

# Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings December 6, 2018

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## THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1946-The selection of the All-Star teams, except for pitchers, is returned to a fan ballot

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### MLB.COM

**Inbox: What's on tap for Reds at Winter Mtgs?  
Beat reporter Mark Sheldon fields offseason questions from fans  
By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m\_sheldon  
Dec. 5th, 2018**

As a Reds fan, what should we expect out of the upcoming Winter Meetings? Is it expected that the Reds are to try to sign a starter or two? And what caliber of pitcher are the Reds most likely going to invest in?  
-- Daniel K., Portland, Ore.

These things are not easy to predict, but president of baseball operations Dick Williams said last weekend that there is a chance moves could be made because the groundwork has been laid, while the phone calls and check-ins have been ongoing. As always, the market will determine the dollars. As for the type of pitcher, I don't see the Reds investing six years and nine figures -- like the Nationals reportedly did with Patrick Corbin. As I've been saying throughout the offseason, if the Reds go after a free-agent starter, I think it will be from the second tier of guys.

However, if the Reds are willing to give up what it takes in players and prospects, I could envision them landing a much more dynamic starter. MLB.com's Jon Paul Morosi reported on Tuesday that Cincinnati has talked with Cleveland about Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer. That sure would be interesting.

The Reds, for the first time in a while, are seeming to make little waves in the Hot Stove. What are their chances of signing Dallas Keuchel, and how much do they have to spend? I have heard that they have been "all over" Dallas, but just how much?  
-- Bryce A.

I would not run out and buy a No. 60 Keuchel Reds jersey at the moment. From talking to people with the Reds, I don't believe that they were or are all over Keuchel as has been reported. While not specifically addressing Keuchel the other day, Williams dismissed many of the rumors.

"I will say the reports as a whole, I've been surprised at how inaccurate they've been," Williams said. "There have been some that really took us by surprise because they are so off-base."

What are the Reds thinking not contracting with Billy Hamilton? Grew up in Indiana during the days of the Big Red Machine. Hamilton is the most exciting part of the Reds the last 20 years. Get him signed now and work with him to get better at the plate. He should be a danger to bunt every few at-bats but hardly saw that this season. He more than makes up for any deficit at the plate with his wheels in the outfield.  
-- Scott B., Paoli, Ind.

I'm not surprised that some fans are miffed that Hamilton wasn't offered a contract. He indeed has special speed and plays elite defense. But I'm also wondering why there is backlash for a career .245 hitter with a .298 on-base percentage. Players who have performed much better and more consistently have been booed or run out of town by fans. Especially for the money it would cost, Hamilton has not performed in the past couple of seasons to the level of a player who will get a very large raise via arbitration. The Reds have worked with him at the plate and have tried to help him with his bunting. Fans are frustrated with losing and the Reds are trying to get better this winter. Has Hamilton's lack of production from the leadoff spot in recent years helped them climb out of last place the past four years?

Maybe a change of scenery and different voices will help. Or maybe the Reds can bring him back at a lower price and continue to work with him. The door wasn't completely closed to a player who is now free to speak with all 30 clubs.

Was Brandon Phillips an important enough part of Reds history for the team to sign him to a ceremonial-type contract so he can retire as a Red? Or was that bridge burned beyond repair?

-- @CDW1277 on Twitter

After sitting out of baseball for most of 2018, Phillips finished the season with the Red Sox but was not on their postseason roster. I have not heard anything about him retiring. However, I've rarely seen ceremonial contracts in baseball similar to what happens in the NFL. I also think the type of exit Phillips had would make such an olive branch unlikely. Remember, the Reds paid the Braves \$13 million of the \$14 million owed to Phillips to trade him before the 2017 season. One guarantee I will make is that Phillips is a lock to be in the Reds Hall of Fame once he is eligible. He had a great career in Cincinnati and was a big part of the winning that happened in 2010, '12 and '13.

Should the Reds trade for Sonny Gray?

-- Nathan K., Cincinnati

It would depend on the Yankees' asking price, but I think the Reds should be looking very closely at a guy like Gray. Although his 1 1/2 seasons with the Yankees were forgettable, he had a nice career with Oakland, posting a 44-36 record and 3.42 ERA in 114 games (112 starts) over five seasons. Gray would have a chance to bounce back with Cincinnati, and he would be reunited with his college pitching coach in Derek Johnson, who helped him become a successful Major Leaguer.

### **Votto visits fire department to sign No. 19 truck**

**By Michael Anderson Cincinnati Reds**

**Dec. 5th, 2018**

CINCINNATI -- For Cincinnati Fire Department Station 19, a typical day is usually rather exciting considering it's one of the city's busiest firehouses.

But when Joey Votto walked into the firehouse last Friday, it's safe to say the firefighters were thrilled to finally meet the Reds first baseman who wears their station number on his jersey.

Votto was invited to the fire station to sign the door of the No. 19 firetruck that was recently retired.

"In July of 2017, we got a new pumper truck and they were going to take the old truck and basically scrap it," said firefighter Eric Monahan. "We asked if we could keep the door and hopefully get Joey to sign it."

Votto agreed to visit and meet with the firefighters while he was in Cincinnati for Redsfest. He spent about 30 minutes at the firehouse meeting the firefighters, taking photos and signing the No. 19 firetruck.

"It means the world to us to have Joey want to stop here to meet us and sign our truck," said Monahan. "To actually want to spend time with us and connect with us is an awesome sign of respect. It was such an honor to meet him and see first-hand how nice and humble of a guy he is."

Before leaving the firehouse, Votto was given a Cincinnati Fire Department hat, shirt and sweatshirt. He wore the CFD hat at Redsfest on Friday night.

Votto is not the first Reds player to add his signature to a Cincinnati firetruck.

Johnny Bench signed the door of the Engine 5 firetruck when he was the Grand Marshal of the 2010 Findlay Market Opening Day Parade. That door now hangs on the wall at Station 5.

In 2014, Joe Morgan continued the tradition and signed the Engine 8 firetruck at the parade.

There is a strong history between the Reds and the Cincinnati Fire Department, which was established in 1853 as the first professional and fully paid fire department in the United States.

"We've had a great partnership with the Reds considering that they're the first professional baseball team and we're the first professional fire department," said Matt Alter, president of the Cincinnati Fire Fighters Union Local 48. "Going back 100 years, Engine 5 has been the leader of the Opening Day Parade every year, even when it was horse and buggy and a steam pumper. The history with the Cincinnati Fire Department and the Reds is as old as both of our organizations."

