



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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- The Athletic, **Why the Cubs see Anthony Iapoce as the right hitting coach at the right time**
<https://theathletic.com/591799/2018/10/15/why-the-cubs-see-anthony-iapoce-as-the-right-hitting-coach-at-the-right-time/>
- The Athletic, **The search is on for the 'edge' that will put the Cubs back on top**
<https://theathletic.com/590553/2018/10/15/the-search-is-on-for-the-edge-that-will-put-the-cubs-back-on-top/>
- Cubs.com, **Cubs bring back Iapoce to be their hitting coach**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cubs-name-anthony-iapoce-as-hitting-coach/c-297867602>
- Cubs.com, **Inbox: Did 'extreme' flexibility hurt the Cubs?**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cubs-fans-ask-about-kris-bryant-lineup/c-297850904>
- ESPNChicago.com, **Anthony Iapoce replaces Chili Davis on Cubs staff**
http://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/24991701/cubs-hire-anthony-iapoce-rangers-hitting-coach
- NBC Sports Chicago, **Cubs have new hitting coach in Anthony Iapoce**
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/cubs-have-reportedly-found-new-hitting-coach-anthony-iapoce-chili-davis-maddon-rangers-contreras>
- NBC Sports Chicago, **What should Brandon Morrow's role be in Cubs 2019 bullpen?**
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/what-should-brandon-morrow-role-be-cubs-2019-bullpen-epstein-maddon-strop>
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<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/cubs-executive-jason-mcleod-reportedly-linked-giants-gm-opening>
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- Chicago Tribune, **How did the Cubs go from Rudy Jaramillo to Anthony Iapoce at hitting coach? It's a long story**
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The Athletic

Why the Cubs see Anthony Iapoce as the right hitting coach at the right time

By Patrick Mooney

When the Cubs wanted a firsthand report on Kris Bryant’s professional debut with Class-A Boise, then-farm director Brandon Hyde instructed Anthony Iapoce to travel to Eugene, Oregon, to see the No. 2 overall pick from the 2013 draft.

As Iapoce watched from the dugout while Bryant went 0-for-5 with five strikeouts, the text messages pinged his phone, including at least one from team president Theo Epstein that read, “How bad is it?”

Iapoce (pronounced “eye-uh-poh-SEE”) laughed at that memory during a conversation in late May, back when it looked like Bryant might have another MVP season, right around the time he injured his left shoulder on a headfirst slide into first base that would ultimately sap his power.

At that point, Iapoce worked for the Texas Rangers, and so did Cole Hamels and Jesse Chavez, the trade-deadline additions who would save the Cubs’ pitching staff. Bryant — and by extension the entire offense — would never be what the Cubs envisioned this year. Hitting coach Chili Davis already took the fall for that, getting fired after a one-and-done, 95-win season that saw several hitters fail to live up to expectations.

The Cubs didn’t issue a press release on Monday that said: We messed up by firing John Mallee. But hiring Iapoce — now the team’s third hitting coach in the past 365 days — is almost as subtle as posting a message on the Wrigley Field marquee.

Iapoce played for Mallee when he was just beginning his coaching career as a minor-league instructor for the Milwaukee Brewers in the mid-1990s. Iapoce got his coaching start with the Florida Marlins, working at three different affiliates (2006-09) while Mallee was their minor-league hitting coordinator.

Mallee — who’s now the hitting coach for the Philadelphia Phillies — helped the Cubs identify Iapoce as the special assistant who would oversee their minor-league hitting program between 2013 and 2015. During that time, the Cubs used first-round picks on Bryant, Kyle Schwarber and Ian Happ while Javier Báez and Addison Russell made their big-league debuts and Willson Contreras and Albert Almora Jr. advanced to the point where they would become contributors to the 2016 World Series team.

Just guessing that manager Joe Maddon won't be making as many sarcastic comments about launch angle and exit velocity next year. But just because Iapoce worked closely with Mallee throughout his career doesn't mean that he's a Mallee clone.

Iapoce is a street-smart New Yorker who grew up in Queens and spent the past three years as the Texas hitting coach. The 2017 Rangers became the first team in major-league history to have at least nine players hit 17 or more home runs. That diverse group of hitters included Joey Gallo, Rougned Odor, Shin-Soo Choo, Elvis Andrus and Adrian Beltre.

Player personnel is always the driving force for a coaching staff. Better hitters — like, say, Bryce Harper or Manny Machado plus Bryant at full strength — make better hitting coaches. But Epstein clearly trusts Iapoce, who knows a lot of the personalities inside the clubhouse and throughout the organization and now takes over the job with real big-league experience.

The Cubs need some level of continuity coming off their fourth straight playoff season with 90-plus wins, an unprecedented run of sustained success at Wrigley Field that still probably won't get Maddon a contract extension before heading into a lame-duck year (worth \$6 million in salary). After completing his first season as Maddon's bench coach, Hyde is now reportedly making the rounds as a managerial candidate with the Rangers, Los Angeles Angels and Minnesota Twins. Epstein no longer sounds quite as enamored with the core of players he assembled or Maddon's laid-back, never-panic attitude.

In what already looks like an offseason of change, the Cubs are returning to their launch-angle roots and bringing back a hitting instructor who worked on the ground floor of the Wrigley Field rebuild. After firing two handpicked hitting coaches in Mallee and Davis, now it should be about the players performing (or not).

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The Athletic

The search is on for the 'edge' that will put the Cubs back on top
By Sahadev Sharma

Back in 2015, the Cubs were a team on the precipice after a surprising run to the NLCS. After the season, numerous scouts around baseball told me that the Cubs were missing the element they needed to take them to another level.

Most referred to it as an "edge" and unsurprisingly, when Cubs president Theo Epstein brought veteran John Lackey aboard to finish off his rotation, he used that exact word.

"Lackey brings a real edge to the mound with him, in a good way, whenever he takes the field," Epstein said after the signing. "That's something that I think we're looking for this year. I know Joe (Maddon)'s talked about how it's a little bit different the year after you've had a pretty successful season. We're going to have that bullseye on our back a little bit this year. You can't take games off, you can't sacrifice a game because it's after an off day or not show up on a given Tuesday night in Milwaukee in May. We're trying to win the division. You have to show up every night. And I think John demands that kind of focus and accountability when he pitches. And I think that carries over to the rest of the team. I do like the way his personality fits in to what we're trying to accomplish and the rest of his teammates."

If all of that sounds familiar, that's because the Cubs once again find themselves in a similar position. Yes, they've got a World Series and four straight trips to the playoffs under their belts, but the 2018

Cubs, who fell short of reaching even the NLDS for the first time in four years, were a team lacking edge and urgency.

