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6 NL first-timers among Silver Slugger honorees

By Anthony Castrovine / MLB.com / November 8, 2018

The list of 2018 American League and National League Silver Slugger Award winners announced on Thursday night on MLB Network includes quite a few past recipients of the offense-based honor. Most notably, Mike Trout won for the sixth time, Jose Altuve for the fifth, and Paul Goldschmidt and Nolan Arenado for the fourth apiece.

But the list also includes the first two-time winner ... within the same season. J.D. Martinez's selection as both a designated hitter and an outfielder makes him the first player in the 39-year history of the award, which is presented annually by Louisville Slugger, to win two Silver Sluggers in the same year.

- All-time Silver Slugger Award winners

MLB managers and coaches fill in their blank Silver Slugger ballots at the conclusion of the regular season and are not allowed to vote for players on their own team. It's not unusual for players to receive votes at multiple positions, though that usually works to the detriment of a player's chances of winning. Martinez's exceptional year, in which he spent 62 percent of his time at DH and the other 38 in the corner outfield for the World Series champion Red Sox, created an exception all its own.

Here is the full list of winners for 2018:

CATCHER

AL winner: Salvador Perez, Royals (second Silver Slugger Award)

Perez, who also won a Silver Slugger in 2016, was the only AL catcher to notch enough plate appearances to qualify for the batting title, and he repeated the career highs he set in 2017 with 27 homers and 80 RBIs. The Indians' Yan Gomes led AL catchers in OPS (.762) but in 107 fewer at-bats than Perez (.713 OPS).

NL winner: J.T. Realmuto, Marlins (first)

A much-discussed trade candidate of late, Realmuto led all qualifying catchers with his career-best .825 OPS while hitting 21 homers, 30 doubles and three triples.

FIRST BASE

AL winner: Jose Abreu, White Sox (second)

In a down year for productivity for AL first basemen, Abreu recaptured the award he last won in his rookie season of 2014. He had a .265/.325/.473 slash with 22 homers, 36 doubles and 78 RBIs.

NL winner: Paul Goldschmidt, D-backs (fourth)

A four-time Silver Slugger, Goldschmidt took an un-Goldschmidt-like .198 batting average into play on May 23 but wound up with a very-Goldschmidt-like .290/.389/.533 slash with 33 homers, 35 doubles and five triples by season's end. His .922 OPS was 25 points higher than any other qualifying first baseman in the Majors.

SECOND BASE

AL winner: Jose Altuve, Astros (fifth)

Beset by injury, Altuve endured a significant step down from his 2017 MVP numbers but will take home hardware anyway. He led all full-time AL second basemen in batting average (.316) and OPS (.837).

NL winner: Javier Baez, Cubs (first)

Baez had the potential to invite the same positional vote split as Martinez because he made 75 starts at second and 52 at short (with another 18 at third). Wherever he played, he was one of the most productive players in the league, with an RBI total (111) that trailed only that of Martinez and the A's Khris Davis. Additionally, his .290 average, .326 on-base percentage, .554 slugging percentage, 34 homers, 40 doubles, nine triples and 21 steals were all career bests.

SHORTSTOP

AL winner: Francisco Lindor, Indians (second)

Lindor continued to assert himself in a field of electric AL shortstops with his second Silver Slugger Award in as many seasons. He tied for the Major League lead in runs (129) and became the first shortstop in MLB history with at least 35 homers (he hit 38), 40 doubles (he hit 42) and 20 stolen bases (he swiped 25) in a single season.

NL winner: Trevor Story, Rockies (first)

Story made shortstop history of his own. With 37 homers, 42 doubles and 27 steals (all career bests), he became the first shortstop with a 40-double, 30-homer, 25-steal season. He drove in 108 runs, and his .914 OPS was the best of any qualified shortstop in the bigs.

