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Rowand mentoring young White Sox outfielders

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | October 29, 2018

GLENDALE, Ariz. -- Aaron Rowand played center field with successful abandon during his 11-year Major League career. He was often referred to as the prototype behind the White Sox popular Grinder Rules developed after the 2005 World Series championship run.

The 41-year-old also enjoyed time as manager for the Glendale Desert Dogs during the 2016 Arizona Fall League. But, for now, Rowand is very content in transferring the vast knowledge gained during his stellar outfield days to White Sox Minor Leaguers as the organization's outfield and baserunning coordinator.

"I enjoy teaching and passing down information that I was taught and that I had learned over the years and try to help these guys achieve their dream," said Rowand during a recent interview at Camelback Ranch. "Getting to know all the players and the relationships with them has been awesome."

"There's a reason he was an elite center fielder, man," said outfielder Steele Walker, the team's second-round pick in the 2018 Draft. "Aaron Rowand is an absolute legend when it comes to what he knows in the outfield. The stuff that I've learned just in these two weeks is, like, incredible."

Walker worked with Rowand for two weeks in the instructional league, but the veteran has spent the last three seasons teaching. Rowand has learned a great deal as well.

Eloy Jimenez, the White Sox No. 1 prospect per MLB Pipeline, known more for his offensive prowess, has the chance to be a good outfielder. His motivation to be great will make him even better, according to Rowand.

"He has an above-average arm. He runs really well for a big guy," said Rowand of Jimenez. "It's just that we're going to continue to work on the fundamentals and the footwork part of it, and that's always going to be the challenge with a big guy."

"You saw that with Avisail Garcia when he was young. Being a big guy, footwork is everything out there. Now Avi's really turned himself into a good outfielder. I see the same path for Eloy because Eloy cares about it."

Luis Robert, the No. 4 White Sox prospect who is currently playing with Glendale in the AFL, has a "skillset through the roof" and "moves at a different pace," in Rowand's estimation. Rowand added that Robert shows no timidity, a necessity in center field.

"Once he gets more comfortable with the language it's going to be easier," Rowand said. "But his makeup is, he takes everything everybody gives to him and runs with it, and I didn't see him being tentative at all when he was out there in [the midst of] moving guys or whatever."

"Whatever outfielders that played with him and played center field as well also helped him in understanding reading tendencies, reading hitters' swings, reading bat path and bat angle and stuff to be able to get good jumps. He works on that in batting practice."

All the young outfielders rotated across the three spots in instructs, getting comfortable from left to right, with Rowand explaining he came up as a right fielder and ended up playing center field. You never know what can happen at the big league level, an attitude Rowand takes when he considers managing someday.

"Sure, if it came up, [I would consider it]" Rowand said. "I'm really enjoying what I'm doing right now. I don't have any idea of what the future looks like. I enjoy being in the clubhouse, out on the field and all those things, wherever it takes me really. Doing what I do right now has been a lot of fun."

Jones' option picked up; Shields a free agent

By David Adler / MLB.com | October 29, 2018

The White Sox addressed one of their offseason questions on Monday, when they picked up reliever Nate Jones' \$4.65-million club option for 2019, keeping their longest-tenured player for at least one more season.

They will not do the same for James Shields. The White Sox declined Shields' \$16-million option for 2019 on Monday. They'll instead buy out the final year of Shields' contract for \$2 million, making the veteran right-hander a free agent.

Jones has been with Chicago for his entire Major League career, which began in 2012, but the hard-throwing right-hander has only been able to pitch in 44 games over the last two seasons due to elbow and forearm injuries. In 2018, the 32-year-old made 33 relief appearances with a 3.00 ERA and 32 strikeouts in 30 innings. The White Sox hold two more club options on Jones for 2020 (\$5.15 million) and '21 (\$6 million).

Shields, once a reliable workhorse for the Rays and Royals, struggled on the mound in his 2 1/2 seasons with the White Sox. The 36-year-old eclipsed 200 innings pitched in 2018, but he had a 4.53 ERA and went 7-16, leading the Majors in losses. He went 16-35 with a 5.31 ERA in 77 games with the White Sox after being acquired from the Padres in June 2016.

