SPORTS

Three Yankees prospects who broke out in 2026

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MLB player Yostin Pena runs on the field. Pena signed with the Yankees last November.

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With former first-round draft selections George Lombard Jr. and Spencer Jones graduating to the major league level and well-regarded farmhands such as pitchers Henry Lalane, Jack Cebert and Ben Grable switching hands at the 2026 trade deadline, the New York Yankees' farm system has lost much of its luster.

Despite notching solid numbers at Triple-A, right-handed pitcher Elmer Rodríguez posted pedestrian results in his first taste at the majors. Fellow right-hander Carlos Lagrange missed out on making his own major league debut due to a right shoulder injury sustained in early July.

Though he also missed much of 2026 due to injury, 2025 first round pick Dax Kilby was the only player ranked within MLB Pipeline's end-of-the-season Top 100 Prospects list, coming in at 78. As such, the Yankees' farm system ranked near the bottom of the league at 27, according to MLB Pipeline.

While that ranking has continued to drop in recent years, the team also saw a smattering of prospects' post-breakout seasons in the lower levels of the minors. Here is a look at a trio of prospects who positioned themselves well to shoot up prospect rankings heading into 2027.

Wilberson De Pena

The Yankees acquired De Pena from the Los Angeles Angels along with international bonus pool money at the 2025 trade deadline, sending former top prospect Oswald Peraza to the Halos to clear a major league roster spot.

After the first month of the 2026 season, the trade looked extremely favorable for the Angels. In the month of April, then 25-year-old Peraza slashed .262/.333/.446 and looked like a competent infield option for a team ever in need of young talent.

Fast forward to the end of May, and the script had flipped completely. Across the first month of the season, De Pena burst onto the scene with a .395/.451/.765 slash line, seven home runs and 15 extra-base hits in his first 20 games stateside. The 19-year-old owned the Florida Complex League across a 56-game sample size, eventually winning the league's MVP award and triple crown after leading the league with 81 hits, 16 home runs, 67 RBIs, a .358 batting average and a 1.088 OPS.

Though De Pena struggled in a 21-game taste of Single-A after a late season promotion, posting a .638 OPS, the outfielder was almost two years younger than the average position player in the Florida State League this season, according to Baseball Reference.

Though De Pena's season strikeout rate of 22.4% is solid for a power hitter, it is also bogged down by a 29.3% rate in 92 Single-A plate appearances. If De Pena can continue to hit for power without selling out for pop completely, allowing that strikeout rate to drop a hair, he has 30-plus homer potential at the major league level, according to MLB Pipeline.

Yostin Pena

At just 18 years old, Pena torched the Dominican Summer League over 37 games in 2026 with a .375/.457/.646 triple slash in his professional debut. Skipping over the Florida Complex League to make his U.S. debut at the Single-A level, Pena continued to hit, posting a .941 OPS in 24 games.

Signing with the Yankees for $357,533 last November, the Dominican outfielder showed that his raw power could hold up against older pitching in Single-A. Pena posted a max exit velocity of 114 mph, according to MLB Pipeline. To maximize that raw power, Pena will have to lower his 45% chase rate at the Single-A level and lift the ball in the air more to avoid rolling over, according to MLB Pipeline.

While Pena is a long way away from the majors and will have to clean up his approach to continue progressing, his potential is perhaps the reason all-star catcher Adley Rutschman is not a Yankee and is instead a member of the rival Boston Red Sox.

Pena was part of the four-player package the Baltimore Orioles requested from the Yankees at the trade deadline, with Pena's inclusion in the deal being "one big sticking point" for the Yankees, according to Jon Heyman of the New York Post through MLB Trade Rumors.

Allen Facundo

Though the Yankees left Facundo unprotected in the 2025 Rule 5 Draft, that same treatment should not be expected this offseason after the left-hander put together a full season of starts for the first time in his career in 2026. Starting all 22 of his appearances across Single-A and High-A, Facundo posted a 4.44 ERA in 19 High-A starts while touching the triple digits with his fastball.

Even more important than the results, Facundo's 114 1/3 innings pitched in 2026 nearly topped the 148 innings that the Venezuelan tossed throughout the first five seasons of his career combined while facing multiple injuries. Facundo also struck out 148 batters in 2026.

That positive turn in health and punchout ability resulted in Facundo jumping from the Yankees' No. 26 ranked prospect to begin 2026 to No. 7 by the end of the season. That was the largest jump by any Yankees prospect and the sixth largest across baseball, according to Rob Terranova of MLB.com.

While Facundo will be 24 to start next season, his high-grade fastball could make him a fast-track candidate for the Yankees' currently unsettled 2027 bullpen should his slider continue to develop.



MLB player Allen Facundo pitches the ball. Facundo will be 24 at the start of next season.

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