With the glow of a brilliant debut from Josh Tomlin against the Bronx Bombers still shining bright, the Trading Deadline (the July 31st one at least) bearing down, and in light of the recent Dan Haren deal – you know, the one in which Yahoo Sports' Jeff Passan said that the Diamondbacks were "depantsed" - perhaps now is the time to revisit a topic that's been hit on before but needs some updating. The topic is the acquisition of young pitching talent, something that certainly seems to be at a premium around MLB more than ever, if anything can be gleaned from the "return" on Haren for the D'Backs, all of whom were pitchers. Realizing that young pitching is not something that is generally parted with in MLB, what is interesting is that accumulating it is something that the Indians have been in overdrive with since the summer of 2008.

While the summer of 2008 is one that will live in infamy on the North Coast as it essentially slammed shut the "window of contention" that seemed so wide open the previous October, the manner in which the Indians have acted since that time in adding arms to their system, at all levels, in just over 24 months is eye-opening when looked at it as a body of work.

While players like the aforementioned Tomlin (um...Laffey, don't rush back too soon from that shoulder issue) and Jeanmar Gomez (who probably sees some starts down the stretch once inning counts for Talbot and Masterson are reached) don't "qualify" for this little exercise, which focuses ONLY on the arms brought in since the CC deal in 2008 because they were in the organization prior to 2008, the volume of pitchers added to the organization in a short amount of time is still staggering .

While the arms added via trade get much of the attention, factoring in the 2008 and 2009 draft picks with the pitchers acquired via trade since mid-2008 gives a better idea of how quickly the cupboard has been re-stocked, particularly in the upper levels and onto the parent club. Interestingly, as much attention is paid to the players acquired via trade since the CC trade, it is worth mentioning that 4 pitchers who were drafted since 2008 have made it to AA or above:
2008
Zach Putnam
Eric Berger
Bryce Stowell

2009
Alex White

Remember, those are just the pitchers that have been in Akron and there are other guys who were drafted in the last two years who are currently below AA, even if they spent a day or two above Kinston (Joe Gardner, Cory Burns, Tyler Sturdevant, Trey Haley, TJ House, Clayton Cook, Marty Popham, Brian Grening, etc.) who are certainly interesting. However, in the interest of looking at immediate or close-to-the-surface arms, let's restrict this to arms acquired in the last two years who are already at AA or above, with the idea that they would be able to contribute at the MLB level in the next year or two.

With all of that introductory language out of the way, here are the players (with their numbers to date) that were not in the Indians' organization at the beginning of June in 2008 that currently populate their system, levels AA and above:

Mitch Talbot – Age 26
4.08 ERA, 1.40 WHIP, .748 OPS against with 66 K, 47 BB in 119 IP

Justin Masterson – Age 25
5.19 ERA, 1.58 WHIP, .755 OPS against with 94 K, 51 BB in 118 IP

Chris Perez – Age 24
2.31 ERA, 1.23 WHIP, .666 OPS against with 34 K, 21 BB in 39 IP

Joe Smith – Age 26 (MLB)
4.26 ERA, 1.37 WHIP, .751 OPS against with 15 K, 12 BB in 19 IP
Joe Smith – Age 26 (AAA)
1.96 ERA, 1.17 WHIP, .505 OPS against with 19 K, 10 BB in 23 IP

Jess Todd – Age 24 (MLB)
9.00 ERA, 2.00 WHIP, .785 OPS against with 5 K, 2 BB in 3 IP
Jess Todd – Age 24 (AAA)
2.75 ERA, 1.28 WHIP, .716 OPS against with 46 K, 12 BB in 39 1/3 IP

Carlos Carrasco – Age 23 (AAA)
4.00 ERA, 1.34 WHIP, .774 OPS against with 103 K, 43 BB in 117 IP

Yohan Pino – Age 26 (AAA)
5.56 ERA, 1.48 WHIP, .836 OPS against with 78 K, 37 BB in 100 1/3 IP

