

## Draft Recap: 2019 Iowa Crows

2018 wasn't exactly a triumphant return to RUMBA. Given the stellar cards of Nolan Arenado and Charlie Blackmon, I set my course to win now. Trades to shore up holes imported several thirty-somethings: Neil Walker, Josh Harrison, Gerardo Parra, Carlos Santana, and Steve Souza. A year later, none of those guys have much value. This was partly just bad luck — one would have expected a couple of them to have decent years — but this is also why most people in a draft league don't trust anyone over thirty.

This has been a challenging draft, due to my having to drive to Colorado in the middle rounds. It is also getting harder and harder to summon the energy to sift the draftable dregs in late rounds to find a golden nugget; RUMBA would be much better, I think, if a full roster was 40 players rather than 45. Anyway, as begin to write this summary my team still had one pick remaining and I am tempted to just use Draft-O-Matic. Tis a sad state of affairs.

**#10, WILLY ADAMES (SS).** I gave a lot of thought to which guys might still be there at #10, and this usually left me feeling a bit gloomy. So imagine my joy upon getting Adames, who was my main hope for a guy who might realistically slip to me. He gives me solid depth behind Elvis Andrus, and also has an ok rating at 2B. We are off to a very good start!

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?** As part of last year's folly, I traded away my 2nd and 4th round picks. As such, my emotional investment in Adames is sky-high. I had thought this pick might have been Austin Meadows or Ramon Laureano, so I guess I'll feel some regrets if they turn out to be the better players. My hope this round was to get either an outfielder or middle infielder, and I ended up with the one I wanted most so no real regrets at this point.*

**#50, CHRISTIN STEWART (LF).** My pitching staff is in relatively good shape, so again we reach for a hitter. It was a long Saturday watching another forty picks go by before my second pick, and yet another forty would pass before my next one. So the big gamble here is reaching for a player whose hoped-for value is all in the future rather than a good card for right now.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?** My outfield already tilts left, so it might have been smart to grab Mark Canha. I also have a real problem at the hot corner, and so in an odd way Isiah Kiner-Falefa (whose main position is catcher, but he's also fine at third) would have been a nice pickup. But I went with the outfielder that I thought had a chance to be an all-star someday (kind of a stretch, but he has a chance).*

**#83, NICO GOODRUM (UTL).** Nico ranked pretty high on my spreadsheet, but he seems like the kind of guy who might fade pretty quickly. This was a "value pick" in that he doesn't fill any particular need (but will play a lot due to his good card).

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?** The main problem for my Crows going into the draft was at third. The available pool was very thin, and it seemed to me that Hunter Dozier wasn't worthy of a pick yet. Alas, he was taken right before my next one so I missed the chance to get a presumed regular at the hot corner. You win some, you lose some.*

**#90, DEREK HOLLAND (LHP).** Similar to #83, I decided that Holland was a good value here. I also need a lefty in the bullpen and might ride this one hard in the middle innings. With his balance rating (9L), Holland would be an interesting pitcher to put in after a righty "opener."

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?*** *I was tempted to take a right-handed outfielder, Phillip Ervin, with this pick. Failing to take Ervin could be my biggest regret of this draft.*

**#110, DYLAN FLORO (RHP).** I entered the draft with a full rotation, but several holes in the bullpen. So with my last pick of the weekend I took the best righty still left on my short lists. I like to think his future is bright, but frankly don't get all that excited about relievers. This pick was geared toward making the season ahead a bit more enjoyable to play out.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?*** *As a teacher, I get tired of hearing excuses about why a student is unprepared. So it is with some reluctance that I mention I was getting ready to drive to Colorado, where Jenny and I have been looking to buy a second home (for our future retirement). Anyway, it was sort of embarrassing to have Adam Conley taken a few picks later, in that I have Conley in my other league and think he is going to be quite a stud in the future (and isn't half bad right now).*

**#130, TYLER CLIPPARD (RHP).** Late Monday morning I pulled into the rest stop in Julesburg to make my pick. I wanted another reliever, and was excited to see one last name on my short list that wasn't crossed out: Richard Rodriguez. So it looked like a quick pit stop, until I saw that he actually was **not** available. So I spent fifteen minutes trying to find a guy with a usable card and a somewhat decent future... and somehow end up with 34-yo Tyler Clippard. I just pray that none of you guys snickered!

