The Indians lost two highly rated prospects in today's Rule 5 Draft as first baseman Matt Whitney was taken 7th overall to the Washington Nationals and outfielder Brian Barton was taken 10th overall by the St. Louis Cardinals. The Indians did not lose any other players in either the major league, Triple-A, or Double-A phases. Tony recaps the day's events.

The Indians lost two highly rated prospects in today's Rule 5 Draft as first baseman Matt Whitney was taken 7th overall to the Washington Nationals and outfielder Brian Barton was taken 10th overall by the St. Louis Cardinals. The Indians did not lose any other players in either the major league, Triple-A, or Double-A phases. The selection of Barton is of no surprise, as leading into the draft he was expected to be picked. However, the selection of Whitney did come as a surprise.

First off, I have to say I have bittersweet feelings about the loss of Whitney and Barton. I have to congratulate them as both are outstanding young men and are getting a great opportunity to realize their major league dreams. I've spoken with Barton on several occasions, and while his demeanor is very quiet and he generally keeps to himself, he is a gentleman. And, I had the chance to sit down with Whitney last year when I was in Kinston - and have spoken to some of his family members on occasion as well - and he is also a great young man with a good head on his shoulders with a bright future ahead. I wish them both the best of luck.

That said, it is painful to see these two go. Particularly Barton because it seems barring a complete collapse in spring training that he will make the Cardinals opening day roster and stick all year. It is tough to see a talent like him go, and he was to be rated #17 in our Top 50 Prospect rankings which are close to done and will post in early January. His versatility, solid defense and speed, and good pop will help him stick with the Cardinals. Some people I have spoken to say he is not a major league ready hitter (he gets eaten up away), but considering the Cardinals have mentioned he was picked up mainly for his versatility, defense and speed, the bat is a bonus to them and they will probably live with his high strikeout totals.

In Whitney's case, he'll get to go to major league camp and have a blast with the experience, but it is a very big longshot that he makes the Nationals opening day roster. Nationals General Manager Jim Bowden even commented that Whitney is not major league ready. Whitney was to be ranked #7 in our Top 50 Prospect list coming next month. He has never played a game above Single-A, and while he had a monster year last year and improved with the plate discipline woes that plagued him in previous years, he still has issues with balls low and away and still needs a lot of seasoning. The chances are very strong he will be returned, although I am sure the Nationals will try to complete a trade with the Indians to obtain his full rights, which is possible.

Some may wonder how the Indians could risk losing both of these players, but it is just the way the Rule 5 works, especially since you have such limited room on the 40-man roster. Also, some will undoubtedly question the Indians philosophy with how they roster players, how they could risk exposing this player or that player, and rip on the front office when these players are lost.

But, if we take a step outside of our organization for a second, we will see we are not the only ones losing players nor are we the only ones making questionable roster decisions. It happens when you have a deep system as talent will be exposed. We can't protect everyone. You think Twins fans are not questioning some of the roster moves their team made that ended up seeing them lose some talent that should have been protected instead? The same goes for just about any other team.

Not protecting Whitney is excusable from the Indians standpoint, as he is not major league ready and if you put him on the major league roster he is an

unuseable player for potentially the next two years and is burning up his options in the meantime. Considering the options issues the Indians have run into recently, this makes sense.

Also, while the rostering of catcher Wyatt Toregas is somewhat puzzling, he is still viewed as a potentially useful player as he is now the third catching option and would be ready for use with the big club this year if needed. In addition, since he is already on the roster, if the need for a third catcher arises in the season the Indians would not have to create roster space to add one since he is already on there now.

In regard to Barton, it pretty much came down to him versus whether to keep Brad Snyder on the 40-man. The Indians still like Snyder and expect a big bounce back year out of him at Buffalo next year, so they opted to keep him on the roster. Had they removed Snyder from the 40-man, he would have had to clear waivers (he probably would not have) before he could be outrighted to Buffalo. The Indians have such a logjam in the upper levels of the system with outfielders, that someone was bound to be lost considering they had Ben Francisco, Trevor Crowe, Barton, Ryan Goleski, and Snyder vying for three outfield spots in Buffalo.

But, where the Indians probably made a mistake is with the likes of Jason Michaels and Dave Dellucci on the major league roster. With the 40-man roster, the Indians typically slot a certain number of spots on the 40-man for each position, and with Dellucci and Michaels on the major league team still, it did not allow them the room to add Barton to protect him.

Considering Ben Francisco looks all but ready to assume Jason Michaels' 4th outfielder role, it was sort of surprising they did not find a way to trade Michaels to create the necessary room for Barton. They very well may have (we'll never know), but had they done so Barton would still be an Indian today.

But, it is what it is. And, usually what that is, is in the Rule 5 most of these players are returned to the original clubs. So, I expect Whitney to at least return, and wish Barton the best of luck.