THIRD BASE

AL winner: Jose Ramirez, Indians (second)

Ramirez leads all MLB players in extra-base hits over the last two seasons (172) and, appropriately, has been named a Silver Slugger winner both years. He finished fourth among all AL players in slugging (.552),

OPS (.939), RBIs (105), runs (110), total bases (319) and homers (39). He and Lindor are the first Indians teammates to win back-to-back Silver Sluggers since Roberto Alomar and Manny Ramirez in 1999-2000.

NL winner: Nolan Arenado, Rockies (fourth)

If Arenado were only busy collecting his six straight Gold Gloves, he'd be an impactful player. But he's mixed in four straight Silver Slugger seasons, too. For the third time in the last four years, he led the NL in homers (38), and his .935 OPS and 111 RBIs were the best among NL third basemen.

OUTFIELD

AL winners: Mookie Betts, Red Sox (second); Mike Trout, Angels (sixth); J.D. Martinez, Red Sox (second, third)

Aaron Judge's second-half wrist injury opened the door for Martinez, who had 219 at-bats as an outfielder vs. 350 as a DH, to command a higher vote tally here. Martinez previously won a Silver Slugger with the Tigers in 2015 (as an outfielder). His overall numbers were what earned him his votes in 2018, but it's worth noting that his numbers as an outfielder (.384/.450/.680 slash) were actually even better than his numbers as a DH (.297/.373/.597).

Martinez is not the first player to receive votes at multiple positions in the same season. In fact, it happened a few times this year. Ramirez got votes at second base and third base in AL, while Baez got votes at second base at shortstop in the NL. They ended up winning at third and second, respectively. Meanwhile, Oakland's Davis got votes in the outfield and at DH in the AL but didn't win at either spot.

Betts and Trout, meanwhile, were no-brainers.

Trout, who has now collected a Silver Slugger in six of the seven seasons in which he's qualified for the batting title, led all qualified hitters in the Majors in OPS (1.088), and Betts was second (1.078). Trout's OPS and OPS+ (199) were both the best of his Cooperstown-worthy career.

Betts' .346 average was the best in the Majors by 16 points, and he tied Lindor for the Major League lead in runs (129). Betts, who also won a Silver Slugger in 2016, joined Ramirez in becoming baseball's first 30-homer, 30-steal players since 2012.

NL winners: Christian Yelich, Brewers (second); David Peralta, D-backs (first); Nick Markakis, Braves (first)

Yelich already won the NL Hank Aaron Award and now adds his second Silver Slugger. Yelich led the NL in average (.326), slugging (.598), OPS (1.000) and total bases (343), hit for the cycle against the Reds twice (becoming the first to do so against the same team), and finished two homers and one RBI shy of the first NL Triple Crown in 81 years.

So he was an easy selection, whereas Peralta and Markakis (both first-time winners) had a lot of competition for this honor.

Peralta hit a career-high 30 homers, and his .868 OPS ranked fourth among NL qualifiers in the outfield.

Markakis had a power surge in his age-34 season, with his highest slugging (.440) and homer total (14) since 2012 and his highest doubles total (43) since 2010.

DESIGNATED HITTER

AL winner: J.D. Martinez, Red Sox (second, third)

As noted, Martinez saw the bulk of his playing time here (93 of his 150 games). Overall, he led the Majors in RBIs (130) and total bases (358) while finishing second in homers (43). His .330 average was nearly 40 points higher than his career norm, and his .402 OBP was nearly 50 points higher.

PITCHER

NL winner: German Marquez, Rockies (first)

Pitchers are obviously graded on a steep curve here. In a year in which pitchers, as a whole, posted an ugly slash line, Marquez hit .300/.300/.350 in 65 plate appearances (his .650 OPS was the highest of any pitcher with at least 35 plate appearances). His homer off a position player (Daniel Descalso) -- a true role reversal if ever there was one -- likely stuck in the minds of voters.

30 best power prospects -- 1 for each team

By Jonathan Mayo and Jim Callis and Mike Rosenbaum / MLB.com / November 8, 2018

Baseball has witnessed a proliferation of home run-hitting rookies in recent years.

