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Clarkin claimed after less than week with Cubs

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | November 26, 2018

CHICAGO -- Ian Clarkin's time with the Cubs organization didn't last long.

The 23-year-old left-hander was claimed by the White Sox off waivers on Monday after the Cubs claimed Clarkin off waivers on Tuesday. The White Sox originally acquired Clarkin from the Yankees on July 18, 2017, as part of a seven-player trade sending outfielder Blake Rutherford, the team's current No. 7 prospect per MLB Pipeline, among others to the White Sox in exchange for third baseman Todd Frazier and right-handed pitchers Tommy Kahnle and David Robertson.

Clarkin produced a 4-5 record with a 4.76 ERA over 25 games (12 starts) between Class A Advanced Winston-Salem and Double-A Birmingham last season. He was originally selected 33rd overall by the Yankees in the 2013 MLB Draft. Clarkin's return increases the White Sox 40-man roster to 39.

10 biggest trades in White Sox history

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | November 26, 2018

CHICAGO -- During Ken Williams' 12-year tenure as the White Sox general manager, he acquired 171 players in 72 trades involving the Major League roster. So picking the 10 biggest trades in franchise history could be increased to 20 or 30 based on the current executive vice president's work alone.

And current general manager Rick Hahn has followed that same maverick path, only with a rebuild focus over the past three years. Some of those deals changed the franchise for the better. Some didn't pan out as planned.

Those many choices mean a deal sending Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. from the Reds to the White Sox didn't make the final 10. The same holds true for the White Sox acquiring Juan Uribe from Colorado and Jeff Samardzija from Oakland or the acquisitions and eventual trades of Jake Peavy and Nick Swisher.

Here is a look at the biggest 10 for the White Sox.

1. Landing the top prize

White Sox got from Mariners: RHP Freddy Garcia, C Ben Davis

White Sox gave up: C Miguel Olivo, OF Jeremy Reed, IF Mike Morse

Date: June 27, 2004

Garcia was one of the top trade targets leading up to the 2004 Deadline, with the White Sox making a better offer than the Yankees to finish the acquisition. Garcia was added to help a team competing for the American League Central title in '04, but when Garcia agreed to a three-year extension 10 days later, the White Sox locked down a key component of their World Series championship rotation. Garcia pitched seven scoreless innings in the clinching 1-0 victory over the Astros in Game 4, after basically guaranteeing victory in the White Sox clubhouse before the game's first pitch.

2. Sale(ing) to Boston

White Sox got from Red Sox: INF Yoan Moncada, RHP Michael Kopech, OF Luis Alexander Basabe, RHP Victor Diaz

White Sox gave up: LHP Chris Sale

Date: Dec. 6, 2016

White Sox chairman Jerry Reinsdorf once said the only untouchable player he had trade-wise wore No. 23 for the Chicago Bulls. That fact was proven true when one of the greatest pitchers in White Sox history was moved to Boston to begin the team's rebuild. Sale's excellence continued, finishing off the 2018 Red Sox World Series title by striking out the side in the ninth in Game 5 against the Dodgers. Kopech will miss '19 while recovering from Tommy John surgery, and Moncada fanned 217 times in his first full season. But both players have limitless potential, with Basabe moving quickly through the system.

3. The King's new court

White Sox got from Reds: 1B Paul Konerko

White Sox gave up: OF Mike Cameron

Date: Nov. 11, 1998

Konerko was traded twice during the 1998 calendar year, but once he reached Chicago, the first baseman found a home where he would reside and excel for the next 16 years. Konerko had 439 home runs and 1,412 RBIs, had his No. 14 retired and had a concourse statue in his likeness dedicated at Guaranteed Rate Field. He served as the most recent White Sox captain and was as big of a force in the community as his great impact on the field.

4. Sly as a Fox

White Sox got from Philadelphia Athletics: 2B Nellie Fox

White Sox gave up: C Joe Tipton
Date: Oct. 9, 1949

Tipton hit .204 with 11 extra-base hits during his one season covering 214 plate appearances in 1949. In trading for Fox, the White Sox obtained a future Hall of Famer, the '59 AL Most Valuable Player Award winner for a team losing to the Dodgers in six in the World Series and one-half of the franchise's all-time great double-play combinations with fellow Hall of Famer Luis Aparicio.

