



# CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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February 5, 2019

- Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs ownership patriarch Joe Ricketts 'regrets' racist emails leaked Monday**  
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-ownership-patriarch-joe-ricketts-regrets-racist-emails-leaked-monday/>
- The Athletic, **Tom Ricketts responds to latest, most offensive batch of Joe Ricketts emails**  
<https://theathletic.com/800558/2019/02/04/tom-ricketts-responds-to-latest-most-offensive-batch-of-joe-ricketts-emails/>
- Cubs.com, **Hamels preparing to take on leadership role**  
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cole-hamels-spent-offseason-honing-adjustments/c-303485762>
- ESPNChicago.com, **Tom Ricketts: Father's 'racially insensitive' email exchanges not reflective of Cubs' culture**  
[http://www.espn.com/mlb/story/\\_/id/25927331/chicago-cubs-respond-joe-ricketts-racially-insensitive-email-exchanges](http://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/25927331/chicago-cubs-respond-joe-ricketts-racially-insensitive-email-exchanges)
- NBC Sports Chicago, **A decade into his career, nothing's surprising Jason Heyward anymore**  
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/decade-his-career-nothings-surprising-jason-heyward-anymore>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs family patriarch Joe Ricketts apologizes after racist emails are revealed: 'I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong'**  
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-joe-ricketts-emails-20190204-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **With Manny Machado and Bryce Harper still unsigned, MLB's free-agent season remains in a polar vortex**  
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/ct-spt-mlb-offseason-manny-machado-bryce-harper-20190205-story.html>

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## Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs ownership patriarch Joe Ricketts 'regrets' racist emails leaked Monday

By Gordon Wittenmyer

Leaked emails published Monday by the website SplinterNews.com revealed racist jokes and conspiracy theories spouted and/or shared by TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts, the patriarch of the Cubs' family ownership. The revelations prompted statements from Joe Ricketts and son Tom Ricketts, the Cubs' chairman.

"I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails," Joe Ricketts said in a statement provided to the Sun-Times and other news outlets. "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."

Joe Ricketts and sons Pete Ricketts and Todd Ricketts have been especially active in conservative politics. Pete Ricketts, who in the leaked emails cautions his father in some cases to check the veracity of some information before sharing it, is the Republican governor of Nebraska.

In response to one of those warnings from his son in 2010, Joe Ricketts responded by sharing his belief that, "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."

The leaked emails also show Joe Ricketts was an active participant in spreading the birther conspiracy aimed at former President Barack Obama and at one point shared an email that suggested Obama was once a sex worker, had made money smuggling heroin, didn't attend Columbia University, "lied his way into Harvard" and bought a "fake diploma."

Some of the emails roughly coincide with the revelation of a racist, anti-Obama attack ad planned by a Joe Ricketts-funded Super PAC during Obama's 2012 re-election bid.

A report by the New York Times on that planned ad so infuriated Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama's friend and former chief of staff, that a \$150 million public-funding package all but approved for renovations at Wrigley Field was pulled off the table, hindering the Cubs' already debt-restricted ability to spend on players during their rebuild.

"We are aware of the racially insensitive emails in my father's account that were published by an online media outlet," Tom Ricketts said in a statement. "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 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."

Joe Ricketts approved the cash portion of the family's leveraged \$845 million purchase of the Cubs in 2009, despite his conspicuous absence from most materials the team released publicly.

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### **The Athletic**

Tom Ricketts responds to latest, most offensive batch of Joe Ricketts emails  
By Jon Greenberg

A cache of Joe Ricketts' emails continues to be released by Splinter News and the latest batch show him receiving and sending email forwards filled with Islamophobic thought and racist language.

In the latest edition of "The Billionaire's Inbox," reporter Molly Osberg collated emails that show what the patriarch of the family that owns the Cubs likes to send out. Previous editions of this series focused on media, politics, family business and government policy.

There were rumors that racist emails were coming out and some people with the Cubs were aware that Splinter had them, according to a team source.

Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts released a statement to The Athletic through his spokesperson on Monday night:

“WE ARE AWARE OF THE RACIALLY INSENSITIVE EMAILS IN MY FATHER’S ACCOUNT THAT WERE PUBLISHED BY AN ONLINE MEDIA OUTLET. 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.”

Joe Ricketts is the founder of TD Ameritrade and his money funded the family trust that his children used to buy the Cubs from the Tribune Co. in 2009. Joe Ricketts and his wife Marlene sold \$403 million in stock to close the deal. The four Ricketts children sit on the board of directors of the team, having recently bought out the Tribune’s remaining share.

