



# CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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## NBC Sports Chicago

Glanville: Changing expectations have made it so 95 wins is not enough for Cubs

By Doug Glanville

During the first week of my rookie season with the Cubs, my teammate, the late Frank Castillo was running his sprints in the outfield in between starts. We were home at Wrigley and as was customary, a pitcher would do pole to poles, meaning he would run from the foul line to the other foul line while following the bend of the warning track. In this case, Frankie was running during batting practice after the fans were let into the ballpark.

The bleacher bums, known for their relentless in-your-face attitude towards visiting outfielders, were supportive and understanding when it came to the home squad, despite the so-so season we were having to date in 1996. When Frank, who had 1 win and 9 losses up until that point, ran by the left field section of these diehards, I heard a fan clearly tell Frank, "That's OK Frank, next game, you will be 2-9!"

It was loud enough for me to hear from where I was shagging fly balls nearby. I was surprised that this group of rough-and-tumble fans still had optimistic words of support.

Yet this was consistent with everything I had seen from the Cubs fans on my way up from the minor leagues, particularly when I was interacting with the fans during major league spring training before I was called up. Positive, hopeful, worried, waiting for bad luck to dash hopes, loyal and always with kind words, no matter how you were playing.

As a player who was just getting his first taste of major league action, this was comforting. The idea that I could make mistakes, that I had room to fall short and support would still be there, but you also wondered where the line was between complacency and patience, rebuilding and folding, hope and naïveté.

Since I was new enough to just be taking it in, this was clouded by my own fandom. Like most new arrivals, everyone on your team is an All-Star in your mind. You are not sure where you will fit in yet, even with an abundance of self-confidence. Playing with teammates that I had imitated in Wiffle ball or rolled dice with their card on my table during a teenage Strat-O-Matic game, made me recognize that I was surrounded by greatness, in fact, icons. Sandberg, Grace, Dunston, Sosa. These were household names in the baseball mind of my childhood. How could we not have high expectations with these guys?

I was not objective enough to analyze the bullpen or the backup catcher, or how this team hit with runners in scoring position. That was past data, we have a future, and it could all change next week, right?

But there is something different about high expectations when you are on the back end of years of winning. When you are on the heels of a World Championship like the 2016 Cubs produced.

The language the Cubs players used throughout the 2018 campaign and after they were knocked out reflected the highest of expectation. The idea that every year is not just a playoff appearance, a 90-win season, a better-than-last-year achievement. It is a year measured by the singular accomplishment of being a world champion.

When a team has rattled off a few years in a row of going deep into the postseason with a roster full of young players that could have just as easily stopped and taken pictures for simply being happy to be in “The Show,” it says a lot that these Cubs players arrived expecting much more. Age was just a number, underscoring that not only was winning aspirational, but it was a destination that was pre-set, as if they bought a plane ticket and anything other than a trophy was an unauthorized detour.

Along my professional career, I heard a lot of motivational spring training speeches (at least 14 of them). Every organization says they have assembled the best staff on Earth. Everyone says they have acquired the best talent in the Milky Way. Everyone looks around and sees top draft picks, legends of the past and a few guys that may be in the Hall of Fame one day. Yet all 30 teams are saying the same thing and only one can remain standing when all is said and done.

In today’s era of draft-and-develop over a patient-but-direct timeline, it may come down to whether a young player arrives at the right time in the cycle of his organization. Is he there for the upswing? If you play long enough, every team has a least one upswing, even if it lasts only a year. But you must be a core player, otherwise the trade machine could gobble up your timing.

Regardless, it makes a difference when a team has done it before. It makes expectation a word more akin to destiny. The team does not have to accomplish this championship goal by waving a magic wand.

They believe it is now by repeating history, or at least as Mark Twain once referenced, “rhyming” with history. And despite baseball’s fascination and respect for its past, a player’s history is often measured in single-digit years.

After they were quickly eliminated from contention, the 2018 Cubs made it loud and clear. The ending was a huge disappointment. 95 wins was not good enough, a Wild Card was not champagne worthy.