Station 19 is located in Corryville on Short Vine, Station 5 is in Over-the-Rhine at Vine and McMicken and Station 8 is in Pleasant Ridge on Montgomery Road.

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# DAYTON DAILY NEWS

**Lighter Romano focused on health, ‘helping the Reds win’  
Pitcher hopes weight loss helps improve results on the mound  
Updated 20 hours ago  
By Mark Schmetzer, Contributing Writer**

CINCINNATI —

Those tailors creating the 15 throwback uniforms the Cincinnati Reds will wear next season to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the creation of all-professional sports better double-check their Sal Romano measurements.

The Cincinnati right-handed pitcher revealed during Redsfest that he’s been focusing on losing weight.

“I was always 270 (pounds), creeping up a little bit,” said Romano, who turned 25 on Oct. 12. “I just wanted to see how my body reacts. I’m going to see how I feel when I do start throwing and see how my arm responds and my body reacts. If I need to put a little bit more weight on, I’ll do that, but I really was determined to lose some weight this offseason. I can only see it benefitting my game and my mobility.”

Romano, who went 8-11 with a 5.31 earned-run average in 39 appearances – including 25 starts – last season, said he lost the weight through eating healthier and more time in the gym. He smiled when reminded that he picked a difficult time to go on a diet.

“Thanksgiving, I just had some portions,” said Romano, nicknamed “Big Sally,” said. “I didn’t crush like I normally do.”

Romano was on track to report to spring training at his lowest weight since 2014, when he carried 254 pounds on his 6-foot-5 frame, according to Reds media guides. The June 2011 23rd-round draft pick weighed 225 pounds his first couple of years in the organization before growing to 245 in 2013, 254 in 2014, 260 in 2015 and 2016 and 270 the past couple of seasons.

Romano pitched out of the bullpen last season for the first time in his brief major league career. All but one of his 131 minor league appearances were starts and he was 5-8 with a 4.45 ERA in 16 starts during his first major league experience in 2017. He finished 2018 7-10 with a 5.48 ERA in his starts and 1-0 with a 3.77 ERA in relief, but his goal is to return to new manager David Bell’s rotation.

“I’m going to go for the rotation,” he said. “I proved last year that I can do both, but the most important thing is helping the Reds win. It’s time to win. We have the players to win.”

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## FANGRAPHS

**Top 33 Prospects: Cincinnati Reds  
by Eric Longenhagen and Kiley McDaniel  
December 4, 2018**

Below is an analysis of the prospects in the farm system of the Cincinnati Reds. Scouting reports are compiled with information provided by industry sources as well as from our own (both Eric Longenhagen’s and Kiley McDaniel’s) observations. For more information on the 20-80 scouting scale by which all of our prospect content is governed you can click [here](#). For further explanation of the merits and drawbacks of Future Value, read this.

All of the numbered prospects here also appear on The Board, a new feature at the site that offers sortable scouting information for every organization. That can be found [here](#).

### Top Prospects

Rk	Name	Age	Highest Level	Position	ETA	FV
1	Nick Senzel	23.4	AAA	3B	2018	60
2	Taylor Trammell	21.2	A+	LF	2021	60
3	Hunter Greene	19.3	A	RHP	2021	50
4	Jonathan India	22.0	A	3B	2020	50
5	Tyler Stephenson	22.3	A+	C	2020	50
6	Tony Santillan	21.6	AA	RHP	2020	50
7	Shed Long	23.3	AA	2B	2019	50
8	Jeter Downs	20.4	A	2B	2021	45+
9	Jose Siri	23.4	AA	CF	2020	45+
10	Vladimir Gutierrez	23.2	AA	RHP	2019	45

11	Mike Siani	19.4	R	CF	2022	45
12	Jose Garcia	20.7	A	SS	2021	40+
13	Josiah Gray	21.0	R	RHP	2021	40+
14	Lyon Richardson	18.9	R	RHP	2022	40+
15	TJ Friedl	23.3	AA	CF	2019	40
16	Joel Kuhnel	23.8	A+	RHP	2020	40
17	Stuart Fairchild	22.7	A+	CF	2020	40
18	Tanner Rainey	25.9	AAA	RHP	2019	40
19	Keury Mella	25.3	MLB	RHP	2019	40
20	Bren Spillane	22.2	R	1B	2021	40
21	Jimmy Herget	25.2	AAA	RHP	2019	40
22	Danny Lantigua	19.7	R	RF	2023	40
23	Rylan Thomas	21.4	R	1B	2021	40
24	Mariel Bautista	21.1	R	CF	2021	40
25	Ryan Hendrix	24.0	A+	RHP	2019	40
26	Jose Lopez	25.3	AAA	RHP	2019	40
27	Miguel Hernandez	19.6	R	SS	2023	40
28	James Marinar	20.1	R	RHP	2022	40
29	Michael Beltre	23.4	A+	CF	2021	35+
30	Cash Case	19.6	R	2B	2022	35+
31	Jacob Heatherly	20.5	R	LHP	2021	35+
32	Edwin Yon	20.4	R	RF	2023	35+
33	Debby Santana	18.3	R	3B	2023	35+

#### 60 FV Prospects

##### 1. Nick Senzel, 3B

Drafted: 1st Round, 2016 from Tennessee (CIN)

Age 23.4 Height 6' 1" Weight 205 Bat / Thr R / R FV 60

Tool Grades (Present/Future)

Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw
55/70	55/55	40/55	55/55	45/55	55/55

Several freak injuries upended Senzel's 2018. He missed most of May battling vertigo symptoms for the second time in nine months (they first started in late August '17), then fractured a finger in late-June and missed the rest of the season. He was supposed to play in the Fall League, but a return of the left elbow pain he had played through during the year became severe enough that he needed an MRI, which revealed bone spurs. He had surgery and was shut down for the year. When Senzel did play, he was very good and slashed .310/.378/.509 in 44 games at Triple-A while playing second base for the first time in affiliated ball.

Senzel's likely future defensive home is still to be determined. He wasn't a very good defensive third baseman early in college but became one as a junior. The presence of Eugenio Suarez led to reps at second base, and Scooter Gennett's emergence led to what was supposed to be reps in left and center field this fall before Senzel needed surgery. The departure of Billy Hamilton leaves an obvious hole that he could potentially fill, but he hasn't been seen playing center enough to know for sure. At the very least, he has stumbled into defensive versatility.

