



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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February 6, 2019

- Daily Herald, **Cubs ownership, MLB respond to Joe Ricketts' 'racially insensitive' emails leaked**
<https://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20190205/cubs-ownership-mlb-respond-to-joe-ricketts-racially-insensitive-emails-leaked>
- Daily Herald, **Cubs announce spring training, regular season broadcast schedule**
<https://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20190205/cubs-announce-spring-training-regular-season-broadcast-schedule>
- The Athletic, **State of the union: Joe Ricketts' emails will have consequences for 'Cubs Way'**
<https://theathletic.com/802148/2019/02/05/state-of-the-union-joe-ricketts-emails-will-have-consequences-for-cubs-way/>
- The Athletic, **Greenberg: Reading about the Warriors gets me thinking about the Cubs and Bulls**
<https://theathletic.com/800755/2019/02/05/greenberg-reading-about-warriors-gets-me-thinking-about-cubs-and-bulls/>
- NBC Sports Chicago, **The 'reins are off' Cubs pitching prospect Adbert Alzolay after injury-shortened 2018**
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/reins-are-cubs-pitching-prospect-adbert-alzolay-after-injury-shortened-2018-farm-system-bullpen>
- NBC Sports Chicago, **State of the Cubs: Right field**
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/state-cubs-right-field-heyward-bryce-harper-bryant-zobrist-happ-descalso>
- NBC Sports Chicago, **They Were There: Former Cubs Involved in Henry Aaron Milestones**
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/they-were-there-former-cubs-involved-henry-aaron-milestones>
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Daily Herald

Cubs ownership, MLB respond to Joe Ricketts' 'racially insensitive' emails leaked

By Bruce Miles

Major League Baseball reacted quickly Tuesday to racist and Islamophobic emails sent and received by Joe Ricketts, patriarch of the family that owns the Chicago Cubs.

The emails were revealed Monday by SplinterNews.com.

"We are aware of the email exchanges involving Joe Ricketts," the MLB statement reads. "While many of the emails were not written by Mr. Ricketts, the content is extremely offensive and completely at odds with the values and principles of Major League Baseball. Providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone is extremely important for MLB and our 30 clubs."

Joe Ricketts helped to bankroll his family's purchase of the Cubs from the Tribune Co. in 2009. Ricketts four children, headed by chairman Tom Ricketts, run the baseball team, and a statement Monday from Tom Ricketts stressed that Joe Ricketts is not involved in the operation of the Cubs.

The emails published by SplinterNews.com reveal Ricketts expressing fear and distrust of Muslims and engaging of talk of the "birther" conspiracy about whether former President Barack Obama was born in the United States.

Joe Ricketts and Tom Ricketts each issued statements late Monday as the emails became public.

"I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails," Joe Ricketts' statement read. "Sometimes I received emails that I should have condemned. Other times I've said things that don't reflect my value system. I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong."

Tom Ricketts added his own statement: "My father is not involved with the operation of the Chicago Cubs in any way. I am trusted with representing this organization and our fans with respect for people from all backgrounds. These emails do not reflect the culture we've worked so hard to build at the Chicago Cubs since 2009."

Tom Ricketts has kept his politics close to the vest. Tom's brother, Pete, is the Republican governor of Nebraska. Another brother, Todd Ricketts, is active in Republican politics. Sister Laura Ricketts was an active supporter of Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate for president in 2016.

The four Ricketts family members serve on the Cubs' board.

According to Julian Green, the Cubs' vice president of communications and community affairs, the Cubs have reached out to Chicago's Muslim community, but Green added the Cubs are not ready to disclose information about a possible meeting.

The Ricketts family drew criticism from fans and media last month when the board members did not appear before fans at the team's annual convention. It has been a convention tradition since the family took over ownership of the Cubs that the board members would take questions from fans in a ballroom setting.

This year, the family said they did not appear before fans in the question-and-answer format because the session had been "low rated" in surveys sent to convention attendees.

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Daily Herald

Cubs announce spring training, regular season broadcast schedule

By Bruce Miles

The last season of Cubs TV broadcasting as fans have known it will begin in spring training.

The Cubs on Tuesday announced their multimedia broadcast schedule for spring training and their television broadcast schedule for the regular season.

WGN-TV will begin its 72nd and likely final season of televising Cubs games before the Cubs embark on their own TV channel for 2020.

Four spring games will air on WGN, and two will be shown by NBC Sports Chicago. WGN will televise its first game when the Cubs host the Milwaukee Brewers March 2. Len Kasper and Jim Deshaies return to call all Cubs TV games. NBC Sports Chicago's first game is March 17 when the Cubs host the Colorado Rockies.

WGN will televise the club's regular-season opener at 3:05 p.m. March 28 at Texas. NBC Sports Chicago's first broadcast is 7:05 p.m. March 30 at Texas. ABC 7 has its first broadcast, the Wrigley Field home opener, at 1:20 p.m. April 8 against Pittsburgh.

NBC Sports Chicago will televise as many as 83 Cubs games, WGN-TV will broadcast 45 games and ABC 7 has 25 games. ESPN will televise three consecutive Sunday night games: May 5, 12 and 19.

Nearly every Cubs spring training game will be available via television, radio or Internet radio broadcast.

Ten games will be broadcast on WSCR 670-AM radio, and 22 will be available via Internet radio broadcast at Cubs.com. Fans will be able to access the Cubs webcasts on Cubs.com and MLB.com for free by registering for a login account with the website.

WSCR 670-AM will air its first game Feb. 23, the club's season opener at Sloan Park, when the Cubs play the Brewers. Pat Hughes and Ron Coomer return as the radio voices. Kasper will again join Mick Gillispie, radio broadcaster for the Cubs' Class AA Tennessee affiliate, for most of the Cubs.com Internet radio broadcasts.

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The Athletic

State of the union: Joe Ricketts' emails will have consequences for 'Cubs Way'

By Patrick Mooney

Maybe the Cubs are too big to fail.

A brand built on more than a century of losing – the mythology behind what they marketed as the last great quest in professional sports – should be able to withstand negative offseason headlines. Like snow after a polar vortex, this could all melt away by the time you're sitting peacefully at Wrigley Field this summer, staring at the blue sky and the green grass and drinking beers with your friends, not thinking about dark money and email leaks.

But the cracks are clearly visible in "The Foundation for Sustained Success." And this stain won't be easy to erase.

The latest email dump on the Splinter News website showed an ugly side of Joe Ricketts, the patriarch whose TD Ameritrade fortune helped his children buy the team in 2009. "The Billionaire's Inbox," a series organized by investigative reporter Molly Osberg, exposed a group email dated April 11, 2011 that used the N-word as a punchline.

"great laugh," Joe Ricketts responded.

Another exchange revealed what Joe Ricketts thinks of Muslims: "Islam is a cult and not a religion. Christianity and Judaism (are) based on love whereas Islam is based on 'kill the infidel' a thing of evil."

Re: President Barack Obama, Splinter broke out one section of birther conspiracy emails from a Joe Ricketts account with this heading: "On Obama's past life as a drug mule and gay sex worker."

While it's not totally shocking to learn the 77-year-old political mega-donor harbors those ideas, it's still jarring to see them all spelled out on a screen and spilled into public view.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama's former White House chief of staff, responded on Tuesday morning with a statement that brought back his bitter memories from the 2012 presidential race. Emanuel pulled \$150 million in potential funding for the Wrigley Field renovation plan after The New

York Times exposed a super PAC consulting with Joe Ricketts on racially charged attack ads against Obama.

