If you want an example of one of the biggest prospect surprises of the year, look no further than at left-handed starter Russell Young. As a 28th round pick by the Indians in the 2008 Draft out of Dartmouth, Young seemed better off using that Ivy League education for a well-paying job right out of college than the pursuit of an illustrious baseball career. But where he is at right now is an amazing turnaround from where he was just five months ago when minor league camp opened in early March. Tony tells us about it.

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As a 28th round pick by the Indians in the 2008 Draft out of Dartmouth, Young seemed better off using that Ivy League education for a well-paying job right out of college than the pursuit of an illustrious baseball career. But where he is at right now is an amazing turnaround from where he was just five months ago when minor league camp opened in early March.

Coming off a solid professional debut at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley last year where he was 6-3 with a 3.38 ERA in 15 starts, Young came into the 2009 season with a questionable role in the organization and fighting for a spot on the Low-A Lake County roster. By the end of spring training he missed out on a spot in the Low-A Lake County rotation and ended up opening the season there in the bullpen.

Young was not even in Lake County for long as less then three weeks into the season he was moved up to Kinston because of some roster shuffling when left-hander Kelvin De La Cruz went on the shelf with an elbow strain. The Indians needed a starter to plug in at Kinston while De La Cruz was out, and not wanting to already promote anyone from their established rotation in Lake County they turned to Young to fill the void.

So often baseball is about being in the right place at the right time and taking advantage of a big break, and that is exactly what Young did when inserted into De La Cruz's spot in the Kinston rotation. With a chance to get back into the starting rotation again and also move up a level he has shined going 5-5 with a 3.40 ERA in 19 starts for Kinston this year. He made his first start for Kinston on May 1st and ever since he has been a stabilizing presence in the starting rotation which has largely been in flux all year.

"I was surprised to make it up here as early as I did," said Young in a recent interview at Grainger Stadium. "It was definitely kind of a personal goal of mine to hopefully finish here this season. As far as that goes I am of ahead of schedule and excited about that.

I started off pretty rough early on but kind of got used to things, made a few adjustments, and since then I feel like I have been throwing the ball pretty well."

Things definitely did not start off well for Young at Kinston. His month of May was very forgettable as in six starts he was 0-3 with a 7.36 ERA and he looked destined to be shipped back to Lake County or even extended spring training to make way for someone else to get an opportunity. But then in June something clicked for him, and he took off and in four starts he was 1-0 with a 2.19 ERA.

He followed up his impressive June with an even better July where he was 2-2 with a 1.80 ERA in six starts, and has been rolling ever since as in three August starts he is 2-0 with a 2.08 ERA.

"I have always started my whole life, and so coming out of spring training when I was in the bullpen that was a bit of an adjustment," said Young. "But I was fine with it as I just wanted to pitch. I made a couple appearances in the bullpen [in Lake County] and then we sent [Ryan] Miller here and they asked me to fill in as a starter and I have kind of done that ever since.

So, yeah, it was a transition at first just getting my arm into shape and getting used to starting.

But I think as far as me struggling early on it was more of an adjustment just coming up here to High-A and facing a little bit better hitters and learning how to pitch in a different way."

Early on this season Young was certainly finding his way as a pitcher as he adapted to facing much more advanced hitters in the Carolina League, something that is a significant adjustment when compared to the quality of the Ivy League lineups he was facing every time out in college just a year ago.

"It is an adjustment as going from college ball to pro ball the first thing you notice is the wood bats," said Young. "So you need to learn to be a little more aggressive in the strike zone and challenge guys on the inside part of the plate. That was an adjustment, but one that I think has helped me out as a pitcher.

As far as coming from the Ivy League, each team has some good players, but certainly not the depth that I am facing night in and night out here.

You can't take any innings off.

You have to be on your game and attacking guys from one through nine in the lineup because any of them can hurt you."

In 13 starts since June 1st, Young is 5-2 with a 1.98 ERA. His strong play of late has vaulted him into the Carolina League's top ten in a few categories, namely 6th in ERA (3.40) and 2nd in WHIP (1.18).

He does not miss many bats (5.1 K/9) because he is more a command and control pitcher with a fastball that generally sits at 87-88 MPH and can touch up to 91 MPH.

He also has a good feel for his changeup and curveball.

[redacted]