Joe Ricketts released a statement Monday night after the initial publication of this article:

“I DEEPLY REGRET AND APOLOGIZE FOR SOME OF THE EXCHANGES I HAD IN MY EMAILS. 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.”

While the elder Ricketts is not involved with the team, other emails show he tries to hold a strong influence over his family and its future.

In this cluster of emails, many were about the fear of Muslims, with several about then-President Barack Obama’s faith — a fervent topic for right-wing email chains of that time. In one exchange, Joe forwarded an email about this racist rumor, with Joe admitting he didn’t actually think it was true.

In one email, dated April 22, 2011, Joe Ricketts forwarded an email to an unknown person with the initials JG (“Subject: FW: OBAMAS PAST—A Bedtime Story?”), writing “Any interest in this J?”

The forward was a standard one passed around during the time, expressing certitude the President wasn’t an American citizen, with a fantastical story about his upbringing and secret life. The email included lines like, “Because Barry was such a news maker as the only Black in the Senate, and he could speak like a white man he was made key speaker for the Democrat convention. Barry then decided to run for President to keep the lie going.”

The following year, it was revealed Joe Ricketts was willing to bankroll an anti-Obama ad campaign as he sought re-election. One potential campaign wanted to tie Obama to his old pastor in Chicago and the ensuing story published by the New York Times wound up costing the Cubs potential public financing from the city for its Wrigley Field renovation. The Cubs eventually made amends with Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

In a May 2012 email, one written shortly before the Times story came out, Joe wrote to a person with the initials S.V.: “Christians and Jews can have a mutual respect for each other to create a civil society. As you know, Islam cannot do that. Therefore we cannot ever let Islam become a large part of our society. Muslims are naturally my (our) enemy due to their deep antagonism and bias against non-Muslims.”

In an April 24, 2013 email, he seemed to have a change of heart on an unknown conversation with a person named "E.":

YESTERDAY I WAS QUITE HARD ON MUSLIMS IN OUR CONVERSATION SO I WANTED TO SEND YOU THIS INFORMATION. I HAVE A PRIVATE CHARITY THAT I STARTED AND SUPPORT, OPPORTUNITY EDUCATION FOUNDATION (WE HAVE A WEB SITE). MY BROTHER IS THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR.

RECENTLY OUR GROUP RETURNED FROM AFRICA AFTER HAVING VISITED SOME OF THE SCHOOLS WE SUPPORT.

ATTACHED IS INFORMATION ON A MUSLIM SCHOOL I SUPPORT IN UGANDA. THEIR THANK YOU LETTER IS THE ATTACHMENT ABOVE AND A VIDEO OF THEIR SCHOOL AND OUR VISIT IS SHOWN BELOW.

I PARTICULARLY LIKE HELPING MUSLIM SCHOOLS TO SHOW THEM THAT WE ARE NOT BAD PEOPLE.

CHEERS, JOE RICKETTS

The only time one of Joe's children responds to an email in this batch is when Pete Ricketts, now the governor of Nebraska, replied to a Sept. 13, 2010 email with the subject "RE: FW: Americans believe in religious freedom – Muslims don't."

DAD,

I RECOMMEND YOU GO TO [WWW.SNOPE.COM](http://WWW.SNOPE.COM) AND SEARCH ON THESE STORIES BEFORE YOU PASS THEM ON. IN THIS CASE, THERE IS A DISPUTE OVER WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED AND WHO WAS REPRESENTED IN THIS TRAINING SESSION. GO THE LINK ABOVE AND SEARCH RICK MATHES PRISON MINISTRY ISLAM.

PETE

Joe stuck to his guns, leading to a brief Pete response:

I AM NOT SURE THAT YOUR STATEMENT IS ACCURATE WITH REGARDS TO ISLAM BUT I RECOMMEND READING THE PIECE ON SNOPE.

In April 2011, Joe Ricketts, along with other recipients, was forwarded an email "Yankee boy marries a Southern girl" where the punchline was the N-word. Ricketts responded only, "great laugh."

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### **Cubs.com**

Hamels preparing to take on leadership role

By Jordan Bastian

Once the Cubs picked up Cole Hamels' option for the upcoming campaign -- a move made only days into the offseason -- the veteran lefty was able to push any thoughts of free agency out of his mind.

Hamels' offseason focus could be centered solely on continuing to harness and hone the adjustments he made down the stretch with the North Siders last year. Beyond that, the pitcher felt his time in Chicago

last season, combined with the knowledge that he would still be suiting up for the club in 2019, would allow him to more confidently step forward as a clubhouse leader this year.

