



ANYTHING BUT TYPICAL

The 2010 Twins draft

by Josh Johnson

For the last decade, the Minnesota Twins have garnered league-wide respect for their ability to produce players from their minor league pipeline. While the club has done a great job of making trades and signing international and undrafted free agents, most of the credit can be attributed to what they do every year on draft day. In 2010, exactly half of the players that put on a Twins uniform were at one point drafted by the organization.

Out of the 50 players drafted by the Twins this year, 31 of them signed, making 2010 one of the most successful drafts that the Twins have ever had in that regard. They also signed their first ten picks, which has become fairly common for the organization, but something other ball clubs struggle with on a yearly basis.

Of the 31 players to sign, 18 were pitchers with college experience. This may sound surprising, but the Twins do

have a reason for exclusively targeting college pitchers. For perspective, only four former draft picks without college pitching experience have debuted with the Twins over the past 10 years: J.D. Durbin, Jason Miller, Anthony Swarzak, and Alex Burnett. Meanwhile, the Twins have been very successful when drafting college pitchers. In 2010, over half of the Twins opening day starting rotation and nearly half of the bullpen were pitchers the team drafted out of college.

THE CLASS OF 2010

With the 21st overall pick in the 2010 draft, the Twins took right-handed pitcher Alex Wimmers out of Ohio State. The 6'2", 195-pound starter made 26 starts between his sophomore and junior seasons and went 18–2 with a 2.59 ERA. After a couple months of deliberation, the Twins were able to ink Wimmers to a \$1.332 million signing bonus on August 6.

Despite his late signing, Wimmers still managed to start four games for the Single-A Fort Myers Miracle. He gave up just one earned run over 15.2 innings and struck out 23 batters. In his first professional stint, Wimmers flirted with a no-hitter and was named the Florida State League Player of the Week during the last week of the season.

Wimmers won't blow anyone away with his fastball, but he has good secondary pitches. He pounds the strike zone, doesn't walk many batters, and works quickly on the mound. All of these qualities are similar to those that the Twins found in 2009 first-round pick Kyle Gibson. And like Gibson, Wimmers appears likely to follow the fast track to the major leagues. It is doubtful that we will see Wimmers with the Twins in 2011, but it is not completely out of the question either.

College pitchers are not the only commodity the Twins have taken a liking to over the years; high school hitters have also become a staple early on draft day. Over the past 10 years, the Twins have taken a high school hitter with at least one of their first two picks eight times. The team continued that trend in 2010 with second-rounder Cartier "Niko" Goodrum. A Fayette, GA native, Goodrum was one of the best

all-around athletes in the draft, and his raw potential could be matched by few players around the country. The switch-hitting infielder has a wide array of untapped potential that the Twins could not pass up. He has a slim 6'3", 167-pound build, but many believe he'll develop a good deal of power when he does grow into his body. He also projects to move to the outfield in the future.

Goodrum is characterized as a high-risk, high-reward pick, but the Twins felt confident enough in his potential to hand him a \$514,800 signing bonus. He signed 15 days after the draft, which allowed him to have 118 at bats with the Gulf Coast League Twins of the Rookie League. He hit a disappointing .161/.219/.195 (AVG/OBP/SLG) with four extra-base hits and 34 strikeouts, but the Twins know they will need to be very patient with him.

Despite the disappointing numbers, Goodrum claims to have learned a lot and will continue to work hard every day. He describes himself as a "hard working, determined, fast, strong, skilled player." He also likes what he has seen from the Twins organization thus far.

"What impresses me about the Twins is that they stress playing the game the right way," he said. "And that's the way I



Ohio State's Alex Wimmers was the Twins' first pick in the 2010 draft, and impressed during a brief stint in Ft. Myers.



Alex Burnett is one of the few pitchers without college experience that the Twins have drafted.

play it: The Twins Way.”

In the third round, the Twins took Pat Dean, a pitcher from Boston College. Immediately after being drafted, the lefthander knew that the Twins were a great match. “The Twins organization seems like such a perfect fit for me,” Dean said. “The way the system is run and the type of players they produce, I cannot see myself being anywhere else.”

Dean impressed scouts with his four-pitch repertoire, as well as the control he has of each offering. His fastball sits in the low 90s, but he also throws a curveball, slider, and change-up. He appeared in nine games between the Gulf Coast League and the Appalachian League’s Elizabethton Twins and posted a combined 2.15 ERA in 24.1 innings. Perhaps the most impressive statistic from Dean’s 2010 season was his 37 strikeouts to only one walk. Dean was faced with the same dilemma that Wimmers had: leave school and turn pro or wait another year. In the end, Dean’s dreams of playing professional baseball and the way the Twins run their organization made it an easy decision to forgo his senior season at Boston College. “It really wasn’t that hard of a decision for me to leave,” Dean admitted. “The Twins are an incredible organization, and I was being given everything I was asking for.”

Twenty-eighth-round pick Jamaal Hawkins echoed similar sentiments, “It was a very easy decision for me to leave Jacksonville University because I knew I wanted a shot at playing professional baseball.”

