of an above-average breaking ball, although his mid-70s curveball was shorter and harder this year than it was in the past. He also opens up his front side very early, making the ball much easier for hitters to track, especially from the left side. Most importantly, he is still just 21 and is at least ready to pitch in a big league bullpen, with the kind of loose arm and easy velocity you can't teach.

Rank

Player

19 Archie Bradley

Age: 19 (DOB: Aug. 10, 1992)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Arizona Diamondbacks

Top '11 Level: R (Missoula)

2011 ranking: IE

Bradley and Dylan Bundy were inevitably paired up all spring, compared to each other primarily because of geography (they played for rival high schools in Oklahoma) rather than the way they pitch. On the mound, the two 2011 first-round picks are quite different.

Where Bundy brings polish and probability, Bradley brings size and ceiling. Bradley, a star quarterback who turned down a scholarship to Oklahoma, is 6-foot-4, 225 pounds, with a fastball at 92-97 mph and one of the best curveballs in last year's draft, an absolute hammer at 80-84 that had older players laughing at how sharp it was in last year's instructional league.

His delivery is pretty simple for a guy his size; he keeps his hands away from his body and pronates his elbow nice and early, but doesn't generate much torque through hip rotation. His feel for pitching isn't as advanced as Bundy's -- yes, now I'm comparing them -- and he'll need to develop his changeup in pro ball, but he has the size and two weapons to project as an ace three or four years down the line.

Rank

Player

20 Martin Perez

Age: 20 (DOB: Apr. 4, 1991)

Bats: Left **Throws:** Left

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Texas Rangers

Top '11 Level: AAA (Round Rock)

2011 ranking: 18

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM25
- IP144.2
- W15
- L3
- ERA2.55
- SO122
- BB48
- H123
- HR5
- BAA.232

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM2
- IP2
- W0
- L0
- ERA0.00
- SO4
- BB0
- H1
- HR0
- BAA.143

Perez has been on the prospect radar so long that it's easy to forget he has yet to turn 21. His performances haven't matched his stuff -- or the hype -- just yet, but he reached Triple-A at an unusually young age and performed well given that added variable.

He will sit 92-95 mph on good days, working effectively to both sides of the plate, with a plus changeup at 83-85 that has both good arm speed and hard fading action. His curveball is more solid-average, mid-70s with inconsistent shape. Perez's command and control are still works in progress. He can take an inning or more to find his rhythm, and he has a tendency to overthrow when in trouble. He's improved his conditioning over the past two years, losing baby fat and building up muscle for durability. He could still end up at the top of a rotation but is more likely a solid No. 2 behind, say, someone such as Yu Darvish.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM27
- IP137.1
- W8
- L6
- ERA4.33
- SO120
- BB56
- H152
- HR10
- BAA.284

Rank

Player

21 Trevor Bauer

Age: 21 (DOB: Jan. 17, 1991)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Arizona Diamondbacks

Top '11 Level: AA (Mobile)

2011 ranking: IE

Bauer, the 2011 Golden Spikes Award winner, was like a machine all spring for UCLA, striking out nearly 40 percent of the batters he faced. He carried much of that dominance into pro ball, helping an absurdly talented Mobile club win the Southern League championship.

He works with up to six pitches, including a plus fastball at 92-95 mph, an above-average changeup and multiple curveballs; both varieties of curve get swings and misses but tend to finish below the zone, something Bauer will have to address to miss pro bats. He's patterned his delivery after Tim Lincecum's, getting leverage early, but without "The Freak's" flexibility or ability to get over his front side.

The righty also handled an obscene workload last spring, topping 120 pitches at least six times for the Bruins, not counting the 50-plus full-effort pitches he'll throw before the game and between innings, adding to concerns about his long-term durability. But he also is nearly ready for the majors, and could post big strikeout totals right out of the chute because of the quality of his stuff and the fact that he's a quick study on the mound.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM7
- IP25.2
- W1
- L2
- ERA5.96
- SO43
- BB12
- H3
- HR27
- BAA.257

Rank

Player

22 Carlos Martinez

Age: 20 (DOB: Sept. 2, 1991)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: St. Louis Cardinals

Top '11 Level: A (Palm Beach)

2011 ranking: 52

Martinez -- formerly known as Matias -- was originally signed as a

2011 MINORS STATS

shortstop by the Red Sox in 2009, had the deal voided due to an identity question, but started throwing hard enough to earn a seven-figure bonus from the Cardinals a few months later. He now hits 100 mph as a starter and pitches in the mid-90s, with a hard curveball that has sharp two-plane break and tilt that puts it somewhere between a curve and a slider. As good as the curveball is, however, it's so far below the fastball's velocity -- 16-18 mph -- that he's sometimes actually helping the hitter by throwing it. He'll flash a plus changeup that he turns over very well, but when he moved up to high Class A, his lack of deception caught up to him, especially against left-handed hitters.

