

## Houston Astros look to Sign Most of their Draft Class

Written by Nicholas Norman  
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Astros scouting director Mike Elias has hopes of signing the bulk of the Astros draft class by no later than next week. Houston kicked things off in the draft last Thursday with the first overall pick, locking down homegrown talent and Stanford right-hander Mark Appel at the No. 1 spot.

“It’s incredibly special,” Appel said. “Both my parents were born in Houston and raised there, and I lived [in Houston] for 12 years before moving to California. All of my family lives there. It’s exciting to potentially be back playing there.”

Another right-handed ace followed in UC-Irvine is standout Andrew Thurman at the 40th pick to round out Day 1. Day 2 lightened up on the pitchers, but the collegiate trend continued. North Carolina left-hander Kent Emanuel led off the Astros’ second-day selections, going first in the third round. The last time Houston drafted three straight pitchers to open a Draft was in 2002 (six straight). Three of those six eventually made the Majors.

The Astros finally deviated from pitching by picking a pair of college teammates. Houston

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grabbed the starting right side of the infield for Vanderbilt, taking first baseman Conrad Gregor in the fourth round and second baseman Tony Kemp in the fifth. Kemp was the 2013 SEC Player of the Year.



The Astros signed seventh round pick James Ramsey on Monday. Ramsey, a prototypical leadoff man, was an All-Big East selection as a center fielder after hitting .337 with 14 doubles, two triples, 29 walks and three home runs as a junior at South Florida.

The Astros signed three more of their draft picks Tuesday. RHP Kyle Westwood (13th round), LHP Sebastian Kessay (22nd round) and C Brett Booth (34th round). The signees should be able to help the Astros in the future.

“I think we executed what we wanted to do in this Draft,” Astros director of amateur scouting Mike Elias said. “Getting the best player on the board was a start, and then we got a lot more pitchers along the way. That’s a good thing to have since we felt it was the strength of this class. You need as many arms as you can get.”

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