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?*** *Again, my mid-round focus was on bullpen arms. I hadn't done enough draft prep to really have any regrets here. The Welcome Center at Julesburg does offer free coffee, but I didn't really want to stay any longer than needed.*

**#144, JESSE BIDDLE (LHP).** I did some draft prep Monday night, and decided another lefty for the pen was needed. Biddle is about as good as it gets in the 8th Round.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?*** *I had thought about hunting through the dregs for players who are considered to be "prospects" among the crowd of low-AB and -IP players. And I still had some outfielders on my short-list — the mind reels at the prospect, but I could have hit the trifecta of Stewart, Shaw, and Naquin!*

**#150, CHRIS SHAW (LF).** I am unsure if there is any real difference between Stewart and Shaw. Nor does there seem much point in drafting a matched set of lumbering left-fielders. But I never buy just one lottery ticket, and do think that overall my fly-chasers need an injection of youth. God help us, but these guys represent our future.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?*** *Rather than do more pitcher research, I went to some hitter names on my short lists. The alternative to Shaw was Tyler Naquin who — you guessed it — is a left-handed outfielder. I think I went with Shaw because Naquin took an O-fer in the recent spring game.*

**#170, HECTOR VELAZQUEZ (RHP).** By this point, I was using Strat's "sort by WAR" function to look for pitchers. This wasn't entirely a hold-yer-nose sort of pick, but neither is it Chanel Nr 5. The card isn't great, but it's another 70 IP that won't be awful.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?*** *Increasingly I am of the belief that the best "values" in these drafts are players old enough to have lost their sexy prospect glow. So I jumped on Holland a few rounds back, and now Hector. But I am operating on no illusion... I know that Velazquez is a likely cut one year from now. A more interesting pick might have been one focused purely on the card itself, even if it had only 20 IP or so. With 45-man rosters, this might be an interesting tactic.*

**#175, DEREK FISHER (LF).** This is in theory a make-or-break spring for Fisher. My hope is that he puts up good numbers but still gets cut, and then goes to Miami or Baltimore where he gets a full shot. Fairy tales can come true, if you're young at heart.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?** Shortly after this pick, a young man named Patrick Wisdom was selected. I am glad I happened to notice that Fisher was available, and that he's having a good camp, but for whatever reason I had jotted Wisdom's name down on one of my pre-draft lists. I guess all I trying to say is that I'm questioning the wisdom of taking another left-handed outfielder here.*

**#210, TYLER CHATWOOD (RHP).** A year ago, Chatwood was a pretty hot property. Liberated from Coors, he was expected to put up some nice numbers. The underlying talent is still there if he can rediscover the strike zone. These last picks show we are all optimists at heart.

***Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda?** Per a search of Baseball Reference, the first name "Tyler" first appeared in MLB in the 1990s. This pick gives my pitching staff a full barbershop quartet of them.*

The Crows drafted six pitchers and five hitters. In theory this draft was approached from a rebuild angle, but the execution was shaky: I should have leaned harder on my prospect handbook and resisted the urge to fill the cracks in my bullpen. But at my age, it's getting harder to focus on a 5-year plan. The future is now.

Here is a condensed look at my roster. The 14 new faces (drafted or acquired in the last 12 months) are in **Red**. Hitters have ABs and OPS listed; pitchers have IP and ERA. I tend to think we are in a downward slide, but the defense and starting pitching are potentially good enough to keep the Crows near the middle of the standings. But I definitely mis-calculated my team's relative quality a year ago, so I am braced for the real possibility of 90+ losses.

