



# CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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February 7, 2018

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- The Athletic, **10 Questions: Will the Cubs vibrate on Joe Maddon's frequency?**  
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## Chicago Tribune

Cubs release TV schedule for 2018 season

By Paul Sullivan

The Cubs on Tuesday released their 2018 TV schedule, which includes the season opener in Miami on March 29 on WGN-Ch. 9.

The majority of the games will be aired on NBC Sports Chicago, formerly Comcast Sports Net, which shares the Cubs with WGN and WLS-Ch. 7.

WGN is beginning its 71st season of Cubs' coverage.

NBC Sports Chicago will have up to 84 games, while WGN will carry 45 and WLS gets 25. The home opener on April 9 against the Pirates will be shown on WLS.

Len Kasper and Jim Deshaies will describe the action on all telecasts that are not nationally televised.

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## Chicago Tribune

MLB players union claims owners threatening 'integrity' of game

By Paul Sullivan

With the opening of spring training camps in Florida and Arizona only a week away, the players union finally is beginning to make some noise about the free-agent freeze-out.

MLB Player Association executive director Tony Clark issued a statement Tuesday suggesting owners are threatening the “integrity” of the game by leaving so many players unsigned.

“Pitchers and catchers will report to camps in one week,” Clark wrote. “A record number of talented free agents remain unemployed in an industry where revenues and franchise values are at record highs.

“Spring training has always been associated with hope for a new season. This year a significant number of teams are engaged in a race to the bottom. This conduct is a fundamental breach of the trust between a team and its fans and threatens the integrity of our game.”

More than 100 free agents remain on the market, and obviously many would not be able to start the season on time without participating in spring training. A few others free-agents, like Todd Frazier, have signed for far less than they expected when they entered the market in November.

While some have charged the owners with “collusion”, it’s a difficult argument to make since a few teams have signed prominent free agents, including the Rockies and Brewers. The Cubs signed starter Tyler Chatwood to a three-year, \$38 million deal in December, but still are seeking a top-of-the-rotation starter.

The MLBPA also retweeted a tweet from Rockies catcher Chris Iannetta, who wrote he was fortunate to be playing on a team that is “competing for a World Series from day one” of the season. The Rockies signed Cubs closer Wade Davis and have revamped their bullpen.

Referring to teams that allegedly are tanking and not signing players, Iannetta wrote: “What if one competitor plays more teams that aren’t competing. Unfair advantage.”

The Nationals are one of those teams. They’re competing in the National League East with the Phillies, Braves and Marlins, all of whom are in various stages of a rebuilding plan. Since teams play more games within their own divisions, the Nationals figure to have a much easier route to the postseason than the Rockies, who will play more games against the Dodgers and Diamondbacks, both of whom made the playoffs last year, and the Giants, who acquired Andrew McCutchen and Evan Longoria this winter.

Agent Scott Boras on Monday said the number of so-called “tanking” teams is hurting the game.

“They decided we’re going to have the 12 teams-a-tanking, if you will, and therefore you have a noncompetitive cancer and this is completely opposite of what (then-)Commissioner (Bud) Selig in good-faith sought in bargaining,” Boras said.

Boras represents several unsigned free agents, including Jake Arrieta, J.D. Martinez, Mike Moustakas and Eric Hosmer. Last week, Brodie Van Wagenen, the co-head of CAA Sports, called for a boycott of spring training and said players were “outraged” over the lack of free agent movement.

“There is a rising tide among players for radical change,” Van Wagenen wrote. “A fight is brewing and it may begin with one, maybe two and perhaps 1,200 willing to follow. A boycott of Spring Training may be a starting point, if behavior doesn’t change.”

The MLBPA released a statement Monday saying the union has not “recommended such a course of action.”

It seems like we're getting closer and closer to another Andre Dawson spring, the kind we presumed we never would see again.

When Dawson walked into the Cubs spring training camp in Mesa, Ariz., in 1987 and told the Cubs he would take whatever offer they thought was fair, he forced the organization to sign him.

As Dodgers executive Ned Colletti noted in his book "The Big Chair: "Everyone who had a passing interest in the bargaining process knew the owners were colluding against the players. Nobody could prove it, but the Hawk was about to make it clear to all the world."

Dawson handed Dallas Green a blank contract, saying: "I want to be a Cub. You can fill in the rest."

The Cubs paid Dawson \$500,000, less than half of the \$1.047 million he had received with the Expos. Dawson became MVP, the owners later were fined for collusion and several players who signed sub-par deals were granted "second look" free-agency.

What if Yu Darvish or Arrieta told Theo Epstein this week: "I want to be a Cub. You can fill in the rest"?

Would anyone be brave enough to follow Dawson's lead in this day and age?