Mostly though, Senzel hits. He doesn't have monster raw power, nor does he seek to take max-effort swings by utilizing a big stride or leg kick. Instead, his power comes from precise, high-quality contact. He's going to be a doubles machine with home runs coming opportunistically rather than playing core aspect of his approach, but he'll still hit for power. He has the skills and polish of a near-ready star, and the injuries don't seem like they're going to be a chronic thing.

##### 2. Taylor Trammell, LF

Drafted: 1st Round, 2016 from Mount Paran HS (GA) (CIN)

Age 21.2 Height 6' 2" Weight 195 Bat / Thr L / L FV 60

Tool Grades (Present/Future)

Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw
35/60	55/55	40/55	70/70	55/70	40/40

Trammell has uncommon on-field self-awareness for a two-sport high school athlete who was only 20 last year. He has excellent plate discipline and an all-fields, gap-to-gap approach that suits his plus-plus speed; everything he slices down the line or sprays into the gap goes for extra-bases.

Trammell also put on a shocking display of power during BP at the Futures Game and hit two absolute seeds during the game. He never did anything remotely like that in the Fall League (nor, frankly, did any of the other prospects who played in D.C. and then later in Arizona) and actually struggled to turn on balls there, but there's a chance of huge, if dormant, in-game power here, too.

Though Trammell runs well enough to play center field (by a lot), his arm strength still might limit him to left field. That's where we have him projected, where we think he'll be a Carl Crawford or Brett Gardner type of defender. He projects as an excellent leadoff hitter with some pop, but there's a chance he ends up hitting for more power at some point.

#### 50 FV Prospects

##### 3. Hunter Greene, RHP

Drafted: 1st Round, 2017 from Notre Dame HS (CA) (CIN)

Age	19.3	Height	6' 4"	Weight	197	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	50
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball	Slider	Curveball		Changeup		Command		Sits/Tops	
70/80	50/55	40/45		45/55		40/60		95-98 / 103	

Greene is a generational on-mound athlete whose 2018 season ended with an elbow sprain. A strong two month run of starts in the early summer culminated in a 7-inning shutout start (2 H, 0 BB, 10 K, it took 69 pitches) on July 2 at Lake County followed by his feat of strength at the Futures Game. Eleven days later, Greene's season was over. He had a PRP injection and rehabbed the sprained UCL in Arizona with broad plans to start throwing during the winter and so far, he seems on track for spring training.

Greene's development was already pretty likely to be slow. He was able to throw strikes with that upper-90s fastball in high school, but his breaking ball was just okay, and he had no use for a changeup, so both of his secondary pitches were behind other pitchers in the class. Teams needed to project heavily on Greene's stuff to buy him as a top five pick, but he's such an exceptional athlete and success-oriented person that many of them did. Focusing solely on pitching for the first time, Greene's slider improved in 2018. His ceiling will be dictated by the continued development of his secondary stuff.

##### 4. Jonathan India, 3B

Drafted: 1st Round, 2018 from Florida (CIN)

Age	22.0	Height	6' 0"	Weight	200	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	50
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
35/50	55/55	30/55	50/45	50/55	55/55				

India was a well-known prep prospect in South Florida, but the combination of a solid, but not spectacular, tool set and seven-figure asking price sent him to Florida. His first two years were about as expected; India got regular ABs but didn't have any performative breakthroughs. In his draft year, India lost bad weight and added some strength, made some offensive adjustments, and exploded, torching the best conference in the country to the tune of a 1.21 OPS and 21 homers in 68 games. Scouts saw early in the spring that his tools had improved and the performance along with them, but it wasn't until mid-way through the season that he seemed like a sure first round pick. He eventually looked like a consensus top 10 pick in the weeks leading up to the draft.

India has 55 raw power (60 for some scouts) and is a 55 defender with a 55 arm at third base. He played some shortstop at Florida and could be a limited-range fill-in there, with a chance to fit at second base if needed for longer stretches. We see India continuing to tap into his power, with something like a 50 hit tool and 55 power, with slightly more strikeouts than league average, but has the ability to be a hit-over-power type of player if he and the Reds choose that kind of approach.

##### 5. Tyler Stephenson, C

Drafted: 1st Round, 2015 from Kennesaw Mountain HS (GA) (CIN)

Age	22.3	Height	6' 4"	Weight	210	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	50
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
30/40	55/60	30/50	35/30	40/50	70/70				

Stephenson flew under the national radar during summer showcase season as a prep prospect because he didn't go to all the big events, but Georgia area scouts knew to keep close tabs on him. He broke out in the spring, going from a top five round follow to the 11th overall pick. Multiple GMs showed up to many of his late playoff games since they didn't have the same extensive history with him that they did with other top picks. Stephenson has a rare toolbox for a catcher, with a 70-grade arm and surprisingly advanced defensive skills for a 6-foot-4 backstop, along with plus raw power.

Stephenson isn't a runner and his hit tool has been a little inconsistent, due to both his power-focused offensive approach and multiple injuries in pro ball (broken wrist, concussion). He performed well in the pitcher-friendly Florida State League in 2018 and

caught the whole year, which has him on the upswing, primed for a taste of Double-A in 2019 and a future as a big league regular in view.

6. Tony Santillan, RHP

Drafted: 2nd Round, 2015 from Seguin HS (TX) (CIN)

Age	21.6	Height	6' 3"	Weight	240	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	50
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball		Slider		Changeup		Command		Sits/Tops	
70/70		55/60		40/50		40/50		92-94 / 98	

Like Stephenson, Santillan wasn't a summer showcase favorite, only appearing at one fall event where he showed low-90's velocity and not much else. He emerged in the spring (this always seems to happen with at least one Texas prep arm), running his heater up to 98 mph and flashing a good breaking ball at times. But Santillan was still a work-in-progress strike-thrower and most teams considered him a reliever. Cincinnati took him 49th overall.

He has progressed well in pro ball, with the Reds' belief in his makeup and athleticism paying off, as he's gotten more consistent across the board and is now a little more likely to be a starter than reliever. He still mostly has the big stuff he flashed as a prep, though his velo and spin rates are slightly down. Santillan has mid-rotation upside, but his fallback options if the command/consistency doesn't work in a starter role would be an above-average multi-inning or high leverage reliever, which is much more valuable now than it was in 2015. Santillan could open 2019 in Double- or Triple-A but the pitching-starved Reds seems likely to give him a big league look at some point next year.