5. Young arm arrives
White Sox got from Cubs: RHP Jon Garland
White Sox gave up: RHP Matt Karchner
Date: July 29, 1998

The Cubs were in postseason contention and needed veteran bullpen help in Karchner. In the process, the White Sox picked up one of their rotation staples with a devastating sinker for almost a decade and acquired a key piece in the 2005 World Series championship push.

6. Crosstown future changer
White Sox got from Cubs: OF Eloy Jimenez, RHP Dylan Cease, INF Bryant Flete, INF Matt Rose
White Sox gave up: LHP Jose Quintana
Date: July 13, 2017

This deal might go down as a historically beneficial move for both sides. The Cubs probably wouldn't have reached the National League Championship Series in 2017 or made the playoffs in '18 without Quintana, but if the great Minor League numbers put up by Jimenez and Cease play out close to the same in the big leagues, the White Sox acquired a pair of rebuild cornerstones.

7. Reshaping a champion
White Sox got from Brewers: OF Scott Podsednik, RHP Luis Vizcaino, player to named later (Travis Hinton)
White Sox gave up: OF Carlos Lee
Date: Dec. 13, 2004

Williams and Ozzie Guillen, the White Sox general manager and manager at the time, wanted to reshape their roster after falling short against the "piranhas" from Minnesota in 2004. So they traded a homegrown power bat in Lee to add speed at the top of the order in Podsednik and a bullpen arm in Vizcaino. The money saved in the deal also allowed the White Sox flexibility to add second baseman Tadahito Iguchi via free agency to further complete the championship puzzle.

8. A titanic acquisition
White Sox got from Yankees: RHP Jose Contreras and cash
White Sox gave up: RHP Esteban Loaiza
Date: July 31, 2004

Loaiza was the AL Cy Young Award runner-up in 2003, but he didn't have close to the same effectiveness in '04. Contreras was facing similar struggles for the Yankees. But the White Sox got the best of the deal, with Contreras posting career-best numbers in '05 and starting Game 1 in all three playoff series. He continues to work for the White Sox on the Minor League side.

9. Sosa goes North
White Sox got from Cubs: OF/DH George Bell and cash
White Sox gave up: OF Sammy Sosa, LHP Ken Patterson
Date: March 30, 1992

On July 29, 1989, the White Sox acquired Sosa, Scott Fletcher and Wilson Alvarez from Texas for Harold Baines and Fred Manrique. That trade worked out decently, but the move sending Sosa to the Cubs wasn't

as impactful. Bell drove in 112 during the '92 season and contributed to the '93 division title, but Sosa hit 545 of his 609 career home runs over 13 years with the Cubs, topping 60 on three occasions.

10. Thanksgiving surprise

White Sox got from Phillies: DH Jim Thome and cash

White Sox gave up: CF Aaron Rowand, LHP Daniel Haigwood and a player to be named later (LHP Gio Gonzalez)

Date: Nov. 25, 2005

Thome and Rowand are first-class baseball talents and first-class people overall, but the move caught some by surprise after Rowand's major contribution to the 2005 World Series title. Thome provided a powerful left-handed bat in the middle of the order, hitting 42 homers in '06 and 134 homers over parts of four seasons with the White Sox, including the long blast off Nick Blackburn to beat the Twins, 1-0, in the '08 AL Central tiebreaker game known as the Blackout Game.

Inbox: Any updates on Jimenez, Robert?

Beat reporter Scott Merkin answers fans' questions

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | November 20, 2018

CHICAGO -- Here are this week's White Sox inquiries. Happy Thanksgiving to all and good luck to Michigan football this weekend.

Do you see Eloy Jimenez breaking camp with the team?

-- Mike, Los Angeles, @filmreviewbyme

Jimenez will play the majority of the 2019 season at the Major League level for the White Sox: This point, I can all but guarantee. As far as leaving with the team from Spring Training, Chicago's top prospect and No. 3 in baseball according to MLB Pipeline will need to fulfill the checklist the White Sox have to be ready for that promotion. He certainly will receive consideration.

Do you think the White Sox should spend big in this year's free agency or wait a year or two when the team is more ready to win?