Probably not, but the clock is ticking, and at least for now, neither side is budging.

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### **Daily Herald**

Rozner: Hot takes galore as MLB verbal war over free agents escalates

By Barry Rozner

Another day, another dollar's worth of rhetoric from the MLB Players Association, followed by a quick response from the commissioner's office.

The fight, as you know, is over the lack of movement in the free-agent market.

One side believes there's collusion and was threatening for a brief moment a spring-training boycott, while the other insists they're merely playing by the rules of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Just after 1 p.m. Tuesday, PA boss Tony Clark issued this statement:

"Pitchers and catchers will report to camps in Florida and Arizona in one week. A record number of talented free agents remain unemployed in an industry where revenues and franchise values are at record highs.

"Spring training has always been associated with hope for a new season. This year a significant number of teams are engaged in a race to the bottom. This conduct is a fundamental breach of the trust between a team and its fans and threatens the very integrity of our game."

Within the hour, MLB responded with this:

"Our Clubs are committed to putting a winning product on the field for their fans. Owners own teams for one reason: they want to win. In Baseball, it has always been true that Clubs go through cyclical, multiyear strategies directed at winning.

"It is common at this point in the calendar to have large numbers of free agents unsigned. What is uncommon is to have some of the best free agents sitting unsigned even though they have substantial offers, some in nine figures.

"It is the responsibility of players' agents to value their clients in a constantly changing free-agent market based on factors such as positional demand, advanced analytics, and the impact of the new Basic Agreement. To lay responsibility on the Clubs for the failure of some agents to accurately assess the market is unfair, unwarranted, and inflammatory."

As was mentioned here a few days ago, this rise in temperatures is bad for the game and suggests we are headed for labor unrest and perhaps the first work stoppage since 1995.

But I read the Basic Agreement on Tuesday, all 373 pages of it -- OK, I skimmed a few having to deal with Home Run Derby and Uniform Regulations -- and at the bottom of Page 154 was the only sentence that truly matters right now:

"This Agreement shall terminate on December 1, 2021, at 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time."

That's 10:59 p.m. here in Chicago, in case you're counting down.

Yeah, there's nothing in there about an opt-out and no clause stating, "We reserve the right to terminate said agreement if we're getting our heads stoved in by the other side because we didn't foresee the unintended consequences of the payroll tax and signed a bad deal for our side."

That would be the players, who agreed to a de facto salary cap in the form of the Competitive Balance Tax.

Oops.

As bad as it looks right now, it's going to look a lot better after the 2018 World Series when Bryce Harper, Manny Machado and Clayton Kershaw sign some of the biggest contracts in the history of the game.

One of those deals could be for \$500 million, another for \$400 million and perhaps a third for \$300 million.

Those three players are likely to bust a billion dollars on their own.

Charlie Blackmon, A.J. Pollock, Cody Allen, Andrew Miller, Josh Donaldson, Craig Kimbrel, Daniel Murphy, Andrew McCutchen and David Price are among many others who have the opportunity to score big if they are healthy and perform well in 2018.

There won't be any crying then, except from the small-market teams who are always complaining about the big-market teams while they bank revenue sharing and turn a nice profit.

Yeah, there's always more than two sides to sports labor disagreements.

But that didn't stop the very many hot takes over the last few days, reacting to this winter's free agency.

The latest is that there must be a floor to the spending so teams are forced to buy free agents they don't want, as happens frequently in sports with an actual salary cap.

So a team like the White Sox, for example, must spend money on players it doesn't want right now when banking cash for the future -- Machado? -- and pouring money into international spending, amateur scouting and player development.

But you want to tell them how they should spend their money as they build toward what they hope will be an extended run in the postseason and a chance to win a World Series?

Hot take, indeed.

It's all grist for the mill, filling airtime and Twitter feeds until the CBA is something both sides are ready to discuss again.

Don't hold your breath until it expires -- in 1,394 days.

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### **The Athletic**

10 Questions: Will the Cubs vibrate on Joe Maddon's frequency?

By Patrick Mooney

Joe Maddon could retire tomorrow and drive around the country in his RV. He could drink red wine across Europe and spend more time with his grandchildren. He could take one of those special assistant jobs and keep his charitable foundation and endorsement portfolio connected to the Cubs' brand.

Maddon could put on a loud suit, step into the broadcast booth and become Major League Baseball's John Madden. Maybe he could get his on-camera fix as a pundit on the cable news shows he likes to watch.

But Maddon isn't wired to think about retirement, next steps or exit strategies. Not after his long climb to the top, starting out as an undrafted player and managing in places like Peoria, Idaho Falls and Midland, Texas. And definitely not when he has two years left on a contract that pays him \$6 million annually to be the face and voice of a loaded roster backed by the big-market firepower he always wanted in the American League East.

