It has been a big year for Indians top pitching prospect left-hander David Huff. While he certainly was one of the Indians top pitching prospects coming into this season, there were some question marks about his health, and whether or not he could live up to being a first round pick. Not anymore. Huff has proven to be one of the fastest rising pitching prospects in baseball this season, and is easily a Top 100 prospect in all of baseball. T had a chance to talk with him last weekend.

It has been a big year for Indians top pitching prospect left-hander David Huff.

Coming into the season Huff only pitched a total of 67.1 innings the last year and a half since he signed and was drafted as a supplemental first round pick by the Indians in the 2006 Draft out of UCLA. While he certainly was one of the Indians top pitching prospects coming into this season, there were some question marks about his health, and whether or not he could live up to being a first round pick.

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Huff has proven to be one of the fastest rising pitching prospects in baseball this season, and is easily a Top 100 prospect in all of baseball. Many will likely tab Huff as the Indians #1 prospect next year, and everyone surely will have him in the Indians top five.

Huff started the year in Double-A Akron and flat out dominated, going 5-1 with a 1.92 ERA in 11 starts, and held batters to a .189 average while striking out almost a batter an inning with 62 strikeouts in 65.2 innings pitched.

The Indians promoted Huff to Triple-A Buffalo on June 6th, and in nine starts with Buffalo he has

not really skipped a beat going 2-3 with a 3.19 ERA while holding batters to a .240 average and striking out more than a batter an inning with 50 strikeouts in 48 innings pitched.

In 20 combined starts at Akron and Buffalo, Huff is 7-4 with a 2.45 ERA, and in 113.2 innings pitched he has only allowed 88 hits, 19 walks, and has struck out 112 batters.

His WHIP is an incredible 0.94, and he has an astonishing 6:1 strikeout to walk rate.

"He has really been impressive this year," said Indians Farm Director Ross Atkins in a recent interview. "Every time we expect that maybe there will be a hiccup there just isn't one. He answers every challenge and is an extremely tough individual. Our expectations and standards of him have been very high because of his talent and ability."

Huff is certainly enjoying his success, but being as competitive as he is, he always strives to be better.

"Everything just feels great," said Huff in an interview over the weekend. "I'm still kind of getting used to everything here in Buffalo.

It's been a real good adjustment, but you can never be satisfied.

You have to keep pushing, keep getting better and playing hard.

You can never be content with what you are doing so far.

There is always room for improvement and room for moving forward."

Huff may be as close to the complete package as you can get with a pitcher. He may not throw the ball 98 MPH, but he consistently pitches around 91-93 MPH and has topped out at high as 94 MPH. He also throws a devastating changeup which is pretty much his money pitch.

Not only does he have the talent, but the 6'2" 190 pound left-hander has an incredible feel for pitching.

You can have all the talent in the world and that 98 MPH fastball teams and fans drool over, but if you can't control where it is going, have very good secondary stuff, and know how to attack hitters, you won't go very far.

People outside of the Indians organization certainly recognize Huff's value and talent.

"I like him as a middle of the rotation guy," said a scout for a National League club. "He has a veteran attack plan, and for him it is all about command, movement and velocity.
His fastball plays up because of his plus changeup, and his changeup is a legitimate weapon

against lefties and righties.
He is in the upper echelon of the [Indians] system."

Coming out of college Huff's changeup was widely considered as the best in the draft that year.

For a lot of pitchers, learning how to throw a changeup and get a good feel for the pitch is usually what determines their fate as a starter or a reliever so that they have that effective third pitch.

Huff has never had a problem with the changeup, as he has been throwing it his entire life.

"It is just one of those things where I have thrown it my whole life along with my fastball," said Huff. "I mean grips have changed over time, but really it is just every time I go and play catch with somebody I am throwing it. That's the same approach that I take when I am throwing it in a game.

[When the catcher] gives me the target I can throw it in there.

The good part about it is I can throw it in any count.

I am very comfortable and have a lot of confidence with it, almost as much confidence as I have in my fastball."

Huff's fastball has really become a weapon for him as well. His velocity is very much like Indians left-handed starter Cliff Lee where it plays up some because of some deception in his delivery. But, while Huff does not overpower hitters, what mostly makes his fastball so effective is his unbelievable confidence in it and the command he displays by working it to both sides of the plate and to the corners on all four quadrants. He has the best fastball command in the entire system, and uses that command to his advantage by aggressively attacking hitters.

"Yeah, to me throwing the fastball to both sides of the plate keeps hitters off balance," said Huff. "They don't really get comfortable in the box like they do with a guy who always throws the fastball away. They start sitting on it away, and once I see that then I throw it in and it makes them very uncomfortable and it almost catches them off guard.
Plus I throw four off speed pitches for strikes.

I throw them in and out of the zone almost locating them each time."

Huff knows how to pitch and is very smart. He is a pitcher you like to watch pitch because he moves the ball around in and out, gets the breaking ball and changeup over, and knows how to effectively use all his pitches. As this season has played out Huff has been trying to really hone in on his mechanics and make sure he is more cognizant of when his mechanics start to drift a little.

"What I am really trying to do is maintain my mechanics," said Huff. "For me, when things are going good I kind of start losing focus on what got me to that point.

I start not really struggling, but kind of just get away from it.

In between starts I am always really trying to concentrate on my mechanics, hitting my balance point, using my back leg with a little bit of bend to really drive off the rubber towards home plate and get full extension.

My last couple outings, as good as they were, I noticed on video I was not getting much extension as I was almost finishing straight up.

Granted I got away with a few pitches, but that goes back to there is always room for improvement.

Besides staying healthy, that's what I have been concentrating on this entire year."

The key to Huff's future will be the development of an effective breaking ball as a third pitch to use against left-handers. In addition to his fastball and changeup, Huff also throws a 12-6 curveball and a slider. Both are good pitches for him and he commands then well, but going into the season the Indians felt the curveball needed some more work to become yet another weapon for him in his pitching arsenal.

Huff has made strides with both pitches this year and now feels he can use them effectively in any count and to any batter.

"Yeah, the curveball is there," said Huff. "My mechanics are good where it is real sharp and there is a lot of depth to it. I noticed this past outing I was casting my curveball a little bit.

I mostly use my slider as an out pitch and the curveball as a show-me pitch.

The slider is firm and there is a lot of depth to that, which is surprising for a slider but it works.

The curveball has gotten a lot better since college."

One of Huff's biggest fans is his older brother Tim, and they have a unique relationship where Tim is almost like a personal pitching coach to him. After every start, Tim will call his younger brother and go over the start literally pitch-by-pitch and tell Dave what he did wrong and how he could be better.

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