The White Sox made one other minor offseason roster move on Monday, reinstating Michael Kopech from the 60-day disabled list. Kopech is recovering from Tommy John surgery and will miss all of the 2019 season.

What Monday's pitching decisions mean for the White Sox in 2019

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago | October 30, 2018

The World Series ended. The offseason began. And the White Sox started their winter work.

The team announced three pitching moves Monday, none of them terribly dramatic or unexpected: They declined a \$16 million option on starting pitcher James Shields, picked up a \$4.65 million option on reliever Nate Jones and moved top-ranked pitching prospect Michael Kopech off the 60-day disabled list.

Now, let's get that last one out of the way first: Kopech was moved off the 60-day DL to make sure he's on the 40-man roster. It's a formality, and no, he's not miraculously recovered from his Tommy John surgery. He's still expected to miss the entirety of the 2019 campaign while recovering.

As for Shields, the White Sox were never expected to fork over \$16 million to keep a pitcher who in three seasons on the South Side posted a 5.31 ERA. That being said, that decision makes Shields a free agent, and it's certainly not out of the realm of possibility that the White Sox would want him back for their 2019 rotation. They have a few different routes they could go to fill what is now a pair of openings on that starting staff, one caused by Kopech's injury and the other by Shields' departure. They could try to land a decently sized free-agent fish to not only better a rotation that led baseball in walks in 2018 but also to serve as a safety net should Kopech and Dylan Cease experience the to-be-expected growing pains of young pitchers. Or they could simply bridge the gap between now and 2020, the likely season of Kopech's return and Cease's readiness, with a couple one-year fill-ins.

Shields would fit that second role, and he's coming off an impressive 2018 that saw him finish as one of 13 big leaguers to log 200 innings. His reliability and status as a mentor to young pitchers like Lucas Giolito make his return sound awful sensible, though who knows how realistic it is.

Meanwhile, at least one spot is filled in the 2019 bullpen with the return of Jones. The injury-plagued lefty will be 33 on Opening Day and has thrown just 41.2 innings in the past two seasons, but his salary is a low one for a team with so few big financial commitments. And the White Sox still use him as one of their better relief arms when he's healthy, with Rick Renteria often deploying him in hold and save situations last season. Jones only saved five games, but it likely would have been a much bigger number had he not been on the shelf most of the time following the team's trade of Joakim Soria. And the numbers, too, show that Jones is an effective reliever when healthy. He's got a 3.11 career ERA, including a 2.60 ERA and a 10.6 K/9 over the past four seasons. The problem? "When healthy" has described a small amount of time, as Jones has thrown an average of just 33 innings those last four years.

But with the majority of the White Sox bullpen young and unproven, having a veteran like Jones down there will be a valuable thing, especially if there are no further veteran additions of note to the relief corps this winter. Jones might not have seen as much game action as he and the White Sox would've liked in recent seasons, but he's got way more experience the young relief corps of Aaron Bummer, Ryan Burr, Caleb Frare, Jace Fry, Ian Hamilton, Juan Minaya, Jose Ruiz and Thyago Vieira. As the roster stands right now, it wouldn't be at all surprising if Jones was the White Sox closer.

Rick Hahn has already said the White Sox will be making some additions to the pitching staff this winter, so these are hardly the only decisions to be made. They're simply the first.

Sox Drawer: The biggest White Sox questions as the offseason begins

By Chuck Garfien / NBC Sports Chicago | October 29, 2018

The World Series is over. The offseason is here. So is the latest installment of the Sox Drawer!

Q: Chris Sale. Discuss -- @sccerlaw

Chuck Garfien: It's the second week in a row I've gotten this exact question from @sccerlaw. With Sale closing out the World Series Sunday night, it definitely warrants another answer.

