

Windy City Mo-Joe

Patience is a virtue when it comes to the Cubs

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Patience is easily the hardest virtue to embrace. Even when you do manage to wait a long time for something worthwhile, it feels like the payoff is relatively short-lived. Then, it's right back to waiting.

For this reason, Cubs fans are not going to like what I'm about to say: We need to exercise more patience. Yes, I said more.

Recently, MLB.com came out with its list of the [Top 100 Prospects in Major League Baseball](#). Three Cubs ranked in the top 50: Jorge Soler (#42), Albert Almora (#39) and Javier Baez (#16). There has been local fanfare surrounding these names for the past year or so, but now they are starting to become regularly mentioned across the nation as impact prospects.

As a refresher, the Cubs don't exactly have the greatest track record with impact prospects. You might think I'm crazy because of all the 50 – plus homerun seasons Brian Dopriak and Ryan Harvey are piling up, and all the consecutive seasons that Grant Johnson and Mark Pawelek have been posting sub-3.00 ERAs.

Oh, wait, what's that you say? That never happened? That's probably why all of these former "can't miss" Cubs prospects are all long gone from the Major League Baseball (MLB).

Even [Josh Vitters](#), the number three pick in the 2007 MLB draft who was called up in August of last season, couldn't manage to keep his batting average higher than his weight. Jim Hendry's poor handle on the farm system is still affecting the team. Now we're left to imagine how Matt Wieters or Jason Heyward would look in blue pinstripes had they been chosen at number three instead of Vitters.

To be fair, hindsight is 20/20. That's why the new management regime of the Cubs is trying to take all of the "what-ifs" out the equation by using sabermetrics. Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer have made it a point to utilize as many advanced statistics as possible to find true talent amongst a crop of young players. That's a much better idea than what Hendry's regime had, which probably consisted of picking the youngest guy with the most awards, AKA, a crapshoot.

Epstein and Hoyer have been using crazy analytical stats like Weighted On-Base Average (wOBA) and Fielding Independent Pitching (FIP) to restock the farm system with quality talent. This is obvious by the slow and steady rise of names like Baez, Almora and Soler on the national scene. But Cubs fans have to understand that a slow and steady rise is

exactly how to continue to develop these players. Anything different would actually hurt the team in the long run.

There has been a whirlwind of newfound anticipation surrounding the Cubs since MLB.com dropped its prospect list. Now that Cubs players have been ranked inside the top 50, Cubs fans have flooded online forums to discuss the estimated arrival times of these prospects. Baez just turned 20 years old and is still only in single A, but I saw an article debating if he could make the Cubs' opening day roster this season.

And it's not just random people on the Internet playing up the prospects. I've even overheard analysts on MLB Network discussing how the Cubs might improve this season, thanks to the return of Matt Garza and the signing of Edwin Jackson. The improvement might be enough so that the team could afford to call up the prospects earlier than expected because they would join the team in a winning environment.

To that, I say: really?! I'm all about the team improving as fast as possible, but this is a team that lost 101 games last season and will most likely hover around that same number of losses for the next season or two. Epstein himself said it will take about five years for this team to be a serious contender in the NL Central.

He told us five years, and it's only been one. Are we really that impatient? Let's just take a deep breath, relax and realize that taking things slow will eventually bring success. Consider how Epstein and Hoyer handled [Anthony Rizzo](#) throughout his minor league career. Rizzo was putting up outstanding numbers for over three years in the Red Sox's and Padres' farm systems, but he only got the call up to the majors when they felt he was truly ready. And when he struggled in the majors the first time around, Rizzo was sent back to the minors, where he stayed until he could prove without a doubt that he was ready to handle major league pitching. I'd say he's doing pretty well this second time around, wouldn't you?

This is the route Epstein and Hoyer should take to develop this current crop of top prospects. Rushing these kids to the majors can leave them under prepared, overmatched and can stick them in an early rut they may never re-emerge from. If that happens, they'll add nothing to the team and leave us right back at square one.

No matter how much the fans beg and plead, the guys upstairs have to stick to the plan of action they've laid out. Only then, when we start seeing those players reach the majors at the proper time, will we start seeing the team improve as a whole.

So remember, the goal is more like 2016, not 2013.

Patience, young grasshoppers. Patience.