The 2010 Draft process came to a close on August 16th with the signing deadline coming and going, and once the dust settled the Indians had signed 27 of their 50 draft picks this year. They paid a club record $9.3 million in bonuses, with 15 players getting $100K or more and four players getting $1M or more.

The architect of the Indians aggressive approach in the draft this year was Amateur Scouting Director Brad Grant. He along with the help of Scouting Director John Mirabelli and about two dozen area scouts and crosscheckers had what on paper was an impactful, memorable draft, and when it is looked back on in four to five years has the potential to go down as one of the all-time great drafts in Indians' history.

As with any draft, there are no sure things and the attrition rate can be high. There could be some unexpected surprises or disappointments, and as always injuries are the great equalizer. But, with what appears a string of now three successful drafts in a row since Grant took the draft reigns in 2008, things are finally starting to look more promising with the Indians now beginning to draft and develop their own players.

I had a chance to talk to Grant over the weekend about a myriad of topics surrounding this

year's draft, the draft process, and their preparations for next year. Below is what was talked about, in Q&A style.

Q: Now that the dust has settled on the 2010 Draft and the signing deadline has come and gone, how do you feel about things?

Brad Grant (BG): We are very excited about how the process worked out with the ability to sign the first 14 picks. We went into the draft trying to talk the best player available and trying to add as much talent as we possibly could. We came out of it where right now on paper it looks like a very successful draft. We will see where it all plays out over the next four years, but we like where we are right now."

Q: Going into the draft it was said you would be very aggressive with your approach not only in drafting players, but in getting them signed as well. As an example, you selected 12 of Baseball America's Top 200 draft prospects and ended up signing 11 of them. You went overslot on many players, more than just about any other team. Where did the aggressive approach come from this year?

BG: I just think with where we are as an organization we need to continue to add talent to our development system. Obviously we are not going to be able to compete on the free agent market, especially with premium free agent acquisitions, so we have to acquire talent at the amateur level and develop it and add it to our major league club. We wanted to be aggressive. We have been aggressive in the past with our drafts, and we wanted to continue to be aggressive this year and ensure we are adding as much talent as possible to the development system.

Q: Why don't we just adopt this approach every year, or is this easier said than done?

BG: Yeah it is easier said than done. It is a case by case basis and depends with where we are economically as well and what we have available to be able to spend. Last year we only went out of slot one time, but we still felt like we had a very successful draft last year. Recognizing that we did take players that would sign for slot, we still took very talented players. So just because you take players and sign them for overslot doesn't dictate that you are going to have premium talent as we were able to add premium talent last year without going overslot.

Q: The late signing deadline and the slot recommendations seem to be a crutch in the negotiating process. With more and more players signing so late, you as an organization are losing more and more opportunities to get these guys on the field in their draft year for a significant amount of games. Is there anything you would like to see changed with the signing process?

BG: Yeah we will see what happens over the course of the next basic agreement. Certainly moving the signing deadline closer to the draft so that we can get players out and into our development system would definitely be something I would like. Also, just having some consistency in the process so it doesn't reward a larger market team and doesn't penalize a smaller market team and that there is some consistency with teams being able to acquire the best available players with the way they are picking. (Editor's Note: I take this as Grant talking about the free agent draft pick compensation system how so many large market teams get comp picks.)

Q: There were a lot of overslot signings this year, not just by the Indians but industry-wide. What kind of repercussions – if any – come from Major League Baseball for going overslot with so many players?

BG: It is just part of the process to go through it and to make sure that we are negotiating correctly and that we are going through it correctly. Each case is dictated by a players leverage in negotiations and what type of leverage they have. Just because you are going overslot doesn't dictate they have better talent than a player who signs in that slot, it is more based on their leverage during the course of negotiations.

Q: How does the relationship work between major league teams and colleges since you are essentially taking their draft eligible sophomores, juniors, enrolled freshman, or transfers?

BG: It is just how it works and is a professional relationship. Obviously they are working to try and keep their players, and we are working to try and sign them. Both sides realize that sometimes we will get it and the college realizes that sometimes they will get the player back. It is just part of the process and we want to build and maintain relationships with the college programs. Obviously we need their assistance and they need our assistance when their players

are ready to be drafted as they want to have them drafted. It is definitely a professional relationship and we try to maintain those relationships with all college programs.

Q: When it comes to the draft do your crosscheckers see everyone you draft, or as you get deeper in the draft is it really the scout's draft?

BG: With how we are setup with four regional crosscheckers and a national crosschecker, we are usually able to get pretty deep in terms of our crosscheck looks. A lot of times it is just one look from a crosschecker, whereas the top end guys in the first five-ten picks will have multiple crosscheck looks where later on it becomes more of the scout's draft. It is the area scout having multiple looks at a player and maybe one look by a crosschecker. A lot of times the late picks are dictated by the area scout.

Q: You took an approach of taking the best player available in the draft this year with each pick, but are there ever situations in any given round with two or more players having a similar rating where depth in a position may influence a pick?

