

A's News Clips, Friday, January 21, 2011

Drumbeat: Chavez update, Pennington, jersey numbers

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 1/20/2011 5:37PM

I heard from a scout who works for another NL team that the Dodgers were raving about Eric Chavez's tryout today; he swung the bat well and apparently looked healthy after being put through his paces. Also from the scouting grapevine, it sounds as if there is some pretty strong interest in Chavez elsewhere, but I know that Chavez is really excited about the Dodgers, so I hope that's where he lands.

I mentioned in yesterday's Drumbeat and this morning's Chronicle story that the A's are now light on backup infielders, but I forgot to mention a status update on Cliff Pennington, who had left shoulder surgery at the start of the offseason. Assistant GM David Forst told me yesterday that Pennington will be fully ready for spring training, so his health isn't a major concern for the team at this point. The A's still hope to retain Steve Tolleson, who was designated for assignment, but it's not as if they're going into the spring with Eric Sogard as the lone shortstop possibility. Pennington has the all-clear.

I tweeted some information the other day that I neglected to mention here; many Twitter followers seem to be very interested in number assignments, and at their behest, I tweeted these: Rich Harden will be 18 (Andrew Bailey has Harden's former No. 40 with Oakland; David DeJesus is 12, Josh Willingham is 16 and Grant Balfour is 50. My favorite, and this I did mention the other day, is Josh Outman, No. 88 (Hideki Matsui has Outman's old No. 55). Outman told me he was No. 8 in college and in the minors with the Phillies, and he wanted a high number, so he doubled it.

Many twitter followers seem very excited by the fact that Ryan Sweeney is going back to No. 15 now that Ben Sheets is not with the team. I'm guessing there were a lot of people who'd owned that Sweeney No. 15 jersey and they can haul it back out now.

Brian Fuentes doesn't have a number announced yet but I'll try to remember to provide it when that happens.

Notebook: Kilby, Childs report to camp in March

By John Hull - Citizen Sports Writer

This may be a pivotal year for professional baseball players Dwight Childs and Brad Kilby.

Kilby, a former Laguna Creek and San Jose State pitcher, reports to the Oakland A's minor league spring training camp in Arizona the first week of March.

He spent much of 2010 on the injury list of the Sacramento River Cats, the A's Triple-A affiliate, with a shoulder injury. He had surgery in the off-season and has been rehabilitating.

Kilby is already 15 pounds below his playing weight a year ago and looking to shed more pounds. He's also been the basketball scoreboard operator at Franklin High School this season, helping his brother, Bryan, the school's activities director.

Last season Kilby spent some time in the bullpen with the A's, but it appears as though he'll be playing for Sacramento for the fourth year in a row

Childs, a catcher at Elk Grove High School and the University of Arizona, was drafted by the Cleveland Indians in 2009. He played in Class-A Short Season Mahoning Valley that summer and was with Class-A Lake County after expanded spring training in 2010.

Whereas Childs is regarded as a top defensive catcher, he's struggled in the pros with his bat. He had a .093 batting average with Mahoning Valley in 15 games and a .103 mark in 16 games with Lake County.

He reports Mar. 7 to the Indians' minor league camp, also in Arizona.

"I know they'll give me an opportunity, so I need to take advantage of it," Childs said of his prospects for the 2011 season.

The Indians have a new catching coordinator, Dave Wallace, Childs said, so he's a little unsure of where he may be playing in the Indians' organization.

"I just want to play," Childs added.

He says he's been doing weight training to try to add pounds to his 175-pound frame.

"There's lots of good talent in the minor league ranks right now," Childs said of the Indian organization. "They've got good instructors, good coaches."

He described current Indians' starting catcher Carlos Santana as a "really good hitter" and thinks the Indians have some rising stars in its organization at several positions.

A's offseason analysis

By John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 1/20/2011

"That's so 2010" isn't a bad thing when speaking of the Giants, who always will be about 2010. Just as they've always been about 1954.

Championships, especially when they're few and far between, tend to resonate for a while, which explains why the proud Giants are busy flashing their World Series trophy around the country.

Baseball teams have a habit of emulating winning blueprints, and perhaps it's not a stretch for teams to follow the formula of the '10 Giants, who won with a heap of pitching and timely in-season pickups by general manager Brian Sabean.

Let's consider the A's.

Responding to a question about whether his new team can win the American League West, Brian Fuentes volunteered that the A's will enter the 2011 season much like the Giants entered 2010.

"We definitely have an opportunity," the reliever said on Wednesday after the A's announced his two-year, \$10.5 million deal. "The pieces are in place. Management has gone out and quietly put together a really strong team. I see a lot of San Francisco in this team. San Francisco wasn't thought too highly of going into spring training last year, but they had pitching and really good role players.

"This offseason, with the pieces that were acquired (by the A's), it seems like there's a lot in this Oakland team as well. It seems a little premature to say we'll win the West, but the opportunity is definitely there."

Of course, A's general manager Billy Beane wouldn't bite on the topic. He'd neither begin to brag that he has a possible playoff team nor suggest his constant offseason roster building is a direct response to the Giants winning it all.

Not when the Giants are talking about a \$120 million payroll while the A's will be in the \$69 million neighborhood.

"It makes for great copy, but we're not in the position to be able to respond," Beane said. "The Giants had great pitching, usually the driving force behind success, as well as astute moves at the right time. That's a good blueprint for anyone. Our best response to the Giants would be: They build a stadium, we build one, too."

Well, there's that.

There's also this: Assemble a solid rotation and deep bullpen (check), support the staff with a reliable defense (check) and improve the offense enough to hopefully make a difference (check).

Worked for the Giants. Will it work for the A's?

Players positive

All the new guys seem encouraged.

Hideki Matsui said last month, "There's definitely a strong possibility for us to go beyond the regular season and into the postseason." That was before Beane brought in outfielder Josh Willingham and relievers Grant Balfour and Fuentes, making the bullpen one of the league's deepest.

Willingham said after his arrival, "I think this team is ready to win." Then Balfour came aboard and said, "We've got a good shot at winning it."

Fuentes' comments were more of the same.

The fact is, they're right. The A's play in a four-team division, and let's be the first to dismiss the Mariners on Jan. 20, the Jack Cust signing notwithstanding. If it's a three-team race, we can't emphasize enough that the 80-82 Angels, while pitching rich, struck out on Carl Crawford and Adrian Beltre and are praying that a healthy Kendry Morales will upgrade an inefficient lineup.

The Rangers got Beltre but lost Cliff Lee, and was there a more considerable loss in the entire league? They're still the AL's defending champs with a scary offense and adequate pitching, but as Beane said, "I think we narrowed the gap" — despite the division's lowest payroll by far.

Remember, Moneyball isn't just about utilizing on-base percentage as much as creatively taking advantage of a given marketplace with whatever resources are handy. In the A's case, it was about making use of a buyer's market and an excess of free-agent designated hitters and relievers, leading to the relatively affordable signings of Matsui, Fuentes and Balfour.

A deeper outfield

With Eric Chavez and Ben Sheets off the books, the A's had earmarked just \$39 million toward 2011 once last season ended. Trades landed Willingham and David DeJesus, corner outfielders who drop Conor Jackson, Ryan Sweeney and Chris Carter on the depth chart.