7. Shed Long, 2B

Drafted: 12th Round, 2013 from Jacksonville HS (AL) (CIN)

Age	23.3	Height	5' 8"	Weight	180	Bat / Thr	L / R	FV	50
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
40/45	55/55	40/50	55/55	40/45	50/50				

After a bad 42-game initial foray into Double-A in 2017, Long's BABIP and overall statline rebounded in his 2018 full season campaign at Pensacola, where he hit .261/.353/.412 with 12 homers and 19 steals. A converted catcher, with rare straightline speed for a backstop but the stereotypically excellent catcher makeup, Long is still not a very good second baseman and has below average hands and clunky footwork. He has now been playing there regularly for three and a half seasons, and his development has plateaued. We still have him projected as a 45 defender at second base but also think there's an increased chance that he eventually moves to the outfield.

It would be much easier for Long to profile were he to stay at second base, where big leaguers slashed a collective .254/.317/.395 (good for a 93 wRC+) in 2018. The outfield corners are not so kind. Ultimately, Long has some power and his thunderous uppercut swing is going to enable him to get to it in games, even if his contact profile is fringe. That will play everyday at second base so long as he can.

45+ FV Prospects

8. Jeter Downs, 2B

Drafted: 1st Round, 2017 from Monsignor Pace HS (FL) (CIN)

Age	20.4	Height	5' 11"	Weight	180	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	45+
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
25/55	45/50	20/50	45/40	40/50	55/55				

He was just 19 for most of the season, but Downs had a strong 2018 at Low-A Dayton, where he hit .257/.351/.402 with 37 steals (78% success) and 35 extra-base hits. He's a bat-first middle infielder who has a non-zero chance to stick at shortstop, and he's likely to continue to see time there until he reaches the upper levels of the minors, at which point the Reds will make a decision as to where he fits best. Scouts in other orgs think it will be second base or the outfield. Most of Downs' physical abilities hover near average but he does a little bit of everything, which, so long as he stays on the middle infield, gives him a good chance to be an average everyday player.

9. Jose Siri, CF

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2012 from Dominican Republic (CIN)

Age	23.4	Height	6' 2"	Weight	175	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	45+
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
35/55	55/55	40/55	60/60	50/55	60/60				

Siri is a superb talent who can't help but take max-effort swings at just about everything. His approach and early-career maturity issues (which have improved but still exist) slowed his development a bit and he only has half a season at Double-A despite being 23 and having played pro ball for six seasons. But Siri has great bat speed, power, and an innate feel for impacting the bottom of the baseball and lifting it into the air. If he weren't so aggressive (he appeared to be under a mandate to see more pitches in 2018) he'd be an easy plus future hit, plus future power center field prospect in the middle of our top 100.

But the volatility created by the impatience, combined with Siri's noticeably thicker 2018 frame, has created apprehension. His upside is huge, but so is the risk. Ultimately, he shares many traits with Phillies outfielder Nick Williams (though Siri's a better defender by a wide margin), and, like Williams, Siri might just be such an amazing offensive talent that he'll be fine eventually despite his issues and several developmental bumps in the road.

#### 45 FV Prospects

##### 10. Vladimir Gutierrez, RHP

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2016 from Cuba (CIN)

Age	23.2	Height	6' 0"	Weight	190	Bat / Thr		R / R	FV	45
Tool Grades (Present/Future)										
Fastball		Curveball		Changeup		Command			Sits/Tops	
50/50		60/70		40/45		45/50			90-94 / 95	

There's a lot of disagreement in baseball about whether or not Gutierrez's fastball is going to play in the big leagues. It's certainly not slow, and routinely creeps into the mid-90s. And the combination of Gutierrez's size and drop-and-drive delivery creates flat plane that plays well with good curveballs, which he has. But the fastball doesn't spin and doesn't sneak over the top of hitter's barrels, so there's some fear he'll be homer-prone. Gutierrez is also an incredible athlete with a video game breaking ball and improving changeup, so we like his chances to turn into something, just probably a no. 4/5 starter. He signed for \$4.75 million late in 2016 and spent all of 2018 at Double-A Pensacola.

##### 11. Mike Siani, CF

Drafted: 4th Round, 2018 from William Penn Charter HS (PA) (CIN)

Age	19.4	Height	5' 11"	Weight	190	Bat / Thr		L / R	FV	45
Tool Grades (Present/Future)										
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw					
25/55	45/50	20/45	60/60	50/55	60/60					

Siani was a well-known name to scouts years before he was drafted because as an underclassman, he was great at USA Baseball's Tournament of Stars. That put Siani (as well as Alek Thomas and Jarred Kelenic) much further ahead of the notoriety/perceived polish curve than is typical for cold weather hitters. Siani isn't physically projectable and doesn't have big raw power, so he isn't the sexy upside high school player to whom clubs are drawn, but he does have a long track record of hitting and showing plus defensive ability in center field. He's a plus runner with a plus arm (90-92 on the mound) and gets great jumps on fly balls. There's a real chance Siani could have four tools that grade out as a 60, along with power that's a 45 or 50, and he's much closer to hitting that upside than most 19-year-olds.

#### 40+ FV Prospects

##### 12. Jose Garcia, SS

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2016 from Cuba (CIN)

Age	20.7	Height	6' 2"	Weight	175	Bat / Thr		R / R	FV	40+
Tool Grades (Present/Future)										
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw					
30/50	40/50	20/40	60/60	40/50	70/70					

Between his lack of reps during the '16-'17 Series Nacional in Cuba and the arduous process of defecting, followed by slowly working out for teams, then waiting for the 2018 season to start, Garcia played very little baseball for the several months leading up to last season and it showed when he finally put on a uniform. The 20-year-old was given an assignment that matched his loud tools (teams who saw him work out were putting 6's and 7's on his speed, arm, and defense at short) but not his readiness, and he was bad early in the year at Low-A Dayton. He came on, statistically, at the end of the year, but didn't walk much in either phase.

Latin American players who have spent their entire lives playing ball back home, or in Florida or Arizona, sometimes struggle with the early-April chill of the Midwest League when they're first assigned there; as if being 20 in a full-season league after not playing for over a year wasn't enough, Garcia may have struggled with this. 2019 should be a more representative sample statistically of what Garcia is. There's no question about his run, field or throw tools, and he was seen at a bat-first prospect early in his Cuban career, so that might be in there, too. If he can develop some confidence around his offense, Garcia could quickly jump into 50 FV territory, which is where we had him last year based on how he worked out for teams. He signed for \$5 million.