"I've been in this game a long time, so I think that's where I need to be," Hamels said during Cubs Convention last month. "That's kind of the role that's directed toward you if you play this game long enough. That's kind of where you fit, so I understand that. I've had a couple years to really kind of do what I need to do in order to try to be that sort of leader.

"And now it's just, I guess, being a little bit more vocal instead of just letting that kind of play out on the field."

The Cubs' decision-makers made it clear from the jump this offseason that improving the leadership behind the scenes was a priority. Hamels clearly heard that message and wants to do his part to solidify that element of the roster.

It is on the field, however, where Hamels can make the more quantifiable impact, as Cubs fans saw after he was acquired for the final two months in 2018. In a dozen starts with the Cubs after coming over from the Rangers via trade, he turned in a 2.36 ERA with 74 strikeouts and 23 walks in 76 1/3 innings. Hamels had a 0.69 ERA in his first six outings with Chicago in August, following a five-start stretch with a 10.23 ERA to end his tenure with Texas.

This was not simply a change-of-scenery situation. A lot of work over several months led to Hamels' improved performance. An oblique injury in May 2017 led to mechanical problems that persisted late in that season and carried over into the early portion of '18. He was striding too far down the mound, flying open and his lower half and upper-body movements were out of sync.

"I was fighting it the whole season until I kind of looked at a little bit deeper film," Hamels explained. "And then, just really made some more drastic changes and went with it, and obviously it worked. So now this offseason, [I'm] training a little bit better, and obviously having better referencing for my mechanics."

The 35-year-old Hamels said a key component was to return to landing more closed off during his stride, creating a crossfire throwing motion.

"We saw it in the video. In Texas, we were trying to correct it," he said. "We just didn't go as drastic as I finally did before I came over [to the Cubs]. It was just little bits and pieces of trying and finally I just said, 'No.' It was a drastic change. I was sore from it, but it worked out and now things have gotten back to normal."

That adjustment can be partially identified through Hamels' horizontal release point. Per Statcast™, that was down to 2.14 feet, on average, for all pitches (from the center of the pitching rubber) in 2017, when Hamels' strikeout rate dropped to an uncharacteristically low 17.1 percent. Last year, the lefty's horizontal release point climbed to 2.75 feet, on average.

Hamels also saw a rise in velocity as he worked to implement his mechanical changes throughout last season. According to Statcast™, the lefty's four-seam velocity stood at 90.7 mph, on average, in the season's first month, but was up to 93.1 mph in August. Overall, Hamels' strikeout rate last year (23.3 percent) was right on par with 2016 (23.6 percent).

Hamels said he did not necessarily pitch through pain after coming back from the oblique issue in 2017, but he could definitely tell his delivery was out of sorts.

"You're just trying to get results," he said. "That was just kind of something that it didn't work out as well, but I knew something was wrong. I was just trying to pitch through it and get through the game, just because that's how I am and what I try to do. I'm glad I was able to at least figure something out, because that wasn't fun."

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### **ESPNChicago.com**

Tom Ricketts: Father's 'racially insensitive' email exchanges not reflective of Cubs' culture  
By Jesse Rogers

Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts on Monday distanced himself from what he called "racially insensitive" email exchanges involving his father, Joe Ricketts, after they were publicly leaked by splinternews.com.

"We are aware of the racially insensitive emails in my father's account that were published by an online media outlet," Tom Ricketts said in a statement Monday. "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."

The elder Ricketts holds no title with the Cubs but is also the father of Pete Ricketts, governor of Nebraska, and Todd Ricketts, who is the Republican National Committee finance chair. Joe Ricketts is the founder and former CEO of TD Ameritrade.

The emails go back several years and include racist messages and jokes that Joe Ricketts comments on in a positive manner. He issued a statement as well:

"I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails. 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."

Major League Baseball did not respond to an email late Monday regarding the leaked Ricketts emails.

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### **NBC Sports Chicago**

A decade into his career, nothing's surprising Jason Heyward anymore  
By Cam Ellis

It's not hard to draw parallels between Jason Heyward and the Cubs team he plays right field for.

Arriving on the scene with a combo of (a bit green) youth and talent, both had to deal with sky-high expectations from the start. Heyward was the future of baseball, an intoxicating mix of 5 tools topped off with a generational glove. The Cubs were bursting at the seams with top prospects, flush with cash, and run by a man that Forbes magazine decided was a better leader than, among others, The Pope.