-- Andrew, @supersoxfan79

Chicago will spend via free agency this offseason to improve the team, although I'm not sure that spending will result in Bryce Harper or Manny Machado as the fans desire. The White Sox will be in on these sorts of All-Star players even if they don't view 2019 as the beginning of their contention window.

I agree with general manager Rick Hahn in that the team must be opportunistic within this market and if the players they target as a key part of their planned championship-contending future are available now, then they need to try to make a move. Harper or Machado would greatly improve any team, but they don't absolutely guarantee Chicago taking the next step up with its talented young core. The White Sox need to find the right veteran fits, be it through trade or free agency.

With (Luis) Robert's great play in the AFL, any chance he gets a callup next year?

-- Roger, Nashville, Tenn., @Soxsupporter1

I've heard nothing but positive reports concerning Luis Robert dating back to Spring Training, describing the outfielder as a high-end albeit raw talent with five-tool capabilities shown in part during Arizona Fall League action. He just needs to stay healthy after being limited to 186 at-bats and 50 games during his first full Minor League season in 2018. The White Sox have been very consistent in not rushing prospects, despite the "hype" or good reports, and the same will hold true for Robert, their fourth-ranked prospect. But I see Robert as a fast mover through the system with a '20 arrival as a possibility.

Do you think it was the right thing extending Rick Renteria's contract? Since he's been the manager for the White Sox, it has been all losing seasons. I believe that part of a rebuilding process should also involve managers and coaches that are not doing well not just players. What do you think?

-- Ray, Chicago

Blaming Renteria and/or the coaching staff for the team's 100 losses last season means the context is being lost of the entire rebuild process. There were and are going to be multiple lean years as these players develop. No manager or staff is perfect, but players respond to Renteria and his staff, and this is a hard-working, well-prepared group. Renteria deserves a chance to win as this team matures.

With all the hype about getting Machado, where does that leave Tim Anderson since the former has indicated his preference to remain at short?

-- Joel K., Charlotte, N.C.

I've been asked numerous questions about an Anderson position switch. I've written about it as well, as I discussed in the last Inbox. But Anderson is the White Sox shortstop because he has earned that job and made himself into a solid defensive presence. He is entrenched in this organization. Let's see what offseason moves Chicago makes before any position changes are discussed.

Top 10 Eagles songs: 1) Take It Easy; 2) Hotel California; 3) Victim Of Love; 4) Heartache Tonight; 5) On The Border; 6) Already Gone; 7) James Dean; 8) Life In The Fast Lane; 9) Good Day In Hell; 10) Greeks Don't Want No Freaks. Your thoughts?

-- Vinnie, Chicago, @VinnieDuber

This is the toughest question of the group because there really is no bad Eagles song. I'm going to go with my Top 5 in order: Take it Easy, Already Gone, Take it to the Limit, How Long and One of These Nights ... and anything performed by Joe Walsh is exceptional and worth the price of admission.

Eloy's comin' to the Dominican Winter League

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / November 27, 2018

There might not be much more time before Eloy Jimenez is playing for the White Sox. But in the meantime, he's going to get some extra action in.

Jimenez, the White Sox top-ranked prospect and the No. 3 prospect in baseball, will play in the Dominican Winter League for the second offseason in a row, suiting up for the Gigantes del Cibao, that team announced Monday.

The White Sox added some more specifics, that Jimenez is scheduled to debut for the Gigantes on Friday and that he's expected to be with the team for four to five weeks.

Jimenez played for the Gigantes last winter, doing his now-typical amount of statistical damage: a .368/.443/.676 slash line with four homers and 21 RBIs in just 19 games.

That preceded his stellar 2018 season in the White Sox organization, where he slashed .337/.384/.577 with 22 homers and 75 RBIs in 108 games between Double-A Birmingham and Triple-A Charlotte.

Jimenez is expected to reach the major leagues early on in the 2019 campaign, but earlier this month at the GM Meetings, general manager Rick Hahn wouldn't rule out Jimenez making the team's Opening Day roster.

"Let's see how he looks when he gets to camp and we'll go from there," Hahn said. "Nothing has changed since Sept. 1 but let's see what happens come February and March.