“Joe Ricketts once said that I do not share his values,” Emanuel said, likely referring to an email in an earlier Splinter story. “Truer words were never spoken. The ignorance and intolerance he has espoused are not welcome in Chicago. Those are not the values I learned from my parents, and those are not the values Amy and I have instilled in our children. Joe Ricketts should consider himself lucky he has never met my mother. She would teach him a lesson. I am proud not to share his bigoted opinions. Hate has no home in Chicago.”

Ahmed Rehab – a leader for the Council on American-Islamic Relations as the executive director of its Chicago office and its national strategic communications director – summed up the feelings within his community.

“Bigotry has no home in Chicago,” Rehab said in a statement. “Mr. (Ricketts’) comments are both alarming and highly disappointing. The community is in shock. There are countless Chicagoans who are both Muslims and Cubs fans. This is particularly hurtful to them. The idea that Muslims do not belong or are a threat to our culture is a tired, old Islamophobic trope that is disproven every day through living, working, contributing, and leading in America, our home. It is lazy, ignorant and moreover blatantly false.

“We expect and demand better. Sports are supposed to bring us together. The Cubs need to act hard and fast to ensure Chicagoans that they embrace our values of anti-bigotry.”

After Splinter’s story first surfaced on Monday, Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts released a statement through a spokesman that attempted to distance the team from his father’s right-wing politics.

“We are aware of the racially insensitive emails in my father’s account that were published by an online media outlet,” Tom Ricketts said. “Let me be clear: The language and views expressed in those emails have no place in our society.

“My father is not involved with the operation of the Chicago Cubs in any way. I am trusted with representing this organization and our fans with a respect for people from all backgrounds. These emails do not reflect the culture we’ve worked so hard to build at the Chicago Cubs since 2009.”

On Tuesday, a Cubs representative said that the team and Tom Ricketts have contacted CAIR-Chicago and the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago in hopes of setting up a meeting.

Joe Ricketts is not a visible presence around the team or an active voice in the franchise’s day-to-day operations, though he was involved in setting up the family trust that impacts how the big-market club functions.

To finance the leveraged partnership with Tribune Co., Joe Ricketts and his wife Marlene sold TD Ameritrade stock worth about \$400 million. Heralded as an asset that would be passed down from one generation to the next, the \$845 million deal for the Cubs also included Wrigley Field and a piece of Comcast SportsNet Chicago.

As part of its annual franchise valuations, Forbes estimated the Cubs were worth \$2.9 billion last year. On Jan. 25, the Cubs’ parent company, Chicago Entertainment Ventures, LLC, announced it had completed the purchase of Tribune’s remaining 5 percent ownership stake.

Owning a championship-caliber team with an iconic venue and a global following has also increased the family's clout and burnished the credentials of the team's board members. On both sides of the aisle, the Ricketts siblings continue to be political players.

Todd Ricketts – who withdrew his nomination to be Donald Trump's deputy commerce secretary in 2017 – is the Republican National Committee's finance chairman and a chief fundraiser for Trump's 2020 campaign. Pete Ricketts, Nebraska's two-term Republican governor, won re-election last November. Laura Ricketts is an influential donor in Democratic circles and a leading figure in the LGBT community.

Culture is hard to define. It's winning more games than any other big-league team across the last four seasons. It's restoring Wrigley Field as part of a real-estate development that will cost around \$1 billion. It's Cubs Charities. It's also surprisingly fragile for an organization that won the 2016 World Series.

That victory tour included two trips to the White House within six months – the Obama administration's final public event and an Oval Office visit with Trump – all part of a championship hangover that lasted parts of two seasons.

Following ownership's budget directives – and paying the price for miscalculations made in last winter's free-agent market – Theo Epstein's baseball operations department has only worked around the edges of the roster instead of signing a superstar like Bryce Harper this offseason.

After yet another round of changes to his coaching staff, star manager Joe Maddon is a lame duck who might have to win another World Series to get a new contract with the Cubs.

Cubs fans already have conflicting feelings about the decision to give Addison Russell a conditional second chance while the shortstop serves a 40-game suspension under Major League Baseball's joint domestic violence policy with the players' union.

All this comes at a particularly sensitive time for the franchise's business/baseball interests. By Opening Day, the Cubs are planning to open three more "premier" clubs at Wrigley Field. By 2020, the Cubs are expected to launch a new cable network with Sinclair Broadcast Group, the media conglomerate famous for its pro-Trump agenda.

Beyond cord-cutting and empty seats – last season MLB reported overall attendance below 70 million for the first time since 2003 – the game's power brokers have to solve pace-of-play issues and brace for a potential work stoppage when the current collective bargaining agreement expires after the 2021 season. Baseball officials have to make the product more appealing to a broader audience and grow a game that is in danger of becoming a sport for rich kids whose families can afford the costs of travel teams, showcases and personal trainers.

"We are aware of the email exchanges involving Joe Ricketts," MLB's official statement read. "While many of the emails were not written by Mr. Ricketts, the content is extremely offensive and completely at odds with the values and principles of Major League Baseball. Providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone is extremely important for MLB and our 30 clubs."

"Stick to sports" is a fantasy while covering an overtly political organization in a \$10 billion industry. During last month's Cubs Convention, the franchise's business-side executives used part of a presentation to rail against 44th Ward alderman Tom Tunney, who's up for re-election on Feb. 26 and running against a Ricketts-backed challenger.

"I was really uncomfortable with the political side of this conference," one fan said during the Q&A session at the Sheraton Grand Chicago. "I realize there's a place for that. I do live in the city, but I don't live in the ward, so I don't have a dog in the fight. But it just was uncomfortable kind of being lectured about who you should be voting for in these elections."

Sticking to sports also ignores the game's powerful potential to unite, from Presidential Medal of Freedom winner Ernie Banks to Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation champion Ron Santo to cancer survivor Anthony Rizzo and his personal affiliations with Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in South Florida.

At a polarizing moment in history, Joe Ricketts already gave his state of the union, and it will inevitably reflect on "The Cubs Way."

"I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails," Joe Ricketts said in a statement issued through his publicist. "Sometimes I received emails that I should have condemned. Other times I've said things that don't reflect my value system. I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong."

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The Athletic

Greenberg: Reading about the Warriors gets me thinking about the Cubs and Bulls
By Jon Greenberg

In a recent interview with our Tim Kawakami, Golden State Warriors co-owner Joe Lacob planted the team's flag when it comes to Klay Thompson and Kevin Durant's upcoming free agency.

"We can do whatever we want (financially)," Lacob told Kawakami. "And you should expect that that's not going to be a reason this team ... doesn't stay great going forward. We have the capital to pay our players what they deserve. And we will."

Lacob and the Warriors, of course, benefitted from timing with the ability to pay Durant during that brief, controversial salary cap spike. But, like the Cubs, the team also created an inviting environment to attract marquee players.

"I mean, theoretically yes, but I'm not really worried about it," Lacob said in response to a question about looking beyond this season. "All we can do is be the best organization we can, treat players the best we can, provide the best environment, have the best management, have a great arena. I mean, all the things we do. The culture of the organization, I think, speaks for itself. Then the chips fall where they may."

Lacob caused some eye-rolling — I admit, I made fun of him — with this braggy New York Times interview years ago, but as owners go, he has the right idea. Spend money to win and spend more money to keep winning.