\$184 million and two underwhelming playoff runs later, both head into 2019 trying to prove that talk of closing windows is premature.

Heyward's struggles have been well documented. Through the first half of his Cubs contract, he's hit .252/.322/.367 with a .688 OPS and a wRC+ that's yet to hit league-average. If it wasn't before, Heyward's contract is officially a burden, and probably one the Cubs would like to get off their books. How that'd work is another thing entirely.

Heyward's contract has some tricky language in it. It offered him a full no-trade clause in the first three years, and a partial one after that. Now, for the first time in his Cubs career, Heyward can't totally dictate his future; he has a 12-team no-trade clause for the next two summers. However, if the Cubs don't move him in either 2019 or 2020, his "10/5 Rights" kick in. Essentially, the latest CBA dictates that if a player has 10+ years of service time, 5 of which come with one team, said player automatically earns a full no-trade clause. As if the Cubs weren't well-tuned in financial restraints already, Heyward's contract (at 20+ million per year) extends for three more years after his 10/5 clause hits.

Swirling trade rumors may linger in the minds of younger players, but with a decade of baseball to his name, Heyward's not phased.

"My antenna is always turned off," he said. "I don't need to pay [trade rumors] any mind. It's funny because going into last offseason, there were trade rumors about me, but I had a full-on trade clause. It's whatever. I talked to Theo, I talked to Jed just in general about the team, after this past season. Just talked about what we can do to improve and what we can do to be healthy. That kind of stuff. I said, like, 'Hey, if you want to trade me, come talk to me.'"

It's a bleak picture right now. There's no questioning that. However, if we're searching the couch cushions for silver linings, Heyward presents a few. He's coming off his best year in Chicago, one that saw him return to league average production at the plate and put together a WAR equal to his two previous seasons combined. He continues to cut down on the strikeouts, and was, by FanGraphs' measurements, the best baserunner on the team last year. His power is a thing of the past, but his contact numbers continue to improve, and he's hitting the ball to all parts of the field more than he ever has in his Cubs tenure. He was not exempt to the team-wide offensive slump in the 2nd half, but having encouraging peripherals is never a bad thing. With a steadfast offseason approach, there's reason to believe his best Cubs years may still be yet to come.

"You're always going to do stuff different," he said, when asked about his offseason routine. "Honestly, I mean, if you do things differently, you're still doing the same thing so to speak. You know, I've had my routine and the kind of things I like to do in the offseason, you always have to add. You get older -- I started playing when I was 20, and now I'm 30. This is Year 10. You have to work hard, work smart. Same stuff, same training. Get ready for the season, be aware of how the game is changing, so to speak."

The Cubs don't need Heyward to be a middle-of-the-order bat. Trotting out Javy Baez, Kris Bryant, and Anthony Rizzo every day affords them such luxuries. But is 2014 Heyward -- someone who hit .271/.351/.384 with a 735 OPS, 109 wRC+ and terrific defense -- too unrealistic to expect? Given how much money the Cubs invested in Heyward, not to mention the (relatively) limited time they have to get out from under it, that's probably where he needs to be if he wants to stay in the Cubs' plans.

"If [a trade] comes about, and they want to, then they're going to do it. That's how they are," he said. "That's how front offices are. I can honestly say, and I don't take it for granted, that this front office is going to do what they think is best for this team and this organization. That's comforting to know. But right now? What do you do? You have all these guys that have put up a number of wins over these last

few years. They've made trades at the deadlines, they've signed guys, they traded guys. That doesn't happen everywhere. We keep meeting them halfway, and they're going to keep rewarding us with those moves that try and help the team win."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Cubs family patriarch Joe Ricketts apologizes after racist emails are revealed: 'I strongly believe that bigoted ideas are wrong'

By Mark Gonzales

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

Ricketts, 77, and his son and team Chairman Tom Ricketts, issued separate statements regarding the emails after they were posted.

"I deeply regret and apologize for some of the exchanges I had in my emails," Joe Ricketts said in a 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."

Islamophobia was prevalent in many of the emails, with Ricketts stating, "Muslims are naturally my (our) enemy" in one. Others mentioned the faith of former President Barack Obama. Several of the emails included short replies to forwarded emails, including one in April 2011 that included the words "great laugh" regarding a joke whose punchline is a racist slur.

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

"We are aware of the racially insensitive emails in my father's account that were published by an online media outlet," Tom Ricketts wrote in his statement. "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."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

With Manny Machado and Bryce Harper still unsigned, MLB's free-agent season remains in a polar vortex  
By Paul Sullivan

As a lifeless Super Bowl officially ended the football season Sunday, baseball's buzz-free winter limped toward the finish line.