That's why Epstein didn't mince words when he spoke to members of the media at his year-end press conference nearly two weeks ago. The offense "broke" and players finally admitted the lack of urgency throughout the season. Epstein was open and honest and it became clear that as much as the front office may have liked the mix of players and coaches coming into the season, changes would be made after a disappointing one-game stint in the playoffs.

The departure of Chili Davis, who was billed by many in the organization as one of the few difference-makers in his position, was the first change in what's likely to be an offseason full of it for the Cubs. There might not be any more drastic changes, but moves will be made to ensure the 2019 Cubs don't sleepwalk through the regular season, only to need a dose of reality to wake them come October — a jolt that proved to come too late this season.

"This year it manifested that we had chance after chance to put away the division, and we didn't do it," Epstein said. "So we have to own that. I don't think there's some sort of fatal flaw at all in the clubhouse. I just think, if we're being honest about it, as Jon Lester said, maybe this will be good for us. Because if you just show up, playing it cool, knowing you're talented, knowing it's a long season and trusting that the talent will manifest over the course of 162, sometimes you'll end up one game short. And that's not who we are. It's not who we should want to be. It's not what we're all about. I think we have to own that and we have to recognize it. I think our players do from talking to them today. Maybe that feeling in the clubhouse last night, which was a whole lot of pissed off and disappointed and frustrated, will be our rallying cry for next year."

It'd be easy to take what Epstein said and assume that the early playoff exit will be enough to give the 2019 squad the necessary edge or sense of urgency. But Epstein's not the type to leave these things up to chance. Last offseason, he decided to keep his young offensive core together, trusting they would develop and mature in 2018. That didn't happen. Would he dare risk that the early playoff exit will be enough of a wake-up call for next season?

"I think if we're being totally honest, this is a theme that's come up with some of the players as we talk to them and that we felt through the course of the year," Epstein said. "There was a lot to grind through and there was a lot to be proud of, but we could have done more from Day 1 to 162 as far as complete sense of urgency every day, being completely on mission every day, showing up with that assertiveness and that edge every single day to win."

It's notable Epstein said, "that we felt through the course of the year." If this were Epstein immediately after his team had been eliminated, perhaps taking these words at face value would be risky. But this wasn't an emotional Epstein speaking off the cuff after a frustrating loss. He had time to decompress and really think about what he wanted to say.

He addressed the topic head-on when asked about whether the team ran out of gas because of the difficult run of games they had to end the season — 42 games in 43 days. While Epstein did admit that was "unheard of" and a "gauntlet" he quickly moved away from making excuses. He spent the next 5 1/2 minutes talking about this element that the team lacked and how it had to be addressed. He was so hellbent on getting his full message across that he even told a reporter trying to get a question in during a short pause that he wasn't finished.

But this was not an annoyed executive in the midst of an ad-lib rant. This was a calculated message being sent by someone who was relieved that he could finally address this issue publicly after his team had finally acknowledged it.

Many around the Cubs have wondered whether this group is a little too laid back and only performs when their backs are against the wall. In 2017, the World Series hangover was a kind of excuse. But that wore off when they were 43-45 and sat 5 1/2 games back of first place at the All-Star break. There was no excuse this season. And perhaps the best thing that came of their early exit was the public acknowledgment of the issue.

The Cubs were a couple balls finding holes away from advancing. If Victor Caratini's 102.3 mph hopper in the 11th inning of their 2-1 loss to the Colorado Rockies is a foot to the left or right, or if Anthony Rizzo's final out the day prior carries a few extra feet, do the players ever admit publicly, or even to themselves, that this issue even exists? Nobody with the Cubs wanted the season to end this way, but as Lester said and Epstein echoed, perhaps it's what they needed.

Epstein won't sit idly by and merely hope his team finds this intangible quality. The front office, along with manager Joe Maddon and his coaching staff, will periodically remind players of what they shared with the media immediately after their loss and what they told Epstein during their exit interviews, and they'll hold them to those words.

But that won't be the end of it. Expect the front office to add players to the fold who understand and communicate that sense of urgency and desire to bring it every single day during the season and into the playoffs — whether that's in the lineup or on the bench. And whether it's new coaches or other environmental aspects, the Cubs will find other ways to try and cultivate that intangible aspect this team clearly needs.

Fixing the offense is priority No. 1 this winter, but don't overlook the need for that X-factor element that could push the Cubs over the top once again.

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Cubs.com

Cubs bring back Iapocce to be their hitting coach
By Carrie Muskat

CHICAGO -- Once word got out that Anthony Iapocce was returning to the Cubs organization as the hitting coach, his phone started to buzz with text messages. By late Monday, a half dozen players had reached out to Iapocce to congratulate him and welcome him back.

That familiarity made the job attractive. But Iapocce is quick to point out that even though he knows several of the Cubs players in his former job as the team's Minor League hitting coordinator, he can't snap his fingers and fix an offense that struggled in the second half this season.

"Just because you know the players doesn't mean it'll bring instant success right away," Iapocce said Monday night. "There are plenty of places that hire people because they're familiar with certain players and it doesn't work out. You feel pretty good going into it knowing the players and what they've been through in the Minor Leagues."

The Cubs are hoping Iapoce's background with the team will help. He was named the hitting coach on Monday, replacing Chili Davis, who was dismissed last week after one season. Iapoce, 45, just completed his third season as the Rangers' hitting coach and third season on a big league coaching staff.

"It was a good feeling to be wanted, not only by the Rangers but by the Cubs," Iapoce said by phone from his New York home. "It's the first job where I will go back to something familiar which is a big deal to me. I've never had that."

He began his coaching career in the Marlins' system from 2006-09 and spent three seasons as the Blue Jays' roving hitting coordinator from 2010-12.

"You're always starting new and you're always trying to lay down the groundwork and the foundation of what you're trying to accomplish as a team," Iapoce said of his previous jobs. "Now, going back to somewhere that you're familiar with as far as players, coaches, front office, yourself, you can go in right away and be yourself and not be too concerned about looking over your shoulder coaching. You can coach right away."

He was a special assistant to the general manager/player development with the Cubs from 2013-15 and oversaw the Minor League hitting program, working with young players such as Kris Bryant, Albert Almora Jr. and Kyle Schwarber.

The Cubs did finish the 2018 season leading the National League in batting average but had a disappointing second half, and Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein vowed to make changes. The Cubs led the NL in runs (476) and on-base percentage (.345) in the first half but dropped to eighth in runs scored (285) and ninth in OBP (.316) after the All-Star break. In the first half, they hit 100 home runs, but hit only 67 in the second half.