"Eloy has been saying since A-ball that he's ready, which is wonderful and exactly where I want him to be. We'd much rather try to reign a guy back than try to prod him forward. Eloy's level of confidence and enthusiasm for being in the big leagues is wonderful.

"I think right now he's in very good spirits. He looks great. He's working out and been working on his nutrition. I know he's planning to come to camp eager to show everybody what he's capable of doing."

While the possibility apparently exists for Jimenez to impress enough to make his way onto the Opening Day roster, the overwhelming logic that goes along with baseball's financial reality would dictate that the White Sox will probably treat Jimenez much like the Cubs treated Kris Bryant back in 2015, waiting just a few weeks into the season to bring him up to the majors.

Until then, if you're looking for your Eloy fix, you can get whatever the Dominican Winter League equivalent of MiLB.TV is.

It sounds like every player you want the White Sox to get is going to end up on the Phillies

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago | November 26, 2018

White Sox fans don't normally need to dedicate too much brain space to worrying about the Philadelphia Phillies.

The Phillies play in the NL East, nowhere near the AL Central, and since reaching back-to-back World Series in 2008 and 2009 (they won the first), they haven't demanded much postseason attention, either.

But the Phillies seem poised, if you believe all the reports simmering on the Hot Stove, to be everyone's — including the apparently aggressive White Sox — main competition this offseason.

You want the White Sox to sign Bryce Harper? Oh well, too bad, everyone thinks he's going to end up on the Phillies. OK, how about Manny Machado? Yeah, the Phillies want him, too. Jeez, what about Patrick Corbin, Craig Kimbrel, Andrew Miller or Nathan Eovaldi? Phillies. Lord, well at least the White Sox can land a big fish via trade, right? Well, actually, the Phillies are going after those guys, too.

For weeks, the baseball industry has identified the Phillies as a probable destination for Bryce Harper, Manny Machado or both. But what if the Phillies spend aggressively this offseason ... yet land...

A source says the teams discussed a package that would have included Zach Eflin & several young players. But the deal fell apart when the Phillies tried to add Carlos Santana

The Phillies owner has already declared his intention to spend big and "maybe even be a little stupid about it," a good sign that his club could end up winning several bidding wars that the financially flexible White Sox might be involved in. In specific regards to Harper, The Athletic's Jayson Stark wrote "it's amazing how many people inside this sport almost assume that the Phillies will be the highest bidder in this auction." The South Siders are reportedly interested in Harper, Machado and Eovaldi, the first two of which are expected to receive a couple of the biggest contracts in baseball history. But even if Rick Hahn's front office seems willing to spend, can anyone compete with "stupid" spending?

If the Phillies end up doing what they seem so intent on doing and land not one but multiple big-ticket items this winter, they'll be instant contenders. But while that might leave teams like the White Sox without a date to this offseason's dance, it could provide a promising template for future offseasons — because it wasn't long ago the Phillies were a rebuilding team themselves.

Yes, the Phillies, now poised to take the baseball world by storm, just spent the past six seasons with sub-.500 records. They haven't finished higher than third in the NL East since their run of five straight division titles ended in 2011. And so, rebuild. That process has worked, to a degree, with the Phillies looking last

season like one of baseball's fun, young teams on the verge of contention. Problem is they're still on that verge after nosediving in the second half and missing the playoffs yet again.

But that's where what Hahn calls "finishing pieces" come in. The Phillies made a couple big additions last offseason in Jake Arrieta and Carlos Santana, though they might be trying to move on from the latter. They've got a young core of guys — Aaron Nola, Rhys Hoskins, Seranthony Dominguez — that they want to bolster and bolster in a big way. Harper, Machado, Corbin, whoever. Those are "finishing pieces," the cappers to a rebuilding effort that vault a team over the top.

The White Sox will be there one day. They might be trying to add "finishing pieces" now, while they have the opportunity to do so with a talent like Harper or Machado, before the waves of highly touted prospects starts washing up on the South Side, but they still fall into that category. Whether they do it this offseason, next offseason or in an offseason after that, that time is coming. And given the White Sox financial flexibility, it's not at all difficult to envision them having an offseason in which they add multiple "finishing pieces" of a high caliber.

But this winter, they'll have competition, every team in the game will have competition, because the Phillies are there now.