"It's been a busy but productive winter," said Beane, who kept plugging away after rejections by Beltre, Lance Berkman and Hisashi Iwakuma. "We started working on the DeJesus trade the day after the season. We had a great young pitching staff and payroll flexibility. We had a good foundation, and it behooved us to add to it."

Yes, the A's could use more pop. It's not a perfect team, but it's deeper than last year's, a key point considering they usually lead the league in injuries. It's better, too. Maybe not good enough to win it all. But until further notice, good enough to win the West, and that's a start.

Inbox: A's thinking long term with outfielders?

Beat reporter Jane Lee fields questions from fans

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

I'm excited about the A's new additions this offseason and really think the team could win the American League West. However, the A's entire starting outfield, designated hitter and second baseman will all be free agents after next season. Any chance some of these guys stay around long-term?
-- Matt A., Chico, Calif.

It doesn't appear that way at the moment, though general manager Billy Beane has mentioned being open to the possibility of teaming with David DeJesus and Josh Willingham for more than just a year. It seems it would have made sense to lock up at least one of them for at least two seasons when they were acquired, but Beane and Co. may already be picturing a 2012 outfield that boasts Chris Carter, Michael Taylor and Ryan Sweeney. As for the other outfielder to whom you're referring, Coco Crisp could stand to be a little too expensive for Oakland's liking by season's end.

It's also important to remember that all three of these guys endured lengthy stints on the disabled list last year, and health is one of the key assets of inking a long-term deal. Second baseman Mark Ellis, meanwhile, may in fact be preparing for his final season in green and gold if Oakland decides to go younger, though I know he'd love to finish his career with the A's. And Hideki Matsui, no matter how potent of a year he puts together, is likely headed for the open market once again next winter.

The A's are rather picky when it comes to long-term contracts, and they appear to be in favor of locking up their young pitching talent at the moment. Brett Anderson and battery mate Kurt Suzuki got their four-year deals last season, and Trevor Cahill is likely next in line. Pitching is what has this team primed for playoff contention, so the A's aren't about to sacrifice their future on the mound by handing away cash to higher-priced older players whose benefits are only of the short-term type.

Everyone seems to be writing off Ryan Sweeney for the right-field position. He has put in his time and proven himself at this level, and neither outfield acquisition has proven to be better or have more potential. Is there

any reason for this other than not knowing if he will return to form after his knee surgery?

-- Mike S., Sacramento, Calif.

It's not really fair to categorize Willingham and DeJesus that way when they have a combined 12 years of Major League experience, compared to Sweeney's three. In no way am I attempting to downplay Sweeney's talent, because it's definitely there. But his high-average swing comes without power, something the A's desperately needed last year.

DeJesus doesn't exactly exude much power, either, but he's an all-around player with some speed who hit .318 with five homers and 37 RBIs in 91 games for the Royals before missing the final two months of the 2010 campaign. He was highly coveted around the Trade Deadline before the onset of a thumb injury because of those numbers, and he is well respected around the league.

Willingham, meanwhile, can provide the club with some right-handed pop, having averaged 20 home runs and 66 RBIs over the past five seasons. Both have potential to be impact players, and Sweeney could benefit greatly from learning from them while at the same time offering a quality bat and glove off the bench.

With all of these relievers coming in, is there any reason to believe that Beane might be working to trade away Andrew Bailey? I know you've mentioned how important bullpen depth is, given the team's recent injury history, but might they have enough depth now to use to land another hitter?

-- Greg D., Westlake Village, Calif.

I'm guessing you're not the only one who has given thought to this idea, Greg. It's well-known by now that Beane essentially creates his closers rather than shop for them, a notion which definitely makes Bailey expendable. The righty represents pretty decent trade bait, possibly for another offensive addition in the form of an infielder. That being said, I think there's reason to believe it's a possibility -- but nothing more at this point. I'm still sold on the fact the A's are simply trying to stock up on bullpen depth after watching the 2010 domino effect on which injured arms had on healthy ones.

It seems like we haven't heard much about Carter this offseason. Wasn't he supposed to play winter ball? If he starts the year at Triple-A, which seems likely, when do you think he'll get another chance in Oakland?

-- Ben G., Phoenix, Ariz.

Carter was supposed to play winter ball, but a sore left thumb kept him away from baseball action for much of the offseason. However, I'm told he was deemed 100 percent in December, leaving him plenty of time to prepare for what should be a telling Spring Training. Carter's currently destined for the Minors in April because of Oakland's heavy outfield crop, but the A's might have to get creative to keep him on board should he have a stellar spring. There's no telling when he'll join The Show if he starts the season in Sacramento, though it might not be too long if Oakland's injury-prone ways continue.

Am I the only one who thinks the A's need to pick up the phone and call the Rangers to see what they want for Michael Young? He would slide into third base, and we would have a great team. Just marinate on that for a minute.

-- Angel D., Texas

It's not a bad thought, whether marinated for one minute or 15, but Texas is intent on keeping Young around despite snagging Adrian Beltre. The veteran infielder is entering his 11th season with the Rangers, with whom he's signed through 2013, and he's already openly expressed his willingness to move from the hot corner to accommodate Beltre. Even if Texas was to make him expendable, I doubt the A's would show serious interest. Young's got a great amount of pop, but he's a below-average defender.

Athletics' Horton Puts Injuries Behind Him In Breakout

By Casey Tefertiller, Baseball America, 1/20/2011

OAKLAND—For two ugly years, Josh Horton battled injuries and just wondered what might happen if he could stay healthy.

He found out last season. The 24-year-old shortstop batted .286/.353/.464 in 420 at-bats for Double-A Midland, made the Texas League all-star team and then earned his first invitation to big league spring training for 2011.

"The improvements he's made are tremendous," farm director Keith Lieppman said. "He's become a sure-handed, steady infielder. He is learning positioning and reading hitters. He's really advanced a lot in the last year and a half since his injury."

Horton has emerged as the top defensive shortstop prospect in the organization, and he is showing improvement with his bat. In 11 games in the Mexican Pacific League in November he batted 17-for-37 (.459) with two strikeouts.

"The big thing for me was getting comfortable with my routine, the pregame stuff," Horton said. "Not just showing up for batting practice, but coming in with a plan. That let me maintain my comfort level to game time."

The one knock on the lefty-hitting Horton's résumé is his shortage of power. Just 24 of his 120 Midland hits went for extra bases, three of those being home runs. Nearly all his hits in Mexico were singles as well—he mixed in two doubles.¹

"He started showing some signs of developing some power last year," Lieppman said. "He hit more balls into the gaps. The power's there—it just hasn't developed quite yet. Maybe it just comes later."

Horton has demonstrated that he has both the arm and glove to remain on the left side of the infield, though he played four Double-A games at second base to gain versatility.

The Athletics selected Horton out of North Carolina in the second round of the 2007 draft, but his next two seasons were limited by injuries: plantar fasciitis in the feet in '08 and then an elbow injury in '09 that required surgery.

A's ACORNS

- The A's completed their minor league staffing by naming Rick Magnante manager of the new short-season Vermont affiliate in the New York-Penn League. He'll be flanked by coaches Casey Myers (hitting) and John Wasdin (pitching), both of whom are former A's draft picks.
- Slugging left fielder/first baseman Chris Carter had been scheduled to play winter ball in Mexico, but his thumb injury took too long to heal and he stayed home to recover.