"It's a young team and sometimes you forget that because of the 2016 World Series, but they're still growing up," Iapoce said. "Your first year [as a player] is always the toughest -- you're surviving, but then they start to figure you out and you have to make adjustments and the opposition makes adjustments. We dealt with that in Texas. We were really young and guys were trying to find their way."

"It's just a matter of guys getting comfortable and what they can do to help the Cubs win the ultimate goal, which is the World Series," he said.

The first step for Iapoce will be to reach out to players to re-introduce himself and talk about their offseason plans.

An announcement regarding the entire 2019 Cubs coaching staff will come at a later date. One of the reasons for the delay is that bench coach Brandon Hyde is interviewing for some of the managerial openings in the Major Leagues.

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Cubs.com

Inbox: Did 'extreme' flexibility hurt the Cubs

By Carrie Muskat

While the extreme flexibility in the Cubs' lineup is pretty impressive -- from players like Kris Bryant (third base, left field, right field) and Javier Baez (second base, shortstop, third base) being slotted into multiple positions on the field and in the batting order -- do you think not having a relatively settled

lineup or batting order is a contributing factor to the team's lack of consistency? -- Joe S., Henderson, Nev.

During exit interviews, Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein said some players did express some frustration over the constantly changing lineups. However, Epstein added that the players understood why manager Joe Maddon changed things up.

"They look around and see the talent here," Epstein said. "That's how players talk about it -- it's like, 'Hey, we have so many talented players who deserve to play, and that's what makes us great and really good. But here's how sometimes it makes me feel and here's how if we could communicate about it, it could make things easier.'"

According to Baseball Reference, the Cubs used 152 different batting orders. By comparison, the Brewers used 137 different batting orders and the Dodgers used 155.

In case you were wondering what the most common batting order for the Cubs was: Albert Almora Jr., Baez, Bryant, Anthony Rizzo, Willson Contreras, Kyle Schwarber, Addison Russell, Jason Heyward and the starting pitcher

Maddon used that lineup for five games.

What's the possibility that Kris Bryant will need shoulder surgery this winter? -- Wayne C., South Bend, Ind.

Not likely. At the end of the season, both Bryant and Epstein said the third baseman did not need surgery on his left shoulder.

Once Kris Bryant returned from his second DL stint, he started to keep two hands on the bat, and it appeared he was not "staying through" the baseball as well as he did not trying to keep two hands on the bat. Does Kris plan to swing natural next year or work with keeping two hands on the bat? -- Tyler B., Gilbert, Ariz.

Bryant used the two-handed approach during batting practice and when he was hitting in the cage to avoid putting more stress on his left shoulder. You may have felt he wasn't "staying through" his swing, but Bryant seemed to like the switch and compared it to a golf swing.

"It feels -- and I feel -- a lot more powerful. I feel like I'm hitting the ball further," Bryant said in late August.

He'll most likely experiment this offseason.

I've been wondering the whole season whether David Bote might have a permanent position on the active roster rather than bouncing back and forth from Triple-A to the big leagues. -- Denise M., Yorkville, Ill.

Bote did shuttle back and forth early, but was stayed with the big league team from July 26 through the end of the year. His versatility on defense and .455 batting average as a pinch-hitter certainly make him an attractive player to have on the active roster. It will depend on the roster makeup next year, but he definitely opened some eyes.

Tyler Chatwood can't pitch. To even suggest including him as a starter for 2019 is ludicrous. The upper management must own up to the fact that they spent money on him and figure out a way to get rid of him. -- Judi M., Barrington, Ill.

Chatwood did finish the season as the Major League leader in walks. He also held right-handed hitters to a .150 average and .219 slugging percentage. Let's see what happens after an offseason to reboot. When the Cubs signed Chatwood last December, I heard from more than one scout that it was a great pickup. I'm optimistic that he can get back on track.

Is there any concern regarding the Cubs batting with runners in scoring position? I heard many comments that we had such a low average for that during the season. -- Haley S., Vero Beach, Fla.

The Cubs finished 10th in the National League with a .247 batting average with runners in scoring position. By comparison, they also ranked 10th in 2016 with a .252 batting average with RISP and 11th in 2017 at .253. It's something the Cubs would like to improve on, which will likely be a hot topic for the new hitting coach.

What is the current number of players (past and present) with any connection (Major or Minor Leagues) to the Texas Rangers? (Asked by a Texas Cubs fan who went to the same high school as Kerry Wood and currently lives four miles away from where the Rangers play) -- Stanley K., Grand Prairie, Texas

According to Baseball Reference, 68 pitchers pitched and 141 players played for both the Cubs and Rangers. I'm not going to list them all (not enough room here), but the list does include a variety, including Don Zimmer (who played and managed the Cubs and also managed the Rangers from 1981-82).

Players on the 2018 Cubs with ties to both included Anthony Bass, Eddie Butler, Jesse Chavez, Yu Darvish, Chris Gimenez, Cole Hamels, and Pedro Strop. Kyle Hendricks was drafted by the Rangers in 2008, and Carl Edwards Jr. was drafted in '11.

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ESPNChicago.com

Anthony Iapoce replaces Chili Davis on Cubs staff

By Jesse Rogers

CHICAGO -- The Chicago Cubs have their third hitting coach in as many seasons after the team announced on Monday that it had hired former Rangers hitting coach, Anthony Iapoce.

Iapoce, 45, replaces Chili Davis, who lasted one year on the job after Davis replaced John Mallee. Iapoce is a Mallee disciple, having worked under him at several major league organizations including the Miami Marlins and Toronto Blue Jays. Mallee recommended Iapoce to oversee the Cubs minor league hitting program, a position he held from 2013-2015 before joining the Rangers.

The Cubs were dissatisfied with their offense last season after seeing a precipitous drop in power and on-base percentage in the second half of the season. Davis had been hired to help the team's situational hitting and to get players to use more of the entire field, and although the Cubs led the National League in opposite-field hits, they scored 61 fewer runs in 2018 than in 2017. It led president Theo Epstein to declare the offense "broke" after the All-Star break.

Davis admitted it was a difficult transition to a team full of established hitters, saying he and the players never completely "meshed."

Mallee brought the phrase "launch angle" to his teachings with the Cubs, and it's assumed Iapoce will pick up on that notion as the team hit 57 more home runs in 2017 than 2018. The Cubs have not announced the status of the rest of their coaching staff for 2019.

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NBC Sports Chicago

Cubs have new hitting coach in Anthony Iapoce

By Tony Andracki

The Cubs are heading into a new season with a different hitting coach for the second straight winter, but the most recent choice is a familiar face.