For the seventh year in a row, the Twins took

a position player in the fourth round. In 2010, that player was outfielder Eddie Rosario from Puerto Rico. Rosario admitted that he had no contact with the Twins prior to the draft and was surprised when they took him, but was happy nonetheless. Baseball America compared Rosario to two-time All-Star outfielder Bobby Abreu for his “sound approach at the plate.” He signed on June 20 and played in 51 games for the Gulf Coast League Twins, hitting .294/.343/.438 with 16 extra-base hits, and leading the league with 22 stolen bases.

Rosario was one of five outfielders the Twins drafted and signed. In the fifth round, the team took Nate Roberts from High Point University. Roberts reported to the Elizabethton Twins

where he hit .336/.444/.547 with 16 extra-base hits in just 35 games. If he had enough at bats to qualify, Roberts would have finished with the second-best OPS in the league, following only teammate Oswaldo Arcia. Along with Rosario and Roberts, the Twins drafted outfielders Lance Ray (8th round), Brandon Henderson (27th), and Kelvin Mention (36th).

In the sixth and seventh rounds, the Twins selected pitchers Logan Darnell and Matthew Hauser. The left-handed Darnell and the right-handed Hauser were both drafted as relievers, but Darnell found success as a starter in his first stint as a professional. As a reliever Darnell was 0–1 with a 3.72 ERA in 9.2 innings, as a starter he was 2–2 with a 1.44 ERA in 25 innings. All eight of the runs he gave up on the season came in two different games. Hauser appeared in 12



Pat Dean

games between Elizabethton and Beloit before being shut down on August 1 with tendinitis in his elbow.

Every year, the Twins draft a couple of local products. This year, they were former University of Minnesota catcher and Maple Grove native Kyle Knudson in the ninth round, and St. Cloud State pitcher David Deminsky in the 44th round.

“Being drafted by a pro baseball team was a dream come true,” said Knudson. “Then having it be the hometown Twins made it even more special.” Deminsky added, “It felt pretty great being drafted by the Twins. The Twins pride themselves on playing the game hard and fundamentally sound, and that philosophy could not fit my style of play any better.”

In the 10th round, the Twins surprised many by selecting JaDamion Williams, an infielder from Brooks-DeBartolo Collegiate High School in Tampa, FL. Williams was considered one of the top 100 prep players in the country, but due to his commitment to the University of Maryland, many teams thought he would choose college over professional baseball. The Twins lured him away from the Terps with a \$125,000 signing bonus. On the final signing day, the Twins also signed their 36th-round pick, Kelvin Mention, who was Williams’ high school teammate.

In the 23rd round, the Twins set their sights on Sam Houston State junior Dallas Gallant, despite his mediocre stat line. His 3–8 record and 4.82 ERA certainly doesn’t jump out as impressive, but it was his potential that drew the Twins to him. Other teams were turned off by his injury-riddled sophomore season, but he pitched in the Cape Cod League in 2010 and looked to have added several miles per hour to his fastball while pitching very well. The Twins made the decision to give Gallant a \$122,500 signing bonus. For comparison sake, Darnell signed for \$125,000 in the sixth round.



When the Twins drafted this young catcher he fit two of their patterns: high school hitter and local.

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

The Twins have the goal of signing as many players as they can every year, but signing every player is an impossible mission. Some decide that they would benefit from playing collegiately, others hold out for more money. In 2010, the Twins took a risk on several players that, in the end, chose school over professional baseball.

The Twins used their 11th-round pick on Tyler Kuresa. The 6'4", 190-pound first baseman wrapped up a senior year at Oakmont High School in Roseville, CA by hitting .447/.571/.750 in 27 games. Due to his lanky build, solid defense, and below-average power (at least for his size), Kuresa drew comparisons to James Loney and Casey Kotchman. Many thought that he would fall somewhere between rounds three and five, but due to signability concerns, he slipped to the 11th round. The Twins made numerous offers, but they could not pry him away from attending the University of Oregon on a baseball scholarship.

In the next round, the Twins took Steven Maxwell, a redshirt junior from Texas Christian University. Maxwell, 22, is two years removed from Tommy John Surgery and at 6'0", 180 pounds, there was a lot of concern over his long-term success. However, Maxwell shined in his 2010 season at TCU, going 10–1 with a 2.73 ERA. Maxwell felt that another year in school may benefit him as a pitcher and improve his draft position in 2011.

In the 14th round, the Twins drafted their first prep pitcher of 2010, DeAndre Smelter. Unlike Kuresa, Smelter's fall in the draft had less to do with his commitment to play collegiately and more to do with his health. He experienced arm discomfort during the spring, which scared teams. Smelter eventually fell all the way to the 435th overall pick, but the Twins were not able to work out a deal with him. He chose to honor his commitment to Georgia Tech and will try the draft again in three years.

With a focus on college pitchers and high school hitters, this may be considered a “typical” Twins draft, but they did take several risks and even surprised a few with the players they were able to sign. In any case, a “typical” Twins draft should be a point of pride. After all, they do pretty well when it comes to drafting, developing, and eventually getting their draft picks to the big leagues. **MSP**

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