Yet I cannot help but think back to Frank Castillo and the fan that up until that time in 1996, never saw such a run that this 2018 unit has seen over the past few years. This fan often exuded a sentiment that being relentlessly positive was important and a 95 win-season and an early playoff exit still generated satisfaction. Certainly when I was a rookie arrival, if we won 95 wins that year, 95 major league wins was more than I could have fathomed as a young baseball fan when I was in Little League.

The Cubs have taken steps to show that satisfaction was not achieved in 2018 and there are consequences. Hitting coach Chili Davis was let go, more changes probably on the horizon. Fans can rest assured that the organization’s leadership is playing for the era of “now,” and they require no pat on the back for winning 95 games, in fact, they are declaring that the basking period of 2016 is officially over.

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### **NBC Sports Chicago**

Chili Davis after being ousted by Cubs: 'There were multiple players in there I didn't connect with'  
By Tony Andracki

Chili Davis didn't go all scorched earth on the Cubs in a recent interview with the Chicago Sun-Times, but he had quite a lot to say after being ousted by the organization after just one year as the hitting coach.

The Cubs made Davis the scapegoat for an offense that faded down the stretch, struggling for the entire second half and scoring just 1 run in three of the final four games of the year.

When he was hired a year ago, Theo Epstein and Joe Maddon talked up Davis' impressive resume that includes a 19-year MLB career, two separate stints as a successful hitting coach with the Oakland A's and Boston Red Sox and a philosophy that they hoped would withstand the test of time in the game today, preaching more contact and using the opposite field.

Throughout the 2018 season, Maddon often commended Davis for his ability to communicate with players, particularly in the area of mental approach to each at-bat.

Now that the dust has settled a bit on his firing, Davis felt he had some issues getting through to some Cubs players.

“I learned a lot this year,” Davis told the Sun-Times' Gordon Wittenmyer. “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 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.”

The Cubs hired Anthony Iapoce as their new hitting coach Monday afternoon. Iapoce comes over from the Rangers and has a direct link to John Mallee, who was the Cubs' hitting coach for three seasons before being let go when Davis became available last winter.

Iapocce also spent three seasons with the Cubs as a special assistant to the GM, overseeing the organization's minor-league hitting from 2013-15. Presumably, he found a way over those years to connect with the Cubs' top young hitting prospects — guys like Kris Bryant and Kyle Schwarber and Willson Contreras that are now leading the big-league lineup.

"Hopefully he has better success at this than I did," Davis said of Iapocce in the Sun-Times article. "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 had a whole lot more to say on the matter and I encourage you to read the full interview with Wittenmyer over at [ChicagoSunTimes.com](http://ChicagoSunTimes.com).

A healthy Bryant very likely could've changed everything for Davis and the Cubs' 2018 lineup. Contreras hitting like he's capable of in the second half would've made a huge difference, as well.

But the end result is a finish to the 2018 campaign that was viewed universally as a disappointment — particularly in the offensive department — and the Cubs are left with their third different hitting coach in three seasons.

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### **NBC Sports Chicago**

What caused Willson Contreras' downturn in production in 2018?

By Chris Kamka

There was plenty of "Willson Contreras: Future MVP?" discussion during spring training.

Any time a player in his age-25 year season hits 21 home runs with a .276/.356/.499 slash line at a premium defensive position (catcher) despite missing about a month with a hamstring injury (as Contreras did in 2017), the baseball world takes notice. The notion that he might one day garner MVP recognition was nothing to be laughed at.

Through the first few months of 2018, Contreras did much of the same. He had a small drop off in power, but he still had his moments and was solid overall. Over a three-game stretch in the beginning of May, he went 10-for-15 with three doubles, two triples, three home runs and 11 RBIs. He was the first Cubs catcher with five triples before the All-Star break since Gabby Hartnett in 1935. He even started the All-Star Game — and became the second player in MLB history (after Terry Steinbach) to homer in his first career All-Star at-bat after having homered in his first career MLB at-bat (back in 2016).

But instead of cruising along at a performance level about 20 percent better than league average, something happened.

Here are Contreras' Weighted Runs Created Plus (wRC+) numbers from the past three seasons (100 is league average, any point above or below is equal to a percentage point above or below league average):

Here's that breakdown in terms of batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage:

But what caused the downturn in production?

There were some underlying characteristics of his work, particularly a mixture of significantly higher ground-ball rate, lower average exit velocity and bad luck on balls in play which led to the decrease in production.