Noah Syndergaard would be an ideal fit for the White Sox, but how high a cost is too high?

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago | November 26, 2018

Ring the bell, another big-name starting pitcher is reportedly available.

There seem to be myriad options out there this winter for the pitching-needy White Sox. Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel and Nathan Eovaldi are all on the free-agent market, and different reports have suggested that the Arizona Diamondbacks could trade Zack Greinke and that the Cleveland Indians are willing to listen to offers for Corey Kluber and Carlos Carrasco.

Well, add another name to the could-be-traded list, as FanCred's Jon Heyman reported last week that the New York Mets are "seriously considering" offers on Noah Syndergaard.

That might be the most exciting name yet to pop up on this offseason's list of available starting pitchers.

Of course, the Mets would certainly want a hefty return package for the 26-year-old with a 2.93 career ERA in four big league seasons. And much like what was discussed here after the New York Yankees and Seattle Mariners made their deal that sent James Paxton to The Bronx, the cost from a White Sox perspective could start with Dylan Cease. Cease is the organization's No. 3 prospect and fresh off a spectacular season that earned him the title of MLB Pipeline's minor league pitcher of the year. Would the White Sox be willing to give Cease up? It would figure they would not be.

But there's no doubt that the White Sox need starting pitching, what with Michael Kopech slated to miss the entirety of the 2019 campaign while recovering from Tommy John surgery and James Shields departed via free agency. The financial flexibility the front office has created during the ongoing rebuilding effort allows the team to go in one of a couple different directions, and it's possible the White Sox opt for a couple one-year fill-ins while waiting for Kopech to recover and for Cease to reach the majors.

If they want to make more of a long-term splash, however, Syndergaard would certainly fit that bill. He's got three years of team control remaining, aligning him with when the White Sox plan to transition from rebuilding to contending, and he's been inarguably great since reaching the big leagues in 2015. His All-Star season in 2016 saw him post a 2.60 ERA, strike out 218 guys and finish eighth in the NL Cy Young vote. After an injury-shortened 2017, he turned in a 3.03 ERA with 155 strikeouts in 2018.

Adding a guy like that to the top of a young rotation would not only give the White Sox a legitimate ace, but it would provide a heck of a safety net for a group of young starting pitchers that while promising has a lot

of question marks. Kopech is on the mend from a significant surgery. Carlos Rodon hasn't pitched a full season since 2016. Lucas Giolito has baseball's highest ERA among qualified starting pitchers last season. Reynaldo Lopez had his ups and downs in his first full season in the bigs. And Cease has yet to pitch above the Double-A level.

It kind of goes without saying, but if the Mets would be willing to part with Syndergaard for a package that didn't include Cease (or top-ranked prospect Eloy Jimenez), that would seem to be a no-brainer. Who knows how likely that would be, but Syndergaard has the combination of youth, immediate impact and team control that would be considered the jackpot for a rebuilding team like the White Sox. The only question is how big the bet would have to be to hit that jackpot. And how big a bet is too big?

Ian Clarkin was a Cub for six days and now he's on the White Sox again

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago | November 26, 2018

Cast your mind back to a long-ago time when Ian Clarkin left the White Sox organization on a waiver claim, joining the Cubs.

Well after an arduous journey lasting all of six days, Clarkin is a White Sock once more.

From White Sox to Cubs to White Sox, just like that.

Clarkin was originally brought to the White Sox organization in the seven-player trade with the New York Yankees in the summer of 2017. The South Siders got highly ranked outfield prospect Blake Rutherford as the centerpiece of the return package for the major league trio of David Robertson, Tommy Kahnle and Todd Frazier, and after Clarkin went to the Cubs last week, Robertson was the last player from that deal left standing in the White Sox organization.

Well, add Clarkin back to that club and back to the 40-man roster. Last week, around the same time the Cubs' waiver claim was announced, the White Sox protected a quartet of minor leaguers from the Rule 5 Draft by adding them to the 40-man roster, and Clarkin was soon removed from it. Now he's back, and the White Sox 40-man roster stands at 39.

But, it wouldn't be any kind of shock to see the White Sox free up a 40-man spot by putting Clarkin on waivers again. Why? Because they already did it once.

