The Indians have completed a deal today to send right-hander Jeff Stevens, right-hander Chris Archer, and left-hander John Gaub to the Chicago Cubs for infielder Mark DeRosa. This is the third significant move in the offseason for the Indians, one in which earlier this month they signed closer Kerry Wood and traded outfielder Franklin Gutierrez for right-hander reliever Joe Smith and second baseman Luis Valbuena. Tony provides tons of insight on the deal inside, especially on the players the Indians are giving up.

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"The acquisition of Mark DeRosa gives our club an experienced, high character infielder who complements our team perfectly with his professional, right-handed bat and defensive versatility," said Cleveland Indians Executive Vice President and General Manager Mark Shapiro.

The pickup of DeRosa, 33, gives the Indians some flexibility at second and third base where he will fill a void at one of the positions. Last year with the Cubs he had a career season recording an on-base percentage of .376 along with a .285 AVG with 30 doubles, 3 triples, 21 home runs and 87 RBI in 149 games. He recorded career highs in on-base %, HR, RBI, walks (69) and runs scored (103), and he finished tied for 11th in the National League in runs and 16th in on-base %.

On the year he hit .310/.398/.497/.894 off left-handed pitching and .322 with runners in scoring position, which ranked 6th in the entire National League. He also became just the second Cub

since 1956 to record an extra base hit in eight consecutive games in August (8/21-28), homering in 4 straight games at one point during the streak.

DeRosa is very versatile as he appeared in at least 20 games at four different positions and six positions in total in 2008. He appeared in 95 games at second base, 38 games in right field, 27 games in left field , 22 games at third base and a game apiece at first base and shortstop.

Among 2008 Major League players who appeared in at least 90 games at second base, he finished tied for third in home runs (21), 4th in RBI (87) and 3rd in on-base % (.376).

He is signed thru 2009 ($5.5M) and has been invited to participate in the 2009 World Baseball Classic for Team USA.

He owns an 11-year Major League career batting of .279 with 151 doubles, 10 triples, 69 home runs and 352 RBI in 893 games with Atlanta, Texas and the Chicago Cubs. Over each of the last three seasons since 2006 he has posted 70+ RBI with on-base percentages of .357 or higher. He owns a career batting average of .302 (232-767, .847OPS) off left-handed pitching.

What The Indians Are Giving Up

The Indians certainly dealt from a position of strength where the headliner of the deal Stevens was stuck in a logjam of right-handed relievers at Triple-A Columbus or in Cleveland. Last season he pitched for Team USA in the Olympics, and in 36 combined appearances at Double-A Akron and Triple-A Buffalo he was 5-4 with a 3.24 ERA, and in 58.1 innings allowed 38 hits, 27 walks and had 81 strikeouts.

Stevens' exit closes the book on the Brandon Phillips Debacle , the player he was traded to Cleveland for, and most likely provides him a better opportunity to pitch at the big league level in 2009 with the Cubs. There is also an outside chance he could be part of another move to go to San Diego as part of a package to acquire Jake Peavy from the Padres.

Even with Stevens gone, the Indians still have a stockpile of young relievers in right-hander Adam Miller, right-hander Jon Meloan, left-hander Tony Sipp, right-hander Joe Smith, and others all set to compete for the final few spots in the bullpen this spring. Although it should be noted that Smith is a lock to be on the team, and Sipp has been shutdown with shoulder discomfort and may require surgery if he does not feel better when spring starts.

The other two players the Indians sent out in the deal, Archer and Gaub, are two highly thought of pitching prospects in the lower levels of the Indians system that spent the entire year last season at Single-A Lake County. In 27 starts, the then 19-year old Archer was 4-8 with a 4.29 ERA and in 115.1 innings allowed 92 hits, 84 walks, and had 106 strikeouts.

In 34 relief appearances, the 23-year old Gaub was 1-1 with a 3.38 ERA and in 64.0 innings allowed 44 hits, 32 walks, and had 100 strikeouts.

It is tough to give up an arm in the bullpen that is major league ready such as Stevens, and two high upside arms like Archer and Gaub, but the Indians were really dealing from a position of strength. This is a win-win for the Indians and their former players as all three should have a better opportunity to move up much quicker in their new organizations.

Scouting Reports Of The Departed

These were the scouting reports for each of the three players that were to be included in my upcoming prospect book
.

For the record, Stevens was set to be #15, Archer #28, and Gaub #50.

Chris Archer - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 19 Height: 6'2" Weight: 180 Bats: Right Throws: Right

History: Archer was a 5th round pick in the 2006 Draft out of high school. At 19 years of age last year, Archer was one of the youngest players in the South Atlantic League.