**CATCHERS.** The big off-season acquisition was **Willson Contreras** (474, .729), who better rediscover his stroke or we're screwed! He and Sandy Leon (265, .511) are great defensively, and Victor Caratini (181, .597) still has a shot to be a bat-first option behind the dish.

**FIRSTBASE.** A year ago, we traded for Carlos Santana (560, .766) thinking he would be a solid first-sacker for another few years. We hope he rebounds nicely, but are definitely worried. Our big future hope is **Tyler White** (210, .887), who was picked up in the Arenado deal, but his path to regular playing time is uncertain. In this draft we picked up a few left-fielders who might eventually get some time at first, but for now the backups are two guys who are probably just has-beens but who I could not bring myself to cut: Chris Davis (470, .539) and Neil Walker (347, .663).

**SECONDBASE.** Good teams don't play any '4' gloves up the middle, which is why a good hitter like **Scooter Gennett** (584, .847) was tossed into the big Arenado trade. The backups don't field any better, but **Nico Goodrum** (444, .747) and Jurickson Profar (524, .793) have a lot of position flexibility so will get their share of ABs.

**THIRDBASE.** We went into the draft thinking **Yangervis Solarte** (468, .655) would be ok, perhaps platooning with Profar, but after Round 3 worked out a deal for a band-aid solution in the form of **Evan Longoria** (480, .694). It seems like most of my infield is on the verge of collapse!

**SHORTSTOP.** Elvis Andrus (395, .675) was hurt quite a bit last year, which is why drafting **Willy Adames** (288, .754) was such a big priority. This is now the strongest position on the team, I think.

**LEFTFIELD.** **Corey Dickerson** (504, .804) is a '2' with a pretty good bat, and Gerardo Parra (401, .714) is a pretty decent 4th outfielder. Draft three marginally good prospects — **Christin Stewart** (60, .792), **Chris Shaw** (54, .552), and **Derek Fisher** (79, .165) — and that gives me five left-fielders that all bat left-handed.

**CENTERFIELD.** A pair of '1' fielders form a nice L/R platoon. The stronger bat is wielded by **Jackie Bradley Jr** (474, .717). JaCoby Jones (429, .630) isn't much of a prospect, but will be useful.

**RIGHTFIELD.** The presumed regular, Steven Souza, Jr (241, .678), had some injury woes so we're relying on an elder statesman, Matt Kemp (462, .819), to take the field most days. Robbie Grossman (396, .751) and Melky Cabrera (250, .755) are a pair of switch-hitters that should get some ABs in the DH slot.

**ROTATION.** Kyle Freeland (202, 2.85), Tyler Anderson (176, 4.55), **Derek Holland** (171, 3.57), Sean Manaea (161, 3.59), Clayton Richard (159, 5.33), Tyler Skaggs (125, 4.02), and **Hyun-Jin Ryu** (82, 1.97) give me seven left-handed starters. This leads me to think I need to tilt my park ratings accordingly! Right-handers run the gamut from **Carlos Carrasco** (192, 3.38) to Jordan Zimmermann (131, 4.52). Future depth is provided by **Domingo German** (86, 5.57) and **Tyler Chatwood** (104, 5.30).

**BULLPEN.** This is an ok collection of relievers. The high-quality closer is lefty Sean Doolittle (45, 1.60), and he's backed by a so-so pair of righties: Fernando Rodney (64, 3.36) and Brad Boxberger (53, 4.39). Middle relief won't win any prizes, but seems adequate for a team without pretensions of contending. The main lefty will probably be Holland (assuming I don't plug him into the rotation), and **Jesse Biddle\*** (64, 3.11) is also decent. From the right side we can bring **Hector Velazquez** (85, 3.18), **Dylan Floro** (64, 2.25), Hector Rondon (59, 3.20), Phil Maton (47, 4.37), and **Tyler Clippard** (69, 3.67).