UNDER THE RADAR PROSPECTS: 2026 NEW YORK YANKEES

by Thaddeus Sawyer
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
thaddeus.sawyer@uconn.edu

As the 2026 Minor League Baseball season begins, many Yankees fans will be focusing on names such as perceived MLB roster snubs Spencer Jones and Jasson Domínguez or blue-chip pitching prospects Carlos Lagrange and Elmer Rodríguez.

However, a different crop of players, often on the outskirts of prospect rankings, will enter the season hoping to find themselves in the same sentences as the four above by October.

When this exercise was done almost a year ago, the three players mentioned included Lagrange, Griffin Herring and Edgleen Perez. Going into the 2025 season, Perez ranked the highest amongst the three on MLB.com's preseason system ranking, coming in at 13. Lagrange came in at 19, while Herring was all the way down at 28.

Fast forward to today, Lagrange is a consensus top 100 prospect while Herring and Perez were key pieces in the trades that brought Ryan McMahon and David Bednar to New York at the 2025 deadline.

After successfully finding three names in 2025, here is a trio of players who could find themselves rocketing up prospect rankings by the end of 2026.

Henry Lalane

Lalane and Lagrange came into 2025 on similar footing: a pair of highly touted international signees who had signed less than a year apart and had both suffered injuries in recent seasons. In fact, Lalane was ranked higher than Lagrange by MLB.com, coming in at 11.

The difference from there? The latter tossed 120 minor league innings. The former was limited to just 19.1. In fact, Lalane has just 143 career innings since signing in 2021.

The Bronx native, who signed out of the Dominican Republic after moving there when he was young, has long been lauded for his strikeout potential and ability to touch the upper 90s. However, the velocity has taken a hit due to shoulder issues which had to be surgically fixed.

Lalane still has the ability to strike out the side in any given inning, evidenced by his 11 strikeouts per nine innings in Low-A in 2025. On the other hand, the soon to be 22-year-old can also be prone to walking the house, walking over seven batters per nine.

If the left-hander can recapture his early career velocity and bring the walks back down to even close to where he had it in the Florida Coast League in 2023 (1.7/9), he could make a similar jump to Lagrange in 2026.

Thatcher Hurd

A third-round pick out of LSU in 2024, Hurd has yet to throw a professional pitch. The 23-year-old's last outing came with the Cotuit Kettleers of the Cape Cod Baseball League in his draft year before undergoing Tommy John surgery prior to 2025.

Hurd has always possessed first round stuff but often not the production to go with it. After working to a 1.06 ERA in his first year of college at UCLA before transferring to LSU, Hurd struggled in two years for the Tigers while bouncing in and out of the weekend rotation. The right-hander finished his time in Baton Rouge with a 6.04 ERA, though he was the winning pitcher in the 2023 NCAA National Championship Game.

Hurd should make his debut at some point in 2026 and could reach High-A if the buildup and return go as planned. Based on what he showed in college, Baseball Savant credits Hurd with a plus fastball and slider and an average curve. What Savant is low on is his control, handing him a 40-grade which may keep him from becoming a starter. Still, the Yankees love taking pitchers with poor college results and below average control and turning them into viable upper-level prospects (see Ben Hess). A lot will depend on the speed of his return, but don't count out Hurd making it as a starter just yet.

Harrison Cohen

Rounding out the trio of arms, Cohen is easily the most experienced and likely would be even if the other two hadn't been plagued by the injury bug. One of the last true prospects in the organization to be born before the turn of the century, the 26-year-old Cohen will turn 27 this season; not exactly the prototypical age of a notable farmhand.

Even making his way to a list like this would have been a tall task after going undrafted in 2022. However, the right-hander has earned that respect through his consistently dominant minor league performance.

Cohen worked to sub-two full season ERAs across multiple levels in both 2024 and 2025, striking out over a batter an inning in both campaigns. The New York native ran into some walk trouble in 2025, as his 5.3 BB/9 was over two higher than in 2024. Cohen's pitch mix is also questionable, as MLB.com considers only his slider to be above average.

Pitching in both the World Baseball Classic for Team Israel and Major League spring training, Cohen will likely get his first cracks at the big leagues this season. The bullpen arm will likely never feature at the back end of a contending bullpen or come in to get big postseason outs. There's a reason he went both unprotected and unselected in this past off-season's Rule 5 draft. Still, there's something to be said for being a reliable middle-inning reliever on a league-minimum contract.

New York Yankees pitching prospect Henry Lalone in uniform. Lalone has only pitched 143 innings since signing with the Yankees in 2021. PHOTO COURTESY OF @HLALON18 ON INSTAGRAM



KIMI ANTONELLI BECOMES YOUNGEST CHAMPIONSHIP LEADER IN F1 HISTORY

by Alex Klancko
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
lvb24001@uconn.edu

Kimi Antonelli won the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday to become the youngest Formula 1 championship leader in history at 19 years and 216 days old.

Antonelli beat out current Ferrari driver and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton for the feat. Hamilton was just over 22 years old when he became the championship leader in 2007.

Antonelli, who led 31 laps on the day, had a horrific start. He dropped from pole to sixth after the first lap and slowly climbed his way back up.

Antonelli needed a bit of luck though, and he got it. Shortly after race leader Oscar Piastri and teammate George Russell pitted for fresh tires ahead of him, a safety car came out when Oliver Bearman ran off the track and hit barriers in turn 13.

Antonelli pitted for fresh hard tires and kept the lead which he wouldn't relinquish for the remainder of the race.

The win gives Antonelli his second victory of his young career and back-to-back wins from pole this season.

Antonelli currently beats his teammate Russell in the standings, 72 to 63 points.

Piastri finished second after taking his first grand prix laps of the season.

In his home race in Australia, Piastri crashed on the reconnaissance lap and with not enough time to repair the car, did not start the race.

Two weeks ago in China, Piastri participated in the sprint race on Saturday, finishing sixth for three points. But right before the main race on Sunday, McLaren found an issue with his car engine electrical system that prevented him from starting the race.

Rounding out the podium was Charles Leclerc who fended off the attacks of Russell in the closing laps of the race.

This was Leclerc's second podium of the season with his first coming in the opening race in Australia.

Although Leclerc is one of the best drivers on the grid, he hasn't won since the 2024 United States GP, 32 races ago. That is the third longest winless drought of his career since he won his first race in Belgium in 2019.

The longest winless drought in his career is 40 races between July 24, 2022, and May 19, 2024. With the state of the Ferrari engine versus the Mercedes engine, it looks like his winless streak of 40 may be broken this season.

Every team except Cadillac, who are in their first season, and Aston Martin have scored points this season. Haas has gotten off to a mega start, grabbing 18 points in the opening three races.

Second year driver, Bearman, currently sits seventh in the standings with 17 points while Esteban Ocon is fifteenth with one point.

Red Bull Racing has started off the season in poor form. Four-time champion Max Verstappen sits ninth in the standings with 12 points after grabbing four points in Japan, while Isack Hadjar has four points for twelfth in the standings with an eighth-place finish in China.

Red Bull has severely lacked pace at times and with the poor reliability of their cars. This season has not been kind to the six-time constructor's champion.

Looking ahead, F1 will race on May 1 in the Miami Grand Prix.



Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli with his winner's trophy from the Japanese Grand Prix. despite falling to sixth after the opening lap, a well-timed safety car helped Kimi Antonelli keep the lead and the win. PHOTO COURTESY OF @KIMI.ANTONELLI ON INSTAGRAM