I'm happy for Sale. He's one of the best pitchers in the game, and yes, it stinks that the White Sox traded him, but if you look at where the organization was at after the 2016 season, it was the right move to trade him. I still believe that.

The White Sox had very little depth in the majors and minors at the time. They tried to win with Sale by attempting to plug holes every year with the likes of Todd Frazier, David Robertson, Melky Cabrera, Brett Lawrie, etc., but if players got hurt or underperformed, there was not enough talent in their system to back them up. The White Sox were basically trying to thread the needle every year hoping everything (or mostly everything) went right. That's tough to do.

I called up pitching coach Don Cooper today for his thoughts on Sale. We ended up talking for a half hour. Look for that conversation tomorrow on the White Sox Talk Podcast. In the meantime, here's Coop's thoughts on Sale winning a World Series:

"I'm happy for Sale. I texted him and congratulated him," Cooper said. "He got what he was hoping for. He got what he wanted. We weren't winning with him here. This has nothing to do with where we're at right now. We traded Sale to acquire talent to start our rebuild and we are probably close to the middle of our rebuild I'll have to say. It doesn't happen overnight. It takes patience. It takes the finding out of the people we have in our organization that can help us. Our stuff doesn't change. We're still trying to make this rebuild get us back to where we want to be."

As for the Sale trade itself, I'm still high on Yoan Moncada, Michael Kopech and Luis Basabe long term, and that's what this trade was about for the White Sox--the long term. The Red Sox acquired Sale for the short term. Congrats to them. They got a World Series and they've got Sale for one more season before he becomes a free agent. After that, who knows?

Q: Any possibility that Chris Sale pulls a LeBron and returns to his first team, the White Sox, after having been a champion elsewhere? Are those bridges burnt? --- @ToddHertz

CG: I would never rule it out, but Sale has it pretty good right now. The Red Sox are World Series champs, they have a young, talented nucleus and the financial backing to be great for many years to come. Sale is in line to make bank after next season. Assuming he stays healthy, the Red Sox will likely do everything in their power to keep him. Also, since the Red Sox hold spring training in Ft. Myers, FL, Sale gets to live at his home in nearby Naples for an extra 7 weeks in the winter. That's tough to give up. Anything can happen, but at this point, Sale returning to the White Sox feels like a longshot to me.

Q: Love all young Sox players but we need veteran presence. How about Nate Eovaldi? Will cost more as stock rising. Someone described him as nice as Thome! --- @hennesyjosephj

CG: Give the Red Sox credit. They acquired Eovaldi from a divisional foe (the Rays) before the trade deadline--for reliever Jalen Beeks. That worked out pretty well. I like the idea of signing Eovaldi at the right price. My only concern is that he just pitched 22.1 high intensity innings in the playoffs, especially the 6 innings out of the pen in the 18-inning marathon Game 3 which saved the Red Sox bullpen for the rest of the series. When a pitcher goes through that, there's sometimes a carry-over affect the following year. Ask the Cubs about Brandon Morrow. He wasn't used and abused like Morrow was with the Dodgers last year,

but it just gives me some pause. Coming back from an elbow injury, Eovaldi didn't make his first major league start in 2018 until late May, so he did have something extra left in the tank in October. Put it all together and maybe you pursue him this winter. Depends on what his market is. I wouldn't overspend to get him.

Q: If the White Sox do the unthinkable, shock the world and land Machado. The next priority would be to fill that 3b hole. How about the Sox offer Carlos Rodon, Tim Anderson and Luis Basabe to the Reds for 3B Eugenio Suarez. Is that enough for Cincinnati? --- @mr_zablocki

CG: As I said on a recent White Sox Talk Podcast, if there's a third baseman out there who is on a rebuilding team with a team friendly contract like the White Sox had with Sale, Jose Quintana and Adam Eaton---it's Eugenio Suarez. The 26-year-old Saurez mashed 34 home runs with 104 RBIs in 2018. Last spring, he signed a 7-year, \$66 million contract extension with a \$15 million team option for an 8th year. The Reds are making him the centerpiece to their rebuild. Would they give him up for Rodon, Anderson and Basabe?? Something tells me no. They need pitching more than anything. They'd probably want Dylan Cease and more.