"Of course, that's the role we're in right now," Lacob said. "Twenty-nine teams are all trying to get better. That's what they're supposed to do. Our job is to do that, too, to continually get better and I think we've gotten better pretty much every year. This is probably our best roster ever. So we're going to continue to do that."

This was the key quote for me:

"I think we'll continue to have a good team if not a great team and try to hopefully be a title-contending team for as long as we can," he said to Kawakami. "We'll be aggressive. Nobody's going to outspend us. Nobody's going to outwork us."

What a novel concept!

Everyone reading this might not agree with the point I'm making, but you definitely understand the point I'm making. Can you dig this, Tom Ricketts?

I repeat what I've written numerous times this offseason: The Cubs should be spending to win now, while they have the pieces in place to win now. I'd love to see what this now-infamous budget really looks like, particularly what expenses are being used to limit the baseball operations department's Bryce Harper money. Because it's ludicrous if they don't give themselves a chance to get him.

I'm not dumb. I get their reasoning. Unlimited budgets aren't reality. The Cubs have spent a ton on their pitching staff, including \$20 million to keep Cole Hamels because last year's pitching additions were a bust. That's on Theo Epstein and his staff.

The Cubs don't have big TV money like some other teams who, incidentally, also haven't made a winning bid for either Harper or Manny Machado. There are big-spending teams and outliers who can out-spend even them. The Cubs are in the former group.

The Warriors are in a salary cap league, but they're willing to pay the penalties for going over. They are also about to open an absolute cash cow of an arena in San Francisco, the \$1 billion privately financed Chase Center. Kids all over the world are wearing Steph Curry and Durant jerseys. Business is booming.

The Cubs are in a competitive window just like the Warriors. Golden State doesn't have young talent to replace the prime talent it has now. Steve Kerr won't coach forever. It wasn't long ago the Warriors were a joke, one of the worst organizations in all of sports. But a sea change happened from ownership on down. The Cubs were in much better shape when Ricketts bought the team from the Tribune Co., but there are some similarities.

I remember when national reporters were trying to frame the Cubs as baseball's Warriors during the 2016 season. Will those comps return? That's the goal as the 2019 season opens next week in spring training.

Harper could be the Cubs' Durant, but alas, it's probably not gonna happen. Hey, the Ricketts family sure could use a positive distraction right around now. Harper would certainly be just that. But maybe they'll open a petting zoo on Gallagher Way or expand the farmer's market to three days a week. Sounds a little more within their budget.

For all the complaining we're doing about the Cubs' \$300 million-pinching, their leaders know they just need to start playing games. Epstein and Jed Hoyer will be hooting and hollering during infield drills in Mesa, let alone the real thing.

While Lacob's comments first made me think about the Cubs' situation, I also hope the Bulls front office reads that interview. While they are forever telling you and themselves that they will spend when it makes sense, a more aggressive approach is necessary sooner than later.

The Bulls earn their disrespect from outside their building every time they pick up cash to launder unwanted players. (I wonder if there's a sense of pride helping other, more competitive teams lower their luxury tax bill?) I know, it makes fiscal sense. But while other teams managed to hoard second-round picks, or buy them from the Bulls, Jerry Reinsdorf's club hoards cash presumably to pay off coaches and lessen bad contracts.

Not that they're totally cheap. The Bulls do spend money, even when they don't have to. Just look at the bizarre homecoming deals for Dwyane Wade and Jabari Parker.

The Bulls don't need a new arena and they did just modernize the cash cow that is the United Center. (Someone tell the teams I promise to try Queenie's Supper Club if they stop squeezing in 50 ads a game.) But pretty soon, without a competitive product, those seats aren't going to be filled and those suites will be empty.

When the Bulls were good seven, eight years ago, the NBA was almost radically different. It was in Tom Thibodeau's last-gasp season that the Warriors won their first of three titles in four years under Kerr. In 2010-11, the Bulls' only appearance in the conference championship game since the Jordan era, the Warriors had 36 wins. Steph Curry was a second-year player and man, look at that roster.

Thanks mainly to Derrick Rose's injury luck, the Bulls never built off that one season — and I wonder if they would've evolved with the league trends. Golden State has managed to avoid the maladies that cripple other fallen contenders. Under Lacob, it is also a more aggressive and progressive organization, from their embrace of analytics to Kerr's modern offensive philosophy.

They fired Mark Jackson, who had led them to two straight playoff appearances, to hire Kerr, improving both performance and, from what has been reported, organizational tension.

The Warriors won't stay on top forever, but credit to them for putting their chips on the table while they can. Bulls fans hope Michael and Jerry Reinsdorf do the same if this rebuild proves fruitful, but while the modern NBA player would love to play in San Francisco, Chicago has never provided the same beacon. You can't blame the Reinsdorfs for Chicago winters.

It's helpful to remember the Warriors' ascent got a major boost after Bob Myers, a former agent and UCLA basketball player, was hired as an assistant GM and quickly promoted two months before the 2012 draft. The Warriors, if you remember, took Draymond Green in the second round that summer.

While Golden State already had Klay Thompson (drafted the previous season when Myers was newly hired) and Steph Curry, the addition of Kerr and Myers turned this team into a contender and a standard-setter in the NBA. Kerr, to me, is the key to everything.

Will John Paxson be able to find his own Kerr? To his credit, Paxson has made two good coaching hires in Scott Skiles and Thibodeau, though one would argue they are each the antithesis of Kerr, in terms of personality. If Paxson sticks with Jim Boylen for another year — no offense to Jim — it would be a dubious move. Unless Paxson is waiting on a coach with a job to come free the next offseason, the Bulls need a fresh start, a new approach.

Both the Bulls and Cubs could look to the West for inspiration.

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NBC Sports Chicago

The 'reins are off' Cubs pitching prospect Adbert Alzolay after injury-shortened 2018

By Tony Andracki

Adbert Alzolay may still wind up a frontline starting pitcher for the Cubs, but it's safe to say he won't realize that potential in 2019.

Alzolay — who turns 24 in March — has fallen off top prospect lists after a forgettable 2018 campaign in which he posted a 4.76 ERA and 1.41 WHIP with Triple-A Iowa in only 8 starts before going down for the season with a lat injury.

The injury wasn't bad enough to require surgery and Alzolay is expected to be a full go for spring training this season, but he will not be afforded a full season's worth of work.

"The reins are off," Cubs VP Jason McLeod said last month. "He's worked exceptionally hard. The kid's phenomenal. He feels great; he looks great. But yeah, it won't be a full 160-inning year."

Alzolay threw just 39.2 innings last year after tossing 114.1 and 120.1 frames the two years prior in the Cubs system while serving as the organization's top pitching prospect. Despite the injury-shortened campaign, Alzolay is still the Cubs' top pitching prospect by FanGraphs' ranking, but comes in behind Brailyn Marquez on Baseball America's list and Alex Lange on Baseball Prospectus' Top 10 this winter.

Still, the Cubs are bullish on Alzolay. They like the on-field talent (he posted a 2.99 ERA, 1.10 WHIP, 8.5 K/9 while splitting time in Class-A Myrtle Beach and Double-A Tennessee in 2017) and the organization absolutely raves about his makeup, especially as he's worked his way back from this injury.

There was talk last May of the young right-hander coming up to Chicago to make his big-league debut against the Reds in Cincinnati, but the Cubs wound up going a different direction and Alzolay's season was done just a couple weeks later.

