Carlos Moncrief is a guy almost every Cleveland Indians fan probably has never heard of. He was the Indians 14th round selection in the 2008 Draft out of Chipola College in Florida, and spent his first two professional seasons prior to this year out in the island that is rookie league ball in the Gulf Coast League in Florida in 2008 and in the Arizona League in 2009.

This year the 21-year old Moncrief is finally getting a chance to show his raw talents to the Cleveland faithful playing for short-season Mahoning Valley. In 29 games for the Scrappers he is only hitting .206 with 2 HR, 9 RBI, and a .622 OPS, though has started to show signs of turning things around of late as in his last five games he is hitting .316 (6-for-19) with both of his home runs coming during that span.

Moncrief's poor start offensively is not much of a surprise as he is still trying to find his swing again. He was initially scouted as both a pitcher and outfielder, and upon signing with the Indians he was converted to a pitcher full time. As a result, he had not hit for almost two years before finally picking up a bat again this past offseason.

Moncrief came to realize that pitching was just not in the cards for him and that his best chance to get to the big leagues would have to come from his bat instead of his arm. He had a powerful

fastball that sat 93-95 MPH and touched 96 MPH as well as a promising slider, but his mechanics still needed a lot of work and did not show much progress in developing his fastball command.

After taking some swings in the offseason in the cages and toying with the idea of moving back to the outfield, Moncrief approached the Indians about moving back to the outfield full time. The Indians were receptive to the idea decided to take a tentative look at him in spring training in the outfield. After evaluating him they quickly settled on the idea to move him back to the outfield.

“It was really more of a lot of throwing and my arm was really not in pitching shape,” explained Moncrief about his request to move from the mound to the outfield. “When I first signed I had to get in pitching shape as I only threw five innings my first season. So when the offseason [between 2008 and 2009] came I threw a lot and I got in shape, but at the end of last season I had shoulder tightness. My range of motion was [not good] from what the doctor told me. I ended up asking [the Indians] if I could hit, and they said they would take a look at me [in spring training] and see if they liked it and it worked out well.”

Now that Moncrief’s pitching career looks to be a thing of the past, his focus now is getting his swing back and showing what he can do. He no doubt has the power arm, decent speed and athleticism to be a prototype right fielder as far as defense goes. But the most important ingredient is his bat, one where he was thought to have some good power potential coming out of the draft. Bottom line, if he is to ever be taken seriously as a prospect, he is going to have to hit.

“I really got settled in at the end of spring training and in extended spring training,” said Moncrief. “I hit about .290-.300 in extended spring training before I got [to Mahoning Valley]. I can hit some home runs, and I can also hit for some contact as I am more a line drive gap-to-gap type hitter. I can also run pretty well. Everything is working out for the good, and I almost have my swing back.”

Moving from the mound to the outfield can be a tough adjustment to make in just one season, but Moncrief is happy to be back in the outfield.

“To be honest, I like the outfield better,” said Moncrief. “I struck out the first ten guys I faced

[last year], but I got tired. If I am 100% I can pitch at 93-95 MPH easily, but if I get tired and with me not knowing how to pitch to the fullest like I should I [was] throwing 89-92 MPH and getting hit. I just thought pitching was a faster road to the big leagues, but there was more to learn about pitching. I knew a pretty good bit about hitting, so I felt [like I] could make it [there] too."

Moncrief said he was once clocked at 97 MPH in college, so giving up on that kind of powerful arm as a pitcher was probably tough for the Indians, but they also had to realize that while he has some potentially dominating stuff, it just was not translating to the mound as initially thought two years ago when they drafted him.

"I knew I was going to ask the front office in the offseason, so I just began getting myself into a position player shape," said Moncrief. "Just because I could throw the ball pretty hard, I had a little bit of an advantage pitching. But my arm just wouldn't take me there."

Now Moncrief will only have to air it out with his arm two to three times a game in the outfield. And hopefully the bat comes along too.

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