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Ranking the farm systems

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In advance of the top 100 prospects list, I've ranked the 30 MLB teams' farm systems based solely on the players currently in the organization who have not yet lost their major league rookie eligibility. Thus, [Brett Lawrie](#) doesn't count for the Toronto Blue Jays, but [Mike Trout](#) does still count for the Los Angeles Angels.

Past production of players doesn't factor into this. It ain't where you're from; it's where you're at.

1. [San Diego Padres](#)



Without [Anthony Rizzo](#), they no longer have a top-25 prospect in their system, but in terms of total future value of players likely to play significant roles in the big leagues, they're ahead of everyone else. Some of these players, especially from the 2011 draft, will develop into stars. But there are so many prospects here with high floors, players who would be top-10 or top-five in other systems but are 11-20 here (such as Robbie Erlin or [Edinson Rincon](#)), that they are well-positioned to compete even with modest major league payrolls during the next five to six years. Fans who were upset at the sudden departures of GM Jed Hoyer and assistant GM Jason McLeod for the Cubs should find solace in the fact that the prospects they helped bring into the system (along with many other scouts and execs, including Chris Gwynn, now with Seattle, and Jaron Madison and Randy Smith, still in San Diego) remain in place.

2. [Tampa Bay Rays](#)



If you favor ceiling over probability, you could make a strong argument for having the Rays ahead of the Padres, based on the fact that this system could quite easily produce six to eight players who end up as grade-60 players or better in the majors. After that first tier, however, there's a lot less probability here than there was a year or two ago, and several executives from other clubs pointed out that the Rays have a gap in their prospect pipeline coming up that will be filled only if some of their 2011 draft picks move faster than anticipated.

3. [Toronto Blue Jays](#)



One of the many reasons criticism of Rogers Communications, the owner of the Blue Jays, for being stingy with free agents is so ignorant is that the club has spent aggressively in the amateur markets during the past three years, grabbing high-ceiling high school players and Latin American prospects by stockpiling picks and paying whatever it took to sign those players. They are the organization most likely to be No. 1 on this list next winter.

4. [St. Louis Cardinals](#)



They've drafted very well in the past few years, which has to be heartening to Astros fans, as Houston just hired Jeff Luhnow, who oversaw the Cards' recent drafts, as GM. St. Louis also has done an excellent job of developing the players it's drafted. I really like how the Cards are set up to contend continuously during the next five years.

5. [Kansas City Royals](#)



Despite some major losses via promotion (Eric Hosmer, Mike Moustakas, Danny Duffy) and injury (John Lamb), the system remains extremely deep and still has two high-ceiling prospects at the top, Bubba Starling and Wil Myers.

6. [Arizona Diamondbacks](#)



Those two picks in the top 10 in June certainly helped, but the Diamondbacks also have added a few strong arms through trades and are seeing progress from their 2008 draft crop.

7. [Texas Rangers](#)



The Rangers have ranked highly the past few years -- including No. 1 once -- because of depth and ceiling, but they're now more about the latter than the former. (Note that I don't consider [Yu Darvish](#) or any player with Nippon Professional Baseball experience a "prospect" for the purpose of this ranking or the top 100.)

8. [Pittsburgh Pirates](#)



The Pirates' top tier of prospects is very strong, but there's surprisingly little depth given how high they've drafted and how much they've spent on amateur talent.

9. [Oakland Athletics](#)



This was a bottom-10 system, maybe bottom-five, when the offseason began, but the A's restocked with the trades of [Trevor Cahill](#), [Gio Gonzalez](#) and [Andrew Bailey](#). They're still pitching-heavy for a major league club that has struggled to find bats.

10. [New York Yankees](#)



I might be jumping the gun here, but I see a lot of star potential on their bottom few affiliates, including new acquisition Jose Campos from Seattle, to go with the two power arms from their Scranton club (Manny Banuelos and Dellin Betances). The flaw in the system is the lack of near-in talent, especially position players, who could either help the big club soon or provide more fodder for trades.

11. [Seattle Mariners](#)



What I said about the Pirates applies with the Mariners as well: It's a great front five -- led by 2011 top pick Danny Hultzen and the recently acquired Jesus Montero -- but the gap between No. 5 and No. 10 in their system is huge.