"Listen, put yourself in my shoes," Maddon said. "This is what any manager wants -- to be in this position, where we've had a successful run with a very young group that is staying together, maturing as a group and learning how to play a certain method, our version of The Cubs Way."

This could get awkward if the Cubs don't live up to those massive annual expectations or outgrow those methods that didn't seem to work quite as well while nursing a World Series hangover. You don't need to see another "Embrace The Target" T-shirt at spring training to know this will be a pivotal year for Maddon and his Hall of Fame legacy.

Maddon, who turns 64 on Thursday, will be working with a new group of coaches after a major staff shakeup that followed a frustrating regular season and a quick exit in the National League Championship

Series. Even if this wasn't the intention – Maddon pushed for or agreed with all the changes – it felt like the focus shifting onto the manager with two seasons left on a five-year deal.

Maddon is already more of an exception in today's game as front offices are going with younger, cheaper managers, applying the kind of dispassionate analysis that has frozen the free-agent market this winter.

Extension talk would be an academic discussion if president of baseball operations Theo Epstein again sees a team playing without an edge or enough focus and staggering into the All-Star break with a sub-.500 record and a 5 1/2-game deficit in the NL Central.

The Cubs need their supremely confident, intensely competitive and stubborn to a fault manager to push the right buttons for a roster with very new faces.

For his part, Maddon appreciates the stability and continuity after all the churn with the small-market Tampa Bay Rays. He believes in the growth potential of all the 20-something players who will be running around the team's Arizona complex, insisting they didn't peak during the 2016 World Series.

"They're going to know exactly what we're going to want to do during those drills," Maddon said, "and how we want the drills run and what we expect out of them in the drills. And if anybody new that shows up and they're not doing it right, they're going to grab them and say: 'We don't do that here.' That's the advantage of all this stuff.

"Now beyond that, with good health and when you're a good athlete, you're going to get better. I really believe – with good health – our guys are going to keep getting better because they have their egos in check, the work ethic's fabulous and they care. So for all those different reasons, again, you'd love to have my job, working with these guys, because these guys are all of that."

Almost anyone seems to think they can do Maddon's job, from fans to the second-guessing from old-school veterans like Miguel Montero and John Lackey to the line of questioning from the national media during the playoffs.

"That's just the nature of being the manager in Chicago," general manager Jed Hoyer said. "We've won 292 games [over] the last three years and been to three NLCSs and won a World Series and the manager that's done that is getting criticized? Almost by definition, if he's getting criticized, that means it just comes with the territory.

"And I think it's the nature of being a manager in the postseason. When you're in the postseason, the spotlight is shown so much on managers in general, positive and negative, from hero to goat, from success to criticism.

"Whatever it might be, I just think that's the nature of the game in the postseason when you got these two teams that are so incredibly evenly matched. Almost every game is close, so a few decisions here and there are upsetting the balance of that game, so the manager is talked about in a very different way in October than he is the rest of the season.

"Playing as many postseason games as we have the last three years – that's 36 opportunities for that kind of scrutiny. Playoff managers are going to have a lot of scrutiny. And Joe's had a lot of scrutiny. But I think his success kind of speaks for itself."

Energy and enthusiasm figure to be the buzzwords when pitchers and catchers report to Mesa next week and Maddon begins joking and sparring with the media again. Maddon is completely comfortable in his own skin and won't pretend to be somebody else or rethink his hands-off philosophy with players that relies on his coaches to deliver messages to the players. Brandon Hyde replaces longtime aide Davey Martinez as Maddon's bench coach, so he'll be pivotal in that role.

Even after overseeing this golden age of Cubs baseball, Maddon wants and expects so much more. To borrow a Maddon-ism: Will everyone be vibrating on the same frequency?

"When you get a group that is like this group, that's been successful together, I'd like to believe there's checks and balances in place," Maddon said. "In other words, if somebody's not doing it properly, then somebody's going to say something.

"That's where locker rooms work well. Cultures work well when people within the culture are the ones that are really running it, as opposed to the perceived head of the culture, in a sense. So I really have so much faith in the fact that we really empower our players."

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### **The Athletic**

10 Questions: Will the Cubs' bullpen be a team strength? Ask again in October

By Sahadev Sharma

Trying to predict how a bullpen — any bullpen — might perform in a given year is a good way to look foolish. A few seasons ago, Hector Rondon was looked at as a dominant relief arm. This winter, the Cubs chose to not tender him a contract.

Injuries and ineffectiveness are a part of the unpredictable nature that seems to particularly impact relief arms, making them the most volatile group in baseball. Cubs fans need not look any further than Carl Edwards Jr.'s mercurial 2017 or how Justin Wilson failed to live up to expectations on the North Side to understand how quickly a reliever can go from dominant to struggling to get outs.