Also notable is that after the Midsummer Classic, the hits stopped coming on pitches on the outer third. Dividing the strike zone into thirds (this doesn't include pitches outside the zone), this is what his batting average and slugging percentage looked like:

Granted, it's not a significant sample, but it's there.

One non-offensive thing that sticks out is his workload.

\*missed 29 games in August and September with hamstring injury

It was the most innings caught by a Cubs receiver since Geovany Soto logged 1,150.1 innings in his Rookie of the Year season in 2008. Three other catchers besides Contreras logged at least 1,000 innings behind the plate in 2018: Jonathan Lucroy, Yasmani Grandal and Yadier Molina. While they combined to fare better prior to the All-Star break, it wasn't nearly as precipitous a drop as Contreras suffered.

Lucroy, Grandal and Molina combined to slash .255/.322/.416 before the All-Star Game and .239/.317/.405 after it.

That could possibly have a little something to do with it though.

There's no way to be entirely sure and to what extent each of the things listed above affected Contreras last season. Could it have been something completely different? Could it have been a minor nagging injury? A mental roadblock? Too many constant adjustments throughout the season? The questions remain. A new voice in newly appointed hitting coach Anthony Iapoce might be just what Contreras, who is entering his age-27 season, needs to get back on track and reestablish his spot among the best catchers in the major leagues.

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Joe Maddon's agent rips media speculation on Cubs manager's future: 'You guys fired everything up'  
By Paul Sullivan

The Joe Maddon Farewell Tour is off to a rocky start and already in danger of being canceled.

When we left Maddon last two weeks ago at Wrigley Field, the Cubs manager left for his offseason vacation on the heels of a 13-inning loss to the Rockies in the National League wild-card game, ending a once-promising season with an audible thud.

The Cubs blew a five-game lead in the NL Central, lost to the Brewers in Game 163 at Wrigley and basically stopped hitting when it mattered most.

The next day, a column speculating on Maddon's future appeared in The Athletic under the headline: "The Cubs are out. Will Joe Maddon soon follow?"

In it, Ken Rosenthal, a plugged-in, nationally known reporter who also works for Fox Sports and MLB Network, outlined several reasons Cubs President Theo Epstein might be unhappy with Maddon, including the handling of closer Brandon Morrow, the ill-fated Pedro Strop at-bat in the Sept. 13 makeup game in Washington and Maddon's initial refusal to read Melisa Reidy-Russell's blog post in which she accused her former husband, Cubs shortstop Addison Russell, of emotional and physical abuse.

But in the end, Rosenthal concluded a dismissal wouldn't happen, theorizing "it's difficult to imagine the Cubs firing him if their biggest complaint is that Epstein finds him annoying or difficult to work with."

Maddon left town without a postseason briefing, though Epstein spoke to the media for more than an hour the day after the playoff loss. Epstein didn't cite the Athletic article while denying friction between himself and Maddon. But while confirming Maddon would return in 2019, Epstein mentioned "some sort of high-profile report this morning that was not accurate."

"I didn't read the whole thing," Epstein said. "But I saw in there that there were some claims that he and I had personal friction. Not true at all. We have a terrific working relationship."

Still, without an extension heading into the final season of his contract, Maddon would be considered a lame-duck manager throughout the year. Speculation would run rampant.

And who would be next? Is it too soon to bet the house on David Ross?

But Maddon is not worried about the extension, or the speculation, or the possibility of "Grandpa" or another big-name candidate looking over his shoulder, at least according to Maddon's agent, Alan Nero.

"The reality is Joe is not upset," Nero said Tuesday. "There's nothing going on."

"There is nothing wrong. I have all the faith in the world that we'll get this done when the time is appropriate, when it's ready."

The notion that Maddon wouldn't be around for a few more years might seem preposterous, considering his record and accomplishments since arriving in Chicago with that memorable news conference at the Cubby Bear nearly four years ago.

He has averaged 93 victories per season and has made four consecutive postseason appearances, including three NLCSes and, oh yeah, that 2016 World Series championship, the franchise's first in 108 years.

But Epstein's recent criticism of Maddon's revolving lineups and his belief a lame-duck season in 2019 wouldn't become a distraction suggest an encore for Maddon isn't the slam dunk one might have presumed.