Anthony Iapoce is set to join Joe Maddon's coaching staff this week after serving in the same capacity with the Texas Rangers for the last three seasons. The Cubs confirmed the move Monday afternoon shortly after the news broke out of the Rangers camp.

The Cubs fired Chili Davis last week after just one season as the team's hitting coach.

Entering the final week of the season, the Rangers fired manager Jeff Banister, leaving Iapoce and the rest of the Texas coaching staff in limbo.

As such, Iapoce is rejoining the Cubs, where he served as a special assistant to the General Manager from 2013-15 focusing on player development, particularly in the hitting department throughout the minor leagues.

Iapoce has familiarity with a bunch of the current star offensive players on the Cubs, from Willson Contreras to Kris Bryant.

Both Bryant and Contreras endured tough 2018 seasons at the plate, which was a huge reason for the Cubs' underperforming lineup. Bryant's issue was more related to a left shoulder injury suffered in mid-May while Contreras' offensive woes remain a major question mark after the young catcher looked to be emerging as a legitimate superstar entering the campaign.

Getting Contreras back to the hitter that put up 21 homers and 74 RBI in only 117 games in 2017 will be one of the main goals for Iapoce, so the history between the two could be a key.

With the Rangers, Iapoce oversaw an offense that ranked 7th, 9th and 14th in MLB in runs scored over the last three seasons. The decline in offensive production is obviously not a great sign, but the Rangers as a team have fallen off greatly since notching the top seed in the AL playoffs in 2016 with 95 wins only to lose 95 games in 2018, resulting in the change at manager.

Iapoce has worked with an offense backed by Adrian Beltre, Elvis Andrus, Shin-Soo Choo, Nomar Mazara and Joey Gallo the last few seasons.

Under Iapoce's tutelage, former top prospect Jurickson Profar shed any notion of a "bust" label and emerged as a budding star at age 25, collecting 61 extra-base hits with a .793 OPS in 2018.

When the Cubs let Davis go last week, they provided no update on assistant hitting coach Andy Haines, who just finished his first season in that role and is expected to remain with the team for 2019. The same offseason lapoche left for the Rangers, Haines took over as the Cubs' minor league hitting instructor.

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NBC Sports Chicago

What should Brandon Morrow's role be in Cubs 2019 bullpen?

By Tony Andracki

Since the Cubs' early exit from the postseason, many have turned their attention to the 2019 roster and wonder if Brandon Morrow will be the team's closer next year.

However, the question isn't WILL Morrow be the closer, but rather — SHOULD he be counted on as the main ninth-inning option?

Morrow didn't throw a single pitch for the Cubs after the All-Star Game, nursing a bone bruise in his forearm that did not heal in time to allow him to make a return down the stretch.

Of course, an injury isn't surprising given Morrow's lengthy history of arm issues.

Consider: Even with a half-season spent on the DL, Morrow's 35 appearances in 2018 was his second-highest total since 2008 (though he also spent a ton of time as a starting pitcher from 2009-15).

Morrow is 34 now and has managed to throw just 211 innings in 126 games since the start of the 2013 season.

Because of that, Theo Epstein isn't ready to anoint Morrow the Cubs' 2019 closer despite success in the role in his first year in Chicago (22-for-24 in save chances).

"[We're] very comfortable with Morrow as part of a deep and talented 'pen," Epstein said. "We have to recommit to him in a very structured role and stick with it to do our best to keep him healthy. Set some rules and adhere to them and build a 'pen around that. I'm comfortable."

Epstein is referencing the overuse the Cubs have pointed to for the origin of Morrow's bone bruise when he worked three straight games from May 31-June 2 during a stretch of four appearances in five days.

Joe Maddon and the Cubs were very cautious with Morrow early in the year, unleashing him for only three outings — and 2 innings — in the first two-plus weeks of the season, rarely using him even on back-to-back days.

During that late-May/early-June stretch, Morrow also threw just 2 pitches in one outing (May 31) and was only called upon for the 14th inning June 2 when Maddon had already emptied the rest of the Cubs bullpen in a 7-1 extra-inning victory in New York.

The blame or origin of Morrow's bone bruise hardly matters now. All the Cubs can do at this moment is try to learn from it and carry those lessons into 2019. It sounds like they have, heading into Year 2 of a two-year, \$21 million deal that also includes a team option for 2020.

"It's the type of injury you can fully recover from with rest," Epstein said. "that said, he has an injury history and we knew that going in. That was part of the calculation when we signed him and that's why it was the length it was and the amount of money it was, given his talent and everything else.

"We were riding pretty high with him for a few months and then we didn't have him for the second half of the season. And again, that's on me. We took an educated gamble on him there and on the 'pen overall, thinking that even if he did get hurt, we had enough talent to cover for it. And look, it was a really good year in the 'pen and he contributed to that greatly in the first half.

"They key is to keep him healthy as much as possible and especially target it for down the stretch and into what we hope will be a full month of October next year."

It's clear the Cubs will be even more cautious with Morrow in 2019, though he also should head into the new campaign with significantly more rest than he received last fall when he appeared in all seven games of the World Series out of the Dodgers bullpen.

Morrow has more than proven his value in this Cubs bullpen as a low-maintenance option when he's on the field who goes right after hitters and permits very few walks or home runs.

But if the Cubs are going to keep him healthy for the most important time of the season in September and October, they'll need to once again pack the bullpen with at least 7 other arms besides Morrow, affording Maddon plenty of options.

When he is healthy, Morrow will probably get a ton of the closing opportunities, but the world has also seen what Pedro Strop can do in that role and the Cubs will likely add another arm or two this winter for high-leverage situations.

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NBC Sports Chicago

Cubs executive Jason McLeod reportedly linked to Giants' GM opening

By Tim Stebbins

Is this the offseason that Cubs executive Jason McLeod finally becomes an MLB general manager?

According to Bruce Levine, the Giants are reportedly interested in McLeod, the Cubs senior vice president of scouting and player development, for their vacant general manager position.

McLeod joined the Cubs' front office in 2011 alongside Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer. Before the Cubs, he spent six years in the Red Sox front office and two in the Padres' (with Hoyer, who was San Diego's general manager from 2010-2011).

Of course, the Giants' reported interest in McLeod doesn't necessarily mean that he will interview for the job. However, it's worth noting that McLeod interviewed for the Twins' general manager job in 2016; he also withdrew his name from consideration for the Padres' general manager job in 2014.

In addition to the Giants, McLeod's name has been linked to the Mets' general manager vacancy. This is more speculation, but the point is that it seems to be only a matter of time before McLeod is hired as general manager elsewhere.

For what it's worth, though, McLeod is under contract through 2021 and has previously said that he is grateful to be with the Cubs.