Prospect Watch: Top 10 right-handed pitchers

Hellickson, Teheran, Drabek head list of potential future aces

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

The 2011 version of MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list will be unveiled on Tuesday, Jan. 25, on MLB.com as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 9 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com takes a look at baseball's top 10 prospects at each position.

The adage about never having enough pitching has some truth to it, and there appears to be plenty of pitching coming up through Minor League systems. If this list is any indication, a rush of high-end talent is on the way, with no one on this Top 10 list projecting to be anything less than a high-quality No.3 starter.

1. Jeremy Hellickson, Rays: The Matt Garza trade has opened the door for the next of what seems like a steady stream of Rays pitching prospects. Hellickson has outstanding stuff, with a fastball, changeup and curve, which look even better because of his outstanding command. He goes right after hitters and won't hurt himself with walks. Now the No. 5 guy in the rotation, his ceiling is much higher than that.

2. Julio Teheran, Braves: Teheran jumped on the fast track in 2010, pitching across three levels. He's got a terrific three-pitch mix (fastball, changeup, curve), all of which are at least above-average. Just 20, his command on the mound belies his years and that, combined with his stuff, points to a future at the top of a rotation. Atlanta already has Tommy Hanson and Mike Minor. It may not take too long for Teheran to join them.

3. Kyle Drabek, Blue Jays: Doug's kid had a pretty good first season in Toronto's organization after coming over from Philadelphia in the Roy Halladay deal. He was the Eastern League's Pitcher of the Year and made his big league debut in September. With one of the best breaking pitches in the Minors, Drabek also throws a lively fastball and a changeup that's improved considerably. A strong competitor, he's ready to take on the AL East as part of the Jays rotation.

4. Michael Pineda, Mariners: Just 22, Pineda should be getting more attention from prospect fans. His 2009 season was injury-hampered, but he came back strong last year and looked like a front-line starter. The 6-foot-5 right-hander has three pitches -- fastball, slider and changeup -- and can command all of them. He should get a long look this spring. Eventually he and King Felix could make for a very potent 1-2 punch.

Top 10 RHP prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Jeremy Hellickson	TB
2.	Julio Teheran	ATL
3.	Kyle Drabek	TOR
4.	Michael Pineda	SEA
5.	Jacob Turner	DET
6.	Jameson Taillon	PIT
7.	Shelby Miller	STL
8.	Casey Kelly	SD
9.	Jarrod Parker	ARI
10.	Jordan Lyles	HOU

5. Jacob Turner, Tigers: The Tigers will be aggressive with their young starters, so it's not surprising Turner reached the Class A Advanced Florida State League in his first full season. He's got the stuff, a feel for pitching and the mound presence to keep moving quickly. Once just a hard thrower, he's much more of a pitcher now, having made significant progress with his secondary stuff. With improved command, he could hit Detroit with Rick Porcello-like haste.

6. Jameson Taillon, Pirates: High school pitchers like this don't come around often. Taillon has size (he's 6-foot-6), stuff (he can throw four pitches for strikes), command and makeup. Three of those pitches are plus at times, and the changeup isn't far behind. He's yet to make his pro debut, but he has the type of arm at his age that could move him fairly quickly through the Pittsburgh system.

7. Shelby Miller, Cardinals: It's looking like taking a high school pitcher with the 19th overall pick in 2009 was a good move for the Cards. While having his innings monitored carefully in his first full season, Miller went to the Futures Game and finished strongly. He has a plus fastball, and his curve and changeup progressed a great deal. With the kid gloves off, he could start to move quickly up the ladder.

8. Casey Kelly, Padres: Kelly was a must-have for the Padres when they sent Adrian Gonzalez to the Red Sox this offseason. And while Kelly's numbers in 2010, his first season as a full-time pitcher, weren't pretty, scouts agreed that his pure stuff was as good as ever. It might even be better this year, thanks to some maturity and the focus on pitching. With experience, he'll regain command of his fastball-curve-changeup combination, and his performance will quickly catch up with his stuff.

9. Jarrod Parker, D-backs: Parker ranks this highly even after missing the 2010 season following Tommy John elbow surgery. A tireless worker, his rehab went well, and he was throwing very well in the instruction league last fall. His plus fastball is mostly back, and he's got a plus slider to go with it. His changeup was coming around pre-surgery and it should return without much difficulty. You always want to be cautious when projecting a T.J. surgery returnee, but don't be shocked to see Parker in Arizona this season.

10. Jordan Lyles, Astros: The Astros seem to be turning things around with a youth movement as a once-somnambulant farm system is starting to produce players. Next up could be Lyles, who is only 20 years old. He's got a three-pitch mix -- fastball, breaking ball, changeup -- and in many ways his secondary stuff is better than the fastball. But the heater and the other pitches get better grades because he commands them so well and he's got a very good feel for pitching. He's in the No. 5 starter mix in Houston, but even if he goes down to Triple-A to start the year, Astros fans should see him in 2011.

To be eligible for the list, a player must have rookie eligibility. To qualify for rookie status, a player must not have exceeded 130 at-bats or 50 innings pitched in the Major Leagues, or accumulated more than 45 days on the active roster of a Major League club or clubs during the 25-player limit period, excluding time on the disabled list or in military service.

Prospect Watch: Top 10 left-handed pitchers

Electrifying Chapman tops list of southpaws with big-time stuff

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

The 2011 version of MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list will be unveiled on Tuesday, Jan. 25, on MLB.com as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 9 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com takes a look at baseball's top 10 prospects at each position.

Once upon a time, left-handed pitchers seemed to fit a certain mold. They were soft-tossers, finesse types, guys with a keen sense about pitching. The top 10 southpaw prospects break that mold in a big way. Not that they don't know how to pitch, but they come to the mound with big-time stuff along with a feel for pitching.

1. Aroldis Chapman, Reds: When news about his triple-digit fastball in the Minors spread, there surely were a few skeptics. Then the Cuban defector arrived in Cincinnati and popped a 105 on the radar gun, ending any doubt about the fastball. It wasn't an aberration -- Chapman tops 100 mph consistently, especially when he's coming out of the bullpen. Coupling that with a plus slider, he's got all he needs to dominate as a setup man or closer. That's the kind of role he'll have in 2011, at least, meaning he won't have to worry about his developing changeup or his command issues quite as much.

2. Mike Montgomery, Royals: The only thing that slowed Montgomery down last year was a forearm strain. The Royals were understandably cautious and shut him down for two months, but there are no long-term concerns. Montgomery has size, stuff and a very good feel for pitching. His fastball is plus and his curve is close. The changeup is behind, but it's nearly caught up. He commands his pitches well and his size helps create a downward plane. All he needs is more experience and he'll be ready for Kansas City in the near future.

3. Zach Britton, Orioles: In the past two seasons, Britton has gone from an interesting young pitcher to one of the better southpaws in the Minors who's nearly ready to contribute in Baltimore. He gets tons of ground balls while using a hard sinker, slider and changeup. He commands all of them well and has proven to be durable, throwing more than 140 innings three years running. The 2010 Futures Gamer spent half the season in Triple-A and now will wait for the first opportunity to show what he can do at Camden Yards.

