International scouting has become so much more prevalent over the last decade in Major League Baseball. Since most of the major Latin American signings occur when the players are 16-years old, teams are lining up to give them five, six and sometimes seven figure bonuses to a kid who may be six to seven years at least from the big leagues. In the case of Single-A Lake County outfielder Delvi Cid, the Cleveland Indians did that very thing when the signed him in December 2006 out of the Dominican Republic. Cid is having a nice year for the Captains, and Tony had a chance to talk with him this past week.

When you go mining for talent in Latin America, you are dipping into a realm where scouting is put to the ultimate test.

International scouting, particularly the scouting of Latin countries involves applying the longest projection any organization has to make on a potential signee. Since most of the major Latin American signings occur when the players are 16-years old, teams are lining up to give them five, six and sometimes seven figure bonuses to a kid who may be six to seven years at least from the big leagues.

These are players who are the youngest in professional baseball, and the players who tend to stick around in the entry levels in their home country playing in the Dominican Summer League sometimes for years because they are so raw and need more exposure to the game before coming stateside. Most of these players have never been a part of any structured baseball environment with regular games and coaching, so while they come into the game with loads of

raw talent and tools they often lack knowledge on how to play the game the right way.

Teams start looking at these players when they are around 15 years old and bring them in for workouts to their academies that they have setup in the Dominican Republic. Based on those workouts the team will make a decision on whether to attempt to sign the player or not.

There are no games to see these kids play in.

Scouts don't have the benefit of seeing them play at college or high school games against high level competition.

There are no special tournaments or profile games.

It is all about what those scouts see in the workouts held by the club, and ultimately comes down to the tools, which takes a lot of projection and luck to accurately assess.

In the case of Single-A Lake County outfielder Delvi Cid, the Cleveland Indians did that very thing when the signed him in December 2006 out of the Dominican Republic.

The Indians saw the tools and made the projection on Cid, and to date they look to have unearthed a very good, young talent. He is a player who went largely unheralded when he was going through the workout and signing process, but he is a player who is now starting to turn some heads and open some eyes outside the organization.

"They don't play games in the Dominican Republic," said Indians Assistant General Manager and Director of Scouting John Mirabelli. "I was there from day one with Delvi. He was not a high profile player.

He was just a guy who came to one of our workouts in our academy.

He has come such a far distance from the day where we first laid eyes on him where left-handed he couldn't even get the ball out of the batting cage and his arm strength where he couldn't get the ball from center field to second base.

But our scouts saw the rawness, the athleticism, and the speed potential and that is what we are banking on."

Cid is blazing fast and grades out as an 80 on the 20-80 scouting scale. He also is extremely athletic, which will help him down the road as he matures and grows into his body and learns to harness his talent more.

He's a burner in every sense of the word, and the catalyst at the top of the lineup the Indians will continue to develop in that role.

"He has come so far in such a short distance," said Mirabelli. "I think in our organization in terms of speed and athleticism he is at the top of the chart above anybody in our organization in those two categories."

Mirabelli likened Cid to a wide receiver drafted off the high school football team who had never played a baseball game in their life yet were drafted and signed based on those incredible tools and some amazing athleticism. He has a lot to learn on how to play the game, and it is something that is going to take awhile.

"He is raw, he is green, and he needs a lot of development because Dominican players do not play in games until our workouts," cautioned Mirabelli. "[Those workouts are] batting practice, infield and simulated games.

A player with his skill set, what he has to develop are his instincts, his small ball approach, playing the game, getting on-base, creating havoc, and all the things that are a different skill set from his raw tools.

We think he can do it, he has made great strides, he has grown, he is bigger and stronger, and is probably our best runner in our system.

But he has a lot of things to do."

Even though he is still learning, Cid often gets by because of his raw plus-plus speed which helps cover some mistakes on the base paths or in tracking down balls in the outfield. In time, as he better develops his skills he is expected to be an elite basestealer and gold glove caliber defender.

He would be a player at the top of the lineup the Indians hope can create a lot of uneasiness for pitchers when he gets on base, and a player who can impact a game with his defense.

"He has the potential to be a [great] defensive player, but that is part of his development," said Mirabelli. "He outruns a lot of his mistakes right now. He still needs to work on reads, routes, and jumps.

That's his game, but he has the ability to be the best defensive player in our system."

Near the end of last season with the rookie-level Gulf Coast League team, Cid severely injured his foot tracking down a ball in the outfield after he slammed into the wall and got his foot caught under the fence. He ended up with a Lisfranc fracture to his foot that sidelined him for over six months.

The injury came at a bad time as the Indians were getting close to calling him up to Lake County for the final month of last season. In addition to missing a month's worth of experience in Lake County last year, he also missed out on Instructional League from September through October, winter ball, and most of spring training this year.

He was actually scheduled to open this season as the Captains starting centerfielder, but he remained in Goodyear, Arizona to continue rehabbing his foot and eventually made it to Lake County by mid-May.

"The kid has aptitude and he is going in the right direction," said Mirabelli. "You also have to factor that he lost six months because of a foot injury, which that is his bread and butter. He needs to play.

You can't replicate tracking down fly balls, reads, routes, and first steps.

You have to play games to do that.

As green as he is, and as far as he has come, even with the setback you gotta be real excited with what he is doing right now."

At just 19-years of age, the switch-hitting Cid has impressed scouts for other teams with what they have seen, and most of all the Indians are very happy with what he has shown this season.

"We are happy with the progress he has made," said Mirabelli. "I think it is

tough to judge from a fan's perspective just on his batting average, but for him to reach his potential and be the guy we want him to be he has to be a true leadoff centerfielder.

He has got to develop the ability to get on base, create havoc, steal bases, and see pitches.

He has got to do all of that stuff, which he is getting better at.

I think it was a pretty tough chore just from where he has come from and how raw he is."

Cid is certainly a diamond in the rough, but one who with a little more polish has a chance to soon become a high quality jewel in the Indians farm system.