Q: Manny Machado and Bryce Harper are popular free agent targets. Why do Sox fans seem to think the org will reverse its entire history and spend some 6, 7 times more on free agents than they EVER have before? What's driving this? -- @BuckyWTGoodHair

CG: Economics. Revenues are going up, salaries are going up and the White Sox don't have much on their payroll over the next several years at the same time that their best young players will be under team control financially. Add all that up and the White Sox will have the ability to make an offer to a player like they never have before. No one from the White Sox has come out and said "We will spend \$300 million on a player." However, Rick Hahn said this at SoxFest last January: "Ultimately, competing for free agents and targeting big-ticket items and hopefully converting on them will be the next logical step when the time is right. Anyone who doubts that we will break from past perception or past process, I believe the evidence is there over the last year that those old standards are gone."

Q: If intelligent extraterrestrial lifeforms came to Earth which past or present White Sox organizational member would do the best job communicating with them for us? --- @Mattheius2783

CG: Juan Uribe.

(I asked White Sox fans on Twitter who they'd choose. Got Yolmer Sanchez, Carl Everett, Scott Radinsky, Hawk Harrelson, Ozzie Guillen, Eddie Gaedel, Jim Thome, Pete Ward, Moe Berg, Ron Kittle and another Uribe).

Q: Can you seriously discuss the chances of AJ becoming manager. --- @krimbos

CG: A.J. Pierzynski certainly has the baseball mind to be a manager and I think he'd be a really good one. Would a team take a chance on hiring him to be their manager? That's the question. Pierzynski wouldn't take the job to make friends that's for sure! Most general managers these days prefer not to hire managers who will be controversial or stand up to the front office. Pierzynski has strong opinions. That's who he is. It would take an owner and general manager who have a good relationship with him and believe in what he can bring to the table(a lot in my opinion). I would compare it to when the White Sox hired Ozzie Guillen. A special group of circumstances made that happen. I would assume the same would have to hold true with Pierzynski.

Q: Moncada long term, 2nd basemen or 3rd basemen? Think keeping Madrigal at 2nd is the best long term option for everyone especially from development standpoint. -- @ZachDavisShow

CG: I've gotten this question a lot and it's too early to tell what position Moncada will play long-term. There are too many chess pieces at work here. Maybe more than you think. If Madrigal meets the expectations of being a bonafide major league hitter, you can definitely see a scenario where he plays second base and

they move Moncada to third. But what if the White Sox sign or acquire a third baseman? Does Moncada move to the outfield? But then you have Jimenez, Robert, Basabe, Adolfo, Gonzalez, Rutherford, Walker all competing for outfield positions. If three of them hit, where in the outfield does Moncada play? Lots of different possibilities here. This would be a great problem to have by the way. We'll see how it all shakes out.

Q: What's the situation with Blake Rutherford? It looks like he had a solid year, but haven't seen much on him at all. Is there room for him in the white Sox outfield? Loved when we acquired him! --- @Mtvrdik

CG: Rutherford was one of the most consistent hitters in the White Sox minor league system in 2018. He slashed .293/.345/.436 at Class-A Winston-Salem with 15 stolen bases in 115 games. I'd expect him to be in AA-Birmingham next season. In my previous answer, you can see that the White Sox have a lot of good outfield prospects in the minors. The cream rises to the top. Rutherford has a chance to do that.

Q: Does Carson Fulmer have a future on this team? Could he be an option out of the bullpen if he doesn't pan out as a starter? --- @TheAuthenticFan

CG: It was definitely a rough season for Fulmer. After struggling in the majors, the White Sox sent him down to Charlotte where he eventually started coming out of the bullpen. In 22.2 IP as a reliever, he went 2-1 with a 4.37 ERA, 9 BB and 21 K. If he can straighten things out, he definitely has a place on the White Sox, presumably as a reliever at this point.