4. Mike Minor, Braves: Minor's stuff was pretty good at Vanderbilt, but he fit more of the sensible lefty mold. As a professional, though, his stuff has been much better than expected. His fastball has gained a few ticks, his changeup is a plus pitch and his curve has improved as well. He can throw all three pitches for strikes. It took him a year to get to Atlanta, and he could very well be there to stay. Braves fans should get excited about having Tommy Hanson, Julio Teheran and Minor in the rotation.

Top 10 LHP prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Aroldis Chapman	CIN
2.	Mike Montgomery	KC
3.	Zach Britton	BAL
4.	Mike Minor	ATL
5.	Martin Perez	TEX
6.	Chris Sale	CWS
7.	Matt Moore	TB
8.	Tyler Matzek	COL
9.	John Lamb	KC
10.	Manny Banuelos	NY

5. Martin Perez, Rangers: The 2010 season was one of some adversity on the mound for Perez. Then again, he was a teenager in Double-A. His size, stuff and background (he's Venezuelan) prompts Johan Santana comparisons. It might not be that far off, as Perez has an outstanding changeup, a low-to-mid-90s fastball and signs of an excellent breaking ball. His command deserted him last year, a big reason for his struggles and his 5.96 ERA. But he's got a chance to have three plus pitches and that can top a rotation anywhere in the big leagues.

6. Chris Sale, White Sox: Wow, that was fast. Sale was in Chicago just two months after being drafted in the first round of the 2010 First-Year Player Draft. And he wasn't there just to check out the scene; he ended up closing games during a pennant race. His long-term role, though, should be as a starter, so he can use his plus fastball, above-average slider and outstanding changeup to greater effect. He has a terrific mound presence and is mature, so he should be able to handle the opportunity to join the White Sox rotation soon without any real difficulty.

7. Matt Moore, Rays: Plus power stuff from the left side, especially the kind that lasts deep into starts, is hard to come by. Moore has it, and that's why he's on this list. He's led the Minor Leagues in strikeouts in each of the past two seasons, becoming the first to top 200 in five years in 2010. He really turned it on in the second half, using his plus fastball, curve and changeup to get a lot of swings and misses. To continue having success as he moves up, he'll have to continue to refine his command. It might not seem fair, but it looks like the Rays have another premium left-handed starter making his way up the ranks.

8. Tyler Matzek, Rockies: The Rockies' top pick (No. 11 overall) in the 2009 Draft, Matzek has all the makings of a future top-of-the-rotation type. He was brought along slowly in his first full season, but still showed glimpses of a four-pitch mix. He always had the fastball when he was in the Southern California high school ranks, and he's still got it. His two breaking pitches, a curve and slider, both have promise, and while his changeup is under-utilized, it has the chance to be a good pitch. He's going to grow and develop, and his command will improve. When that happens, he'll start moving quickly.

9. John Lamb, Royals: There are some who like Lamb more than Montgomery, and for the Royals, that's a pleasant situation. Lamb could be the steal of the 2008 Draft -- he was taken in the fifth round -- as his stuff and pitching know-how are very exciting. His fastball and changeup are his two plus pitches, and while his curve isn't quite as good, it's still an effective pitch. They're made even better by his outstanding command and competitive nature on the mound. Just 20, he and Montgomery will be together to start the year in Double-A, and it will be an interesting race to see who gets to Kansas City first.

10. Manny Banuelos, Yankees: When Banuelos was forced out of action with appendicitis, he took the time and opportunity to focus on conditioning. The effects were noticeable when he returned, with more ticks on the fastball, for one thing. He commands it well, even though he's throwing it harder than he had previously. His other pitches -- a curve and changeup -- are also very good. All he really needs is experience and time to work on being able to throw all three consistently. He's only 20, and even if he's 5-foot-10, 155 pounds, he's got the stuff to be a front-line starter in the not-too-distant future.

To be eligible for the list, a player must have rookie eligibility. To qualify for rookie status, a player must not have exceeded 130 at-bats or 50 innings pitched in the Major Leagues, or accumulated more than 45 days on the active roster of a Major League club or clubs during the 25-player limit period, excluding time on the disabled list or in military service.

Prospect Watch: Top 10 shortstops

Orioles' Machado tops list of young players on the rise

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

The 2011 version of MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list will be unveiled on Tuesday on MLB.com as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 9 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com will take a look at baseball's top 10 prospects at each position.

Teams will always say they are looking for talent up the middle. True shortstops are a rare commodity indeed. One who can hit and field almost automatically goes to the top of prospect lists. This top 10 has an intriguing mix of fantastic gloves, advanced bats that may not stay at the position and some who stand in between those two ends of the spectrum.

1. Manny Machado, Orioles: Machado was the top high school position player in the 2010 Draft and for good reason. He's got the potential to be a very exciting, all-around shortstop who can hit for average and power and field his position well. He got unfair A-Rod comparisons, because he's a big, toolsy shortstop from the Florida prep ranks, but he's got the chance to be very special in his own right.

2. Nick Franklin, Mariners: The No. 27 overall pick in the 2009 Draft, Franklin had a huge first full season, posting 23 homers and 25 steals, while adding 22 doubles as well. It looks like he should be able to stay at short, with decent range and enough arm, though some believe he'd be better at second base. He could leap to Double-A, where he finished in 2010, and jump on the fast track.

3. Jose Iglesias, Red Sox: Had the Cuban infielder stayed healthy all year, the conversation about Iglesias might have been about Boston early in 2011. But he broke a finger when he was hit by a pitch and missed two months. Defensively, he's a highlight reel and is ready to play Gold Glove-caliber defense in the big leagues right now. While he's more glove than bat, he's not a slouch at the plate and should hit for decent average. He might need some more time in the Minors, but not too much more.

4. Dee Gordon, Dodgers: The son of former big league pitcher Tom Gordon successfully made the jump from Class A to Double-A in 2010 and went to the Futures Game. He's a tremendous athlete and has plus speed that's allowed him to steal 126 bases over the past two years. He should be able to hit for average, especially if he improves his plate discipline. That

speed works well defensively and he's got a good arm, though he's not polished in the field. He'll move up to Triple-A to refine his skills and wait for that first call.

Top 10 shortstop prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Manny Machado	BAL
2.	Nick Franklin	SEA
3.	Jose Iglesias	BOS
4.	Dee Gordon	LAD
5.	Jurickson Profar	TEX
6.	Wilmer Flores	NYM
7.	Adeiny Hechavarria	TOR
8.	Grant Green	OAK
9.	Christian Colon	KC
10.	Chris Owings	ARI

5. Jurickson Profar, Rangers: Profar will play all of 2011 at the ripe old age of 18 and is ready to hit full-season ball. He's the type of player to dream on because there's still so much development to come. He's learned how to switch-hit and he's got a good swing from both sides. He should be a good hitter as he progresses and he's got good instincts on the bases and in the field. He emulates Elvis Andrus and while Andrus doesn't have to look over his shoulder just yet, it'll be fun to watch just how fast Profar can reach the Majors and perhaps challenge him.

6. Wilmer Flores, Mets: The Mets sent Flores to full-season ball in 2009, at age 17, and while he wasn't terrible, he didn't stand out. So they sent him back to the South Atlantic League to start the 2010 season and he earned a midseason promotion to the Class A Advanced Florida State League. His best tool is his bat and he started to show some of the extra-base pop he'll continue to grow into. He may not stay at shortstop long-term, but he might hit enough to be a fine third baseman.