Clarkin wasn't especially amazing in 2018. He split time between Class A Winston-Salem and Double-A Birmingham, struggling at the latter stop to the tune of a 5.64 ERA in 68.2 innings. He made 18 appearances there, only 10 of which were starts.

So, thinking that other teams might not be super keen on bringing in someone who posted those numbers this past season, the White Sox might try to once more shake him from their 40-man roster to allow a spot for a different and at this point unknown player. But the White Sox expect to make some acquisitions this winter, so who knows who they could use those spots for. But Clarkin might not be one of them.

Maybe Clarkin will be a Cub again next week. And a White Sock again the week after that. And maybe this back-and-forth will continue for eternity. Clarkin, bouncing between the South Side and the North Side with the dependability of the Red Line.

Confusing enough? Welcome to the wonderful world of waivers.

White Sox Hall of Famers Frank Thomas and Jim Thome and former Cubs GM Jim Hendry to be honored by scouts foundation

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune | November 26, 2018

White Sox Hall of Fame sluggers Frank Thomas and Jim Thome and former Cubs general manager Jim Hendry will be honored Jan. 12 at the Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation's 16th "In the Spirit of the Game" awards dinner in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Thomas will receive "A Scout's Dream Award," to be presented by former Sox scouting director Al Goldis. Thome will be presented with the Player Lifetime Achievement Award by Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf.

Hendry and Tim Wilken, a former Cubs amateur and professional scouting director, will receive the Legends in Scouting Award. Hendry currently works as a special assistant with the Yankees, while Wilken is a special assistant to the GM with the Diamondbacks.

Former Cubs special assistant Gary Hughes will be honored with the George Genovese Lifetime Achievement Award in Scouting. Hughes, who has worked in major-league baseball for more than 50 seasons and currently works for the Red Sox, will be presented with his award by his son Sam, a crosschecker scout with the Cubs.

The PBSF started in 2003 with the intent to help scouts who have fallen on hard times because of loss of job, illness, retirement or other setbacks. The foundation's mission is to raise money to provide emergency funds to scouts or their immediate families.

White Sox top prospect Eloy Jimenez added to Dominican Winter League roster

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune | November 26, 2018

Top prospect Eloy Jimenez is getting a head start in his quest to earn a spot on the 2019 White Sox opening day roster.

Jimenez was added to the roster of Gigantes del Cibao of the Dominican Winter League, the team announced Monday on its Twitter account.

Jimenez's first game with the Gigantes is tentatively scheduled for Friday, the Sox said. Jimenez will play the outfield and designated hitter, and his stint with the Gigantes is expected to last about one month.

Jimenez, 21, a native of Santo Domingo, was not called up to the major-league roster in September despite batting .337 with 22 home runs and 75 RBIs in 108 games at Double-A Birmingham and Triple-A Charlotte. Jimenez put up those numbers despite missing four weeks because of left pectoral and left adductor injuries.

Jimenez was the centerpiece of a four-player package from the Cubs for left-hander Jose Quintana in July 2017.

White Sox claim Ian Clarkin off waivers from Cubs – 6 days after Cubs acquire him from Sox

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune | November 26, 2018

Left-hander Ian Clarkin's stint with the Cubs lasted less than one week.

Clarkin was reclaimed Monday off waivers by the White Sox, six days after the Cubs acquired him on a waiver claim from the Sox.

Clarkin, 23, was 4-5 with a 4.76 ERA in 25 games (12 starts) with Class A Winston-Salem and Double-A Birmingham last season.

The addition of Clarkin increases the Sox's 40-man roster to 39, while the Cubs' 40-man roster shrinks to 38.

White Sox claim left-hander Ian Clarkin off waivers from Cubs

By Madeline Kenney / Chicago Sun-Times | November 26, 2018

Just six days after the Cubs claimed Ian Clarkin off waivers from the White Sox, the left-hander is back with the South Siders.

On Monday, the Sox claimed Clarkin off waivers from the Cubs.

The Sox originally acquired Clarkin, a San Diego native, on July 18, 2017, when they traded All-Star third baseman Todd Frazier and right-handers Tommy Kahnle and David Robertson to the Yankees. Along with Clarkin, the Sox also received right-hander Tyler Clippard and outfielders Blake Rutherford and Tito Polo in that trade.