Q: Do you wear White Sox? --- @up_grc1986

CG: Yes. Sometimes.

Q: Nordhagen or Nahorodny? --- @BradPenders

CG: Nahorodny. It's more fun to say.

And finally...

Q: How did you get the nickname "Our Chuck?" -- @PurveyorOfTrut1

CG: It was actually coined by our longtime stage manager "Mean" Joe Grube. For years, whenever Joe would see me, he'd greet me with "It's our Chuck Garfien." I believe he got it from some of my colleagues who would toss it to me at the ballpark saying, "Now with more on the White Sox, here's our Chuck Garfien." One day, Hawk Harrelson overheard Joe call me that and he started referring to me as "Our Chuck" on the air. The rest is history.

White Sox roster moves: James Shields hits free agency, Nate Jones has team option picked up By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune | October 29, 2018

In an attempt to stabilize their bullpen, the White Sox on Monday picked up the \$4.65 million option on reliever Nate Jones.

The Sox also cut ties with starter James Shields by declining a \$16 million team option for 2019 and electing to exercise a \$2 million buyout. The move allows Shields to become a free agent.

Jones, 32, was 2-2 with a 3.00 ERA and five saves in 33 games. Jones' season was cut short by a pronator muscle strain in his right pitching arm. The Sox hold team options on Jones for 2020 (\$5.15 million) and 2021 (\$6 million).

Shields, 36, was 7-16 with a 4.53 ERA in 34 games. He was tied for third in the American League with 204 2/3 innings. Shields worked at least six innings in 26 starts in 2018, tied with Aaron Nola of the Phillies and Zack Greinke of the Diamondbacks for fifth most in baseball.

Shields started 76 games for the Sox over three seasons, posting a record of 16-35 with a 5.31 ERA and 1.447 WHIP. The Sox acquired him from the Padres in June of 2016 in a trade for shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr., who was 17 at the time, and pitcher Erik Johnson.

Tatis is now considered one of the top prospects in baseball, though he missed half of last season with a thumb injury. Johnson re-signed with the Padres as a free agent in December of 2016.

The Sox also reinstated pitcher Michael Kopech from the 60-day disabled list.

The team's 40-man roster now stands at 34.

Cubs, White Sox prospects look for strong finish in fall league

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune | October 29, 2017

A wise scout once said that it was unfair to evaluate Arizona Fall League players until the final three weeks of the season.

But now with the AFL slated to end Nov. 17, there's something for four Cubs and White Sox players to prove.

For infielder Nico Hoerner and left-hander Justin Steele of the Cubs and outfielder Luis Robert and pitcher Zack Burdi of the White Sox, this is a chance to make up for lost time due to injuries.

Hoerner, who played in only 14 games last summer because of a left arm injury, is batting .373 with eight RBIs and a .400 on-base percentage in 12 games for the Mesa Solar Sox. Hoerner, the Cubs' first pick in the 2018 amateur draft, went 4-for-5 Friday.

Steele, who pitched in only 11 games last summer after returning from Tommy John surgery, is 1-0 with a 5.19 ERA in 8 2/3 innings. Steele would be eligible for the Rule 5 draft in December if he's not added to the Cubs' 40-man roster on Nov. 20. Steele, who received a \$1 million bonus after being drafted in the fifth round of the 2014 draft, had a 2.92 ERA in 20 starts at Class-A Myrtle Beach prior to his injury in 2017.

Robert is finding his rhythm after being limited to only 50 games during the regular season due to a ligament injury in his left thumb and a hamstring injury that sidelined him for nine days earlier this month.

Robert is 4-for-13 with a double in his last three games for the Glendale Desert Dogs since returning from his hamstring injury and is batting .300 (9-for-30). Robert was selected to play Saturday night for the West squad in the Fall Stars Game at Surprise Stadium. Cubs pitcher Bailey Clark was named to the East roster.

Burdi, who pitched in only seven games in the Arizona League after recovering from Tommy John surgery, has struck out five in 4 2/3 innings covering five games. Prior to his injury, Burdi's fastball was clocked around 100 mph.