In 2016, Gary Sanchez became the first player to homer 18 times in his first 45 games, only to see that record obliterated when Rhys Hoskins went deep 19 times in his first 34 games the next season. Overshadowing Hoskins in 2017, Aaron Judge (52) and Cody Bellinger (39) each set league records for long balls by a rookie. This year, Ronald Acuna became the youngest player (age 20) known to have homered in five straight games and seven of eight, finishing the season with 26, while Juan Soto slammed the second-most homers ever by a teenager (22).

Who will form the next wave of young sluggers? Below, we identify the top power-hitting prospect in each organization, focusing on usable power (translatable into home run production) as opposed to simply raw power.

AL East

Vladimir Guerrero Jr., 3B, Blue Jays No. 1 (MLB No. 1)

The 19-year-old phenom is the best hitter in the Minor Leagues, and it's not even close. The truly amazing part, however, is that he hasn't even begun in earnest to tap into the enormous raw power he's shown flashes of at times in his career -- which says a lot considering he totaled 20 home runs and 26 doubles in 91 games while also hitting .381(!) this season between Double- and Triple-A.

Ryan Mountcastle, 3B, Orioles No. 2 (MLB No. 63)

Mountcastle hit 13 home runs in Double-A this year after going deep 18 times and leading the Minors with 48 doubles in 2017. Much of that had to do with the fractured right hand that sidelined him until mid-May, as Mountcastle still showed plenty of raw power to the big part of the field as he has throughout his career. Because of a swing that features natural loft and remains in the zone for an extended period of time, it's easy to envision many of Mountcastle's doubles clearing the fence in future seasons.

Nate Lowe, 1B, Rays No. 13

One of the top breakout prospects of 2018, Lowe, a 13th-round pick in the 2016 Draft, produced a .330/.416/.568 line with an organizational-best 27 home runs as well as 32 doubles while ascending from Class A Advanced Charlotte to Triple-A Durham. With power that plays to all parts of the field, the 23-year-old first baseman could soon be hitting in the middle of Tampa Bay's big league lineup.

Bobby Dalbec, 3B, Red Sox No. 6

Dalbec bounced back from a hamate injury that ruined his first full pro season in 2017 to rank fourth in the Minors with 32 homers this season, as well as place second with 70 extra-base hits and 109 RBIs. A fourth-round pick from Arizona in 2016, Dalbec comes with swing-and-miss concerns, but his raw power has prompted comparisons to Kris Bryant.

Estevan Florial, OF, Yankees No. 2 (MLB No. 45)

Florial's bat speed and the loft in his left-handed swing give him plenty of raw power, though he's still figuring things out at the plate and homered just six times in 84 games while dealing with a hamate injury. Signed out of Haiti in 2015, he has two more well above-average tools in his speed and arm strength.

AL Central

Bobby Bradley, 1B, Indians No. 7

The 22-year-old left-handed slugger connected on 27 home runs between Double- and Triple-A and has now totaled at least 23 long balls in each of his first four full seasons. Bradley's massive raw power comes paired with strikeout concerns as well as some inherent streakiness, but he also has a sound approach that portends even more consistent game power down the road.

Seuly Matias, OF, Royals No. 3

Matias' season came to a premature end when he severely cut his right thumb on the cargo door of the team bus while loading his luggage in mid-August, but he still led the Minors in homers per plate appearance (one every 12.1) and ranked sixth with 31 homers in just 94 games. Signed for \$2.25 million out of the Dominican Republic in 2015, he also homered at the SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game, where World manager David Ortiz likened him to a young Sammy Sosa.

Christin Stewart, OF, Tigers No. 6

He's led the Tigers organization in home runs in each of his three full seasons of pro ball, with at least 25 in each season and a high of 30 in 2016, his first full year after coming out of Tennessee. He improved his overall approach without sacrificing power in 2018, cutting his K rate but still hitting 25 long balls.

Brent Rooker, 1B, Twins No. 7

Rooker showed how advanced his bat is by reaching the Florida State League and hitting 18 homers in 62 games during his summer pro debut in 2017. He went straight to Double-A in 2018 and led the Twins with 22 home runs, 13 of which came during a torrid June and July.