Clarkin, whom the Yankees selected 33rd overall in the 2013 draft, has yet to break into the major leagues. He's also coming off a rough season with Class A Winston-Salem and Class AA Birmingham. Between the teams, Clarkin, who turns 24 in February, went 4-5 with a 4.76 ERA in 25 games (12 starts).

This is a 2018 photo of Ian Clarkin of the Chicago White Sox baseball team. This image reflects the 2018 active roster as of Feb. 21, when this image was taken. | Ben Margot/Associated Press

The addition of Clarkin increased the Sox' 40-man roster to 39; the Cubs' 40-man roster decreased to 38.

How the White Sox found Omar Narvaez in two at-bats

By James Fegan / The Athletic | November 24, 2018

Five summers ago, White Sox scout John Tumminia's daughter, Tyler, invited him out to a baseball game. Tyler is a baseball executive for the Goldklang Group, so they met at a game for the short season Class-A Hudson Valley Renegades, one of the four minor league teams she oversees.

It was there Tumminia noticed a shorter, stout 21-year-old catcher lash an opposite-field double to left in his first at-bat. This catcher — who was grinding through his fifth year in the Rays organization and would never appear on a public top organizational prospect list — flashed some arm strength on his one throw to second, but it was too high and defensively Tumminia thought he was only OK. Yet by the fifth inning, when the catcher pulled a line drive to right field for his second hit of the game, Tumminia informed his daughter that their outing would unfortunately need to come to an end.

"I said to my daughter 'I gotta go,' and she said 'Where ya going?' and I said 'I gotta go home and write this guy up,'" Tumminia said. "So I went home and wrote the guy up that night, sent it in not knowing where it would go."

At the end of October, Tumminia retired from full-time scouting after 32 years in the game, having already been inducted into the Professional Baseball Scouts Hall of Fame. He's listed as a recommending scout on the trades where the White Sox acquired Yoán Moncada, Michael Kopech, Reynaldo López, Dane Dunning and countless others. But even Tumminia would be quick to insist that his average grade on Omar Narváez's hit tool back when he was in the New York-Penn League is not the full story of how the White Sox acquired their statistically best hitter of the 2018 season. It's just the fun part.

For one, fellow scout Joe Butler had filed a similarly optimistic report on Narváez a year prior. But more to the point, White Sox director of operations Dan Fabian was ultimately the man who took the enthusiastic reports, ran Narváez's information through the team's statistical models and decided it was worth making a \$12,000 outlay to nab Narváez in the minor league phase of the Rule 5 draft in 2013, the same year the White Sox more memorably took Adrian Nieto in the major league portion.

"I try to break the ties," Fabian said of his role in the decision making process. "In a trade situation you have to choose from a group of players. Obviously in a Rule 5 situation, you've got to line them up and really at the time Omar was the one who stood out that year. It wasn't like there was a whole lot of competition. Just depends on the depth year to year with the draft."

If the major league portion of Rule 5 draft — where teams try to find major league potential amid stalled prospects who haven't managed to crack the 40-man roster in four (if they were drafted out of college) or five professional seasons — is mostly a wasteland with precious few players capable of providing major league impact, the minor league phase is a larger haystack with fewer needles to be found. Or rather, hunting for players left outside the 38-man reserve list for the Triple-A phase, or off the 37-man list for Double-A, is much more about organizational depth. Recent pick Yermin Mercedes might never see Chicago, but he thrilled Dash fans in Winston-Salem all summer long. Finding a big leaguer is rare; finding a season of a .275/.366/.429 batting line is rarer.

In his 26 seasons in the White Sox baseball operations department, Fabian says the franchise's best minor league phase Rule 5 picks were infielder Aaron Miles (whom they were able to trade for Juan Uribe) and reliever Matt Karchner (who was famously flipped for a teenaged Jon Garland). Like any seasoned executive, Fabian celebrates the value adds that set up a trade for a star player as much as the finishing moves themselves. If Blake Rutherford becomes a star, there's a story to be told about the pro scout who recommended Yency Almonte, whom the Sox got for Gordon Beckham, then traded for Tommy Kahnle, who was part of the package for Rutherford.

