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10 prospects who just missed

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As always, when I compile my rankings of the top 100 MLB prospects, I start with a longer list of candidates, including the top prospects in each organization, and gradually narrow the number of players on the master list as I make calls, review notes and video, write up capsules, and circulate drafts of the top 100 to trusted sources -- a process that leaves a few players just on the outside of the final ranking. Here are the 10 players who just barely missed the top 100 (in no particular order), including full capsules for two players I wrote up before deciding to bump them from that final list.



[Will Middlebrooks](#), 3B: He emerged as one of the top Red Sox prospects last season with a breakout year at age 22 with Double-A Portland, showing raw power and plus defense at third base, a position that's really down around the majors right now. Middlebrooks has filled out his 6-foot-4 frame, so his rotational swing now produces home runs instead of just long fly balls. But his approach at the plate is a real weakness that pitchers started to exploit when he was called up to Triple-A and in the Arizona Fall League -- especially with better off-speed stuff.

He's an above-average defender at third with good reads and a plus arm; he could get to the big leagues on his defense alone. The issue for Middlebrooks will be whether he can hit enough to be able to hit for power, and he's not going to hit unless he can recognize off-speed stuff better and at least threaten to take the occasional walk, getting into more fastball counts to get pitches he can drive.



[Alex Torres](#), LHP: He ranked 77th last year but drops off the list because of rising concerns about whether he'll ever throw enough strikes to be a starter. He stands just 5-foot-10 but keeps racking up strikeouts and generating ground balls while walking too many guys (5.0 per nine innings in his minor league career), meaning he could end up a No. 2 or 3 starter. But most scouts see him becoming a dominant left-handed reliever instead. Many of the walks are Torres getting cute, trying to be a finesse pitcher rather than a power guy who can miss bats in the strike zone. He'll sit 91-93 mph, touching 95, with late life on the pitch, and has a plus changeup at 82-84 with hard fade down and away from right-handed hitters. The curveball is his weakest pitch, mid-70s with a fairly short break.

Although he's small, he gets on top of the ball well, with enough plane on the fastball to keep from becoming

homer-prone. To stay a starter, he'll have to stop handing out free passes, forcing hitters to earn them or die trying, because his ability to miss bats and get hitters out on both sides of the plate would give Torres real upside in a rotation.



Jeurys Familia, RHP: If I thought there was any chance he could start, he would have made the list, but he's headed for the bullpen with a plus fastball and not enough command or secondary stuff to remain in the rotation. The real gap in expected values between him and some of the likely relievers on my top 100, such as [Dellin Betances](#) or [Addison Reed](#), isn't as big as the ranking gap might make it seem, given how volatile reliever performances can be.



Austin Adams, RHP: A similar story to Familia's -- Adams hits 98 mph just about every time out but doesn't have the knockout second pitch to back it up (although the slider isn't far off), and he struggles to keep his fastball down because of his size (he's just 5-11) and the way he lands on a stiff front leg.



Trevor Rosenthal, RHP: He has the arm strength (hitting 97 mph deep into starts) and size (he's 6-2, 190) to be a starter, but the breaking ball and changeup aren't there yet to lock him in as a future starter. St. Louis deserves credit for identifying him out of Cowley County CC in Arkansas City, Kan., and nabbing him in the 21st round in 2009. He's another solid signing out of a small school for the Cardinals' amateur department.



Austin Hedges, C: He was a very late, difficult cut from the top 100, and is already one of the best defensive catchers in the minor leagues, with receiving and throwing skills (arm strength, release, and accuracy) that would play in the majors right now even though he's just out of high school. Last fall, he shortened his stride and showed more power and ability to square up the ball than he did as an amateur, and is a strong candidate to jump to the middle of next year's list.



Andrelton Simmons, SS: He has a plus glove, plus-plus arm and plus speed. But with minus power, will he get on base enough to be more than an extra guy? His .351 OBP for high Class A Lynchburg was nice, but he needs to show he can maintain that this year.



Ryan Lavarney, C: If he catches, he's worth a couple of wins a year above replacement because of the value of his bat back there. But there's a wide industry consensus, one with which I agree, that he won't be able to catch every day, despite a tremendous work ethic that has at least raised his odds to "non-zero."



Alex Meyer, RHP: I love the fastball, the sink, the slider and the size (6-9), but the delivery and the questionable command have more teams viewing him as a potential reliever than starter. I still hold out more hope for the latter than most.



Luis Heredia, RHP: He appeared on the "just missed" list last year, and he sits at 90-95 mph with some ability to spin the breaking ball. He is only 17 years old, and last year he pitched with the command and lack of body control you'd expect given his age. I like the upside, but he could very easily take six years to produce any positive major league value.



Joe Wieland, RHP: Alright, I'm going to 11 because I couldn't decide on just 10. Wieland was acquired from the Rangers along with Robbie Erlin in the [Mike Adams](#) trade last July and started showing more velocity as the season progressed, hitting 95 mph in the Texas League playoffs. He's an extreme strike thrower who pitches aggressively with his fastball but tries to pitch up in the zone too much, and he doesn't have a plus secondary offering among his slider (his best off-speed pitch), curve or change.

Keith Law joined ESPN.com in June 2006 and is Insider's lead baseball analyst, covering the majors, minors and amateurs. He appears regularly across the ESPN family of networks, providing analysis on all baseball topics. Before joining ESPN, Law spent 4½ years with the Toronto Blue Jays as a special assistant to the general manager, and was previously a writer for Baseball Prospectus. He graduated from Harvard College and holds an MBA from the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon.