7. Adeiny Hechavarria, Blue Jays: Anyone who was in the Arizona Fall League at the right time saw Hechavarria and Jose Iglesias take infield practice together in Peoria in what basically was a "Can you top this?" defensive exhibition. Hechavarria, 21, was signed to a big deal last April and while his debut was just so-so, he's got a tremendous glove and the feeling is he'll hit just fine as he develops.

8. Grant Green, A's: A lot went right for Green in his first full season. He hit .318/.363/.520 with 20 homers and 87 RBIs in Class A Advanced Stockton, earning a promotion to Double-A for the playoffs. He represented the A's at the Futures Game as well. Things didn't go as well with the glove as he committed 37 errors, and there are some who believe a move to second is in the cards. But he'll stay at short for the time being and his bat should keep moving him up the ladder.

9. Christian Colon, Royals: If there was going to be a poster child for signing early, Colon might be it. He signed very quickly with the Royals after being taken No. 4 overall last June, and as a result was able to play 60 games in the Class A Advanced Carolina League. The Cal State Fullerton product has a good idea of what he's doing at the plate and should hit for average and some power. His baseball instincts allow him to play above his tools, especially at shortstop, though some believe he lacks the range to stay there. He's on the fast track and should start the year in Double-A.

10. Chris Owings, D-backs: Owings was having a very solid first pro season, making the Midwest League All-Star team, but was shut down with a foot problem in June. With good bat speed and a short stroke, he's already shown a knack for hitting for contact and hitting for average, though he needs to improve his plate discipline. He's a hard worker who's got enough range, soft-enough hands and a strong-enough arm to stay at shortstop. That's where he'll play as he moves up a level in 2011.

To be eligible for the list, a player must have rookie eligibility. To qualify for rookie status, a player must not have exceeded 130 at-bats or 50 innings pitched in the Major Leagues, or accumulated more than 45 days on the active roster of a Major League club or clubs during the 25-player limit period, excluding time on the disabled list or in military service.

Prospect Watch: Top 10 first basemen

Hosmer and Freeman headline group that is knocking on the door

The 2011 version of MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list will be unveiled on Tuesday, Jan. 25, on MLB.com as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 9 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com will take a look at baseball's top 10 prospects at each position.

There's a prototype for first basemen, a standard set long ago and upheld by superstars like Albert Pujols and Mark Teixeira these days. Perhaps that's setting the bar a bit too high, but every team would love to have that power-hitting, run-producing bat in the middle of their lineup at this position. Many of the names on this Top 10 list have a chance to fit that very profile when they establish themselves in the big leagues.

1. Eric Hosmer, Royals: He took the adversity he had in 2009, along with offseason LASIK eye surgery, and turned it into a huge '10. He's got tremendous plate discipline, should hit for a high average and he's still scratching the surface of his plus power. To think he'll be an annual .300-30-100-type guy, along with being a plus defender, isn't out of the question.

2. Freddie Freeman, Braves: He belongs on any list for 2011 National League Rookie of the Year Award candidates, and not just because he'll have the opportunity to play every day for Atlanta. He might not have the best power in this group, but there's plenty more than what he's shown to date (though he did have 35 doubles and 18 homers in 2010). His smooth left-handed swing should allow him to hit for average and drive in runs right out of the gate.

3. Brandon Belt, Giants: No prospect raised his stock more than Belt in 2010, as the '09 draftee played at three levels and finished second in the Minors in batting average (.352) and OBP (.455), while landing in fourth in RBIs (112). He draws a ton of walks and, with approach, he could compete for batting titles. There's plenty of extra-base power in his left-handed bat, but he may never be a home-run-title type. He can also handle an outfield corner, if needed.

4. Jonathan Singleton, Phillies: When he was drafted out of high school in 2009, Singleton was thought of as a project -- more tools than anything. The Phillies had liked his bat, and it turned out to be very productive right out of the gate -- as Singleton was named the South Atlantic League's Most Outstanding Major League Prospect this past year. It looks like he will be able to hit for both average and plenty of power, especially as he matures. He could make a move to an outfield corner, so he won't be blocked by Ryan Howard down the line.

5. Yonder Alonso, Reds: Finally 100 percent following a hand injury, Alonso had a huge second half of 2010 after starting off the season sluggishly. By hitting .335/.415/.561 after the All-Star break, all of Alonso's hitting tools were on display: hitting for average, power and getting on base. The only problem now is finding a place for that bat. Joey Votto isn't going anywhere. Alonso has played some left field, but first is his better position.

Top 10 first base prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Eric Hosmer	KC
2.	Freddie Freeman	ATL
3.	Brandon Belt	SF
4.	Jonathan Singleton	PHI
5.	Yonder Alonso	CIN
6.	Christian Yelich	FLA
7.	Anthony Rizzo	SD
8.	Chris Carter	OAK
9.	Lars Anderson	BOS
10.	Mark Trumbo	LAA

Click on the player's name to view his complete Minor League stats.

6. Christian Yelich, Marlins: Taken No. 23 overall in the 2010 First-Year Player Draft, Yelich proved to be one of the best pure high school hitters in the Draft class. He's got a smooth left-handed swing and a very good approach, especially for someone his age. He may be more of a John Olerud-type than a pure power guy -- and with good speed, the Marlins might give him a chance to play some outfield to see how that works during his full-season debut.

7. Anthony Rizzo, Padres: One of the keys to the Adrian Gonzalez trade, Rizzo could be asked to take over at first in San Diego within the next year. Rizzo has already overcome Hodgkin's lymphoma, and he had a big 2010 where he established himself as a bona fide offensive prospect by hitting 25 homers and driving in 100 runs. There's more power to come from his left-handed bat, and he's an excellent defender to boot.

8. Chris Carter, A's: Don't put too much stock into Carter's 0-for-33 big league debut last year. He's still one of the best power-hitting prospects in the game. Even after a slow start in 2010, he finished with 31 homers in Triple-A (34 combined) and drove in a combined 101 runs. He can hit the ball out to any part of any ballpark. While he will draw some walks, he's always going to strike out a healthy amount. He can play some left field, which might get him to the bigs this year, though first is clearly his better spot defensively.

9. Lars Anderson, Red Sox: While his stock has fallen a bit, it should be noted that Anderson played most of the year in Triple-A at the ripe old age of 22. He's a selective hitter who will draw walks. And while he hasn't tapped into his raw power, he still has time to figure it out. The one thing he doesn't have is an opportunity in Boston, with Gonzalez now effectively blocking his path for several years.

10. Mark Trumbo, Angels: The move to the Pacific Coast League served Trumbo well in 2010, as he tied for the Minor League lead with 36 homers and finished third with 122 RBIs. While the friendlier hitting climate certainly helped, he's got the kind of power that should work anywhere. He will also strike out a bunch, and that might keep him from being a big average guy. He can play the outfield in a pinch, though it's not a natural spot for him.

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Prospect Watch: Baseball's Top 10 catchers

Yanks, Nats, Jays dominate list of up-and-coming backstops

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

The 2011 version of MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list will be unveiled on Tuesday, Jan. 25, on MLB.com as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 9 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com will take a look at baseball's top 10 prospects at each position.

