

## 2023 MLB Mock Draft Analysis: Rounds 2-9

By: Ethan Kagno

### *Second Round*

#### **41. Oakland Athletics (\$1.70 million) - Ryan Lasko, OF, Rutgers ([Video](#))**

The Scarlet Knight standout was a three-year starter at Rutgers and posted a .314/.408/.580 slash line in college. Despite struggling offensively on the Cape, Lasko made some nice plays defensively in center field, showing off plenty of athleticism. It's currently power-over-hit for Lasko, however, I think his hit tool is average to above average and could even out with his power tool throughout the pro ranks.

It's a narrow and upright stance with not much hand movement for Lasko at the plate. Upon delivery, he'll move his back leg first when getting into his load to widen his frame and tap into his power. An above-average runner, Lasko swiped double-digit bags in his last two collegiate and summer league seasons and shows great instincts on the basepaths. The knock is he had issues making contact with breaking balls. However, his solid plate presence saw him walk (37) more than he struck out (34) in his junior year.

There's a lot to like about the toolsy outfielder, who could realistically play any outfield spot and has a chance to be an everyday regular in the bigs – especially if he cuts down on swing and miss at the higher levels.

#### **45. Detroit Tigers (\$1.43 million) - Max Anderson, 2B, Nebraska ([Video](#))**

Max Anderson was ranked as the 91st overall prospect by MLB Pipeline but that didn't stop the Tigers from selecting the offensive-minded Anderson with the 45th overall pick. Although listed as a second baseman, Anderson found success at the hot corner and at the plate during his two stints with the Cape Cod Baseball League in 2021 and 2022. He batted an even .300 in 72 games with the Wareham Gatemen and Bourne Braves.

The Tigers are banking on the upside of a plus hitter with raw power to all fields. Despite the lack of athleticism and below-average arm, the former Cornhusker could find success at first base for as long as his bat carries him throughout pro ball.

#### **49. Minnesota Twins (\$1.50 million) - Luke Keaschall, 2B, Arizona State ([Video](#))**

Keaschall, who portaled from San Francisco to Arizona State, during the summer of 2022, found immediate success in a tougher conference as a Sun Devil his junior season. The former Don got his first taste against elevated competition on the Cape in 2021 and 2022, whiffing 47 times during his latter stint. He rebounded nicely in his first season at ASU, posting 18 home runs and a .353/.443/.725 slash line in 55 games.

Ranked 90th (per MLB Pipeline) coming into the draft, the Twins took the second baseman 49th overall. It's contact over power for the versatile middle infielder, who will be average defensively anywhere the Twins decide to deploy him. Keaschall seems likely to stick at second but will offer Minnesota defensive versatility throughout the lower levels.

He has the ability to consistently put the ball in play with quick hands through the zone and aggressiveness on the base paths (18 SB in 2023). His profile offers upside as a future utility infielder with everyday starter potential if he's able to keep the strikeouts in check.

### *Competitive Balance - Round B*

#### **63. Baltimore Orioles (\$1.61 million) - Jackson Baumeister, RHP, Florida State ([Video](#))**

The sophomore-eligible right-handed pitcher out of Florida State was taken by Baltimore with their sole competitive balance round selection at 63rd overall. There's a lot of projection here with the 6-foot-4, 224-pound converted catcher.

His fastball sits in the mid-90s and has topped out around 98. It's a plus pitch that offers plenty of carry in the zone. While his secondary offerings, which feature a mid-70s looping curve and fringy slider, are still in the works, Baumeister has the raw makeup that the Orioles fathom over. Not to mention, his lower half delivery is eerily similar to future hall of famer, Max Scherzer.

The FSU product signed over slot value for just north of \$1.6 million (slot value = \$1.24 million) as Baumeister was selected after his second collegiate season with the Seminoles. The O's could develop Baumeister into a mid-rotational piece at the big-league level.

#### **64. Arizona Diamondbacks (\$1.25 million) - Caden Grice, LHP/1B, Clemson ([Video](#))**

Announced as a pitcher, the former Clemson southpaw was a two-way player throughout high school and college but swing-and-miss concerns and inability to hit for contact may lead him to solely toe the rubber in pro ball.

In 42 games on the Cape in 2022, Grice struck out a league-high 56 times in 151 plate appearances, good for a whopping 37% K-rate. It's power-over-contact, evidenced by 18 home runs during his junior year at Clemson. He's an average defender at best but his plus arm and solid speed could give him an opportunity in right-field.