"I'm exceptionally grateful," McLeod said. "All of us are. Look at where we are at this moment in time with this team," McLeod said in 2016. "I can't imagine a better environment, a better culture to work at in baseball.

"We've been together a long time. We're friends. We're good. We embrace the fact that we are good. And we challenge ourselves to be even better."

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Chicago Tribune

7 things to know about Cubs hitting coach Anthony Iapoce (it's pronounced 'eye-uh-poh-SEE')

By Mark Gonzales

Here are seven things to know about Cubs new hitting coach Anthony Iapoce.

1. This is a homecoming for Iapoce, 45, who served as a special assistant to the general manager with the Cubs from 2013-15. In that position, Iapoce worked with several of the Cubs' hitters, including Kris Bryant, Javier Baez, Albert Almora Jr., Willson Contreras and Kyle Schwarber.

2. Iapoce worked closely with former Cubs hitting coach John Mallee since 1996, when Mallee was the hitting coach with the Brewers' Class-A Beloit affiliate. Iapoce batted .290 in 78 games under Mallee, who currently is the Phillies' hitting coach after Chili Davis took over last season.

3. Iapoce concluded his professional career with the Independent League Gary Southshore Railcats in 2004-05, batting .279. Iapoce was an outfielder for nine seasons in the Brewers and Marlins organizations.

4. Much has been made about the Cubs' need to return to power, and the 2017 Rangers — under Iapoce's watch — became the first team in major league history to have nine players hit at least 17 home runs. But Iapoce doesn't overlook situational hitting. "It's all about executing a run-scoring culture," Iapoce told MLB.com after being hired by the Rangers.

5. Iapoce played at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. He is a native of East Elmhurst, N.Y., and graduated in 1991 from Bishop McClancy High School, which produced White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper.

6. How do you pronounce his last name? Good question. It's "eye-uh-poh-SEE."

7. He likes coffee. "I drink a lot of coffee," Iapoce told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in 2016 after he was hired by the Rangers. He is also known for his enthusiasm and high energy, which could be related to the coffee. "High-energy, I've heard that a lot, and I think that's just being excited about what you do each day. ... That's your job — to bring energy and enthusiasm to the players no matter what the score is, no matter if it's a win or a loss. The more energy you bring and the better atmosphere you bring, you're getting the hitters to win every pitch."

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Chicago Tribune

How did the Cubs go from Rudy Jaramillo to Anthony Iapoce at hitting coach? It's a long story
By Paul Sullivan

When the Cubs fired hitting coach John Mallee last October, only one year removed from a world championship, they knew the decision would be controversial.

But President Theo Epstein said it was a unique circumstance and had more to do with the sudden availability of Chili Davis after the Red Sox changed coaching staffs than anything Mallee lacked.

"It was a really tough decision, but we felt like going forward for the next several years Chili Davis is uniquely qualified to help our hitters get to the next level in certain areas there is still room for improvement," Epstein said.

The next "several years" turned into one for Davis, who was fired last week without a replacement lined up or an explanation of why the decision was made.

On Monday, the Cubs hired his replacement, Anthony Iapoce, who was the Rangers hitting coach for the last three seasons and previously worked in the Cubs' minor-league hitting program from 2013-15.

Anyone who watched the Cubs this season could figure out why Davis was a goner.

The Cubs led the National League with a .258 batting average and were fourth with 761 runs, but they were hot and cold all year. They scored one or zero runs 40 times, or about one quarter of their games, and they placed 11th in the NL with 167 home runs. Their lack of power was glaring in the final month as the Brewers erased a five-game deficit to win the NL Central Division. The Cubs' September slugging percentage of .363 ranked 27th in the majors. They finished 13th in the stat for the season at .410 after ranking seventh (.437) in 2017.

The Cubs played two extra games at Wrigley Field — the NL Central tiebreaker against the Brewers and the NL wild-card game against the Rockies — and scored one run in each game as their season ended.

Meanwhile, Davis' former team, the Red Sox, vaulted from 26th in slugging in 2017 (.407) to first (.453) this year. It's easy to see the importance of slugging in the modern era: eight of the top nine teams in slugging percentage made the postseason thus year, with the Cubs the lowest among the ten postseason qualifiers.

So Davis had to go, and now Epstein's eighth season with the Cubs will feature his sixth batting coach.

What will he look for? Probably the same things the Cubs stressed in their last five coaches: a good communicator, someone who buys into their grind-it-out philosophy and emphasizes a two-strike approach and hitting to all fields.

"Our emphasis is on the mental side of hitting, on trying to be selectively aggressive," Epstein said after firing Rudy Jaramillo 60 games in the 2012 season. "It's nothing new. It's page one of Ted Williams' book — get your pitch to hit. Rudy taught that too. ... He didn't do anything wrong."

Epstein had inherited Jaramillo, who was paid \$800,000 in the final season of a three-year, \$2.4 million contract. The Cubs were in the first year of the rebuild, and the personnel was so bad that Jaramillo had no chance to survive. Epstein's first hire was James Rowson, then a 35-year-old minor league hitting coordinator.

The Cubs finished 29th with a .302 on-base percentage in 2012, but Rowson was retained. After manager Dale Sveum was fired following the 2013 season, Rowson rejoined the Yankees organization as their minor-league hitting coordinator, and Epstein hired Rick Renteria as manager. What was Epstein looking for in a hitting coach?

"It's going to take a dynamic personality and somebody with a great feel," he said. "He has to have the ability to connect with all kinds of hitters because not everyone does it the same. But he has to be someone who is well-grounded and (emphasizes) selective aggressiveness. As a team, we want to lead the league in on-base percentage. You can't just say it. You have to do it."

The Cubs ranked 27th in batting average (.238) and 28th in OBP (.300) in 2013. Former Cubs third baseman Bill Mueller took over for Rowson, with Mike Brumley hired as assistant hitting coach. The Cubs again finished 27th in average (.239) and 28th in OBP (.300).

Brumley was fired after the season, and a week later, Mueller quit in support of Brumley.

"Everything was in place," Mueller said. "Theo Epstein made it enticing for me. They took care of Mike. Unfortunately, it was for only one year."

Epstein then hired Mallee, a Chicagoan who was working with Astros hitters.

"It's a dream come true" Mallee told Houston reporters. "I grew up a Cubs fan and always dreamed of standing on the field and representing this amazing franchise."

It seemed like the start of a long relationship. The Cubs rebuild turned the corner in 2015, thanks in part to the signing of veteran pitcher Jon Lester, the ascension of fellow hurler Jake Arrieta and the arrival of young hitters Kris Bryant, Addison Russell and Kyle Schwarber. The Cubs still finished 29th in average (.244) but zoomed to 12th in OBP (.321) and made the postseason.

