We are coming down the home stretch with the year end Cleveland Indians minor league player awards.

The Offensive Player of the Year was announced on Monday, the Pitcher of the Year was announced on Tuesday, the
Reliever of the Year
was announced on Wednesday, the
Defensive Player of the Year
was announced on Thursday, and the
Comeback Player of the Year
was announced yesterday.

Today we continue the postseason awards with the announcement of the Rookie of the Year. This award goes to the most outstanding player who was signed by the Indians in 2010 and made his professional debut this season. Yes, I know that right-handed pitchers Alex White and Joe Gardner technically made their pro debuts this year, but this listing is for 2010 signings only.

Again, just a quick reminder that these awards are awarded 100% based on performance as prospect standing is not factored in. So just because a guy is or is not listed does not mean anything from a “prospect” status. These awards are simply for fun to hand out at the end of the year. Also, the Cleveland Indians in no way whatsoever had any input in these awards. In the coming days the Biggest Breakthrough, Biggest Disappointment and the All-Tony Team will be announced.

Rookie of the Year Nominees:

Nicholas Bartolone (SS – Arizona/Mahoning Valley)
.283 AVG, 32 R, 6 2B, 0 3B, 0 HR, 16 RBI, 16 BB, 36 K, 23 SB, .654 OPS

Bartolone was the mystery guy taken in the 6th round of the draft this year who a lot of publications knew nothing about. He hit .303/.361/.326 with 0 HR, 9 RBI and 15 stolen bases in 32 games at rookie-level Arizona before being promoted to short-season Mahoning Valley where he hit .255/.320/.287 with 0 HR, 7 RBI, and 8 stolen bases in 24 games. He has absolutely no power to speak of at this time, but showed some bat-to-ball ability, some good speed, and some very good defense.

Chase Burnette (OF/1B – Mahoning Valley/Lake County)
.265 AVG, 31 R, 17 2B, 3 3B, 9 HR, 30 RBI, 14 BB, 64 K, 1 SB, .750 OPS

Burnette came to the Indians this year as an 18th round pick in the draft, signed quickly, and had a very good introduction into pro ball this season. Short-season Mahoning Valley lacked much punch offensively all year, but the little punch they had came from him as he hit .274/.312/.456 with 8 HR and 28 RBI in 64 games. He only hit .185/.214/.370 with 1 HR and 2 RBI in 8 games at Low-A Lake County to end the season, but was great in the playoffs for them hitting .308/.386/.538 with 2 HR and 5 RBI.

Owen Dew (RHP – Mahoning Valley/Lake County)
2-4, 3.11 ERA, 16 G (9 GS), 63.2 IP, 51 H, 6 HR, 8 BB, 38 K, 0.93 WHIP, 1.1 BB/9, 5.4 K/9

The Indians picked up Dew in the 21st round of the draft this year, and he immediately impressed with a very good year at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley going 1-2 with a 2.64 ERA in 9 starts (47.2 IP, 36 H, 4 BB, 25 K). He moved on to Low-A Lake County in August and pitched out of the bullpen there going 1-2 with a 4.50 ERA in 7 games (16.0 IP, 15 H, 4 BB, 13 K). His performance should put him in the mix to be in the rotation or bullpen to start the season next year at Lake County.

Tyler Holt (OF – Lake County)
.286 AVG, 12 R, 8 2B, 2 3B, 0 HR, 8 RBI, 15 BB, 12 K, 5 SB, .866 OPS

Holt signed just a few days before the August 16th signing deadline, and upon joining the Low-A Lake County club displayed all the tools that the Indians liked to why they took him in the 10th round of the draft. He showed an intensity on the field and at the plate that is beyond almost anything the Indians have had in awhile, and from a numbers stand point displayed good leadoff qualities with an excellent strikeout to walk ratio of 15:12, a .409 on-base percentage, and 5 stolen bases in 22 games.

Alex Kaminsky (RHP – Mahoning Valley/Akron)
7-5, 2.38 ERA, 15 G (14 GS), 72.0 IP, 57 H, 4 HR, 20 BB, 60 K, 1.07 WHIP, 2.5 BB/9, 7.5 K/9

Kaminsky was an undrafted free agent signing this year who had an outstanding year at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley. He is also a local Ohio product from Fostoria and out of Wright State University. Given an opportunity because so many high profile picks signed late, he took the ball and ran with it finishing 5th in the NY-Penn League in ERA (2.48), tied for 7th in wins (6), and 5th in WHIP (1.06). For his efforts he got an end of year call to Double-A Akron, and then to Low-A Lake County for the final three games of their championship series.