The initial plan for Alzolay is to head to begin 2019 in the minors and probably won't be in the rotation given his innings limit this year. The best bet for him to make it to Chicago and impact the big-league club is via the bullpen.

He made 7 appearances as a reliever against some of the game's top young talent in the Arizona Fall League in 2017, but otherwise has only worked out of the bullpen for a pair of games in Class-A ball since 2015.

The Cubs desperately need to start getting some pitching contributions from their farm system, and Alzolay is one of the arms with the greatest potential to change that narrative.

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NBC Sports Chicago

State of the Cubs: Right field

By Tony Andracki

As the Cubs maneuver through a pivotal offseason, we will break down the current state of the team by sectioning it off into position groups. Here is the 10th installment on the right fielders.

This is the final position in the "State of the Cubs" series and comes the week before the 2019 season begins. Yet the Cubs didn't fill right field with Bryce Harper this winter (as of this writing, no MLB team has, for that matter).

The Cubs right field depth chart is essentially the same it was a year ago, with the addition of Daniel Descalso as the only real change.

Depth chart

1. Jason Heyward
2. Ben Zobrist
3. Ian Happ
4. Daniel Descalso
5. Kris Bryant
6. Mark Zagunis

Heyward is still atop the Cubs depth chart in right field and will see the lion's share of playing time there barring injury. The question is: What kind of impact will Heyward make?

The veteran couldn't top 1.0 WAR either of his first two seasons with the Cubs after inking a \$184 million deal before 2016, but he matched that total (2.0 WAR) in 2018 thanks to an improved offensive season.

Heyward certainly took a step forward with the bat last year, but he still wasn't quite league average (98 OPS+) and managed just a .395 slugging percentage, 8 homers and 57 RBI in 127 games despite a .270 average and .335 on-base percentage. He also really had just one good month, as June (.873 OPS) was the only month in which he posted an OPS north of .734 and he hit .248 with a .665 OPS from July 1 on.

Heyward is still an elite defender and baserunner and a valued voice inside the clubhouse, so he warrants a majority of right-field starts on those merits alone. But the Cubs could certainly use a consistently productive Heyward from an offensive end amid an offseason in which the only position player addition was Descalso.

The narrative around Heyward will always be the lofty contract and he remains the highest-paid position player on the Cubs in 2019 (\$22.5 million salary), behind only Jon Lester (\$27.5 million) among all players.

In a winter where the Cubs' financial limitations has been far and away the most talked-about topic, outside expectations will always be there for Heyward to produce more than just league-average offensive numbers. But they don't need him to hit in the middle of the order and all signs point to his 2018 offensive uptick as legit, in large part due to a contact rate bordering on the elite (12.3 percent strikeout rate).

However, the Cubs know all too well they need depth behind Heyward, as he's missed more than 70 games the last two seasons with injuries and Joe Maddon may still want to give him a day off here or there against tough left-handed pitchers. Plus, the Cubs have never shied away from using Heyward in center field from time to time.

That's where Zobrist and the others come in. Right now, the 2016 World Series MVP does not have a path to regular playing time at any one position, but Zobrist figures to see plenty of innings in right field, where he started more games (52) than any other position a year ago.

The Cubs will also need to find ways to get Happ's bat in the lineup and of course, Bryant and Descalso can always move to a corner outfield spot if needed.

Zagunis and a host of other guys — including Johnny Field, Jim Adduci and Zach Borenstein — provide minor league depth should multiple injuries strike the big-league club.

What's next?

Not Bryce Harper. Sure, he's still a free agent and he would obviously make the Cubs a better team, but it's hard to believe the price on the superstar has come down so much to the point where the Cubs could make it work. Then again, crazier things have certainly happened...

The bottom line

Heyward will be battling the sun and wind in right field at the corner of Clark and Addison all season long once again, though his offense will continue to be a storyline.

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NBC Sports Chicago

They Were There: Former Cubs Involved in Henry Aaron Milestones

By Chris Kamka

The great Henry Louis Aaron turns 85 today.

The Hall of Famer played 347 career games against the Cubs and hit a tremendous .326/.376/.589, with 87 HR (11.5% of his career total) and 262 RBI. Of course, there were fewer teams at the time, which meant more games against each opponent. You'll never again see a player hit 87 home runs against a single opponent. But there's no denying that slashline.

While he never played for the Cubs, we can take a look back at Aaron's career and find where former Cubs intersected with some of his milestone moments. Not all of the players mentioned were with the Cubs at the time, though a few were.

I have listed the players first (years with Cubs in parentheses) and noted the date of the milestone after that.

Andy Pafko (1943-51)

Bob Buhl (1962-66)

Lew Burdette (1964-65)

April 13, 1954

When Henry Aaron made his MLB debut for the Braves in left field, a pair of Cubs were in the Milwaukee lineup. Former Cub (and card #1 of the inaugural Topps 1952 set) Andy Pafko started in right field, and future Cub Bob Buhl (notorious for going 0 for 70 at the plate in 1962) started on the mound. Lew Burdette, who would go on to win 1957 World Series MVP before joining the Cubs later, relieved for the Braves.

Bob Rush (1948-57)

April 22, 1957

Cubs righthander Bob Rush made his second start of the season on April 22, 1957 and he struggled through it, allowing 9 runs (6 earned) in four innings at Milwaukee. Two of the five hits he allowed were to Henry Aaron; a second inning home run followed by a double in the fourth. That double was the 100th of Aaron's MLB career.

Sam Jones (1955-56)
September 24, 1957

"Toothpick Sam" tossed a no-hitter for the Cubs on May 12, 1955... one where he loaded the bases with walks to start the 9th before recording three consecutive strikeouts (Dick Groat, Roberto Clemente & Frank Thomas) to finish the job. By 1957, Jones was in his first season with the Cardinals, and in his final start of the season on September 24 in Milwaukee, he didn't retire a batter. Red Schoendienst & Johnny Logan singled and Eddie Mathews walked to load the bases for none other than Henry Aaron, who deposited a pitch into the right field stands. Wes Covington drew a walk and Jones was outta there. By the way, the grand slam was the 110th home run of Aaron's career... and his first with the bases loaded.

Don Larsen (1967)
October 5, 1957

Game 3 of the 1957 World Series. A year earlier he had tossed the first (and still the only) World Series perfect game. Ten years later, he'd make the final three appearances of his MLB career for the Cubs. But on this day, he allowed the first of Henry Aaron's six career postseason home runs, but he did get the win with 7.1 innings in relief of Bob Turley.

Ty Cline (1966)
April 22, 1963

Ty Cline had a 12-year career where he had an identical OBP and SLG (.304). He played seven games for the Cubs in 1966 (hitting .353/.353/.353). Before that, he was an outfielder for the Braves. On April 22, 1963 after singling off Don Drysdale, Cline moved to third on a Frank Bolling single and scored from third on a Henry Aaron single. It was Aaron's 1,000th career run batted in.

Billy Hoeft (1965-66)
May 28, 1966

A 6'3" (Hoefly) lefty, Hoeft was in his 15th and final Major League season in 1966 pitching for the Cubs when the Braves visited Wrigley Field on May 28. Hoeft relieved starter Bill Hands in the top of the sixth inning and struck out Mack Jones to end the inning. When he returned for the seventh, Henry Aaron doubled to left field before walking Eddie Mathews and exiting the game. It was career double number 400 for Aaron.