Epstein's desire to see the Cubs lead the league in OBP finally came true in 2016, when they were second overall to the Red Sox at .348 and third overall in runs (808). Mallee's approach and communication skills were cited as an integral part of the championship season.

But the next season the Cubs fell to the Dodgers in the NL Championship Series and hit .168 with a .530 OPS in 10 postseason games. Mallee became part of the coaching purge that also included pitching coach Chris Bosio and third-base coach Gary Jones.

Epstein and Maddon both said "timing and availability" led to the hirings of former Red Sox coaches Davis and Brian Butterfield. Epstein called them "elite coaches" and denied the staff turnover was a purge.

"I can understand how people can say that from the outside looking in, but I absolutely wouldn't," Epstein said. "No, it is not a purge in the least bit. There are tweaks to upgrade in certain areas we felt there was room to improve."

Mallee became hitting coach with the rebuilding Phillies, who had their own offensive struggles in a second-half plunge. But after manager Gabe Kapler gave his coach a sign of support, Mallee told The Athletic: "The nice thing about managers that played baseball, like actually stood in the box at a high level, they know it's not easy. So they know that they had trouble swinging at the slider in the dirt or they had trouble with an elevated fastball. The message is correct, but it's much easier when you have someone like that that (who) understands it's really hard."

It was an apparent shot at Maddon, who never played in the major leagues.

The Cubs had high hopes for Davis, who inherited an offense of young but talented hitters. General manager Jed Hoyer said the purpose of hiring Davis was to help those young hitters with a two-strike approach and to use the entire field.

“We needed this with this young group of hitters,” Hoyer said.

Davis said at the 2018 Cubs Convention he wanted his offense to put constant pressure on pitchers with men in scoring position.

“(Pitchers) might whine or weasel their way out of it one time,” he said. “But you do it again, you see how strong-minded and strong-willed a pitcher is by how many situations you can put on him and he can work out of.”

The Cubs ranked 20th in batting average with runners in scoring position (.247) in 2018, while the Red Sox were first at .289.

After the Cubs lost to the Rockies in the wild-card game, Epstein conceded the offense “broke somewhere along the lines” and vowed to fix it. Davis was fired Thursday, and Iapoce was hired Monday afternoon. Epstein has not commented on either move.

Interestingly, one day after Davis was fired, Mallee posted a photo of an article about him on his Twitter account. The headline read: “We’re talking about launch angle? Ex-Cubs hitting coach John Mallee defends his record: ‘I’m a World Series champ.’ ”

Will Iapoce have as much success as Mallee did in 2016?

As usual, it’s wait and see.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs hire Anthony Iapoce from Rangers to replace Chili Davis as hitting coach

By Mark Gonzales

Anthony Iapoce will become the Cubs’ third hitting coach in three seasons, but he has an advantage his predecessors didn’t.

Iapoce, 45, served as a special assistant to the general manager with the Cubs from 2013-15 before the Rangers hired him to be their hitting coach. He worked with Kris Bryant, Javier Baez, Albert Almora Jr., Willson Contreras and Ian Happ in the minors as part of his duties with the Cubs.

But don’t expect a complete overhaul in philosophy from Iapoce.

“We all believe in the same things,” Iapoce said Monday night. “We just present it differently.”

In his new position, Iapoce will have the task of maximizing the talents of the Cubs hitters while finding a productive blend of power and situational hitting that deserted the Cubs in the second half and resulted in the firing of Chili Davis.

The Cubs wasted little time pursuing Iapocce, who was praised for his work in the minors before he left for the Rangers. The status of Iapocce and the rest of the Rangers' coaches was in limbo after manager Jeff Banister was fired.

Coincidentally, Cubs bench coach Brandon Hyde has interviewed for the Rangers' and Angels' managerial openings.

"Working with the (front office), the major-league staff and minor-league staff before helps ease you into your job," Iapocce said. "But you're still trying to make the players better and find that team ego that develops over time. That involves everything — not just one thing. It comes down to the situation and what player has to do. It's important to provide an atmosphere where they can improve."

The Cubs announced the hiring four days after they fired Davis, 59, whose pupils batted .249 with a .316 on-base percentage and .705 OPS in the second half. The Cubs were eliminated in the National League wild-card game with a 2-1, 13-inning loss to the Rockies in which they produced six hits and struck out 16 times.

Under Iapocce's supervision from 2016-18, the Rangers ranked fifth in the American League in runs and fourth in home runs. The 2017 Rangers became the first major-league team to have nine players hit at least 17 homers.

"Love the guy," one Rangers source wrote in a text message.

Iapocce's ability to make a connection with the Cubs batters will be essential, considering the recent turnover in hitting coaches, the struggles experienced this season by Contreras and Happ, and the team's decreased power in 2018.

Iapocce, a native of East Elmhurst, N.Y., played under former Cubs hitting coach John Mallee at Class A Beloit in 1996 and finished his playing career with the independent Gary SouthShore RailCats in 2005.

Iapocce started his coaching career as a hitting coach in the Marlins organization for four seasons (2006-09), then served as a roving minor-league hitting instructor with the Blue Jays from 2010-12.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Chili Davis 'not going to blame myself,' wishes next Cubs hitting coach better

By Gordon Wittenmyer

About the time the Cubs announced the hiring of the sixth hitting coach in eight seasons of Theo Epstein's front office regime, Chili Davis got in his truck and headed out of Chicago on Monday — still sorting out how he took the fall for a group of hitters unable or unwilling to hear his message.

"The driving gives me a little time think about things," said Davis, who was fired last week after just one season into a multiyear contract. "I guess I need to make some adjustments in the way I deliver my message to the millennial players now. I need to make those adjustments for the next job I get, if there is one.

"But without losing my identity," he added. "Because I know what I know. And I know what I bring is not wrong. I'm not going to blame myself for this. I'm not going to blame anyone. It didn't work.

"It's surprising. It's disappointing," he said. "But Jed and Theo had to make a decision, and they did. All I can say is I appreciate the opportunity they gave me, and the next time around I'll do a better job."

Davis, who spent the previous six seasons as a successful hitting coach in Oakland (2012-14) and Boston (2015-17), was replaced by Rangers hitting coach Anthony Iapoce on Monday.

Iapoce, 45, returns to the organization after spending 2013-15 running the Cubs' minor-league hitting program.

"Hopefully, he has better success at this than I did," said Davis, who stressed no hard feelings with the Cubs. "But regardless of who's there, certain players there are going to have to make some adjustments, because the game's changed, and pitchers are pitching them differently. They're not pitching to launch angles and fly balls and all that anymore. They're pitching away from that.