Finding good catching isn't the easiest thing to do. Growing your own seems to be an even harder task. Some can hit, but either can't handle the defensive rigors of the position or get moved to keep that offensive production from wearing down. Others are stalwarts with the glove, but don't hit enough to profile as everyday players. But as the 2011 season looms ahead, the prospect landscape is pretty catching-rich. There are a number of future big league backstops to get excited about. Here are the Top 10:

1. Jesus Montero, Yankees: There's been little doubt about the bat, even though he got off to a very rough start to his 2010 season, his first taste of Triple-A. But after stumbling out of the gate, Montero hit .351/.396/.684 in the second half, putting him back on the short list of top hitting prospects in the game. The question, however, has been more about his defense than his bat. Can Montero be an everyday catcher? Do the Yankees want him to be? While he's worked hard on that part of the game, it remains to be seen if it's enough to stay at the position and become an offensive-minded backstop. He'll have the opportunity to hit his way onto the Bombers' Opening Day roster this spring.

2. Wil Myers, Royals: Myers is another who fits into the "great bat, but can he catch?" group. There's no doubt he can hit, after a .324/.429/.533 line over 637 career plate appearances. He's got great plate discipline and should hit for plenty of power. He's even got decent speed. Having played a number of positions in high school, he's still learning how to catch, but there are those who feel he won't be able to stay behind the plate. He is athletic enough with plenty of arm strength to handle a move to the outfield should the Royals decide to go that route.

3. Gary Sanchez, Yankees: After getting \$3 million -- a Yankees record for a teenager -- to sign out of the Dominican, Sanchez started out his career in the U.S. like gangbusters. He hit .353/.419/.597 in the Gulf Coast League to earn a late bump up to short-season Staten Island, where he held his own over 16 games. He's got all the makings of a solid defensive catcher as well. When all is said and done, he might have more upside than the other talented catching prospects in the Yankees' system. He'll hit full-season ball this year at age 18.

4. Wilin Rosario, Rockies: The only thing slowing Rosario's ascent to the big leagues is injury. After being a Texas League All-Star and Futures Game participant, he tore his ACL, ending his season and putting the timely start of 2011 in jeopardy. He's done very well with his rehab, and the Rockies think he won't be too delayed this season as he moves up to Triple-A. He can hit, hit for power and has an arm that allowed him to throw out 40.6 percent of would-be basestealers. The catchers in Colorado are merely keeping the position warm until Rosario is deemed ready.

5. Devin Mesoraco, Reds: The 2007 first-round pick battled injuries over his first few years as a pro, and his middling performance kind of forced him off the prospect map. Then he broke out in '10, playing at three levels and showing the offensive capabilities the Reds thought he had when they drafted him out of high school. He can hit for average and power (.302/.377/.587 in '10) and while he still needs to work on his overall receiving, he's got an outstanding arm (he threw out 41 percent of basestealers last season). He finished last year in Triple-A, and that's where he'll start '11. Don't be surprised to see him in Cincy at some point this season.

Top 10 catching prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Jesus Montero	NYY
2.	Wil Myers	KC
3.	Gary Sanchez	NYY
4.	Wilin Rosario	COL
5.	Devin Mesoraco	CIN
6.	J.P. Arencibia	TOR
7.	Wilson Ramos	WAS
8.	Austin Romine	NYY

#	PLAYER	ORG
9.	Travis d'Arnaud	TOR
10.	Derek Norris	WAS

Click on the player's name to view his complete Minor League stats.

6. J.P. Arencibia, Blue Jays: If first impressions are indeed the most important, then Blue Jays fans must love Arencibia. In his first Major League game, he banged out four hits -- a double and two homers -- against the Rays. His power is his best tool -- he's got a .507 career slugging percentage in the Minors, .626 last season. While he's definitely an offensive-minded catcher, he does have some defensive tools to work with. He should get every chance to show what he can do as Toronto's starting catcher during the 2011 season.

7. Wilson Ramos, Nationals: Ramos has long been thought of as one of the better catching prospects in the game, but that Joe Mauer fellow wasn't exactly about to yield the position in Minnesota. So the Twins included Ramos in the deal that netted them closer Matt Capps last July. He got a little big league time last May filling in for Mauer, but he really showed what he could do in September and October with the Nats, hitting .292 over 48 at-bats. He's got a little pop as well. But his real calling card is his glove work. Ramos has a very good receiver who will only get better as he gets used to catching a big league staff. He threw out 50 percent of basestealers in the Minors last season. For now, he's going to split time with (and learn from) Ivan Rodriguez, but the everyday job will be his before long.

8. Austin Romine, Yankees: Montero might get most of the ink because of his bat, but it's Romine many believe is the better all-around catcher. While he doesn't have the offensive upside of his counterpart, he's no slouch at the plate, with decent extra-base pop that should improve as he matures and gains more experience at the upper levels. He's a better catcher than Montero, with a strong arm and pretty solid receiving abilities. He'll be in Triple-A continuing to hone his craft. If Montero shows the ability to catch in the big leagues, Romine could get stuck. But some see him as the everyday answer behind the plate, at least until Gary Sanchez is ready.

9. Travis d'Arnaud, Blue Jays: Catching depth is something every organization strives for, and the Blue Jays have some. Arencibia might be the guy for now, but d'Arnaud could eventually supplant him as the everyday catcher in Toronto. In his first season with the organization after coming over in the Roy Halladay deal, he missed a chunk of time with a back issue, but it's not expected to be a long-term problem. He's got a great arm and is very agile behind the plate. While his offensive numbers haven't consistently stood out to date, he's got good bat speed and a solid approach that should lead to good results. It might take him a couple of years, but he profiles to be a better all-around backstop than Arencibia in the future.

10. Derek Norris, Nationals: Following the 2009 season, when he hit 23 homers, drove in 84 runs and had a .926 OPS, Norris was named MLB.com's Class A Hitter of the Year. Things didn't go as well in 2010. He didn't really get started until close to mid-May following hamate bone surgery in his left hand, and he never really found his stroke, finishing with a .235/.419/.419 line. He did bounce back with a solid showing in the Arizona Fall League, which should help him move up to Double-A. He's got tremendous plate discipline and excellent power when he's 100 percent. While he's more of an offensive-minded catcher, he's improved his defense considerably and has thrown out better than 40 percent of basestealers over the past two seasons. With a strong '11, he could make things interesting with Ramos in Washington in '12.

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Prospect Watch: Top 10 third basemen

Royals' Moustakas heads up a very intriguing group

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

The 2011 version of MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list will be unveiled on Tuesday, Jan. 25, on MLB.com, as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 9 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com will take a look at baseball's top 10 prospects at each position.

It's not an overwhelming crop of third basemen making their way up organizational ladders, but it's still an intriguing Top 10. The top of the list is just about ready to reach the big leagues, while some of the names at the bottom are exciting, but still far away from getting to that highest level. Not everyone on this list will ultimately stay at the hot corner, but, conversely, there's bound to be some shortstops who will move over in the future as they mature, which will add some more depth at the position.

1. Mike Moustakas, Royals: Just about everything went well for this 2008 first-round Draft pick. Moustakas tied for the Minor League lead with 36 homers, was second with 124 RBIs and third with his .630 slugging percentage, all while getting promoted to Triple-A midseason. Some are concerned about his ability to stay at third, but he's got a plus arm and decent hands over there. He's knocking on the door and should bust through it at some point in 2011.