Zach Putnam – Age 22 (Cumulative AA/AAA)
4.09 ERA, 1.35 WHIP, .738 OPS against with 45 K, 10 BB in 55 IP

Bryce Stowell – Age 23 (Cumulative A+/AA/AAA)
1.15 ERA, 1.16 WHIP, .548 OPS against with 86 K, 29 BB in 55 IP

Bryan Price – Age 23 (AA)
3.57 ERA, 1.32 WHIP, .741 OPS against with 50 K, 13 BB in 45 1/3 IP

Scott Barnes – Age 22 (AA)

5.20 ERA, 1.37 WHIP, .725 OPS against with 87 K, 40 BB in 97 IP

Connor Graham – Age 24 (AA)
3.76 ERA, 1.75 WHIP, .758 OPS against with 36 K, 36 BB in 55 IP

Eric Berger – Age 24 (AA)
5.07 ERA, 1.58 WHIP, .755 OPS against with 58 K, 41 BB in 71 IP

Alex White – Age 21 (Cumulative A+/AA)
2.00 ERA, 1.04 WHIP, .591 OPS against with 90 K, 35 BB in 117 IP

Nick Hagadone – Age 24 (Cumulative A+/AA)
3.48 ERA, 1.58 WHIP, .666 OPS against with 72 K, 49 BB in 65 1/3 IP

Rob Bryson – Age 22 (Cumulative A/A+/AA)
3.18 ERA, 1.03 WHIP, .560 OPS against with 62 K, 14 BB in 34 IP

If you weren't keeping track at home, that's 16 pitchers at the top three levels of the organization that have been added over the last 25 months, with a mix of starters, current starters that will probably end up as relievers, and current relievers peppered throughout the list.

Going further on that, that list will soon include 60% of the Indians' rotation in the near future (Masterson, Talbot, and Carrasco) and 3 of the 7 arms in the current Indians' bullpen (CF Perez, Joe Smiff, and Jesse Ray Todd), including the closer, with the possibility that some of the bullpen arms in AAA or even AA – most notably Putnam, Price, and Stowell (2 draftees from 2008 and 1 trade acquisition from 2009) – find their way topside before 2010 is over, depending upon roster machinations.

Other than the draftees from 2008 and 2009 who are excluded from this snapshot because they have yet to reach AA, the other notable name excluded is that of Jason Knapp, who has now started to throw in the Arizona League. Even bringing up that Knapp isn't on this list brings into focus the fact that EVERY arm that they acquired via trade in the last two years, except for Knapp, is already in Akron or above.

That all being said, assuredly not all of these guys are going to pan out and it's possible that some go the way of Jerry Sowers, Fernando Cabrera, or Atom Miller and it's incredibly myopic to simply foresee a rotation and bullpen made out of all of these names as soon as the end of this year or even next year. But the sheer quantity of arms that have been acquired (and the way that they've performed to date at advanced levels) speaks to how badly this organization needed an infusion of arms, a particularly glaring hole in the organization, whose “homegrown” arms fell victim to being unable to find consistency in MLB to date (Huff), an inexplicable transformation away from being an effective groundball pitcher (Laffey), career-threatening injuries (Miller), a predilection for the HR (Jenny Lewis) and a tendency to be Sowersian on the mound (Sowers).

However, the Indians, whose rotational future is cloudy (even with the recent performances of

Gomez and Tomlin duly considered) and whose history in building bullpens has been spotty at best, seem to be playing the game of attrition with the arms that they've added over the last 2+ years, with most of the pitchers representing a stark alternative to the group of soft-tossing lefties and retread relievers that have bedeviled the Indians in recent years. While that bedevilment was much of their own doing, the arms are starting to stack up beneath the surface of the parent club with the idea that the wheat will start to seperate from the chaff as seasons pass.

Whether any of the pitchers will develop into the top-of-the-rotation starter that seems to be lacking or into the lights-out reliever that the Indians have failed to develop in the last decade will play itself out, but there will be no shortage of high-end, upper-level options to choose from in that odyssey.