"They're going to have to make that adjustment whether I'm there or not."

Davis, who said he's already been contacted by "three or four" other teams, had high praise for veteran Ben Zobrist, who had a big bounce-back year in 2018, but when asked about some others said, "I'm not going to say anything about other players."

Davis played a big role in the development of Boston's young core of hitters now playing in the American League Championship Series. He said he had expected to return to Chicago – a city he said he had idealized during his career and that exceeded his expectations.

"I've got to flush it out, get it out of my head, start over," said Davis, who paused when asked if he was given enough time to fairly deliver his message.

"I guess I did. A year," Davis said. "I made a bogey. I've got to make a birdie on the next hole to counter that bogey. Actually, I made a double bogey. I hope there's a par 5 ahead, and I can reach in two and make an eagle."

Nobody this front office regime has employed in that role had the credentials Davis brought, between his successful track record as a big-league coach and as a 19-year big-league switch-hitter with three All-Star selections and three World Series rings.

"What I did doesn't matter," said Davis, who not surprisingly plans to do a lot of golfing at home in Arizona as he continues to process what happened in Chicago. "What I know I guess doesn't matter. I think what really matters is what they want, the players.

"I learned a lot this year," he added. "I learned that the next situation I get in, before I say yes to a job, I need to make sure I know the personnel I'll be dealing with in the clubhouse.

"I hope that the next guy connects better with the players, because I felt that there were multiple players there I didn't connect with. It wasn't that I didn't try. It just wasn't there."

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Chicago Sun-Times

Back to the future: Anthony Iapoce replaces Chili Davis as Cubs' hitting coach

By Gordon Wittenmyer

Anthony Iapoce's hiring to replace Chili Davis as the Cubs' hitting coach might look like a straightforward return to the launch angle approach of previous coach John Mallee.

But Iapoce is quick to make one thing clear as he becomes the Cubs' sixth hitting coach since Theo Epstein took over the front office: He's nobody's disciple.

"I don't really see myself aligned with anybody, as far as any other coach would be," said Iapoce, who overlapped with Mallee for a season in the Cubs' organization before leaving for the Texas Rangers hitting coach job he filled the last three seasons.

"You're aligned with yourself, and how you think," he said. "And how you relate to players is No. 1. The first priority is to learn from players, and talk it out, and then them learning from you."

The hiring is nonetheless a back-to-the-future move for the Cubs, who are bringing back the coach who served as a special assistant to the general manager overseeing their minor-league hitting program from 2013-15 before taking the Rangers' big-league job.

Mallee, who coached Iapoce in the minors, was initially offered that job before the 2013 season but after accepting the Astros' big-league job instead, Mallee recommended Iapoce.

Iapoce, 45, became available this time around because of the uncertainty surrounding the Rangers' managerial vacancy. Cubs bench coach Brandon Hyde has interviewed for that job (and also has interviewed for the Angels vacancy).

Whether the hiring is a full pendulum swing back toward Mallee, and the success he had with teams that made three deep playoff runs, the Cubs in Monday's announcement stressed the success the Rangers had hitting home runs during Iapoce's years in Texas.

The Rangers ranked fifth in the American League in runs and fourth in homers during Iapoce's three seasons in Texas. In 2017, the Rangers became the first team in major-league history to have nine players hit at least 17 homers each.

Iapoce said he doesn't take the job with preconceived notions of what went wrong, or right, with the Cubs' young hitters this season – many of whom he knew when they started in the organization.

He stressed being open to how much has likely changed in the three years since he left the Cubs.

"My job right now is to be part of the staff and making the connections," said Iapoce, who plans to spend much of the winter traveling to spend face time with his hitters. "And then kind of pick up steam into spring training."

Iapoce oversaw Kris Bryant's hitting development from his first minor-league assignment in 2013 to his big-league debut in 2015 as well as the early development of Kyle Schwarber and Ian Happ, and late minor-league development of Albert Almora Jr. and Javy Baez.

"It's an exciting team, exciting players," he said. "Even in '15 when I was there and watching them go through it as a staff member and then in '16 watching those players to through it, you still forget how young they were. And they're still young today.

"They're still evolving, which is a great thing."

The Cubs fired Davis last week after determining his all-fields, less-power-emphasis approach was not the right fit for a young core of hitters after just one year on the job.

The Cubs' power numbers this season dipped significantly even as the rest of the production remained similar to 2017 — with injuries to former MVP Bryant an obviously large factor.

“Our offense broke, somewhere along the lines,” Epstein said in addressing the media the day after the Cubs were eliminated in the National League wild-card game two weeks ago.

“Something happened to our offense in the second half,” added Epstein, whose team scored one or no runs in 20 of their final 66 games (including the wild-card game). “We stopped walking, stopped hitting home runs, stopped hitting the ball in the air.”

lapoce operates under a similar philosophy to Mallee (2015-2017), stressing an approach designed to create more balls in in the air.

Before his minor-league tour with the Cubs, lapoce spent three seasons as a roving hitting instructor for the Blue Jays and two seasons before that as a Class A hitting coach in the Marlins system.

He spent 11 seasons in the minors as a player, reaching the AAA level.

The Cubs are expected to announce their entire 2019 coaching staff after Hyde's status is resolved.

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Daily Herald

Rozner: Cubs coaching carousel adds to palace intrigue

By Barry Rozner

Theo Epstein couldn't blame the 2018 season on Joe Maddon.

It's an odd choice of words anyway, to use "blame" for a team that won 95 games and made the playoffs.

But it wasn't on Maddon, the Cubs' inability to get it together in September, leading to a predictable October result.

At least this time, blaming the manager would have been difficult to explain after four playoff appearances in four years, and after some high-profile, free-agent signings did not help the Cubs in 2018.

But Epstein could blame Maddon for firing pitching coach Chris Bosio and hitting coach John Mallee a year ago after three straight NLCS appearances and a World Series title.

That was on Maddon, who brought in pitching coach Jim Hickey and hitting coach Chili Davis.

Of Bosio, Maddon said it was "time for a different voice."

The offense, however, had finished 2017 first in on-base percentage, second in runs and third in home runs, but the offense became one-dimensional in the 2017 postseason and Maddon talked about better situational hitting, a theme that continued in 2018.

When the 2017 changes were announced, Maddon denied that he had put his stamp on the team.

"Of course not. It's about the team," Maddon said. "We're all a spoke in the wheel.

"I think we've done pretty well over the last three years. First World Series in 108 years. I'll take it. Three times to the championship series in the last three years. I'll take it.