Davey Johnson (1978)
Mike Lum (1981)
Bill Buckner (1977-84)
April 8, 1974

This date may sound familiar. That's because it was the day Henry Aaron hit career home run number 715, passing Babe Ruth on the all-time list. There were a few Cubs of note who were there. Joining Aaron in the Braves starting lineup were Mike Lum (first base, batting second) and Davey Johnson (second base, batting sixth); both of whom later finished their MLB careers in a Cubs uniform. The opposing Dodgers had a few former Cubs, but I'll focus on just one. The historic home run soared over

the head of future Cub Bill Buckner, and Vin Scully even mentioned him in his call of the play. "Buckner goes back to the fence, it is gone!"

Dave Roberts (1977-78)
October 3, 1976

The Cubs purchased Roberts from the Tigers mid-1977. In October 1976 he was still pitching for Motown. In his last start of the season in Milwaukee, in the bottom of the sixth inning with runners on second and third, Roberts allowed a single to Henry Aaron, scoring a run. Jim Gantner came in to pinch run. It was the last RBI (#2,297), the last hit (#3,771) and the last plate appearance (#13,941) of one of the greatest careers in MLB history.

Happy birthday to a legend.

85 years old.

755 career home runs.

Countless players made into answers to trivia questions.

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NBC Sports Chicago

Cubs unveil 2019 broadcast schedule for spring training and regular season
By Tony Andracki

The Cubs rolled out their broadcast schedule for the entire 2019, beginning with spring training.

NBC Sports Chicago is set to air 83 regular season games and 2 spring training games, beginning with Cactus League contests on March 17 against the Colorado Rockies and March 25 against the Boston Red Sox. WGN will air 45 regular season games and ABC is set for 25 contests in 2019. The Cubs already have several games tabbed for ESPN, including three straight Sunday nights against the Cardinals (May 5), Brewers (May 12) and Nationals (May 19), with the first two coming at Wrigley Field.

The Cubs regular season opener against the Rangers in Texas will air on WGN and NBC Sports Chicago will have the next three games on March 30-April 1. ABC 7 will broadcast the home opener on April 8 against the Pirates.

Here are some other highlights from the NBC Sports Chicago slate:

- April 6-7: The final two games of the Cubs' first series against the rival Brewers in Milwaukee
- April 12: Mike Trout and the Angels come to Wrigley Field for a Friday afternoon game
- May 3: The Cardinals' first trip to Wrigley Field on a Friday afternoon
- May 10: The Brewers' first trip to Wrigley Field on a Friday afternoon
- May 20: The Phillies visit Chicago...with new free agent acquisition Manny Machado or Bryce Harper??
- May 31: The Cubs' first game in boring old St. Louis since Kris Bryant's comedy-show comment that apparently triggered an entire major American city
- July 12: The official kickoff of the season's second half as Cubs host Pirates
- Sept. 1, 5-6, 8: Four games against the Brewers in the season's final month
- Sept. 22: The final game of the Cubs' final homestand of the regular season against the Cardinals

All but a handful of the Cubs spring training games will be available to fans on TV, radio or audio via Cubs.com. Len Kasper and Mick Gillispie are back again to team up for the internet radio broadcasts.

The Cubs' first Cactus League game is on Saturday, Feb. 23 against the Brewers — a natural opponent to reignite competition, even if it's just an exhibition game.

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Chicago Tribune

Column: Cubs owners need to apologize for Joe Ricketts' racist emails

By Paul Sullivan

Cubs Chairman Tom Ricketts had the media in stitches three years ago when he was asked to respond to a provocative tweet by then-presidential candidate Donald Trump.

"It's a little surreal when Donald Trump threatens your mom," Ricketts cracked.

It was spring training in 2016, back when few believed Trump would become president or the Cubs could end their championship drought.

What had drawn Trump's ire was a \$3 million donation to an anti-Trump group from Marlene Ricketts, the wife of family patriarch Joe Ricketts.

"I hear the Ricketts (sic) family, who own the Chicago Cubs, are secretly spending \$'s against me," Trump tweeted. "They better be careful, they have a lot to hide!"

So what in the world did the Rickettses have to hide?

Tom told the curious media contingent at Sloan Park in Mesa, Ariz., he had no idea what Trump's tweet implied, and insisted his mom, dad, sister and brothers were "pretty much an open book" with their beliefs.

"We stand up for what we believe in," Tom said. "We support the causes that we think are important. That's what America should be. That's who we are."

No problem. Everyone has the right to express his or her beliefs, and eventually Trump and some of the Rickettses made amends. After his election, Trump appointed Todd Ricketts to his cabinet as deputy secretary of commerce.

But on Monday we discovered some of the things Joe Ricketts believes in are undeniably racist after disturbing emails he wrote, responded to or shared were published online by Splinter News.

That's not what America should be, but that's apparently who he is.

While Joe Ricketts apologized in one statement and Tom Ricketts reminded Cubs fans his father "is not involved in the operation of the Chicago Cubs" in another, the damage was done.

Now what?

It's going to be impossible for the Cubs to spin their way out of this nightmare. Tom Ricketts can't totally disassociate the organization from the disturbing beliefs of the man whose fortune helped him and his

three siblings — Pete (the governor of Nebraska), Laura and Todd — buy the team, whether his father is still involved in its operation or not.

MLB released a statement calling the emails “extremely offensive and completely at odds with the values and principles of Major League Baseball.” If Joe Ricketts had no connection to the Cubs, MLB would’ve just ignored the controversy.

Sooner or later, Tom Ricketts, who recently called himself “the most accessible owner in sports,” is going to have to answer questions about his dad’s hateful emails.

The first thing he and his siblings need to do is apologize to Cubs fans — and everyone else — for Joe Ricketts’ hurtful words.

Tom Ricketts said in his statement, “the language and views expressed in those emails have no place in our society.”

What he didn’t say was “The Cubs are sorry.” How difficult is that?

The next thing they can do is simple and can be fixed with a little paint: edit the jumbo photo outside the Cubs’ clubhouse that memorializes the bleacher wall from the 2016 World Series.

You may remember the Cubs allowed fans to write personal messages in chalk on the wall during the ’16 postseason. One fan decided to rip Cavaliers star LeBron James, writing “(Expletive) LeBron” on the wall.

The graffiti wall was an organic idea many fans responded to, and saving a photo for posterity was a fine idea. But the Cubs easily could’ve chosen another section of the wall to plaster on its clubhouse instead of the one with the anti-LeBron obscenity.

Though the message filled up only a couple of bricks, it’s visible to anyone who walks in the hall outside the clubhouse. It’s cringeworthy even if you aren’t a fan of James. When I asked team President Theo Epstein if they’d ever remove it, he joked: “Yeah, when he signs with the Bulls.”

It may have been funny then, but in light of the Joe Ricketts emails, the “(Expletive) LeBron” message on the wall inside Wrigley Field is no longer amusing.

Tom Ricketts said his father’s emails “do not reflect the culture we’ve worked so hard to build at the Chicago Cubs since 2009.”

Those are empty words if the organization continues to disrespect James, or anyone, in that fashion.

This has been a difficult offseason for the Cubs owners, who declined to answer questions from fans or the media at the recent Cubs Convention. Tom Ricketts suggested such sessions were boring and no one wanted to hear them.

They made the decision to keep Addison Russell after his domestic violence suspension and so far have done little to improve the club via free agency. Now comes the ill-timed release of Joe Ricketts’ racist emails as spring training draws near.

Issuing a statement denouncing his dad’s emails is the least “the most accessible owner in sports” could do.