### 13. Josiah Gray, RHP

Drafted: 2nd Round, 2018 from LeMoyne (CIN)

Age	21.0	Height	6' 1"	Weight	210	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40+
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball		Slider	Changeup		Command		Sits/Tops		
55/60		50/55	40/50		40/50		92-95 / 96		

Gray is an athletic, undersized conversion arm with big time arm-acceleration. His arm action is a little stiff, but it's fast, and generates a fastball in the 92-96 mph range (mostly 3s and 4s) with riding life. Gray's size and the drop and drive nature of his delivery combine to create flat plane that plays well up in the zone. He'll miss bats at the letters with his heater.

Thanks to his athleticism, Gray repeats, and throws more strikes than is typical for someone fairly new to pitching who has this kind of stuff, with a notable proclivity for locating his fastball to his arm side. The slider can slurve out and even get kind of short and cuttery at times, but when it's well-located and Gray is on top of the ball, it's a plus pitch. His changeup, which he seldom uses at the moment, is easy to identify out of the hand due to arm deceleration, and is comfortably below average. Because of the strike throwing, fastball efficacy, and ability to spin the breaking ball give him a good shot to play a big league role, and we've moved Gray up beyond where we had him pre-draft. The athleticism, small school pedigree, and position player conversion aspect of the profile indicates there's significant potential for growth as Gray gets on-mound experience. He projects as no. 4 starter, with a chance to be more because of his late-bloomer qualities.

### 14. Lyon Richardson, RHP

Drafted: 3rd Round, 2018 from Jensen Beach HS (FL) (CIN)

Age	18.9	Height	6' 2"	Weight	185	Bat / Thr	S / R	FV	40+
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball		Slider	Changeup		Command		Sits/Tops		
50/55		50/55	45/50		40/50		90-94 / 97		

Richardson was an intriguing two-way athlete on the showcase circuit, then hit 97 mph repeatedly early in his draft spring and moved into top two round contention. His stuff backed up a bit down the stretch. Richardson had not thrown as much as many of his peers and lacked their stamina, though this could be spun into a positive, namely Richardson's arm being relatively fresh. Late in the spring, he was working more in the low-90's rather than 93-96 mph, and his shorter stature and stride length led his fastball to be hittable. The Reds are gambling on the plus fastball returning as he builds strength, experience, and stamina in his arm in a starting role, and he has no. 3/4 starter potential with good, clear checkpoints to watch that will indicate improvement, including fastball rebound and maintaining his stuff into the summer.

### 40 FV Prospects

#### 15. TJ Friedl, CF (CIN)

Age	23.3	Height	5' 10"	Weight	170	Bat / Thr	L / L	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
45/55	45/50	30/40	70/70	50/55	45/45				

It's still unclear to us whether or not anyone knew Friedl was draft-eligible as sophomore in 2016. At the very least, he was overlooked playing on a weaker team in a lightly-scouted conference. He went undrafted, which allowed him to play for College Team USA, who only found out about him from a fortuitous tip, later in the summer.

Friedl was the sparkplug on the heavily-scouted team that included multiple future first round picks, and a bidding war for him amongst teams that hadn't yet spent their entire 2016 draft pool ensued toward the end of Team USA's run. Friedl is a plus-plus runner with good baseball instincts and a contact-first approach at the plate. He has sneaky raw power that he may tap into with swing adjustments.

Somewhat similar to Stuart Fairchild, both have outcomes that range from upper-level 40-man occupant to low-end regular, but Friedl's bat is more stable and he's left-handed, so we have him ahead. He's almost a lock to hang around the big leagues for at least a few years in some role, even if it's as a fifth outfielder.



16. Joel Kuhnel, RHP

Drafted: 11th Round, 2016 from Texas-Arlington (CIN)

Age	23.8	Height	6' 5"	Weight	260	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball	Slider	Changeup	Command	Sits/Tops					
65/70	55/55	45/45	45/50	95-99 / 101					

Kuhnel wasn't a top draft prospect coming out of Texas-Arlington: he had a maxed-out, bulky frame, inconsistent command, and just average stuff for a right-handed reliever. In 2018, he took a big step forward. His fastball jumped 3-4 ticks and hit 101, his slider improved into an above-average pitch, and his command also improved a bit. Kuhnel's conditioning and delivery improved simultaneously and he's moved to the top of the heap among the relief-only arms in this system. If he continues performing like he did in 2018, he could get a big league look in 2019.

17. Stuart Fairchild, CF

Drafted: 2nd Round, 2017 from Wake Forest (CIN)

Age	22.7	Height	6' 0"	Weight	190	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
30/45	50/50	35/45	55/55	50/55	60/60				

Fairchild had a great draft year. He had a plus arm, above-average speed and defense, solid-average raw power, and performed on paper. The concern was that his swing was a little stiff and had a grooved, invariable path, and it was thought that this might limit his offensive upside and relegate him to a fourth outfielder role. A year and change later, and that's largely still the report, with likely outcomes ranging from low-end everyday center fielder to 40-man filler/emergency callup depending on how his offense progresses.

18. Tanner Rainey, RHP

Drafted: 2nd Round, 2015 from West Alabama (CIN)

Age	25.9	Height	6' 2"	Weight	235	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball	Curveball	Changeup	Command	Sits/Tops					
65/70	55/60	40/40	35/40	95-99 / 100					

Rainey was among the top small-school prospects in the 2015 draft, showing plus stuff in a relief profile at West Alabama, where he popped up late because he was a two-way player with limited mound experience. His raw stuff is comparable to Kuhnel's, though Rainey's 60 curve is a bit better than Kuhnel's 55 slider. The difference is that Rainey's command is well behind, as he's still learning to pitch and harness his explosive, closer-worthy raw stuff. Rainey may end up the second or third best pitcher on this list, but he also could washout with little to show for his big skills, with command and consistency as the driving variables.

19. Keury Mella, RHP

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2011 from Dominican Republic (SFG)

Age	25.3	Height	6' 4"	Weight	200	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball	Curveball	Changeup	Command	Sits/Tops					
55/55	55/55	45/50	40/45	92-97 / 98					

Mella (along with Adam Duvall) came back from San Francisco in the 2015 Mike Leake trade. He's always been on the starter/reliever bubble, in large part because his fastball doesn't play quite as well as its pure velocity would seem to indicate and because the lack of a truly average changeup forces Mella to use his fastball very heavily. His stuff backed up just a tad last year. He should still be a no. 5 starter or middle reliever if it doesn't any more.