"And if we start looking past that as not being successful, then we have to re-evaluate how we look at the world in general.

"So no, this is not just about me. It's never just about me. It's about all of us. This is about the Cubs moving forward, and we think these new coaches can absolutely help take us to another level and get us back to the World Series."

But the starters struggled mightily in the first half -- guys who flourished under Bosio -- before settling down and having a fine second half.

The offense never produced as it should and Davis paid the price when he was fired a few days ago, replaced Monday by Mallee disciple -- and former Cubs special assistant -- Anthony Iapoce.

If Maddon had put his stamp on the coaching staff last year, Epstein has now taken away the ink pad.

In his postseason news conference, Epstein went out of his way to praise Maddon and deny any "friction" between the two.

"Not true at all," Epstein said. "We have a terrific working relationship. We don't agree all the time about baseball issues. And that's the way it should be.

"There should be discord and debate and healthy trusting relationships where you can work together to make the organization better.

"And that's the way it is."

That might be entirely accurate, but the two have different ideas about the offense, no matter how much they claim it to be a matter of semantics.

Epstein believes in launch angle and Maddon has railed against it, asking his hitters to use the entire field.

At the same time, Epstein knows the approach has to occasionally change depending on count, score, time of game and where runners are on base.

Maybe they're really not that far apart on this, but the launching of Davis would force a cynic to wonder what else is at play here, knowing Maddon only has a year left on his contract.

There is no denying that Maddon is terrific at his job and there is no denying his four-year record in Chicago of 387-261 (.597) that includes a World Series, three NLCS and four playoff appearances.

There is also no denying his poor in-game managing in the 2016 and 2017 postseasons.

But as much as anything, Epstein is a pragmatist. It's doubtful that he's trying to cause trouble for Maddon or oust him by changing hitting coaches.

Cutting off his nose is not an Epstein philosophy, nor is spite particularly effective for his face.

The Cubs' boss wants to win another World Series and he believed this change was necessary in order to further that goal, and if the Cubs were to win another title in 2019 he would happily extend Maddon and pay him many more millions to stick around.

But these moves -- firing Davis and hiring Iapocce -- will not calm the waters or quiet speculation. It won't do anything to lessen the appearance that Epstein and Maddon have some different ideas.

And it has added another level of intrigue to the 2019 season.

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Daily Herald

Cubs act quickly, hire Iapocce as new hitting coach

By Bruce Miles

Out with the new, in with the old?

That's what the Cubs seemed to be saying Monday when they acted quickly and hired Anthony Iapocce as their new hitting coach. Iapocce had been the hitting coach for the Texas Rangers.

The 45-year-old Iapocce replaces Chili Davis, who was fired last week after only one year on the job.

Interestingly, Iapocce is a longtime disciple of former Cubs hitting coach John Mallee, who was fired last fall after three seasons as the Cubs turned to Davis.

Mallee, now the hitting coach of the Philadelphia Phillies, is a proponent of emphasizing "launch angle" as a way of generating power and contribute to a high on-base-plus-slugging (OPS).

During the 2018 season, Cubs manager Joe Maddon took several opportunities to downplay the "launch angle revolution" and emphasize a hitting approach that focused on batters hitting line drive and using the whole field.

However, the Cubs' offense took a dive in the second half of the season. The team finished the season ranked fourth in runs scored, fifth in OPS and 11th in home runs.

During his postseason news conference after the Cubs were beaten in the wild-card game by the Colorado Rockies, team President Theo Epstein vowed to fix the problems with the offense, saying: "I've never been a part of something like this offensively, and I never want to be again."

Enter Iapocce, someone well known to the Cubs.

Iapoce was in Texas the last three seasons after spending the previous three years in the Cubs organization as a special assistant to the general manager while overseeing the club's minor league hitting program from 2013 to 2015.

During Iapoce's years in Texas, the Rangers ranked fifth in the American League in runs and fourth in home runs in that span. The 2017 Rangers became the first team in big league history to see nine players reach 17 homers in the same season.

Before joining the Cubs the first time, Iapoce spent the previous three seasons as the roving hitting coordinator for the Toronto Blue Jays (2010 to 2012). He also served as the hitting coach for the Marlins' Class A Jupiter affiliate for two seasons from 2008 to 2009.

Iapoce played 11 seasons in the minor leagues in the Brewers and Marlins organizations, as well as independent ball, after being selected by Milwaukee in the 33rd round of the 1994 draft.

Iapoce and Mallee have a working relationship that dates to 1996 when Iapoce was a minor league player and Mallee was a coach.

The Cubs hired Mallee as their hitting coach after the 2014 season, and in an interview late that year, Mallee talked highly of having Iapoce in the organization.

"Luckily, I'm going to have some help, because the minor league hitting coordinator is Anthony Iapoce, and Anthony has been with me forever," Mallee said at the time. "I coached Anthony as a player and tried to take him everywhere I went as a coach. It was interesting because when I left the Marlins, I went to Toronto and then we brought him over to Toronto as the hitting coordinator."

The Cubs had tried to hire Mallee before that, but he went to the Houston Astros as their hitting coach.

"When I turned down the Cubs job to take the major-league job with the Astros, they asked me if I knew anybody 'who runs your philosophy,' " Mallee said in 2014. "Anthony was the guy."

Getting acclimated should be easy for Iapoce. In his previous role with the Cubs, he worked in the minor leagues with several of the prospects who are on the big club now.

The Cubs say they will finalize their coaching staff at a future date.

There has been some intrigue concerning the staff. As the Cubs were getting eliminated in the 2017 National League Championship Series by the Los Angeles Dodgers, Maddon said the coaching staff would be welcome back for 2018.

But shortly after the season ended, the Cubs fired Mallee along with pitching coach Chris Bosio and third-base coach Gary Jones. Bench coach Dave Martinez, a longtime Maddon associate, left to take the manager's job with the Washington Nationals.

The Cubs said the firings of Mallee and Jones came about because of the availability of Davis and Brian Butterfield, who previously held those respective jobs with the Boston Red Sox. The Cubs also brought in longtime favorite Jim Hickey as the pitching coach. Hickey had been with Maddon in Tampa Bay.

The coaching staff purge largely was seen as a Maddon-engineered event. In fairness to Maddon, he inherited the coaching staff -- except for Martinez -- when he took over as Cubs manager from Tampa Bay after the 2014 season.

However, there was a good deal of collaboration on the Davis hire. Davis coached in the Dodgers organization in 2010 before Epstein brought him to Boston to coach in the minor leagues the next year. From 2012 to 2014, Davis was the Oakland Athletics' hitting coach before he went back to Boston to serve as big-league hitting coach from 2015 to 2017.

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