- GM18
- IP84.2
- W6
- L5
- ERA3.93
- SO98
- BB44
- H76
- HR3
- BAA.238

The Cardinals already have made some adjustments with him so the ball isn't so visible all the way through his delivery, and he needs to avoid trying to be too fine with his pitches when he gets into trouble. He's not a very physical guy -- his best comparable in build might be Pedro Martinez -- but he has the three weapons to remain a starter if he can make it harder for hitters to pick up the ball so early. It's top-of-the-rotation stuff in a pitcher who would be a college junior this year if he'd been born in the U.S.

Rank Player

23 Manny Banuelos

Age: 20 (DOB: Mar. 13, 1991)

Bats: Left **Throws:** Left

Position: Pitcher

Organization: New York Yankees

Top '11 Level: AAA (Scranton/Wilkes-Barre)

2011 ranking: 12

Banuelos' season started out on the wrong foot, as he had to go home to Mexico for a personal matter in April, missing some ramp-up time that set him back in his routine and his pitch counts. He pitched into the seventh inning only twice all year, so he needs to build up more stamina in 2012.

When he's right, he'll show an above-average fastball at 90-94 mph (but was a tick below that in 2011), an above-average to plus changeup and a solid-average curveball with good two-plane break. His command and control were off all year, especially to right-handed hitters, and no matter how good your changeup is, you're not getting opposite-side hitters out if you can't locate your fastball first.

Everything still points to Banuelos commanding the ball in the long term as he did before 2011, and much of the disappointment in his season is a function of our high expectations for him. He still projects as a solid No. 2, assuming his previous level of command returns.

Rank Player

24 Taijuan Walker

Age: 19 (DOB: Aug. 13, 1992)

Bats: Right **Throws:** Right

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Seattle Mariners

Top '11 Level: A (Clinton)

2011 ranking: UR

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM27
- IP129.2
- W6
- L7
- ERA3.75
- SO125
- BB71
- H130
- HR9
- BAA.266

If we held a 2010 draft do-over right now, Walker would be a top-10 pick, but the industry let him fall to the sandwich round because a rough spring masked his absurd upside. A two-sport athlete who excelled in basketball in high school, Walker sits in the mid-90s, touching 98 mph, with plus-plus command of his fastball already. He just needs to work on his secondary stuff to reach his potential as a No. 1 starter.

The curveball will flash plus already, while the changeup, which has nice deception, has made solid strides for a pitch he's been throwing for only a little more than a year. Walker has a high leg kick and good stride to the plate, with just a little more effort from the arm than you'd like to see. He is skinny now (6-foot-4, 195 pounds) and is going to fill out substantially, so he needs to work to maintain his agility going forward, as well as on refining the two off-speed pitches. The upside is real, and his emergence this season made the trade of Michael Pineda possible.

Rank

Player

25 Tyler Skaggs

Age: 20 (DOB: Jul. 13, 1991)

Bats: Left **Throws:** Left

Position: Pitcher

Organization: Arizona Diamondbacks

Top '11 Level: AA (Mobile)

2011 ranking: 78

Skaggs continues to improve by leaps and bounds, to the point where he'd be in line for a big league call-up for a club that didn't also have Trevor Bauer standing in line.

He will sit in the low 90s, averaging around 91 mph, but hitters don't pick up the ball, allowing it to play as if he's throwing 96. He always has had a plus curveball -- he threw two in high school but junked the slower one at the urging of the Angels' staff, before he was traded to Arizona -- but his changeup has been the revelation, from a nonfactor in high school to above-average now. He shows almost no platoon split and struck out just less than a third of the right-handed batters he faced in 2011.

The southpaw has put on weight since high school, but his 6-foot-4 frame probably could handle another 20 pounds, so give him another two or three years, and he'll have the body, delivery, weapons and control to pitch near the top of a rotation.

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM18
- IP96.2
- W6
- L5
- ERA2.89

- SO113
- BB39
- H69
- HR4
- BAA.202

2011 MINORS STATS

- GM27
- IP158.1
- W9
- L6
- ERA2.96

- SO198
- BB49
- H126
- HR10
- BAA.218

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Keith Law, formerly the special assistant to the general manager for the Toronto Blue Jays, is the senior baseball analyst for ESPN Insider.