### *Third Round*

#### **89. Toronto Blue Jays (\$1.00 million) - Juaron Watts-Brown, RHP, Oklahoma State ([Video](#))**

I really like this pick by the Jays, who went over slot value (\$771,500) to sign the Oklahoma State transfer. There's a lot of projectability here for JWB, who offers great run on his heater and commands a mid-80s slider well to generate plenty of swing and miss. His above-average curveball has great shape and average changeup can be used effectively, as he was able to show during his time on the Cape – striking out 45 in 34 innings.

The former Cowboy saw continued success in his second collegiate season after transferring from Long Beach State, leading the Big 12 in strikeouts (124) and strikeout rate (13.6 K/9). Despite control issues and getting hit around a bit in 2023 (1.41 WHIP, 48 BB in 82.1 IP), I still think Watts-Brown is a promising prospect with lots to offer if he can add more rise to his fastball to go along with his impressive pitch mix. I couldn't stop thinking about Tink Hence when comparing the two.

#### **90. St. Louis Cardinals (\$700,000) - Travis Honeyman, OF, Boston College ([Video](#))**

Honeyman was widely considered as a first-round selection last year out of Boston College before injuries piled up and inconsistent play seemed to tarnish his draft stock. Still, the Cardinals took a high-upside play here assuming Honeyman can stay healthy.

The former BC Eagle was terrific with a wood bat on the Cape, posting a .930 OPS in 24 games against top-tier pitching. He parlayed that success with a solid junior year until suffering a season-ending injury in April.

The outfielder has an open stance and high leg kick which I would still like to see simplified a bit more. Although he has quick hands and a twitchy swing which allows him to stay in front of the ball and minimize whiffs. It remains to be seen how he taps into his in-game power at the pro level but the raw makeup is there. He shows great athleticism and can drive the ball to all fields and defensively, should be able to stick in center field with the flexibility to play in left as well.

#### *Fourth Round - Compensation*

#### **137. Los Angeles Dodgers (\$466,500) - Eriq Swan, RHP, Middle Tennessee State ([Video](#))**

Eriq Swan has the appearance of a tight end in football. At 6-foot-6, 240 pounds, Swan carries an intimidating presence on the mound. Despite the larger build, the former high school shortstop has good athleticism and one of the best pure arms in the draft class. He owns an effortless delivery while consistently pumping his 60-grade fastball in the high-90s and occasionally reaching triple digits. He sports a tight mid-80s slider which is perhaps his most effective pitch.

The concern here is his powerful heater lacks life and can be hit around rather easily when lower in the zone. That, mixed with control issues had teams hesitant earlier on in the draft to fully commit to what will likely be a project developing him. However, the Dodgers seem

like a good landing spot for Swan who could project as a Brusdar Graterol-type out of the bullpen.

### *Seventh Round*

#### **218. Cleveland Guardians (\$1.00 million) - Alex Mooney, SS, Duke ([Video](#))**

Alex Mooney was an absolute steal in the seventh round. The Guardians, who went over slot (\$231,300 pick value), ended up with a hardworking and toolsy middle infielder with great instincts and athleticism.

The 114th-ranked draft prospect, according to MLB Pipeline, Mooney doesn't have a standout tool but also doesn't really have many flaws in his game. What stood out to me the most during his time on the Cape was his ability to make plays up the middle, showcasing some serious range and a strong arm at shortstop with Falmouth in 2022. Offensively, the former Blue Devil has a more developed hit tool but did show some pull-side pop over the summer with five home runs. He continued to have his best season yet with Duke in 2023 and showcased above-average speed with 21 stolen bases that season.

Mooney has the potential to be a starter in the bigs and worst-case scenario slots as a utility piece for a sneaky-good Guardians farm system.

### *Ninth Round*

#### **278. Cleveland Guardians (\$151,000) - Jay Driver, RHP, Harvard ([Video](#))**

While working as a starter at Harvard in 2023, Driver was inconsistent; posting a 4.41 ERA in 12 starts for the Crimson. The summer prior on the Cape, Driver flashed some good stuff but was still hit around and control issues persisted in the form of 39 BB in 23.2 IP.

Driver's mid to high-90s fastball with good run and high spin slider combo likely plays better in shorter stints. He could be effective out of the pen with an unconventional delivery and lower three-quarter arm slot with good deception.