Tom, Laura, Pete and Todd Ricketts owe Cubs fans much more.

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Chicago Tribune

Local Muslim leaders want action — not just words — from the Cubs in response to Joe Ricketts' racist and Islamophobic emails

By Mark Gonzales

An apology won't be enough for Muslim leaders in Chicago should they get their wish to meet as soon as next week with Cubs Chairman Tom Ricketts after the publication of racist and Islamophobic emails connected to family patriarch Joe Ricketts.

The elder Ricketts, 77, and his son Tom issued separate statements Monday after SplinterNews.com posted emails that showed Joe Ricketts sharing and endorsing racist and Islamophobic language, jokes and conspiracy theories.

Ahmed Rehab, executive director of the Chicago chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), said Tuesday at a news conference that it's good the emails were published.

"It's important to note that had these emails not been leaked, where would we be now?" Rehab said. "What kind of playing out of these sentiments would occur within the Cubs establishment against fans, against players who were Muslim who want to play on the team? Would they play out in discriminatory fashion? Would they play out in ways that would put the Muslims on the side toward marginalize and even demonize?"

"And so it's good that they've been leaked. But the question is: What would have happened if they weren't? So we got the apology now that they've been leaked. But the positions are there. So what we need to address very clearly and concretely is what ways the Cubs establishment, beyond apologizing for the emails being leaked, step up and show through concrete action that they recommit to the anti-bigotry values of Chicago, to work with the Muslim community, to show that in concrete fashion, and other communities affected by this very problematic, hatred rhetoric."

Rehab said there were no plans to boycott the Cubs "at this time."

"We're calling for a conversation and ways to move forward."

Rehab added that Tom Ricketts and Julian Green, the Cubs' vice president of communications, reached out less than 24 hours after the emails were posted.

Joe Ricketts apologized in his statement, saying, in part, "I've said things that don't reflect my value system. I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong."

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Chicago Tribune

'I have more confidence than last year': A healthy Yu Darvish eyes his return to dominance with the Cubs
By Mark Gonzales

Eleven years ago, Yu Darvish was in his own universe.

“Darvish only spoke in Japanese,” recalled Cubs assistant hitting coach Terrmel Sledge, a teammate of Darvish with the Nippon Ham Fighters of the Japan Pacific League for two seasons. “He was 21 and young. We foreigners spotted him and we recognized that year he really wants to be the best.

“He was in his own world, and that’s the first perspective you had on him. He really wanted to be the best.”

With a surgically repaired right arm, Darvish is eyeing a return to dominance that made him one of the marquee free-agent starters last offseason, leading to him signing a six-year, \$126 million contract with the Cubs.

At the Cubs Convention last month, Darvish appeared to be more comfortable than he did last season, speaking in English without an interpreter while discussing optimism about contributing — thanks to a healthy right elbow.

Team President Theo Epstein emphasized two months ago that the Cubs hired Sledge, who played with Darvish in 2008-09, exclusively to aid hitting coach Anthony Iapoce and not because of his association with Darvish.

“I have more confidence than last year,” said Darvish, who agreed to terms with the Cubs only five days before their first spring workout and was nagged by a stomach virus for parts of the first three weeks.

Posts to Darvish social media accounts this offseason showed him throwing off a mound with a fluid delivery at full speed. Nevertheless, this represents the biggest challenge of Darvish’s career, at least since he made his Nippon Professional Baseball debut less than a year after graduating from Tohoku High School.

The Cubs rotation fell short of manager Joe Maddon’s proclamation last spring that it could be the best in his four seasons with the team, in part because injuries limited Darvish to eight starts. His discomfort initially was diagnosed in late June as an impingement in his right elbow, then a stress reaction in late July after an abbreviated minor-league rehab start, eventually leading to season-ending surgery in September to remove debris.

Also, a wrist cramp shortened his Cubs debut to 4 1/3 innings against an inexperienced Marlins team, and he was pulled from his penultimate start against the Braves on May 15 after only 61 pitches because of a right leg cramp despite striking out five in four innings.

Epstein, meanwhile, took no chances as he pursued and acquired left-hander Cole Hamels from the Rangers on July 27 — more than three weeks before Darvish was ruled out for the season. And Darvish’s injuries and Tyler Chatwood’s struggles forced the Cubs to pick up Hamels’ \$20 million team option for 2019.

But Hamels’ return, while solidifying the rotation, left the Cubs with no room to make major upgrades, as they did the last four offseasons.

Kyle Hendricks and Hamels believe a healthy Darvish could be a difference-maker.

“It was unfortunate the year he had to go through,” Hendricks said. “It was tough having to watch him and go through that mentally. You feel bad for him. But he feels awesome, he’s healthy and he’s throwing a bit. It’s obviously great to hear.”

Before the Cubs shut Darvish down, he displayed snippets of his past dominance. He struck out 17 and allowed five hits in 12 innings covering two April starts against the National League Central rival Brewers and struck out seven and allowed two hits in six innings in a win against the Reds in his final start May 20.

“I know he wants to do very well, and he’s capable of so much,” said Hamels, who played with Darvish during the 2016-17 seasons with the Rangers. “He’s really good and can carry a month of starts for a team.

“So to put him between all of us and working together, it’s going to be a lights-out rotation. I know he’s ready to do it. And if he’s healthy, he’s one of the best in the game.”

Left-handed batters hit .276 with a .368 on-base percentage and .474 slugging percentage against Darvish in 2018, compared with a .195/.315/.377 slash line against right-handed hitters.

Darvish has six pitches but has relied less on his fastball and curve and more on his slider and cut fastball over the last three seasons, according to the Bill James Handbook. Darvish isn’t sure if the nagging discomfort in his elbow influenced his choice of pitches but said, “I want to change the percentage.”

“I will be meeting with (coach) Mike Borzello,” Darvish said in a convincing tone.

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Chicago Tribune

Who is Joe Ricketts? And what is his connection to the Cubs?

By Tim Bannon

The Ricketts family is back in the news.

Splinter News on Monday obtained and published a series of emails appearing to show Joe Ricketts, the patriarch of the family that owns the Cubs, sharing and endorsing racist jokes and conspiracy theories.

In response, Joe Ricketts and his son, Tom, chairman of the Cubs, issued separate statements.

“I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails,” Joe Ricketts said in his statement. “Sometimes I received emails that I should have condemned. Other times I’ve said things that don’t reflect my value system. I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong.”

In his statement, Tom said: “My father is not involved with the operation of the Chicago Cubs in any way. I am trusted with representing this organization and our fans with a respect for people from all backgrounds. These emails do not reflect the culture we’ve worked so hard to build at the Chicago Cubs since 2009.”

This controversy revives questions: Who is Joe Ricketts, and what is his connection to the Cubs? Also, what is the role of his children in the team’s operation?

Joe Ricketts

Age: 77

John Joseph Ricketts grew up in Omaha, Neb., graduated with a degree in economics from Creighton and started a discount stock brokerage. In the 1990s he transformed the company into an internet

trading powerhouse now known as TD Ameritrade Holding Corp. He is ranked among the world's billionaires with an estimated net worth of more than \$2 billion. His wife, Marlene, and four children own shares in the company.

He now lives in Wyoming.

Tom Ricketts repeatedly has emphasized that his father isn't involved in the operations of the Cubs, although Joe Ricketts sold 34 million shares of TD Ameritrade for about \$403 million to cover the equity needed to purchase the franchise in 2009.