Archer's numbers in 2008 were not overly impressive, and he has struggled with his command (84 BB, 115.1 IP), but he is the classic example that it is not all about the stats in the minor leagues and has a lot to do with projection.

He was healthy all year making 27 starts, held opposing hitters to a .220 batting average, and had a very healthy 8.3 K/9 on the year.

However, the 84 walks in just 115.1 innings (6.6 BB/9) is very concerning.

He had an 8.3 BB/9 (50 BB, 54.1 IP) before the All-Star break, but showed marked improvement in the second half of the season with a 5.0 BB/9 (34 BB, 61 IP) after the break.

The wildness is nothing new with Archer as going into the draft his command was a concern for teams, and improving his command is the main focus for him at the moment.

Strengths & Opportunities: At 6'3" and 180 pounds and still growing, Archer has a projectable body to handle the rigors of being a starting pitcher. H
e projects as a starter or reliever at the big league level, and when he is on his stuff is

unhittable.

The Indians and scouts from other teams were really impressed with his on the field makeup last year.

He remained content and found a way to hang in there and grind through his wildness which is a clear sign of a strong mental makeup.

Archer has a live arm with a projectable plus fastball that consistently sits around 89-93 MPH and has topped out as high as 95 MPH. As he matures the velocity is expected to increase and be more consistent. His fastball does not sink, but he does a good job of getting his fastball on a downward plane and his command and location of the pitch continues to improve.
Of all his pitches, he has the most confidence in his fastball and it is beginning to develop into an out pitch as he started to get a lot more strikeouts last year than he used to with it.

He complements his fastball with a devastating curveball that sits around 80 MPH and has the makings of being a plus pitch.

Some scouts felt his power breaking ball was the best of any high school pitcher in the draft, and the Indians themselves believe he may have the best curveball in the system.

He also throws a three-fingered straight changeup which he is still working on refining and grades out as solid-average.

Archer has control and command issues, but scouts feel his delivery and arm action faults are definitely correctable. The Indians are working on solidifying his delivery more than anything. His delivery is bad as he kind of rushes, he is rotational, and short in stride with the touchdown.

In addition to the delivery issues, he needs to have a better rhythm on the mound because at times he allows the game to speed up on him and he gets ahead of himself.

He also needs to work on getting the ball out his glove quicker, repeating his delivery, concentrating more on his focal point and not trying to overthrow the ball.

If his delivery issues can be corrected, he will see an immediate command and control spike and then his projectable stuff will play up and will see immediate improvement in four categories: K/9, HR/9, BB/9 and groundball percentage.

Outlook: His youthfulness and inexperience was on display almost every time he went out and pitched at Lake County as he often struggled with command, but to the Indians credit they stuck with him in the rotation all year and used his time there to further develop him. The Indians love his electric stuff in the zone, and feel that once he starts getting consistent in the strike zone he has a good chance to breakout as a prospect.

With two plus pitches, good makeup, and still so young the sky is the limit for Archer.

He was young for the South Atlantic League last year, and some scouts think he would benefit repeating there again in 2009.

It remains to be seen where Archer will go in 2009, but given how aggressive the Indians have been with other very young high level pitching prospects like Rondon, Gomez, and De La Cruz, he could find himself opening the season in the advanced Single-A Kinston rotation.

John Gaub - Left-handed pitcher

Age: 23 Height: 6'2" Weight: 200 Bats: Left Throws: Left

History: Gaub was a 21st round pick in the 2006 Draft out of the University of Minnesota. In college, he used sit at 96 MPH, but shoulder surgery after his sophomore season sort of derailed his career and he saw his velocity decrease. The Indians had loved him prior to the injury and ended up drafting him anyway and signed him knowing he was not fully healthy.

After some more setbacks early in his career with the Indians, Gaub had another surgery to have four screws put in his shoulder to put his labrum back together.

Gaub finally made his professional debut in the Indians organization at the end of the 2007 season in the Gulf Coast League where as part of his rehab from shoulder surgery he appeared in four games (4 IP, 4 H, 1 R, 4 BB, 4 K).

His debut came a full year after signing with the Indians out of the draft.

Gaub started last season in extended spring training, but was quickly activated and sent to Lake County at the end of April where he had a sensational year where in 64 innings out of the bullpen he allowed just 44 hits and struck out 100 batters.

Strengths & Opportunities: Ever since the surgery he has been healthy and pain free, and is continuing to get nothing but stronger. His fastball has good life and just gets in on hitters consistently coming in at 90-91 MPH and topped out as high as 94 MPH last year in Single-A Lake County.