Juan Romero (3B - Arizona)
.241 AVG, 21 R, 10 2B, 2 3B, 7 HR, 14 RBI, 16 BB, 67 K, 2 SB, .804 OPS

Romero was a free agent signing this year out of the Dominican Republic. The Indians were pretty high on him when he signed, and aggressively pushed him to rookie-level Arizona without sending him to the Dominican Summer League. He turned 17-years old in mid-June, but showed incredible raw power for his age and tied for the league lead in home runs and finished 14th in OPS. The strikeouts are obviously a big issue, but time is on his side and his plate discipline is something that will be focused on going forward.

Felix Sterling (RHP - Arizona)
2-3, 3.16 ERA, 12 G, 51.1 IP, 40 H, 2 HR, 20 BB, 57 K, 1.17 WHIP, 3.5 BB/9, 10.0 K/9

Sterling is another free agent signing this year out of the Dominican Republic. He is only 17-years old, but already is a physically imposing specimen on the mound standing at 6'3" 200 pounds. He seemingly got better and stronger as the season wore on, showed surprisingly good command in his pro debut with an ability to miss bats, and held hitters to a .222 batting average. He finished 8th in the Arizona League in ERA (3.16), 10th in strikeouts (57), and 8th in WHIP (1.17).

And the 2010 Tony Award goes to…Felix Sterling

Bartolone certainly impressed with all of his intangibles, but the numbers were just not there to win this award. By the same token, Holt just did not have enough playing time, and Burnette had a very solid though not great performance. Dew had a great start at Mahoning Valley, but fizzled a little when he went to Lake County. Romero's power display for his age when compared to the rest of the league was fabulous, and he has certainly put himself on the prospect map going forward.

In the end, the two who really separated themselves from the pack and stood out strictly from a performance perspective were Kaminsky and Sterling. When initially putting this listing together and before breaking anything down I felt Kaminsky would be the runaway winner based on his out of nowhere performance this year for Mahoning Valley, but when looking at things deepers and considering what Sterling did in the Arizona Summer League that was no longer the case, and ultimately I picked him.

Both Sterling and Kaminsky were similar in many areas, like with hits per nine innings (Sterling 7.0 H/9, Kaminsky 7.1 H/9), strikeout to walk rate (Sterling 2.85, Kaminsky 3.00), and WHIP (Sterling 1.17, Kaminsky 1.07). Kaminsky had a better walk rate of 2.5 BB/9 compared to Sterling who had a 3.5 BB/9, but on the other hand Sterling had a much better strikeout rate of 10.0 K/9 while Kaminsky had a 7.5 K/9.

The separator for me for the top performer was age. Sterling did it as a raw 17-year old kid in a league full of players about three years older than him as the league average age for pitchers

was 20.6 (20.1 for batters). Kaminsky, who is 22 years old, did it at an age a little above league average which was 21.3 for pitchers (21.1 for batters). As we know, the age of a player in relation to the league he is in is a big factor in evaluating not only prospect standing, but performance as well (league averages ages are per Baseball-Reference).

Sterling is a big, strong, physical pitcher whose fastball already sits at 90-94 MPH and flashes two good secondary pitches in a slurvy breaking ball and changeup. As with any young pitcher he is working on improving his command and control, but has shown a good feel for pitching and has the arsenal to remain a starting pitcher as he moves up the minor league ladder. Like most Latin kids he came into the organization as a thrower rather than a pitcher, but unlike most Latin pitchers he had some secondary pitches in place.

Sterling really made a lot of strides during his time out in Arizona, and I can't wait to get my first glimpse of him when I visit the complex this coming week. He is definitely a guy to keep an eye on, and has a great shot of opening the 2010 season in the Low-A Lake County rotation at 18 years of age, though I think the Indians will hold him back in extended spring training for development purposes and bring him along later in the season.

Up Next: Biggest Breakout

Follow Tony and the Indians Prospect Insider on Twitter @TonyIPI . His new book the 2010 Cleveland Indians Top 100 Prospects & More is also available for purchase on Amazon.com or his site .