In a 2010 speech about entrepreneurship in Omaha, he said he never was a sports fan, but Marlene taught his kids about baseball.

Tom talked his siblings and dad into buying the team. "We went down the road to buy them. It was a huge amount of work," Joe Ricketts said. "That was the most complicated transaction I've ever seen, that I've ever been involved in."

Joe Ricketts also has been actively involved in politics. In early 2016 he and Marlene spent \$5.5 million funding an anti-Donald Trump super PAC. But then in late 2016, they gave at least \$1 million to support the GOP nominee.

In 2017, Joe was back in the news when he abruptly shut down DNAinfo, the 8-year-old hyperlocal news website he had launched in 2009. Six months earlier the staff had voted to unionize. Joe Ricketts has been an outspoken critic of labor unions, which he detailed in a blog on his website, joericketts.com.

Marlene Ricketts

Marlene and Joe Ricketts were married in 1963, when both were 22.

According to Chicago Magazine, Marlene, a teacher, was planning to work while Joe finished college. But in 1964 she gave birth to Pete, then to Tom the next year. "The bills started piling up," Joe said in a 2000 interview. "I had to reduce my academic effort to be more in line with my ability to pay, so I went to school part time."

Marlene has remained active with her husband in politics, contributing to the Our Principles PAC, a super PAC that in 2016 waged a campaign against Donald Trump.

Pete Ricketts

Age: 54

Co-owner with his siblings and a member of the Cubs board of directors, Pete Ricketts also is the governor of Nebraska, having just won re-election in November.

He earned his bachelor's degree in biology and then his MBA from the University of Chicago. After school, according to the Nebraska governor's website, he returned to Omaha and worked for Union Pacific before working as a customer service representative at Ameritrade.

In 2006 he was the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate and spent a reported \$11 million on his campaign but lost in the general election to Democrat Ben Nelson.

In 2014 he defeated Nebraska's longtime attorney general and four other contenders who sought to replace Gov. Dave Heineman.

After the Cubs won the World Series in 2016, Pete Ricketts said: “For the family, this is fantastic. This is what we set out to do.”

Tom Ricketts

Age: 53

When the Ricketts family bought the Cubs in 2009, it was Tom’s idea. “In one sense, it all seems an extraordinary coincidence,” he told Chicago Magazine. “On the other, that it was almost fated.” He and his three siblings — Peter, Laura and Todd — share ownership, but Tom is the chairman.

Before taking over the franchise, he worked as an investment banker.

In January, Tom Ricketts threw his financial support behind former U.S. Commerce Secretary Bill Daley’s bid for Chicago mayor, donating \$25,000 to his campaign.

Laura Ricketts

Age: 51

Laura is the co-owner of the team with her siblings and also sits on the board of directors. She has a law degree from the University of Michigan and serves on the leadership council for Lambda Legal, a civil rights organization.

In January she announced her support for Chicago mayoral candidate Susan Mendoza.

“Susana Mendoza has outlined an outstanding plan to fight corruption and raise the standard of ethics and accountability in city government,” Ricketts said in a statement.

Todd Ricketts

Age: 49

Co-owner with his siblings and a member of the Cubs’ board of directors, Todd is also the finance chairman of the Republican National Committee. In 2010, Ricketts appeared on an episode of the reality TV show “Undercover Boss,” in which he worked in disguise as an entry-level Wrigley Field employee.

This week, the Republican National Committee announced that Todd will oversee fundraising for President Donald Trump’s re-election campaign. His official title will be finance chairman of the Trump Victory Committee.

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Chicago Tribune

Column: Joe Ricketts' emails are offensive, inexcusable and, alas, likely to be overlooked by Cubs fans
By Phil Rosenthal

The Cubs want people to pay no attention to Joe Ricketts and his online ugliness, exposed for the world to see.

The Cubs and the Ricketts family, which owns them, want a lot these days.

They want a new 44th Ward alderman because they want to be able to expand and profit from their Wrigleyville empire with fewer constraints.

They want people to shell out for a bigger monthly cable bill after this season because they want their own Cubs TV channel.

The Cubs also want people to believe they will fare better than last season's one-and-done wild-card team without evidence they've significantly improved vis-a-vis their chief rivals.

Now they want people to ignore the racist jokes, fanciful conspiracy theories and out-and-out Islamophobia found in the emails of Joe Ricketts, the billionaire patriarch who bankrolled his family's 2009 purchase of the ballclub.

They may not get what they want, the Rickettses and the Cubs, but one can't help but suspect fans are unlikely to hold any of their requests against them in the long run.

That's the thing about sports fans in general, and especially Cubs fans. The customers are loyal beyond reason. If losing didn't shake them, what will?

SplinterNews.com obtained the Joe Ricketts emails and posted a story on them Monday.

While it may be troubling that private correspondence was unearthed in a way no one would want for one's self, it hardly makes palatable Joe Ricketts' world view on display.

Tom Ricketts, Joe's second-oldest son and the Cubs' public-relations-savvy chairman, issued a statement about the matter, distancing the team from its benefactor.

Daddy R. doesn't play an operational role with the team, according to Tom, who added the Cubs organization has its own culture, which finds the sentiments in Joe Ricketts' correspondence abhorrent.

"Let me be clear," Tom said in a statement. "The language and views expressed in those emails have no place in our society."

Left unaddressed was the obvious question of what place the language and views expressed in those emails might have within the Ricketts family.

What's more, it would be nice to know if Tom or any of his siblings — including Pete, the governor of Nebraska — ever shared this counterpoint about society with dear old dad before or after he helped purchase the Cubs.

"That was the most complicated transaction I've ever seen," Joe Ricketts said in 2010 of the '09 acquisition from Tribune Co., then parent of the Chicago Tribune. "It was the most complicated thing I'd ever been involved in."

The Cubs purchase may have been complex.

The idiocy in his emails is anything but.

Ricketts, 77, is no antediluvian relic who predates modern thinking about race and prejudice.

He was 12 when the Supreme Court issued its unanimous *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision striking down the notion of separate but equal, 22 when Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech in Washington, 24 when the Voting Rights Act passed.

Old Joe had to know how the language and views expressed in those emails fit into society, or at least the part of it he feels at home in. Yet his response certainly stopped short of a full accounting.

“I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails,” his statement said. “Sometimes I received emails that I should have condemned. Other times I’ve said things that don’t reflect my value system. I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong.”

First of all, despite saying “bigoted ideas are wrong,” the excerpted emails offer strong evidence that Papa might not be the best judge of what constitutes a bigoted idea.

Second, if someone says things that don’t reflect his value system, what exactly is that value system? Expedience?

Finally, Pops didn’t just receive emails that he should have condemned. Everyone gets stupid emails. He actively praised jokes, untruths and other intolerant drivel he should have ignored or deleted.

So what are Cubs fans to do?

A better question is: What will they do?

This email stuff is not the sort of thing a fan typically wants to have to dwell on, which is why they probably won’t — no matter how offended they are and should be.

Having sunk so much emotion, time and — through tickets, apparel and such — money over the years, fans may feel too invested to abandon a team over anything less than the departure of a beloved star or the relocation of a franchise.

Think of how often there are rumblings from fans upset about this new player’s police record, that person’s politics, the latest added expense heaped upon those who merely want to follow what they consider “their” team.

Cubs fans didn’t bail when Aroldis Chapman came aboard. They’re not bailing now.

The outrage subsides. The fans almost always come back and stick more money in the real owners’ coffers.