His curveball was scrapped, and the addition of a slider to his arsenal was a big reason for his success last year since it is his best secondary pitch and he can successfully throw it to both right and left-handed batters.

He also throws a changeup which has shown some improvement, but is only an average pitch at best.

He used to throw over the top, but after his surgery it did not feel good so it was dropped to a little lower arm slot which has worked out well for him. He has a real free and easy motion with some deception in his delivery so the ball looks like it is coming out a lot harder than it really is.

One of his biggest strengths is his ability to pitch inside against righties so he uses both sides and keeps hitters honest.

Even though the main goal for Gaub last year was to stay healthy, going forward he needs to continue working on his command since he gave up a lot of walks last year (4.5 BB/9).

He also has had some inconsistencies with his delivery which has caused him to have some control issues at times.

Outlook: The adjustments with his delivery and arm slot have paid big dividends with his ability to throw strikes, and the drop in velocity forced him to learn to become more of a pitcher than just a guy who just fires the ball to the plate every time. He is certainly one of the top left-handed relievers in the system, if not the best, and should open the 2009 season at advanced Single-A Kinston.

Jeff Stevens - Right-handed Pitcher

Age: 25 Height: 6'2" Weight: 205 Bats: Right Throws: Right

History: Stevens was drafted by the Cincinnati Reds in the 6th round of the 2005 Draft out of Loyola Marymount University. He has the distinction of being the infamous player to be named later the Indians received when they traded Brandon Phillips to the Cincinnati Reds on April 7, 2006, though he was not formally sent to the Indians until June 13, 2006.

He went through spring training in 2007 expecting to be a starter, but when camp broke he was shipped to advanced Single-A Kinston and put in the bullpen.

From that moment on his standing as a prospect changed dramatically as the shift to the bullpen saw him break out as a prospect that year and since then he has become one of the better relief pitching prospects in baseball.

Pitching exclusively out of the bullpen the last two years, his phenomenal strikeout rate of 11.62 strikeouts per nine innings combined with a solid 3.30 walks per nine inning rate over that span is what has people excited about him.

Strengths & Opportunities: The move to the bullpen saw him take off, and the Indians are excited about his progress and his future in the bullpen. As the Indians predicted would happen, his velocity has seen a significant spike.

His fastball sits at 92-94 MPH, but this past season he was wowing the Indians with even more velocity as he was touching 96-97 MPH at times which was not expected.

His four-seam power fastball has life to it and gets in on batters quickly, and he is very aggressive with it.

He complements his fastball with a good changeup, curveball, cutter and slider.

His curveball has improved a lot since first coming into the organization and has been described by Indians officials as having the drop and movement of a "whiffle ball".

The slider was just added to his repertoire last season, and it is still a pitch he is learning to grasp and become comfortable with.

The Indians feel it is a better pitch to complement his fastball because they wanted him to have a breaking ball with a different look that was thrown a little harder and less likely to miss the zone.

He is a great competitor and goes right after guys, and he also throws strikes. He has the stuff and makeup to be a backend reliever.

He is often compared to former Indians reliever Bob Howry.

Stevens has pitched in several high profile environments the past two years. After the 2007 season the Indians sent him to the Arizona Fall League (AFL) to continue his growth, and shortly after that he was selected to be part of the pitching staff for Team USA in the World Championships in Taiwan.

In 12 combined appearances in the AFL and with Team USA, Stevens racked up 3 saves and did not allow a run in 12 innings pitched while allowing 5 hits, 1 walk and striking out 11.

In 2008, Stevens was selected to be part of the Team USA pitching staff in the Olympics out in Beijing and made a handful of appearances with them.

Going forward, he has very little to do to finish himself off to be major league ready as he is about as close as you can get to being ready.

He does have limited experience with the slider as he never really has thrown it in the past except a few times in college, but he needs to continue to develop the pitch.

As he learns to throw it well it will provide yet another pitch in his arsenal to attack hitters and make his fastball and curveball more effective.

Outlook: Stevens was rostered this offseason, so his option clock is ticking and now that he is rostered he will certainly be one of the first options the Indians turn to when they need reinforcements for the bullpen. Had he not gone to the Olympics, he may have made his major league debut last August. If he pitches well in spring training, he has an outside shot at winning a job in the opening day Cleveland bullpen as one to two spots potentially could be up for grabs. He should start the season in the Triple-A Columbus bullpen, and will make his major league debut at some point this season.

Photos courtesy of Lake County Captains, Buffalo Bisons, and NBC Sports