Entering last season, even Wade Davis was a question mark. Most might not recall, but there were those who were quite concerned about whether Davis could hold up for an entire season after the rock-solid closer hit the disabled list twice in 2016 with a right forearm strain. Anyone who pays enough attention to baseball injuries knows that's often a precursor to something much more nefarious. It's likely why Davis was available for the mere price of Jorge Soler — whose value around the league was quite low — last winter. Of course, Davis went on to have a brilliant season, staying healthy all year and becoming the Cubs' most reliable and dominant reliever.

What Davis did, and how he was used, is what the Cubs envision for their expected 2018 closer, Brandon Morrow. While Davis' injury concerns were recent, Morrow's injury history is long and well-documented. Morrow is the type whose potential was always lauded for years, but injuries always waylaid any chance of him putting together a full season of greatness. It's that history that gives many pause about the Cubs relying on Morrow rather than bringing Davis back or spending on the still-available Greg Holland.

"We're really confident in Morrow," team president Theo Epstein recently said. "Just because he hasn't closed consistently before — we are very confident in our ability to project him into that role with the way he's throwing. That's the guy we anticipate [being in that role] and having a good year for us."

Epstein has been preaching that line since the Cubs kicked off the winter meetings by signing Morrow in early December. They see the player who posted a 2.06 ERA with a 29.4 percent strikeout rate and 5.3 percent walk rate in 43 2/3 innings sliding seamlessly into the closer's role on the North Side. But it feels like an immense risk to rely on a player with Morrow's injury history to lock down a spot the Cubs have shown they value highly. Perhaps they don't spend big money on proven closers, but they clearly know the value of having consistency there as they've traded valuable pieces over the past two years to solidify the spot. But the Cubs believe using Morrow as the closer, in the same way they did Davis, will allow him to stay healthy all season.

What does that mean? It means limiting the number of times Morrow goes three days in a row, something Davis did three times all season. It means avoiding using Morrow for more than three outs, something Davis didn't do until September in preparation for an increased workload come October.

After two October runs that required Maddon to lean on his closer more than most were comfortable with, it seems like a big ask to not have Morrow available for more than three outs. But that's where the confidence in the rest of the bullpen comes into play.

"Our bullpen, I think, got a little bit over-maligned at the end of the year," general manager Jed Hoyer said at Cubs Convention. "They were [out of gas]. As a collective last year, we could not throw enough strikes. That was something that's almost like a disease — it kind of wound through our bullpen.

"Guys had their career-worst strike-throwing years. But overall, I think our bullpen was better than it looked at the end of the year. I still think we have a lot of really good relievers in that bullpen that are going to throw well for us."

The Cubs' 11.2 percent walk rate from their bullpen was the worst in baseball last season. It spiked in the second half and bit them repeatedly in the postseason. But perhaps Hoyer's optimism isn't without merit. The combination of a new pitching coach in Jim Hickey, the maturation of young pitchers and the return to form of some veterans could lead to that ugly number dropping.

Wilson, who posted a 20.9 percent walk rate with the Cubs, and Edwards Jr. (14.5 percent) will be looked at to improve in that area drastically. Heading into what should be his second full season in the big leagues, Edwards Jr. is expected to show more consistency this summer. With a full offseason and spring to settle into his Cubs surroundings, and a new pitching coach who he may feel more comfortable with, Wilson will be leaned on to look more like the dominant lefty he proved to be in Detroit.

Steve Cishek gives the Cubs a reliever with previous closing experience and a career walk rate of 8.2 percent (the league average last year was 9.2 percent). He also brings a different look, coming at the opponent with a true side-arm delivery. Teams love being able to bring in a variety of pitchers from their bullpen so the opponent has to see all sorts of arm angles from inning to inning. With Cishek and Pedro Strop, the Cubs believe they have two very reliable relievers to help set up for Morrow, along with Wilson and Edwards.

The return of Brian Duensing gives them a second lefty Maddon can trust, and if another starter is added, Mike Montgomery (who also needs to drop his walk rate) can go back to the versatile role he's performed so well in over the past season and a half. And in Justin Grimm, Dillon Maples and Dario Alvarez, the team has a few relievers who have incredible stuff and the ability to pop up in 2018 as key pieces of the pen as well.

That's how an ideal scenario for the Cubs bullpen plays out. Morrow stays healthy, the Cubs relief depth proves to be a strength and one or more talented, young arm takes a step forward to solidify what looks



like an already-strong unit. But to predict as much would be folly. Bullpens are where the best-laid plans of a smart front office often go awry.

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