2. Lonnie Chisenhall, Indians: Chisenhall has long had a reputation of being one of the best pure hitters around. As he's close to being big league ready, that hasn't changed a bit, especially after he shook off a shoulder strain to hit .294/.364/.505 in the second half of 2010. The Futures Gamer should be able to hit for average and pretty good power, using all fields well. There's not a whole lot blocking his path in Cleveland.

3. Brent Morel, White Sox: Morel fits more the mold of a batting-title contender than a power-hitting type, sort of a right-handed Wade Boggs type (without the walks). That's not to say he has no pop, but it's not as big a part of his game right now. He has hit .305 in the Minors since being drafted in 2008, and that should continue. He's very good with the glove, even showing the ability to play shortstop if needed. A good spring could land him the job at the hot corner for the White Sox on Opening Day.

4. Matt Dominguez, Marlins: Ever since high school, Dominguez has prided himself on his glove, and there's no question he could play Gold Glove-caliber defense in the big leagues right now. The question is just how much will he hit. He made some strides in 2010 with his approach, though there's plenty of room for improvement and he should grow into more power. There's an opening at third in Florida now, and if he shows this spring he's ready for big league pitching, he could break camp with the Marlins.

5. Miguel Sano, Twins: Minnesota jumped in and signed the most sought-after international prospect in 2009, and there's a good reason why. Sano is a physical specimen with tools aplenty. He split time at third and shortstop during his debut, but he might be too big for the latter position already. Just 17, he might have more growing to do. He's got everything he needs to be a good defensive third baseman and his bat will likely play just about anywhere, with above-average raw power and excellent bat speed.

Top 10 third base prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Mike Moustakas	KC
2.	Lonnie Chisenhall	CLE
3.	Brent Morel	CWS
4.	Matt Dominguez	FLA
5.	Miguel Sano	MIN
6.	Bobby Borchering	ARI
7.	Josh Vitters	CHC
8.	Zack Cox	STL
9.	Kaleb Cowart	LAA
10.	Nick Castellanos	DET

Click on the player's name to view his complete Minor League stats.

6. Bobby Borchering, D-backs: The 2009 first-rounder (No. 16 overall) had a very strong finish to his first full season, showing the hitting ability and power from both sides of the plate that made him one of the most sought after high school hitters in that '09 Draft class. He should hit for decent average and power as he progresses, and while he strikes out a bunch, he's got a pretty good idea of the strike zone. His glove lags behind his bat by a good margin, and some foresee a move to first base in his future.

7. Josh Vitters, Cubs: Chicago pushed Vitters up to Double-A when it had a hole to fill, and while he didn't put up good numbers at all, the organization was pleased with how he prepared and dealt with the adversity. He still has the great swing, bat speed and raw power that made him the No. 3 overall pick in the 2007 Draft. He hasn't been so great at making adjustments and doesn't draw walks at all. He's not great defensively, but has a good arm and should be able to stay at the hot corner. The 2011 season could be a big one for Vitters.

8. Zack Cox, Cardinals: Signability concerns allowed St. Louis to get the best pure college hitter in last year's Draft class at No. 25 overall. He signed right at the deadline and got his feet wet in the Arizona Fall League, so he'll make his official debut this April. Cox is a line-drive machine with a very good approach, and it's unclear just how much power he'll have as a pro. Some see him as a second baseman in the future, but for now, the Cards will let him man the hot corner as he begins his pro career.

9. Kaleb Cowart, Angels: A two-way star in high school, the Halos are honoring Cowart's wishes and letting him hit. The switch-hitter has plenty of power potential from both sides of the plate. He's got great bat speed, but like many young hitters, has plenty to learn about pitch recognition. A standout pitcher, his plus arm will work just fine at third, though he's likely to be known more for his bat than his glove as he progresses.

10. Nick Castellanos, Tigers: A first-round talent as one of the better high-school bats in the 2010 Draft class, Castellanos dropped into the Tigers' lap at No. 44 because of bonus demands, but Detroit was able to get it done. Tall and thin, Castellanos has good power potential from the right side of the plate, though there's some debate over just how much. The same is true for how well he'll do in the average department, but if everything comes together, he could be a .300-25-homer-type third baseman with an average glove at the hot corner.

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Prospect Watch: Top 10 outfielders

Angels' Trout could develop fast; Harper ready to get started

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

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Outfielders come in all shapes and sizes. Some are speedy, top-of-the-lineup types, others are big bashers. The ultimate prize, of course, is a five-tool outfielder. Those don't grow on trees, but they're out there in the Minor Leagues. This Top 10 list is a reflection of that variety, with a little something for everyone.

1. Mike Trout, Angels: Who said players from the Northeast were behind their counterparts from California or Florida? Trout came from a New Jersey high school and established himself as one of the most exciting prospects in the game in his first full season. He's got plus speed, which he uses extremely well -- both on the bases and to play an outstanding center field. He's got an advanced approach at the plate and he should hit for plenty of average, with additional power to come. At 19 he's very young, but at this rate, it may not take him much longer to reach Los Angeles.

2. Bryce Harper, Nationals: Perhaps you've heard of him? One of the most hyped Draft prospects in history, Harper has yet to play a game. But if his Arizona Fall League showing is any indication, he might actually live up to his surreal expectations. Harper has as much raw power as anyone who's come around in a long time and the skills to tap into it to all fields. He's got such great bat speed that he should hit for average as well. He runs well for a guy his size and should be a very good right fielder with a plus arm when all is said and done. All those tools combined with an all-out attitude should spell quick success for Harper.

3. Domonic Brown, Phillies: The Phillies might be saying publicly they're not handing the right-field job to Brown this spring, but rest assured they're hoping he wins it outright. He has all the makings of the prototypical right fielder, with outstanding raw power and a strong arm. Brown really started to tap into that power in 2010, but he's more than just a home run threat -- he should hit for average as well. He's got good speed to boot, and his entire package reminds many of a young Darryl Strawberry.

4. Desmond Jennings, Rays: Replacing Carl Crawford is a lot easier said than done, but Jennings should make a name for himself with his exciting brand of play. He's more of the leadoff type, with an ability to hit for average, get on base and use his terrific speed to wreak havoc on the basepaths. He'll never be a big power threat, but he should have enough pop to keep pitchers honest. And that speed works for him in the outfield as well. He'll play left right now, but he's got the chance to be a Gold Glove-caliber center fielder if the opportunity arises.

Top 10 outfield prospects

#	PLAYER	ORG
1.	Mike Trout	LAA
2.	Bryce Harper	WAS
3.	Domonic Brown	PHI
4.	Desmond Jennings	TB

#	PLAYER	ORG
5.	Aaron Hicks	MIN
6.	Brett Jackson	CHC
7.	Guillermo Pimentel	SEA
8.	Reymond Fuentes	SD
9.	Ben Revere	MIN
10.	Engel Beltre	TEX

5. Aaron Hicks, Twins: Sometimes it can take the raw, toolsy types a little bit longer to get going. That's what's happened with Hicks, the Twins' first-round pick in 2008. He spent his second year in the Class A Midwest League and after a rough start, he hit .308/.429/.459 in the second half. He's got a chance to be one of those five-tool types, and even if the power doesn't fully develop, he still can be a pretty special center fielder.