Still, remember when the toughest thing about being a Cubs fan was the losing? Good times.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs patriarch Joe Ricketts — his apology of no use — has been starkly revealed
By Steve Greenberg

Heave, ho. Joe must go.

Joe Ricketts, the billionaire patriarch of the family that owns the Cubs, was stripped bare once and for all Monday, with leaked emails published by the site Splinter revealing the man in a truly hideous display.

Indeed, such an unseemly topic with which to begin this new weekly column.

To put a fine point on it, emails Ricketts wrote and/or shared contained a multitude of racist jokes, Islamophobic rants and departures from reality that would make even the most dyed-in-the-wool conspiracy loon blush.

Muslims, African-Americans, Hispanics, Civil Rights leaders, proponents of diversity and multiculturalism, former President Barack Obama and his supporters — all were on the business end of insidious thoughts and highly offensive language. It was enough to make anyone with a brain and a conscience dizzy with outrage.

The 77-year-old Ricketts' written apology was pathetic.

"I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails," he said. "Sometimes I received emails that I should have condemned. Other times I've said things that don't reflect my value system. I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong."

Too late for that, pal. You've been outed.

Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts was quick to distance the organization from the "language and views" in his father's emails, saying they "do not reflect the [Cubs'] culture." He also claimed his father "is not involved with the operation of the Chicago Cubs in any way."

In a sense, that's true: Joe Ricketts' children run the team business. But Old Joe is more than just the bumbling, embarrassing uncle or grandpa at Thanksgiving. He is the money behind the whole operation. He is the driver of the family clown car.

Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, heavy-handed political clout and your money — that's what this family is about, and not in that order. For many, it will be harder than ever to separate the gosh-golly lovability of the Cubs from the political heft of the Ricketts family and all the divisiveness that implies in 2019 America.

Republican Pete Ricketts is Nebraska's governor, at a time when Gov. Ralph Northam of Virginia is being called upon by members of his own Democratic Party to resign amid a racist photo controversy. Todd Ricketts is overseeing fundraising for Donald Trump's re-election campaign. Joe Ricketts funded a Super PAC that went after Obama in such incendiary fashion in 2012 that it ended up costing the Cubs a \$150 million public-funding package for renovations at Wrigley Field.

"Joe Ricketts once said that I do not share his values," Mayor Rahm Emanuel tweeted Tuesday. "Truer words were never spoken. The ignorance and intolerance he has espoused are not welcome in Chicago."

Old Joe may not have a day-to-day role in running the Cubs, but he's cashing ownership checks. Unless and until that ceases, his gilded offspring should be questioned at every turn about what steps they are taking to make Cubdom a brighter, better place for all.

I'm just sayin'

How much longer must ex-coordinator Vic Fangio and the Bears' defensive stars hide their faces in shame for allowing the Rams to pile up a whopping six points — a full twice their Super Bowl output — back in December?

- Perhaps it's no coincidence that the Rams foisted the most boring Super Bowl performance of all time upon the masses. It seems you can take a football team out of St. Louis, but you can't take the St. Louis out of a football team.
- Maybe a nickname would endear Gregg Popovich-loving Bulls coach Jim Boylen to the masses during this lost season. Isn't he rather like the man affectionately known as "Pop," minus the alluring flavors of discernible strategy and, you know, winning? Consider the cold crispness of "Pop Zero."
- Are the Bulls really considering a trade for the Lakers' Kentavious Caldwell-Pope so soon after acquiring Timothé Luwawu-Cabarrot from the Thunder? Imagine the poor, ill-treated soul who's tasked with stitching those names onto the backs of jerseys.
- The words "college basketball" and "wasteland" come to mind.

Did you catch Northwestern's 59-52 loss at home Monday against Penn State? The Nittany Lions came in with an 0-10 Big Ten record and left with whatever remained of the Wildcats' hopes for a respectable season. The night ended with Northwestern and Illinois tied at 3-8 in league play, one notch above last place.

Yep, as far as our hopes of having a team in the NCAA Tournament go, it's up-and-down Loyola winning another Missouri Valley tournament title or bust.

Game balls

Brandon Saad: His former coach — a guy by the name of Quenneville — painted him as a player with motor issues. Saad has done nothing but grind this season, and his goal-scoring has been one of the drivers of the Blackhawks' turnaround from abject awfulness to (how to put this?) not-so-awfulness. With 17 goals entering Tuesday, the winger is on pace to top his high with the Hawks: 23 goals in 2014-15.

Blake Peters: Since our story on the Evanston sophomore guard one year after his 80-foot game-winning shot, Peters has made 22 of 34 three-pointers for the No. 5 team in the Sun-Times' Super 25.

Paul Reed: DePaul hasn't fully emerged yet, but the 6-9 sophomore is exploding. Reed has scored at least 18 points in six of his last seven games, has rebounded like a monster and has begun taking — and making — threes like a natural-born marksman. An NBA talent? I'm betting on it.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs to meet with local Muslim groups in wake of Joe Ricketts' racist emails

By Madeline Kenney

Many Cubs fans, especially those who are Muslim, felt betrayed and hurt after leaked emails from Cubs ownership patriarch and TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts revealed racist jokes and Islamophobic rhetoric.

The Chicago chapter of the Council of American-Islamic Relations on Tuesday said Ricketts' emails sent a shock wave through the city's Muslim community, and executive director Ahmed Rehab called the comments "alarming and highly disappointing."

"Bigotry has no home in Chicago," Rehab said. "The idea that Muslims do not belong or are a threat to our culture is a tired, old Islamophobic trope that is disproven every day through living, working, contributing and leading in America, our home. It is lazy, ignorant and, moreover, blatantly false. We expect and demand better."

Asha Binbek, an avid Cubs fan and the communication coordinator for CAIR-Chicago, described Ricketts' emails as "shocking," "hurtful" and "untrue."

"Honestly, I'm a bit heartbroken," a teary-eyed Binbek said. "And what I would like to see is some reconciliation for the Cubs to prove that they really are 'Everybody In' and that they really are inclusive and that they want their fans there, no matter where they come from, no matter what they believe in."

The website SplinterNews.com on Monday released several emails Ricketts sent and received from December 2009 to March 2012. In some of them, he shared anti-Muslim beliefs.

"Islam is a cult and not a religion," he wrote in one 2010 email to his son Pete. "Christianity and Judaism are based on love, whereas Islam is based on 'kill the infidel,' a thing of evil."

Major League Baseball said it was aware of Ricketts' comments, which it called "extremely offensive and completely at odds with the values and principles" of the game.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel also slammed Ricketts for his "bigoted opinions."

"The ignorance and intolerance [Ricketts] has espoused are not welcome in Chicago," Emanuel said in a statement.

Shortly after the emails were made public, Ricketts said he deeply regretted them and apologized "for some of the exchanges." Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts tried to distance the team from his father, who approved the cash portion of the family's leveraged \$845 million purchase of the Cubs in 2009.

But CAIR-Chicago demanded more than a "mere apology that could be dismissed as apologizing for being caught." The Cubs and Tom Ricketts have reached out to CAIR-Chicago and the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago. They hope to meet face-to-face as early as next week.

"We're coming with an open mind to the conversation," said Rehab, who doesn't plan to boycott the Cubs as of now. ". . . There might be genuine remorse [from the Rickettses], and we would be open to that. And if that is the case, we can move forward."

Contributing: Gordon Wittenmyer

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