But even with those incremental steps in building the last White Sox championship in mind, and even if his defense remains shaky, a two-at-bat look at Narváez spurred one of the greatest minor league Rule 5 coups in franchise history.

"What I liked about his hitting style is that he had good hand-eye coordination and he was using the entire field," Tumminia said. "(White Sox scout) Daraka (Shaheed) is always complimenting me on, 'How did you see Narváez for two at-bats and you put an average on him?' I said, 'I think it has a lot to do with his bat.' When I was an East Coast supervisor, when I had to go in and see a guy with maybe one at-bat. Let's say it rained or snowed or saw a guy two at-bats, and you saw a guy throw down to second a couple times in between innings without even having to make a legitimate throw. I think the crosschecking helps me with my pro scouting reports."

The Narváez story is reflective of multiple scouting realities. First, scouts must be quick and decisive in their assessments. Even in an organization with a robust department like the White Sox, a scout's time is limited, especially for a project that carries the priority level of a 21-year-old catcher in Low-A that Tumminia happened to notice one day and wasn't specifically targeted.

"He was really low too, you're talking short season New York-Penn League," Fabian said. "I can't say there was a lot of work to be done where we took him, but that's when he saw the offensive potential. Omar's always had the ability to control the strike zone. Left-handed hitting catchers who control the strike zone, that's pretty good to have as backup potential. Obviously the rest of the game developed which is what you obviously hope for when you acquire a player."

But even for the best eyes in the game, there's only so much certainty to be had. Tumminia always believed Narváez could hit, even if he was thinking more .250 with 15-20 home run power down the road if he got a full season of starting at-bats — which he now doubts he will with Wellington Castillo on hand. But even with that belief, the first thing Tumminia did when Fabian told him that Narváez was getting called up to the

majors in 2016 was turn around and call minor league catching coordinator John Orton, to congratulate him for what was obviously a developmental triumph of his own.

In an industry predicated on building clear pictures of players as quickly as possible, the idea that any one look can turn out to be the one that sparks something big is pervasive. Three years later, Tumminia was again patrolling the New York-Penn League when he got word that a fever-stricken Dane Dunning would be scratched from his start. After three-plus hours on the freeway, a friend called and informed him that the Nationals' first-round pick would be pitching in the nightcap of a doubleheader after all, so Tumminia turned around.

"Literally," Tumminia said. "I don't know if you've ever been on a New York state freeway but I actually made a U-turn on the freeway and went back up. When I got back to the toll booth in Auburn, New York, the lady asked me how I got back on the freeway with this ticket. I said 'Oh I'm sorry, I had to make a U-turn,' and she just shook her head at me and took the money. But I did see him pitch three innings and he pitched really good, good movement across the plate, everything came out of the hand real nice and I put a grade on him, I put above average on him, hands down."

It's been over a decade since another year of Rule 5 eligibility was added in the collective bargaining agreement, making it harder for the next Johan Santana to change hands. Now the acquisition price for the minor league phase has doubled to \$24,000, making finding the next Narváez a slightly larger calculation, and thus less likely. But since players can now be traded the same winter after they were taken in the draft, the New York-Penn League is still a smart place to see some high-value draft picks — like Dunning — before their stock gets too high.

Tumminia just got back from the Dominican Republic on a trip for Baseball Miracles, a non-profit he's been running for the last six years to provide free equipment and construction to disadvantaged children around the world, and he has another one scheduled for Puerto Rico next month. Daraka Shaheed helps out on the project, other Sox scouts have donated equipment and Jerry Reinsdorf is a major supporter. But if Tumminia finds some time in between all that to stop by to watch the Renegades near his house, say hello to his daughter, and maybe write up anyone that jumps out at him, the White Sox wouldn't mind. Since Tumminia scouted the Nationals organization for the White Sox as part of his coverage, it seemed like a ripe opportunity to ask him what he thought of the notion that Dunning might wind up being the best pitcher in that trade. He downplayed that possibility, saying that after following him for five years before he was acquired, he believes Reynaldo López is "special."

He believes there's a chance that López and Dunning wind up being No. 2 and No. 3 starters in the White Sox rotation, or No. 3 and No. 4 starters perhaps. But it will likely be in that order.