The Indians made three minor moves today, signing outfielder Felix Pie and infielder Jose Lopez to minor league deals, and trading last year's Akron Aeros closer Cory Burns to the Padres for outfielder Aaron Cunningham.

Pie was a top prospect when he was coming up through the Cubs organization, peaking at #27 in all of baseball during the 2006 offseason according to Baseball America. That prospect pedigree however, has never really translated to major league success. In 1051 major league at bats, he's hit .249/.298/.374 with 17 HR and 97 RBI. His best season came in 2009 with the Orioles when he played in 101 games and put up a .763 OPS. He's a solid but unspectacular defender who can play all three outfield positions, and bats lefthanded. He can earn up to $1 million in incentives if he plays well, and as indicated earlier he was signed to a minor league deal with a spring training invite. It's a low-risk, moderate reward signing that really can't hurt anything, and is typical of what most teams are doing this time of year.

If you like low-risk, moderate reward minor league deals, let me introduce you to Jose Lopez. Unlike Pie, Lopez found some success in the major leagues, being named to the all star team in his first full season back in 2006. He's a righthanded hitter who's shown some pop, hitting a career-high 25 HR in 2009 with Seattle. Between 2006 and 2009, Lopez hit .277/.308/.419 with 63 HR and 326 RBI, all while calling Safeco Field his home park. Pretty solid numbers for a young 2B. However, after 2009, Lopez fell off a cliff. In his next two seasons, split between Seattle, Colorado and Florida, Lopez hit just .233/.263/.348 with 18 HR and 79 RBI. His approach had always been poor, as he sports a career 3/1 K/BB ratio, but gone was the power and average that helped to offset that ratio. Like Pie, he was signed to a minor league deal that will pay him less than $1 million if he hits all of his incentives. He's definitely behind Jason Donald for at bats as a utility guy, and will likely fight with Cord Phelps to be the first infielder called up from Columbus if something goes wrong at the major league level.

The third move the Indians made today was dealing relief pitcher Cory Burns to San Diego for outfielder Aaron Cunningham. My full scouting report on Burns from last offseason can be found here , and he'll also be featured in my Arizona Fall League article that posts tomorrow morning. Long story short; he's a guy with great numbers but who's stuff never matched up with the results. He has a very deceptive motion that fools hitters in the minors, but is never really likely to translate to the major league level. Cunningham is a 25-year old corner outfielder who hits righthanded, and has spent part of the past four years in the majors with Oakland and San Diego. He was originally drafted in the 6th round by the White Sox in 2005, then dealt to Arizona before heading to Oakland as part of the Dan Haren deal. From Oakland he moved on to San Diego in the Kevin Kouzmanoff deal, and now is packing his bags for the North Coast. His career major league numbers, in 355 at bats, are .231/.290/.375

with 6 HR and 44 RBI. He's seen as a 4th OF at least, with the potential to be an everyday guy in one of the corner OF positions. He's still young, but he's out of options so will have to either make the club out of spring training in 2012 or be put on waivers. Even if he ends up on waivers, I like the Indians odds to keep him. There are plenty of teams sneaking plenty of guys through at the end of March. His career minor league line is .306/.379/.490, and he's traditionally hit lefthanded pitching pretty well. He joins the previously mentioned Felix Pie, Zeke Carera, and Thomas Neal as guys who will be fighting for the last OF spot in spring training.

All in all, three solid but unspectacular moves. Again, this is what most of the teams around baseball are doing this time of year...signing low-risk vets in an effort to catch lightining in a bottle. Most of the moves don't amount to much, but it's more than work the time and money invested in these guys in case they turn into something. The national media won't be writing stories about it, ESPN won't break away from the latest Miami Heat scrimmage to report on it, but these are the type of moves that have a chance to pay off in 2012. And if they don't, it sure doesn't hurt much. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I love these deals and that I think one of these guys will be the missing piece to the 2012 playoff run, but to bemoan the deals and cry about the Dolans R cheep, yo, isn't really my style, as I'm sure you're all aware by now.

Follow @gotribe31