20. Bren Spillane, 1B

Drafted: 3rd Round, 2018 from Illinois (CIN)

Age	22.2	Height	6' 5"	Weight	210	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
30/45	60/60	40/55	40/30	45/50	55/55				

Spillane burst onto the prospect scene with a gaudy stat line in his draft year at Illinois: 1.401 OPS, 23 homers in 50 games. He's also not a bad athlete, with a chance to fit everyday in right field, though first base is still his most likely home. Spillane has 60 raw power, plenty for a corner regular, but he needs to either get to all of that raw power (game power is one of his better present skills),

or be a 45 to 50 grade hitter to profile in an everyday role. With a limited high-level track record and 41% strikeout rate in his pro debut, that's still an open question, but that's also why he lasted until the third round.

#### 21. Jimmy Herget, RHP

Drafted: 6th Round, 2015 from South Florida (CIN)

Age	25.2	Height	6' 3"	Weight	180	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball	Slider	Command	Sits/Tops						
55/55	55/55	50/55	91-94 / 96						

Herget is unique among prospects. He's a side-arming righty with the typical frisbee slider, but he also hits 96 mph and has a good enough changeup and command to get lefties out, too. Herget started in college, worked around 90 mph and was a middling prospect, but the Reds saw potential in his athleticism, his feel to pitch, and his arm slot, and projected he'd experience a velo boost in short stints. They were right. He's likely to carve out some kind of middle relief role in the big leagues, and will probably get an extended look in 2019.

#### 22. Danny Lantigua, RF

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2015 from Dominican Republic (CIN)

Age	19.7	Height	6' 1"	Weight	165	Bat / Thr	S / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
20/45	55/60	30/55	50/45	45/50	60/60				

There are ways to nitpick Lantigua — he's very likely to move out of center field entirely and he also strikes out a lot— but, ultimately, he's a switch-hitter with plus power whose two swings are further along than is typical for most 19-year-old switch hitters. Lantigua has big time thump from both sides of the plate and had 26 extra-base hits in just 52 AZL games. The strikeout issues make him a low-floor prospect, but there are very few switch-hitters in the minors with this kind of playable pop, and if Lantigua can hit, find a way to stay viable in center field, or both, he could be an impact regular.

#### 23. Rylan Thomas, 1B

Drafted: 26th Round, 2018 from UCF (CIN)

Age	21.4	Height	5' 11"	Weight	235	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
30/40	70/70	45/60	30/30	45/50	60/60				

Thomas has a unique skillset, which could develop in a number of different ways, packed into a fullback-like body. An everyday corner bat is his realistic upside. He has explosive strength in his hands, which creates 70 raw power despite ordinary bat speed. He's a well below-average runner, but has quick feet due in part to his football background. Thomas also closed for UCF, sitting in the low-90's on the mound. Most scouts project him at first base, but he'll get some looks at third and there's a chance he'll get a look at converting to catcher because of the arm. Those most optimistic see arm strength, a competitive mentality, and the short-area explosion necessary to move up the defensive spectrum from first base. There's lift in the swing and current game power skills that make up for a tendency to chase sliders off the plate. Thomas was an age-eligible sophomore who lasted until later in the draft, where the Reds met his overslot (\$287,000) asking price.

#### 24. Mariel Bautista, CF

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2014 from Dominican Republic (CIN)

Age	21.1	Height	6' 3"	Weight	170	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
30/50	55/60	20/45	60/55	45/50	50/50				

We don't trust Bautista's Pioneer league numbers (.330/.386/.541, 12% K% at age 20) because of the hitting environment, but we also don't want to undersell his physical ability. This is a plus runner with plus bat speed who is also tough to strike out because he has good hand-eye coordination. However, Bautista has balance and swing path issues at the plate that limit the quality of his contact in certain parts of the zone. Once he reaches a level of the minors where pitchers can exploit this, he's going to have to make an adjustment. If he can do that, his ceiling is significant, because he has rare ability. We'd just like to see the signs that he can.

25. Ryan Hendrix, RHP

Drafted: 5th Round, 2016 from Texas A&M (CIN)

Age	24.0	Height	6' 3"	Weight	185	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball		Curveball		Command		Sits/Tops			
55/55		60/60		40/45		93-96 / 98			

Hendrix went in the 5th round in 2016 as a relief-only, power curveball guy (you could also just call it a slider, we've heard it both ways) with some command issues. He's still largely the same prospect. His mid-90's velocity stands out a little less now than a few years ago and he's still a little wild, but he is learning how to use his breaking ball more effectively. Hendrix seems likely, barring injury, to carve out some kind of major league role in middle relief starting in the next year or two.

26. Jose Lopez, RHP

Drafted: 6th Round, 2014 from Seton Hall (CIN)

Age	25.3	Height	6' 1"	Weight	185	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball		Slider		Curveball		Changeup	Command	Sits/Tops	
50/50		50/50		50/50		40/50	50/55	90-94 / 95	

Though he had mostly been throwing in the upper 80s as an underclassman, Lopez's ticked into the mid-90s as he entered the fall before his junior year at Seton Hall. His elbow got sore. After an effort to rehab without surgery, Lopez had TJ, missed his junior season and fell to the sixth round.

Though his peak velocity hasn't returned, he averages about 92 mph on a fastball that touches 95 and features enough life that it's capable of missing bats up in the zone. His secondaries are mostly average, and he should debut in 2019 as a relief or backend starter option.

27. Miguel Hernandez, SS

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2015 from Venezuela (CIN)

Age	19.6	Height	6' 0"	Weight	170	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Hit	Raw Power	Game Power	Run	Fielding	Throw				
20/50	30/40	20/30	55/55	45/55	60/60				

Of the shortstops on the main portion of this list, Hernandez has the best chance to stay at the position. His hands and actions are both characteristic of a promising teenage shortstop and he has enough arm for the left side of the infield. Hernandez has also performed reasonably well with the bat as a pro, which is surprising given his clear lack of physical strength. He could have a below-average offensive profile and stay at short, which gives him a chance to be a 50 if he gets stronger into his twenties. If not, he could still be a low-end regular or utility type. He turns 20 in April and should see full-season ball for the first time in 2019.