12. [Los Angeles Dodgers](#)



If pitching wins championships, the Dodgers are in pretty good shape going forward, as their system is loaded with power arms but is relatively light on position players.

13. [Colorado Rockies](#)



This is an underrated system, maybe even here by me. I like systems in which the prospects in the No. 8-12 range are just as interesting (if not as high-upside or high-probability) as the prospects in the No. 1-4 range, and the Rockies' lack of a complex-league team can make some of their youngest prospects look less advanced than they are when they jump right to the Pioneer League.

14. [Minnesota Twins](#)



I pick on these guys for taking low-ceiling college arms with great control, but they have quietly mixed in some interesting high school bats and added a few high-impact Latin American prospects.

15. [Los Angeles Angels](#)



There's only one real sure thing in the system (Mike Trout), but the Angels have a number of guys who are one major adjustment away from becoming impact prospects.

16. [Atlanta Braves](#)



They have reaped as little from the draft the past two years as anyone, taking low-ceiling college guys with early picks, staying at or under MLB's bonus recommendations and having less luck on the international market. It's telling that the major question on every position-player prospect in their top 10 is whether he'll hit.

17. [Baltimore Orioles](#)



I see two likely superstars, one more potential superstar with lower probability ... and after about seven or eight names, it goes off a cliff.

18. [Boston Red Sox](#)



This system is terribly thin up top given the money the Red Sox have spent in the past few years on amateur players. I do see a large group of prospects from low Class A and below that should produce a couple of breakout prospects in 2012, including Brandon Jacobs, Garin Cecchini, Henry Owens, Matt Barnes and Sean Coyle.

19. [Cincinnati Reds](#)



I would have ranked the Reds several spots higher before the Mat Latos trade, probably top 10. Outside of Devin Mesoraco, every guy with high ceiling in this system played in low Class A or below in 2011, and they're all quite high risk to go with the high reward.

20. [Chicago Cubs](#)



An unfairly maligned system, in my opinion -- not a great system, but not a disastrous one. And I say that as someone who's relatively bearish on some of the Cubs' more famous prospects.

21. [Washington Nationals](#)



This was potentially a top-10 system before the Gio Gonzalez trade, no worse than top 15. But after dealing A.J. Cole, Brad Peacock and Derek Norris -- probably three of the Nats' top 10 guys before the Gio swap -- this system lacks depth.

22. [New York Mets](#)



It's actually getting better here, but rebuilding a system takes years, and the Mets have really just begun to inject higher-upside talent into the system.

23. [Milwaukee Brewers](#)



A strong 2011 draft class with a few breakout performers from within the system gets them out of the bottom spot. The Brewers are in better position to reload the parent club after their 2012 free agents leave next winter.

24. [Detroit Tigers](#)



The Tigers have less depth than the Phillies (ranked below here) but have two potential stars (Nick Castellanos and Jacob Turner) with pretty good probability up top.

25. [Philadelphia Phillies](#)



Philly has a ton of athleticism at the lower levels, but the upper levels were wiped out by trades the past few years. New farm director Joe Jordan, the Orioles' former scouting director, has a ton of raw material to work with but no finished or even nearly finished products.

26. [San Francisco Giants](#)



The Giants don't go much over MLB's recommended draft bonuses, never seem to acquire any prospects in trades and haven't had success on the international front yet. Their amateur staff has done a great job finding value in later rounds without going over budget, including [Brandon Belt](#) and Heath Hembree.

27. [Houston Astros](#)



The Astros might have been last if they hadn't traded Hunter Pence or Michael Bourn in July. Even though neither haul was that great, the prospects represented a major infusion into a barren system.

28. [Miami Marlins](#)



They have one top-100 guy and only two others who would merit consideration in the next 50 or so. The system has produced a lot of big league talent in the past few years, including one star in [Mike Stanton](#) and another future star in [Logan Morrison](#), that doesn't count here.

29. [Cleveland Indians](#)



Trades and promotions have gutted this system, which now has very little above low Class A. One of the Indians' better drafts in years last June should help.

30. [Chicago White Sox](#)



And they're not particularly close to No. 29, either. When you don't spend money in the draft, you're not going to fare well in anyone's organizational rankings. The new collective bargaining agreement, which clamps down on teams' ability to acquire premium talent in the draft through higher bonuses, was the result of a long-standing effort by White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf, who wanted to force other teams to play by his rules.