White Sox pick up option on Nate Jones, decline it on James Shields

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times | October 29, 2018

The White Sox on Monday exercised their \$4.65 million option for 2019 on reliever Nate Jones but declined their \$16 million option on right-hander James Shields, opting instead to pay him a \$2 million buyout.

The Sox hold options for 2020 (\$5.15 million) and 2021 (\$6 million) on Jones, who was 2-2 with five saves and a 3.00 ERA in 30 innings in 2018, a season that was shortened by a strained pronator muscle in his right arm.

Shields went 7-16 with a 4.53 ERA but finished tied for third in the American League with 204 2/3 innings. It's possible he could work out a cheaper deal with the Sox as a free agent.

The Sox also reinstated right-hander Michael Kopech, who will miss the 2019 season after having Tommy John surgery, to their 40-man roster.

White Sox say yes on Jones' 2019 club option, say no on Shields'

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald | October 29, 2018

Nate Jones missed three months with a pronator muscle strain in his throwing (right) arm this season and was limited to 33 relief appearances with the White Sox.

In 2017, Jones was diagnosed with right elbow neuritis in early May and was done for the year.

He had Tommy John surgery in late July of 2014 and missed most of the 2015 season.

That is the definition of injury prone, but the Sox are hoping the string of ailments is over.

On Monday, they picked up Jones' \$4.65 million club option for 2019. The 32-year-old reliever also has a \$5.15 million club option for 2020 and a \$6 million club option for 2021.

In 271 games with the White Sox from 2012 to 2018, Jones is 22-12 with a 3.11 ERA and 8 saves to go with 308 strikeouts in 281 innings.

The Sox are bringing Jones back, but they declined their \$16 million club option on James Shields for 2019, exercising a \$2 million buyout. Shields is now a free agent.

Acquired in a June 4, 2016 trade from the Padres that cost the White Sox top prospect Fernando Tatis Jr., Shields was 16-35 with a 5.31 ERA in 77 games (76 starts) with the Sox.

The 36-year-old righty tied for third in the American League with 204 2/3 innings pitched this season.

Michael Kopech (Tommy John surgery) was reinstated from the 60-day disabled list Monday, but he is out for the 2019 season.

The White Sox are expected to sign a veteran starter to eat up innings in Kopech's absence, and there is a chance Shields could return for one more year.

While his numbers were not good and the Sox didn't have a winning record during his stay, Shields sounded like he'd be open for a return after making his final start of the season.

"Ever since I was in Tampa, I've prided myself in being a leader in this clubhouse, just helping the guys out and being a good teammate," Shields said. "Hopefully, these guys take all of the advice and the experience that I've had over the years and take it to heart."

Why giving Nate Jones another year is worth it for the White Sox

By James Fegan / The Athletic | October 30, 2018

By mid-August, it felt fair to wonder why White Sox reliever Nate Jones wasn't just shut down for the year. He was a month into his recovery from a setback, which had come about a month into his recovery and rehab from a pronator muscle strain stemming from his weathered and twice-operated-upon right elbow.

With nothing specific as far as next steps from just throwing bullpens laid out, a dwindling number of games left in the minor league schedule for a rehab stint, and surely no rush to get back and aid a White Sox playoff drive, getting himself prepared for February would have been a reasonable path for Jones.

Instead, his one rehab appearance wound up coming in Game 1 of the Winston-Salem Dash playoff series (his scoreless inning of work can't be blamed for them getting swept) and his return to major league action on Sept. 11 gave him almost exactly three months on the disabled list. But he made it, and made it clear that it was important.

"This was a kind of a long one, took up almost three months," Jones said upon his return. "It's a grind whenever you go on the DL. It's a grind with all the boxes you have to check and all the exercises you have to go through. But in the end it's all worth it to get back out here. It was different and it was exciting. I got that adrenaline going and that was nice too."