6. Brett Jackson, Cubs: Taken in the first round in 2009, Jackson jumped on the fast track by making it to Double-A in his first full season. While his individual tools may not grade out as plus, he can do a little bit of everything. He hit 12 homers and stole 30 bases last year, and there should be more power coming. While he strikes out a lot, he'll also draw some walks and he's capable of playing all over the outfield. With Brandon Guyer gone, Jackson could be the first outfielder the Cubs call up from the Minors when the need arises.

7. Guillermo Pimentel, Mariners: Pimentel is one of those prospects you see far off in the distance, but he is worth watching. He'll play all of 2011 at age 18 and it might take him some time to figure out everything. When he does, look out. Pimentel has plus raw power with very good bat speed. He runs pretty well and has a decent arm, but those tools are all secondary. He needs a lot of work on plate discipline, but he's just getting started. He could be the kind of left-handed power bat teams dream about.

8. Reymond Fuentes, Padres: Part of the Adrian Gonzalez trade, Fuentes was Boston's first-round pick in 2009. A cousin of Carlos Beltran, he's extremely athletic and toolsy, with his speed being the best in the toolbox. He already knows how to use it, stealing 42 bases in 47 attempts and playing a plus center field in 2010. He hasn't hit for much power as of yet, but he might grow into some as he matures. He's starting to get a better feel for the strike zone, which will make him a better hitter as he moves up the San Diego chain.

9. Ben Revere, Twins: Revere is making a career out of proving people wrong. He was a surprise first-round pick in 2007, and he was too small to succeed -- he's heard it all. But all he's done is hit at every level -- never below .300 -- and steal bases (125 in his three full seasons). He uses his speed well in the outfield and plays the game with the kind of energy you love to see. He's been an All-Star at every level he's played and he's just about ready to make more of a big league contribution than he did during a September callup last season.

10. Engel Beltre, Rangers: After a poor showing in the California League in 2009, Beltre went back there last season and started to figure out some things, earning a midseason promotion to Double-A in the process. Acquired from Boston in the Eric Gagne trade in 2007, Beltre can make a lot of things happen. He should hit for plenty of average, especially as he continues to refine his approach from the left side, and should have at least a little power. He's still learning to use his outstanding speed on the bases, but he uses it perfectly well in center field. Even if it takes him a bit longer to smooth out the rough edges, he still could get to Texas ahead of the curve.

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A's Notes: First European Sign; Tolleson DFAd

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jan 20, 2011

Over the past three years, the Oakland A's have made their first amateur free agent signings in Australia, Taiwan and the Caribbean. Now the organization can add continental Europe to the list. We have details on the A's latest amateur signing, as well as the team's latest moves involving their 40-man roster, inside...

A's Ink Paz-Garriga

The Oakland A's came to terms with catcher Andy Paz-Garriga this week, according to Dan Kantrovitz, the A's Coordinator of International Operations. Paz-Garriga is an 18-year-old catcher who resides in Toulouse, France. He is originally from Cuba and immigrated to France in 2007 with his father. Paz-Garriga is the first amateur free agent the A's have signed from

Europe.

Paz-Garriga is six-feet and 170 pounds and he is a right-handed hitter. He has most recently played for Toulouse in the Division Elite in France and has been a member of the French junior national baseball team. In 2010, Paz-Garriga hit .302 with 17 RBIs in 24 games. He threw out 13 base-runners in 24 chances, improving on a nine-for-33 effort in 2009 [Editor's note: an earlier version of this article included incomplete statistics from the 2010 season.] In 2009, he attended the MLB Baseball Camp in Tirrenia, Italy.

Paz-Garriga was considered the top amateur talent in Europe this signing period. He has been scouted by the A's European scout Tom Gillespie since Paz-Garriga arrived in France in 2007. The A's were connected with Paz-Garriga at the start of the July 2nd signing period for amateur free agents, but the team didn't officially come to terms with Paz-Garriga until this week. He is expected to participate in the Dominican Summer League for the 2011 season.

A's Announce Fuentes Signing; Designate Tolleson For Assignment

As expected, the A's announced the signing of left-handed reliever Brian Fuentes on Wednesday. Fuentes signed a two-year deal with a third-year option with Oakland. The veteran was the closer for the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim for the 2009 season and much of the 2010 season. He also pitched for the Minnesota Twins last year. In total, Fuentes had 24 saves and a 2.81 ERA in 48 innings for the Angels and Twins in 2010. He had 48 saves for the Angels in 2009 and has 187 over the course of his major league career.

Fuentes was one of the best relievers in baseball against left-handed hitters last season. He held southpaws to a .128 average and a 371 OPS last season and has held them to a .192 average and 493 OPS over the last three years. He has converted 100 saves in 115 opportunities over that time period.

Fuentes joins Grant Balfour as the A's most recent free agent signings. The team also inked free agent DH Hideki Matsui and pitchers Rich Harden and Brandon McCarthy earlier this off-season and have acquired outfielders Josh Willingham and David DeJesus in trades.

To make room for Fuentes on the A's roster, Oakland designated infielder Steven Tolleson for assignment. Tolleson hit .286 with a 748 OPS in 49 major league at-bats with the A's last season. He also hit .332 with nine homers and a 915 OPS in 80 games for Triple-A Sacramento last season. It was Tolleson's first season in the A's organization. He was claimed off of waivers from the Minnesota Twins before the start of the 2010 campaign. Tolleson was ranked as the A's 23rd best prospect going into the 2011 season by Scout.com

With A's middle infielders Cliff Pennington and Adam Rosales rehabbing from off-season surgeries, Oakland may need to go out and sign a veteran infielder to a minor league deal to bring to spring training if Tolleson doesn't clear waivers. Eric Sogard and Adrian Cardenas are the only other middle infielders on the A's 40-man roster besides Pennington, Rosales and starting second baseman Mark Ellis. Both Sogard and Cardenas have had much more recent experience playing at second base than at shortstop.

Austin's Qcue picks up Cardinals, Oakland A's deal

Austin Business Journal 1/20/2011

Austin-based Qcue has added two **Major League Baseball** teams to its growing roster of mega sports clients.

The dynamic pricing engine announced a deal Thursday with the **Oakland A's** and **St. Louis Cardinals** to provide services for tickets during the 2011 season. Qcue uses sophisticated algorithms to adjust prices in real time as conditions such as pitching matchups, weather, opponents, day of the week, sales to-date and other factors affect demand.

"Our number one goal is to provide our fans with the best values possible and fill the stands at Busch Stadium," said **Joe Strohm**, vice president of ticket sales for the St. Louis Cardinals. "Qcue's solution not only gives us greater day-to-day ticket pricing flexibility but also broadens the ticket-buying fan base, rewards fans for buying earlier in the season and protects season ticket holder value."

Qcue's software sends data directly to ticket seller **Tickets.com**, allowing users to change thousands of prices in minutes.

The deal is the latest of many Qcue has signed with Major League Baseball, **National Basketball Association**, **National Hockey League** and **NASCAR** teams.

The company was founded in 2007 from the Austin Technology Incubator with funding from the Emerging Technology Fund. It won both the McCombs School of Business Moot Corp Competition and an information technology award from the Rice Business Plan Competition.