Nero insisted it was much ado about nothing, blaming the media for creating a false narrative.

"Joe never had a problem with any of this," he said. "Never. He was very comfortable. He was very relaxed. He wasn't thinking about it. He wasn't worried about it. You guys fired everything up."

By "you guys," Nero was referring to sportswriters, arguing that life, liberty and the pursuit of clicks has led us to become mindless speculators trying to one-up each other.

That's a debate for another day. Either way, Nero said talks about an extension will happen, perhaps as early as the upcoming general managers meetings in early November in Carlsbad, Calif.

"There was not a problem between Theo and Joe," he said. "Joe wasn't worried about (an extension). Theo wasn't worried about it. There was plenty of time. We have the offseason. We have the GM meetings. We have the winter meetings. We have spring training.

"He has a contract for next year. When the time is right, Theo and I will sit down and talk about it. But there is no issue. ... There is no problem between them. Everyone seems to want to write about this, and the only reason there might be any sense of urgency to talk about an extension is because of this (BS)."

Nero predicted this Joe versus Theo narrative would be repeated ad nauseam over the next several months by media looking for something to write about, even if it's inaccurate.

"He has a contract," Nero repeated, raising his voice. "I think Theo has a lot more on his mind than worrying about whether we should focus on Joe's contract right now. We actually have 12 months to worry about it.

"But you guys won't let it go. This will be something that will be discussed once a week for the next 52 weeks, OK? ... There will be all speculation, if he had a bad day or if he had a good day — they should (bring him back), they shouldn't. ... I hate it."

I asked Nero about the trend toward younger, less expensive and more inexperienced managerial hires. Maddon is pretty much a dinosaur in this era, making \$6 million while the newbies are getting far less money with way less autonomy.

Nero conceded the trend is real but added: "I don't think it's about the money. I really, really don't, especially with the Cubs. I don't think the decision would be made on finances.

"The decision would be made based on whether or not they're going to go through some sort of rebuild. And whether or not Theo and (general manager Jed Hoyer) and (scouting and player development chief Jason McLeod) want to have more control, which up till now has not been their style. They're not on the field every day making decisions."

Nero dismissed Epstein's comment about concerns over Maddon's lineups, pointing out Epstein reiterated he didn't want a "yes" man as his manager.

"He also said they have differences of opinions, which is healthy," Nero said. "What do you want to do, just have somebody who is just going to silently agree with everything you're going to say and then take the hit? That's what other teams are doing."

It's going to be a long and interesting offseason, and the Cubs have a lot of decisions to make, notably regarding which players to sign, keep or get rid of.

But whether Maddon gets his extension before the 2019 season is one of the bigger decisions they have to make. If he doesn't, we'll all wonder whether he has to win it all in 2019 to return in 2020.

Maddon took the Cubs to the promised land and gained Ditka-esque status in Chicago, so any change would be monumental. Of course, we all know how it ended for Ditka.

Near the end of our interview, Nero lamented the plight of the modern-day manager for having to deal with the modern-day media.

“I think the worst job in the world, besides being president of the United States, is being a field manager,” he said with a laugh.

I can hardly wait for 2019.

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### **Chicago Tribune**

New Cubs hitting coach Anthony Iapoce is close friends with former Cubs hitting coach John Mallee  
By Mark Gonzales

Anthony Iapoce doesn't owe his entire coaching career to John Mallee, but the bond that started as a player-coach relationship in the Brewers organization 22 years ago developed into a mutual passion they have shared with other organizations.

“We would sit and talk like two friends trying to get players better,” the Cubs' new hitting coach said Tuesday. “He asked me to be a (minor-league) coach when he was a hitting coordinator with the Marlins (in 2006), and I've been lucky to work with him with the Blue Jays and Cubs.”

Mallee was the Cubs batting coach from 2015-17 until he was fired and Chili Davis replaced him. Davis was let go after this season. Iapoce, 45, was the Rangers hitting coach the last three years after spending the previous three seasons as a special assistant to Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer. He became available to the Cubs after the Rangers fired manager Jeff Banister.

Mallee's dedication to teaching younger hitters inspired Iapoce and extended to the offseason. Iapoce said he once drove from his offseason home in New York to Northwest Indiana to assist Mallee at an indoor hitting facility.