28. James Marinar, RHP

Drafted: 4th Round, 2017 from Park Vista HS (FL) (LAD)

Age	20.1	Height	6' 5"	Weight	220	Bat / Thr	R / R	FV	40
Tool Grades (Present/Future)									
Fastball	Slider	Changeup	Command	Sits/Tops					
50/60	45/55	40/50	30/45	92-94 / 97					

Marinar had a velocity jump during his draft spring and has had some issues in the two years since dialing in his arm speed and refining his delivery. His velo has varied a bit, but when he's on, he'll work 92-94, hit 97 mph, flash an above-average breaking ball, and have the look of a potential league-average — or a bit better — starter. Other days, he's just a big guy with a clean arm, some velocity, and little else. He's further along in the search for starter traits than lefty Jacob Heatherly is, but you can lump them in the same group as talented young arms that need to show consistency.

35+ FV Prospects

29. Michael Beltre, CF

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2013 from Dominican Republic (CIN)

Age	23.4	Height	6' 3"	Weight	220	Bat / Thr	S / R	FV	35+
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Built like an old school in-the-box NFL safety, Beltre is a physical dynamo whose entire offensive profile is undercut by his extreme propensity to hit the ball into the ground. Beltre has a nearly 60% ground ball rate over each of the last two years. He does a lot of other stuff: he has raw power, great feel for the strike zone, and is a plus runner, with well-regarded makeup. The quality of

his in-game contact is simply not good right now. Stiffness in Beltre's hitting hands could mean this issue is less about a swing change than it is about innate talent.

### 30. Cash Case, 2B

Drafted: 4th Round, 2017 from The First Academy HS (FL) (CIN)

Age 19.6 Height 6' 1" Weight 190 Bat / Thr L / R FV 35+

Case is a bat-first prospect with power and some chance to stick at second base, who signed for \$1 million as a 2017 fourth round pick. Early-career hip surgery has limited his defensive mobility, so he's more of a wait-and-see, somewhat one-dimensional prospect to keep an eye on in 2019. If everything comes together he could be a passable second baseman with game power.

### 31. Jacob Heatherly, LHP

Drafted: 3rd Round, 2017 from Cullman HS (AL) (CIN)

Age 20.5 Height 6' 2" Weight 208 Bat / Thr L / L FV 35+

Tool Grades (Present/Future)

Fastball Curveball Changeup Command Sits/Tops

45/50 50/55 50/55 30/45 89-93 / 95

Heatherly looked like a first round pick heading into his draft spring, then had command issues and slipped. He then had some velocity issues early in pro ball. The command still isn't there and even Reds' personnel describe him as a ball of clay, but he was working 92-94 mph in instructional league and he can spin it, and some think he may turn a corner next season, where his no. 4 starter potential could become more obvious.

### 32. Edwin Yon, RF

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2014 from Dominican Republic (CIN)

Age 20.4 Height 6' 5" Weight 180 Bat / Thr R / R FV 35+

Yon has an NBA shooting guard build at a long-limbed 6-foot-5. He towers over almost all of his peers and has rare physical projection. He might grow elite raw power, though it will be a challenge for him to hit due to his lever length. Hitters like this often don't develop viable hit tools until they're well into their mid-twenties. Yon may take another five years to develop a playable hit tool, but as long as the power develops, he'll get getting chances to learn how to make contact.

### 33. Debby Santana, 3B

Signed: July 2nd Period, 2016 from Dominican Republic (CIN)

Age 18.3 Height 6' 2" Weight 185 Bat / Thr R / R FV 35+

Santana is a R/R corner power bat with a plus arm. His swing needs polish if he's to hit, and his defensive actions need polish if he's going to stay at third. There's a chance he moves to right field and strikes out too much to profile, but he may also stay at third and hit for big power if his ills are cured. He's on pace to be a 2020 19-year-old in full-season ball.

### Other Prospects of Note

#### Tweener OF Types

Allan Cerda, OF

Lorenzo Cedrola, CF

Andy Sugilio, OF

Cerda, 19, had a strong pro debut in the DSL and has some bat speed, feel for lift, and a projectable frame. He might grow into enough pop for a corner if he can't stay in center. Cedrola has bat control, but he's very aggressive and lacks strength. There's a chance he hits enough to be more than a fourth outfielder, but it's still his most likely outcome. He turns 21 in January and could see Hi-A in 2019. Sugilio is a 70 runner whose stats came back down to Earth in 2018 because he left the Pioneer League. He has some bat to ball skills but struggles to lift balls in the air; low-level defenses struggle to deal with his speed.

#### Viable Shortstops

Blake Trahan, SS

Alfredo Rodriguez, SS

Either of these two could play a perfectly fine big league shortstop tomorrow if asked. Trahan is a heady, max-effort player who plays a solid average shortstop. He has some bat control, but well below average bat speed. Rodriguez is smooth and acrobatic but ultimately average at short, and is limited with the bat.

### Two Otherwise Uncategorical Hitters

Jonathan Willems, 2B  
Chris Okey, C

A 20-year-old from Curacao, Willems had a strong year in the Appy League and has some feel to hit. He's an aggressive swinger and doesn't have a position, as he's well-below average at second base right now. Okey has dealt with a lot of injuries as a pro. A bat-first amateur, Okey is now an average defender and may be a backup.

Huge Power, Tough Defensive Profile  
Hendrik Clementina, C  
Ibandel Isabel, 1B  
Aristides Aquino, RF

Both Isabel and Clementina were acquired in minor trades from the Dodgers. Isabel has 80 raw power and had a strong 2018, but he's also 23 and hit against A-ball pitching. We don't think Clementina can catch. Aquino has a 30 bat and a career .306 OBP in eight pro years, which is tough to pull off in an outfield corner.

Pitching Pupu Platter  
Jesus Reyes, RHP  
Packy Naughton, LHP  
Aneurys Zabala, RHP

Reyes was an undrafted 21-year-old freshman at Advanced Software Academy in New York in 2014. Cincinnati signed him that August, and he has turned into a mid-90s sinker/changeup righty who is going to rely heavily on his ability to get ground balls. Naughton has a bunch of average pitches and a changeup that flashes above. He's a no. 5 or 6 starter type, a good return for where he was picked. Zabala also came over from the Dodgers. He's a heavy-bodied arm strength guy (94-98) with an inconsistent breaking ball.

#### System Overview

The Reds general direction is building up to their competitive window opening. Rumors persist that they're willing to spend on top free agent arms, there's a core developing in the bigs or just short of it, and they're in clear asset collection mode. It's interesting to note that arguably the top two assets in the organization (Eugenio Suarez and top prospect Nick Senzel) both fit best at third base, and another top 10 org asset (Jonathan India) also profiles best at the hot corner. These issues aren't hard to work out — India and Senzel can both play second base and Senzel likely will play center field this year, with incumbent second baseman Scooter Gennett very possibly not a long-term core piece — but it presents some challenges in sorting out their pieces out in the most efficient way possible.