BG: You are always using different things to separate out players. You are always going to have players with similar type abilities, so you use different indicators then to separate it out whether it be what we have already taken in the draft, what is perceived as a lack of depth in our development system, or just using premium position/starter to separate out things. There are a lot of different pieces that come into play in terms of separating out players and making decisions. A lot of it to is the area scout who knows the guy the best and says "this is a guy I'd like to get so let's go get him now".

Q: With Pomeranz signing so late and not throwing a professional pitch this year, is he very likely going to be on the same track that Alex White has been on the past 12 months where he goes to Instructional League, opens in Kinston, and pitches a majority of next season at Akron?

BG: I always kind of go back to where every player dictates their own time frame and path. Obviously Drew had success at the collegiate level and at the national level with Team USA. He has the ability to come in and hopefully take that similar path. We will have him go to Instructional League right now and then have him probably start at Kinston next year and have

him dictate what kind of path he takes. Hopefully it is one where he can move rather quickly.

Q: We have heard a lot about most of your top ten picks this year, but the one guy who has not been talked about much at all is 6th round pick shortstop Nick Bartolone. Considering how high he was taken, he has been tabbed as a mystery man because of the lack of information on him from several draft publications. Is this a guy where his scout Don Lyle really pushed for us to go get him?

BG: Don has a lot of experience and has had a lot of success signing major league players. This is a guy that Don identified early on, and when Don gets a gut feel for a guy I usually listen to that. This was a case where Don felt strongly about Nick and his ability to play short was something that he really thought was an attribute. He is a guy who can play a premium position at shortstop, has speed, arm strength and as he gets stronger and continues to adjust to wood will be able to handle the wood. He already kind of exceeded our expectations offensively a little bit this year. He went out and played the defense that we thought he would be able to play and held his own offensively, which was good to see. Maybe he wasn't a name in Baseball America, but he was known in the industry and definitely in northern California. It wasn't like it was a guy who was hidden under the radar.

Q: Going back to the Baseball America Top 200 and the 12 players you drafted, the one player in that group of twelve you did not sign was right-handed pitcher Burch Smith who opted to go to school at Oklahoma. I know you guys are excited about the end results of the signing process, if there was a "guy who got away", would it be him?

BG: Yeah. We were going to try and make a pretty aggressive offer to him, but Burch made the decision that he wanted to go to college and was pretty firm on that. We respected how he went about the process. He said that college was important to him and he wanted to go and try to prove it one more year. He is definitely a guy we are going to scout again next year and definitely a guy on our radar again next year.

Q: Instructional League starts up this week. One thing of note with the roster is that 9th round pick third baseman Hunter Jones is listed as an outfielder. Is he moving to the outfield, or are you guys just experimenting with him out there?

BG: I am not going to tell you that he is going to make the switch yet. We are just trying the different options and see how he plays out there as well. We think he can play third base, but also just want the flexibility to see how he performs in the outfield too. We like the speed, power, athleticism and upside. He is an athlete and obviously has bloodlines as a well above average runner who has power and is progressing in terms of his hitting and defense. He is an athlete that has a strong baseball background and a guy we feel that we can mold into a very good player.

Q: Are there any other position changes in store for anyone else in Instructs?

BG: Jones is the only one. You have seen Tyler Holt play a little bit on the corners [in Lake County], but only because of Cid there in Lake County. Holt is a guy who is going to play a lot more center field. This year we didn't have many position change guys as we took all guys that are playing their position we currently see them playing at in the future.

Q: Speaking of Holt, he has certainly lived up to his billing as a very intense player who lets his emotions show. How do you approach a player like this to scale it back a little since that intense approach is so much a part of their game?

BG: That aggressive approach is part of his game. He will find that he will have to tone it down a little bit in terms of just the length to a minor league and ultimately major league season. That to play at that type of speed and aggressiveness that he will have to manage it. At the same time you don't want to take it away from him at all because that is what makes him good and allows him to overachieve. That's what has gotten him to the point where he is right now.

Q: I know it is early in the process, but any idea what the draft strategy will be next year?

BG: We will wait and see and what we think the talent level is and where we are picking. A lot of those things will come out during the course of the offseason in our planning and everything else. So how we are going to approach it next year is still something that we are continuing to discuss and walk through.

Q: There has been some talk that the 2011 Draft looks to be pretty good, is this true?

BG: On paper right now, especially at the top end, there is probably more depth to it whereas this past year the industry kind of agreed on the top three and after that kind of depending on who you liked there were a lot of similar type players. I think next year, looking at it right now, in terms of premium players there will be more depth at the top of the draft.

Q: What is the general schedule of events for the next several months to prepare for next year's draft?

BG: We already started in June right after we finished the Draft. Our scouts were out and I went out to the Tournament of the Stars and the high school showcases. We covered all the collegiate summer leagues, saw the east coast showcases, and the national showcases. When we get to September there is a little bit of a lull, and now we will start right back up in October with all the college fall ball and scout days that each university has and begin to cover all the colleges again. It doesn't stop at all. We will break again for a couple of weeks in January and then pick it up at the end of January.

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