Working with Mallee — who just completed his first season as the Phillies' hitting coach — enabled Iapoce to develop relationships with members of the Marlins' organization that included Cubs bench coach Brandon Hyde, assistant hitting coach Andy Haines and Tim Cossins (field/catching coordinator) that should make his transition into his new role smooth.

During his four seasons in the Marlins' organization (2006-09), Iapoce crossed paths with Marlins coaches Bo Porter (who went on to manage the Astros), Edwin Rodriguez (who managed the Marlins in 2010-11), Joe Espada (now the bench coach for the Astros and a candidate for several managerial positions) and Mallee (the hitting coach from 2010-11).

Those coaches played a role in the development of Giancarlo Stanton, Logan Morrison, Gaby Sanchez and Chris Coghlan. Iapoce expressed his appreciation for Jim Fleming, who was the Marlins' vice president of player development and scouting.

“(Fleming) let us work,” Iapoce said.

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### **Chicago Tribune**

New Cubs hitting coach Anthony Iapoce is close friends with former Cubs hitting coach John Mallee



By Mark Gonzales

The Cubs were eliminated from the postseason two weeks ago, but their front office personnel remains in demand.

Jason McLeod, who was instrumental in drafting first-round picks Albert Almora Jr., Kris Bryant, Kyle Schwarber and Ian Happ, has interviewed for the vacant general manager's position with the Giants.

McLeod, the Cubs' senior vice president/scouting and player development, is one of several candidates who have been contacted about the job, according to a source.

McLeod, 46, interviewed for the Twins' GM position two seasons ago and withdrew from consideration for a similar position with the Padres after the 2015 season.

His candidacy comes as no surprise to Cubs officials because of his draft background and success, starting with the Padres in 1994 and ascending with the Red Sox (2003-09) before handling scouting and player development duties with the Padres (2010-11) and Cubs.

"We needed to take a fresh approach with baseball operations," Giants CEO Larry Baer told reporters last month shortly after Bobby Evans was dismissed as GM. "We've had a very successful group here a long time, but we have to bring a new approach to Giants baseball and take a look outside."

McLeod's interview, first reported by Bruce Levine of WSCR-AM 670, surfaced after assistant GM Shiraz Rehman left to join the Rangers as an assistant GM.

The Rangers are looking to accelerate their analytics department. Rehman spent his last season with the Cubs with duties of strategic initiatives added to his assistant GM title. Rehman's duties with the Cubs included an emphasis on evaluating current systems and identifying and applying solutions in an attempt to create competitive advantages.

In his new duties with the Rangers, Rehman will be involved in the daily operations of the major-league team, from player acquisitions to roster management to player contracts and salary arbitration.

The Cubs have yet to make any formal announcements about manager Joe Maddon's coaching staff for 2019. Bench coach Brandon Hyde is a candidate for managerial openings with the Rangers, Angels and Twins, and multiple reports have linked Hyde with the Blue Jays.

Coincidentally, Astros bench coach Joe Espada — Hyde's brother-in-law — also has been linked as a managerial candidate for those four teams.

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### **The Athletic**

Jon Lester shows no signs of stopping after an impressive 2018 turnaround

By Sahadev Sharma

Jon Lester stood at his locker for nearly an hour after the Cubs' wild-card loss. The 13-year veteran seemed to tower over reporters as he deconstructed a disappointing end to the 2018 season.

"This sucks," Lester said. "I don't want to be the guy who always looks at the positive of things. But I feel like this can benefit our guys."

Looking for the positive after a poor performance — personally or collectively — is something Lester often denies he wants to do. He usually ends up doing it anyway. It's how Lester ticks. On the field, he's the hard-nosed competitor who stalks the mound after a call doesn't go his way, takes a deep breath, gathers himself and then goes out and works around it. Off the field, he's the type of player who seems like he has no desire to chat with a reporter, barking at them in a way that would make many scurry.

But those who know him understand that gruff exterior is not the true Lester. Ask him a question, even if he seems disinterested, and you'll likely get a long, inspired answer. Lester is thoughtful. Even when he appears to dismiss an idea in public, there's no doubt he's consuming everything he possibly can behind the scenes to try and improve himself.