Camps open across Florida and Arizona next week, though dozens of free agents remain unsigned, including the best outfielder, Bryce Harper, and premier shortstop Manny Machado.



If you neglected to follow the hot stove, rest assured nothing of consequence has happened since the Red Sox beat the Dodgers in the World Series.

It's the second straight free-agent freeze, and fingers are being pointed in several directions.

Some blame it on the cold, numbers-driven front-office types and megalomaniacal owners. Others suggest it's an under-the-radar war between the two high-profile agents of Harper and Machado, desperately trying to massage the venti-sized egos of their superstar clients with the richest contract.

Or perhaps it's just the two players themselves — dreaming of becoming the highest-paid athlete in baseball history no matter where they wind up. In case you forgot, Harper was predicted to sign a 14-year, \$420 million deal with the Dodgers by MLBTradeRumors.com, while the same site had Machado getting 13 years and \$390 million from the Phillies.

It's obvious by now the lack of big-name signings has managed to spoil the only thing baseball has going during the winter — the traditional guessing game over who goes where.

“Two of the best players in the game, and (teams) have very little interest in them, from what I hear,” Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant recently said of Harper and Machado. “It's not good. It's something that's going to have to change. I know a lot of the other players are upset about it.”

That change would likely have to come in the next collective bargaining agreement, as the current five-year deal ends Dec. 1, 2021. A work stoppage before then is a possibility, though no one wants to think about that with spring training on the horizon and the new season ahead.

Asked about the players' disgruntlement at SoxFest, White Sox general manager Rick Hahn acknowledged it's real.

“Our job is to put the best team together possible under the current rules,” Hahn said. “There does seem to be some discontent, especially the veteran free-agent segment of the player market, with how these rules affect them.

“So as a result, there probably does need to be a serious conversation through collective bargaining about how those changes need to be made.

“But as we sit here in January with what I feel is not quite a complete roster, it's frankly not on my mind. ... Right now our focus is trying to build the best team under these rules and be in position where hopefully there is not a work stoppage — which there hasn't been for several decades plus now — and that we're in a position to win those World Series and keep going through labor peace.”

The Sox are one of three teams, along with the Phillies and Padres, reportedly pursuing Machado and Harper. But unless you're a fan of one of the teams, chances are you no longer care where those players wind up, assuming you ever did.

The rumors about this particular free-agent class began a couple of years ago, and speculation over the possibilities exploded on social media. Cubs Chairman Tom Ricketts theorized during last year's similar free-agent freeze that “a lot of teams would rather have dry powder a year from now,” suggesting they were saving their money for the big class of free agents after the 2018 season.

Yet the powder remains dry for most teams, and neither player seems to be in any hurry. Dozens of others remain unsigned, including the top closer, Craig Kimbrel, and one of the best starters, Dallas Keuchel.

The reasons? Who knows? But as former Mets general manager Steve Phillips once said: "It's always about the money, especially when it's not about the money."

Millennial baseball players grew up believing the spending faucet didn't have a shut-off valve. Why would they?

Just flash back to Dec. 8-12, 2000, the solar vortex of one of the hottest periods in hot stove annals. In that brief stretch at the winter meetings in Dallas, baseball handed out three of the biggest deals in history, starting with Mike Hampton's eight-year, \$121 million deal with the Rockies, the longest for a pitcher since Wayne Garland's 10-year deal with the Indians in 1977.

Texas owner Tom Hicks followed by signing shortstop Alex Rodriguez for a record \$252 million over 10 years. The third shocker came hours later, when the Red Sox ponied up \$160 million over eight years for Indians outfielder Manny Ramirez.

The outcry over the spending that winter was widespread. And when Hampton claimed he and his wife chose the Rockies because they liked Colorado's school system, eye-rolling was prevalent among baseball executives.

"It's a lot of money, case closed," former MLB executive vice president Sandy Alderson fumed. "I don't want to hear about the Wheat Ridge school system."

Even Commissioner Bud Selig proclaimed outrage over the spending, declaring: "The system has to be changed and it will be changed."

Indeed, the system has changed. A luxury tax, known as the "competitive balance" tax, has acted as a soft salary cap, with teams trying to avoid paying the penalties. Last year only two teams, the Red Sox and Nationals, paid any tax. Many teams are also tanking, declining to spend on free agents since they're rebuilding and don't plan to contend.

Now it's the players venting about the need for changes, and it will only pick up next week when camps open.

Can't wait, can you?

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