It was also probably nice for Jones to hear the Sox would be officially picking up his \$4.65 million option for 2019, continuing a run with the organization that began when he was drafted in the fifth round in 2007. Whether being the longest tenured White Sox player by a mile, or showing that he was healthy and could still average over 97 mph on his fastball over the last three weeks of the season weighed more heavily in the team's decision to retain, ultimately isn't a question he'll really have to spend time examining.

Jones has pitched 41 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings over the last two years. He's slid into control problems over that time, as clearly evidenced by the two gutting games he gave up leads during and lost in a 2018 season that didn't have any extra wins to spare. He also just posted his lowest strikeout rate in six years.

But for the most part, keeping Jones could just be explained as taking a chance on a reliever who was elite in 2016 at a reasonable cost — a move that would be seen as an intriguing gamble if completed in free agency. He still has top-level velocity, his 13.6 percent swinging strike rate should have led to better results than it did in 2018, and his best is better than what they can find on the market for the same price.

But it's also a somewhat revealing move about where the White Sox are in their rebuild. Their bullpen is still more a proving ground for young arms looking to show that they're viable major leaguers, more than one that could drag them through the playoffs at all costs. Jones has one full and healthy season in his last five years. He's obviously a calculated risk in 2019, but on a team full of them, he's more than qualified. Sure, the Padres got Fernando Tatis Jr., but they did also agree to pay James Shields' \$2 million buyout for 2019. If they were so inclined, the White Sox could negotiate a one-year deal with Shields for \$15 million for next year, and still save money compared to picking up his option. As such, their decision to decline was pretty automatic.

It's likely that retaining Shields for his age-37 season, even after a resurgent 2018 campaign that saw him log the third-most innings in the American League, will not cost even half that much. As is the case with Jones, the White Sox pitching staff needs for 2019 greatly resemble those from 2018, and someone who just demonstrated their ability to pitch every five days and be an observant and communicative member of the staff would figure to be a decent match. Unless of course, the White Sox aim for higher upside.

They did not require announcements on decisions made by the team, but the White Sox 40-man roster being at 34 connotes Héctor Santiago, Jeanmar Gómez and Miguel González departing as free agents. That leaves more than enough room for their obvious additions (Dylan Cease, Seby Zavala) to be protected from the Rule 5 draft, more prudent ones (Kodi Medeiros, Spencer Adams, Zach Thompson), and even one

driven by concern for the Padres trying to perform some insane heist of their lower minors (Amado Nuñez) should they choose.

The non-tender deadline could force the Sox to choose between José Rondón and Leury García as their primary utilityman. The 40-man roster still contains names like Charlie Tilson, Ryan Cordell and Ian Clarkin, who seemed to move toward the periphery of the team's plans over the course of 2018, so they won't run out of room for free agents if they need it.

Whether it's Thompson, Nuñez, Adams, Jordan Stephens or Jordan Guerrero, there figures to be at least a few White Sox prospects with some possibility of providing major league value left exposed. That'll be one area where it's clear the Sox rebuild is ahead of where it was last year.

Luis Robert hit his first home run in Arizona Fall League on Monday, which was his first home run this year since he lifted a bomb in spring training with a sprained thumb. Naturally it happened on the one day no one was taking video and the one day Robert's Instagram feed was dormant.

White Sox decline James Shields' \$16 million option

By Associated Press | October 30, 2018

CHICAGO -- The Chicago White Sox have declined their \$16 million option on James Shields and exercised a \$2 million buyout, making the veteran right-hander a free agent.

Chicago also exercised a \$4.65 million team option on reliever Nate Jones and reinstated right-hander Michael Kopech from the 60-day disabled list Monday.

Shields was 7-16 with a 4.53 ERA in 34 appearances -- 33 starts -- last season. He had a 5.31 ERA in two-plus years with the White Sox, who acquired him from San Diego for prospect Fernando Tatis Jr.

Jones was limited to 33 appearances by a strained muscle in his right arm.

Kopech had Tommy John surgery in September after making four starts for the White Sox and will miss next season.