Take a look at Lester's career and you'll see a story of resilience.

When it comes to pure results, Lester more often than not has proven to be better than average. There have been numerous times when Lester seemed to be headed for a downturn in his career, only to find a way to reinvent himself. In 2012 he looked lost on the mound, posting his worst season (4.82 ERA). But he constantly worked to find his form, and with some tweaks to his mechanics, by midseason of 2013, he had once again found himself. After posting a 4.58 ERA in that season's first half, he dropped that number to 2.57 after the All-Star break. He then worked 34 2/3 innings in five postseason starts, giving the Red Sox a 1.56 ERA during that span as they won their third World Series in a decade.

That's who Lester is: a player who can rebound from poor results and prove doubters wrong. And there were plenty of doubters heading into the 2018 season. Lester missed the 200-inning mark in 2017 for only the second time since he became a full-time starter in 2008 and his 4.33 ERA was the second-worst full-season mark of his career.

He came out in 2018 and delivered strong results in the first half, good enough to make the All-Star team. But ugly peripherals suggested a drop was coming. Sure enough, he posted a 10.32 ERA in his first five starts out of the break and it seemed like all was lost for the aging veteran.

But something stood out about his final disastrous start during that stretch. I spoke to Lester a few days after that outing about some things I thought were working and in typical Lester fashion, he initially dismissed the idea.

"I gave up nine runs," Lester told me. "It's hard to see the positives."

But as he is wont to do, he continued chatting and by the end of our conversation, Lester had this to say: "Even though I just said it's hard, you try to see the positives and build off those."

It's Lester's instinct to want to focus on results when speaking with the media. He doesn't want to make excuses for the bad or try to diminish the good. So when the numbers said he was headed for a downfall, he didn't want to hear it. But sure enough, he was working behind the scenes to make sure that downfall didn't come. And when it did, he worked doubly hard to correct it.

In his final eight regular-season starts, Lester posted a 1.71 ERA and strong peripherals — a 23.2 percent strikeout rate and 6.3 percent walk rate. He looked like the pitcher who was brought aboard prior to the 2015 season, the pitcher who was billed as the ace of a playoff staff. He then delivered six innings of one-run ball in the wild-card game, striking out nine and walking just one.

“Tonight was probably the best physically and as far as pitch command as I’ve felt in a long time,” Lester said after that outing.

Unfortunately for him and the Cubs, it would be his last outing of the season.

There were some mechanical tweaks Lester made that helped correct what was wrong. In the end, it all came down to his cutter doing what it needed to do — getting in on righties and delivering the type of soft contact that’s made him one of the best pitchers of his generation. In his first 24 starts of the year, Lester allowed a .293 average on his cutter with a .193 ISO. In his final dominant nine starts, including the postseason, he allowed just a .216 batting average on the pitch with one extra-base hit allowed.

By the end, Lester’s 2018 mirrored much of his career. There were low points, but somehow, he found a way to get back on track and become the pitcher everyone expects him to be.

“Extremely impressive,” team president Theo Epstein said of Lester’s 2018 season. “He’s like a metronome with his ability to take the ball, make every start, just about every start and find a way to contribute to winning baseball. And in the postseason, it’s hard to live up to that reputation, that postseason reputation, time and time again. You go out there and you make a couple bad starts in October and that reputation’s gone. But he lives up to it just about every time, every time in a Cubs uniform.”

The Cubs won 95 games and made the playoffs, but this is a new era of Cubs baseball, where just appearing in the postseason isn’t enough. There were plenty of things that went wrong for the Cubs in 2018, from injuries to underperformance. But there was Lester at the end of the season, leading his team on the mound and doing everything he could to try and help them come away with a win. As Epstein would later say, one more clutch hit by the offense and “that’s a performance that goes down in Cubs lore.” Lester didn’t get that moment in the wild card, but there have already been plenty of them in his four years in Chicago — more than enough to ensure his place in the hearts of Cubs fans forever.

And after another brilliant season in the books, Lester has no plans of dropping off in 2019.

“Got to,” Lester said when asked if he could repeat what he’d just done over the course of the season. “I mean, I ain’t going anywhere. Unless they trade me or release me, and they can’t trade me. Unless they tell me to go home, I’m here. You guys are stuck with me.”

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