We always say that having too much talent is never a problem, but too much talent is decidedly not the problem on the pitching side. Tony Santillan, Vladimir Gutierrez, and some middle relief types should all go from this list to getting big league looks at some point this year, and Hunter Greene could be the frontline guy they need long-term, but the hurlers on this list aren't answering short-term questions at the big league level. Once quality depth presents itself on the major league pitching staff, the lineup will probably be good enough to compete, so pitching remains the challenge going forward for Cincinnati. The Reds have new voices running both the amateur and international departments along with a new GM in Nick Krall, but the continuity of President Dick Williams and scouting czar Chris Buckley in prominent roles remains.

#### **Reds Prospect TJ Friedl Came Out of Nowhere (Sort Of) by David Laurila December 5, 2018**

Cincinnati's 2018 Minor League Hitter of the Year isn't a slugger, nor is he among the club's higher-profile prospects. That's not to say TJ Friedl won't be roaming the Reds' outfield in the not-too-distant future. Blessed with a smooth left-handed stroke and plus-plus wheels, he is — according to our own Eric Longenhagen and Kiley McDaniell — “almost a lock to hang around the big leagues for at least a few years in some role.”

His background is unlike that of most players who reach the doorstep, let alone get invited inside. Friedl entered pro ball in 2016 as a non-drafted free agent out of the University of Nevada. More on that in moment.

At 5-foot-10 and 170 pounds, the 23-year-old Friedl looks the part of a table-setter, and the numbers match the image. In a 2018 season split evenly between Hi-A Daytona and Double-A Pensacola, the speedster slashed .284/.381/.384 with five home runs and 30 stolen bases.

His top-of-the-order-friendly OBP was fueled by a change that occurred shortly before his 2017 campaign ended prematurely due to injury. Wanting to recognize pitches earlier, he tweaked his timing mechanism.

“Before, I was open and had kind of a leg-kick stride,” Friedl explained earlier this summer. “I’d begun feeling rushed, like I was doing everything at once, so I closed off my stance and went no-stride. I told myself, ‘OK, all you’re going to do is pick your heel up, and put it down.’ At first I didn’t realize how much extra time that was going to give me. I’d been used to striding with the leg kick, and now all of a sudden I was early on 97-mph fastballs.”

His swing remained the same. Friedl didn’t want to change anything with his hands, nor he did he wish to alter a bat path he described as being “level through the zone.” Recognizing that he’s not built for power, Friedl stays gap-to-gap and is careful not to swing too hard. From time to time he’ll take things a step further and go an even-softer route.

“Bunting is kind of a lost art in the big leagues,” said Friedl. “Hardly anyone does it anymore — everybody is trying to hit for power — but it’s one of the biggest parts of my game. Speed is my go-to — I can lay one down and beat it out — plus it gives me something to take out of my back pocket when I’m not seeing the ball well. That’s something I learned in college; if you’re feeling rushed or antsy, you can always bunt. Staying back and seeing the ball hit the bat helps slow things down for you.”

What scouts saw on a University of Nevada roster contributed heavily to his convoluted matriculation from college to pro ball. If it seemed like Friedl came out of nowhere, well, he sort of did. The lusty .401/.494/.563 slash line he put up in 2016 came after two years of anonymity. In 2014, he garnered just 37 at-bats as a freshman. In 2015, he was redshirted.

According to Friedl, a pair of missing letters made him invisible in the eyes of most evaluators.

“Looking back, I’d say the biggest cause [of not getting drafted] was the roster that’s printed out for scouts,” Friedl told me. “All that was listed was ‘sophomore,’ whereas it should have shown ‘RS sophomore’ to let everyone know it was actually my third year. Same with the roster on our website. All it said was ‘sophomore.’”

Ultimately, just one scout — Friedl chose not to divulge which team he was with — called prior to the draft. But while he was aware that the redshirt sophomore was draft eligible, the player himself was not.

“I didn’t know that it being my third year at Nevada counted,” admitted Friedl, who as a business major with a focus on finance maybe should have known (granted, Draft Eligibility 101 presumably wasn’t part of the curriculum). “I thought you needed three years of actual baseball, or you had to be 21. I didn’t have either, so I didn’t think I was eligible. An agent could have told me, but I didn’t even bother getting one until that summer.”

Getting an agent proved to be a godsend. By the time the speedy outfielder was playing for Team USA in July, his status had gone from being a secret to being shouted from the rooftops. As Friedl put it, “Things got pretty hectic. Once I flew overseas to Taiwan — that was our first stop — it all kind of blew up.”

Adam Karon made sure that his client stayed at arm’s length from the tumult that ensued. The esteemed member of the Sosnick Cobbe & Karon triumvirate instructed Friedl to “just play ball” and let him handle any and all negotiations.

“Adam put me on an email chain with my parents,” said Friedl. “Every morning I’d wake up to an email saying, ‘Here is the current situation; here is what we’re looking at; here is what I think we can do.’ Every day there would be a phone call between him and my parents. That took a big weight off my shoulders.”

Friedl was advised — by both Karon and TJ Bruce, the head coach at Nevada — to set a number in his head. If it was reached, he would sign. If it didn’t, he would return to school for another year.

The number was more than met. Despite draft-pool regulations limiting the number of teams that could realistically compete for his services — “it was five once the bidding war started” — Friedl reportedly received a \$732,500 signing bonus.

That may or may not have been the highest offer he received. With his client’s best interests in mind, Karon made sure to include more than just money in his discussions with the young player and his family.

“Once we got to the number and the bidding went on, Adam laid out the situation with every team,” explained Friedl. “He was like, ‘This is what they did in this year’s draft, and this is what their farm system looks like.’”

Nowadays, the Cincinnati farm system is looking pretty good, and Friedl — a mystery man to scouting departments a few short years ago — is among the reasons why.

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## **Transactions**

12/05/18

Detroit Tigers signed free agent RHP Louis Coleman to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Detroit Tigers signed free agent C Kade Scivicque to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Detroit Tigers signed free agent C Bobby Wilson to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Detroit Tigers signed free agent 3B Kody Eaves to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Arizona Diamondbacks traded 1B Paul Goldschmidt to St. Louis Cardinals for C Carson Kelly, RHP Luke Weaver, 2B Andy Young and Future Considerations.

Kansas City Royals signed free agent OF Chris Owings.

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