

Naylor becomes first Canadian taken in 2015 MLB Draft

NAYLOR, Josh

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Josh Naylor was only 15 years old when he was hitting balls out of Marlins Park in Miami en route to reaching the home run derby final at the Perfect Game Power Showcase in 2012.

Little did he know at the time that he would go on to be drafted by the Miami Marlins, who selected the St. Joan of Arc Catholic Secondary School student with the 12th overall pick in the MLB Draft Monday night.

"I think it's kind of coincidence that I was there for the Power Showcase in 2012 and it's pretty funny that I ended up with them after all I've been through," said Naylor, who turns 18 on June 22. "I'm humbled and very appreciative of all the support from my friends, my family, loved ones and coaches."

Naylor, a left-handed power-hitting first baseman, became the highest-drafted Canadian positional player in

Naylor looks to add more power to Marlins lineup

It's been a long time since the Miami Marlins have drafted a player with as much power as Josh Naylor.

Michael Hill, Miami's president of baseball operations, said the last time he saw such a strong-hitting prospect was back in 2007, when the club drafted Giancarlo Stanton, who's currently tied for the Major League lead in home runs with 19 this season.

"We had (Naylor) evaluated as the top power prospect in the draft," Hill said on the Marlins website. "That's something that you (can't) easily acquire. We haven't really drafted power like this since we took Big G in 2007, so to have Josh available at 12, we couldn't be happier."

Although Naylor realizes it can be a long road to the MLB, he hopes to get there while Stanton's still with the Marlins. Naylor hopes to evolve into someone who can bat right before or after Stanton in the Marlins' lineup. "If I make it there early enough and we can hit 3-4 (in the batting order), it would be such a dominant lineup," he said. "It's a young team on the uprise, so I hope it works out for everyone."

MLB history. Pitchers Adam Loewen, Jeff Francis and Philippe Aumont are the only Canadians to be chosen higher in previous drafts.

Many people, including Naylor himself, were surprised when he was drafted so early considering MLB had him ranked as the 59th prospect.

"It was a big surprise for me and my whole family," Naylor said.

"I was watching and waiting, just sitting down with my family and having a good time and then hearing my name called by the Marlins was an honour. It's amazing being a part of the Marlins and being taken that early."

Naylor has been a member of Canada's junior national team since 2012 and also played for the Ontario Blue Jays and Mississauga North Tigers.

He recently returned from the Dominican Republic, where he hit five home runs during a 12-game stint with Team Canada against Dominican professional teams.

Oakland A's third baseman Brett Lawrie had a similar output for Team Canada in 2008 before he was chosen 16th overall that year.

Canadian coach Greg Hamilton called Naylor the best high school hitter in the world, while Dan Bleiwas, director of baseball operations for the Ontario Blue Jays, claims he was born to be in the Major League.

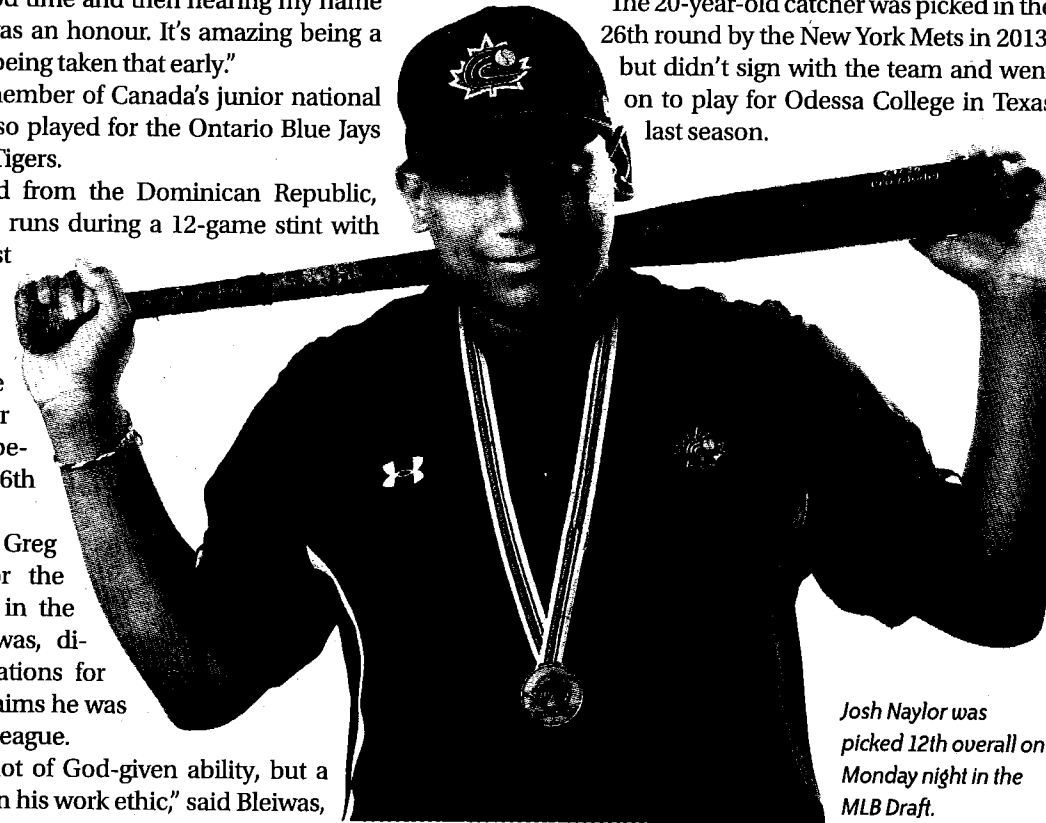
"Obviously there's a lot of God-given ability, but a lot of this is predicated on his work ethic," said Bleiwas,

who also coached Naylor this season on OJB's under-18 white team.

"He just worked on a higher level than anyone else and when you get the God-given ability with that kind of desire and work ethic, this is ultimately what you get: A player who can do some unique things."

Owen Spiwak, another Mississaugan, was also taken in the MLB Draft by the Toronto Blue Jays in the 10th round Tuesday night.

The 20-year-old catcher was picked in the 26th round by the New York Mets in 2013, but didn't sign with the team and went on to play for Odessa College in Texas last season.



Josh Naylor was picked 12th overall on Monday night in the MLB Draft.