Eloy Jimenez, OF, White Sox No. 1 (MLB No. 3)

The jewel of the White Sox's 2017 trade that sent Jose Quintana to the Cubs, Jimenez is the closest rival to Blue Jays third baseman Vladimir Guerrero Jr. as the best offensive prospect in baseball. The Dominican battled pectoral and adductor strains in 2018 yet still set career highs in homers (22) and slugging (.577) while dominating Triple-A at age 21.

AL West

Jo Adell, OF, Angels No. 1 (MLB No. 15)

His raw power has been on display since his high school days, when he hit 25 homers as a senior. Given some questions about his swing-and-miss tendencies, no one would have predicted he'd get to Double-A in his first full season of pro ball. He hit 20 homers in just 99 games along the way for a .543 slugging percentage.

Kyle Tucker, OF, Astros No. 1 (MLB No. 5)

Three picks after taking Alex Bregman with the No. 2 overall pick in the 2015 Draft, the Astros grabbed Tucker, who has a similarly lofty offensive ceiling. He led the Triple-A Pacific Coast League in slugging (.590) and OPS (.989) while recording his second straight 20-20 season.

Lazaro Armenteros, OF, Athletics No. 6

Lazarito's eight home runs in 79 games at Class A Beloit as a 19-year-old this past season don't accurately reflect his power potential. The Cuban product has a chiseled frame at 6 feet and 182 pounds and already shows feel to hit, leading scouts to project him for a considerable uptick in power as he continues to develop and become better acclimated to pro ball.

Kyle Lewis, OF, Mariners No. 1

Lingering effects from the severe knee injury Lewis suffered during his pro debut have kept him from making a true impact in either of his first two full-season campaigns. As a result, it's still easy to dream of the 2016 first-rounder eventually tapping the raw power he's long shown glimpses of. Joey Curletta was also considered after the 24-year-old first baseman went deep 23 times en route to Double-A Texas League Player of the Year honors.

Anderson Tejeda, SS, Rangers No. 10

Tejeda immediately began impressing scouts with his power when he made his U.S. debut in 2016, two years after signing out of the Dominican Republic, and launched 28 extra-base hits in 55 games. He continues to display uncommon pop for a middle infielder, ranking sixth in the high Class A Carolina League with 19 homers this season as one of its younger regulars (age 20).

NL East

Austin Riley, 3B, Braves No. 5 (MLB No. 43)

Riley's raw power has always been a known commodity. What's surprised some is how good he's been at making adjustments at the plate so he can consistently tap into it. He's hit 59 homers the past three seasons combined and despite missing time with injury, he posted a career high (for a full season) with his .522 SLG.

Monte Harrison, OF, Marlins No. 2

The 6-foot-3, 220-pounder's power has blossomed in the last two seasons in the form of 21- and 19-homer campaigns, though it's come at the cost of a soaring strikeout rate and perpetuated concerns about his contact skills. At the same time, it's important to remember that the 23-year-old outfielder is still playing catch-up developmentally after a decorated multi-sport prep career followed by an injury-plagued start to his pro career.

Peter Alonso, 1B, Mets No. 2 (MLB No. 58)

Not only did Alonso tie for the Minor League lead with 36 homers (and lead the Minors outright with 119 RBIs), he's shown ridiculous exit velocity with home runs on big stages (113.6 mph at the Futures Game; 110 mph at the AFL's Fall Stars Game). Each blast knocks louder on the big league door.

Carter Kieboom, SS, Nationals No. 2 (MLB No. 37)

The 2016 first-rounder impressed with his power potential in his first fully healthy season, connecting on 16 homers and 31 doubles in 123 games while reaching Double-A. Kieboom's uptick in power didn't detract from his hitting ability or approach either -- a big reason why evaluators forecast the 21-year-old shortstop to find even more power as he adjusts to upper-level pitching.

Darick Hall, 1B, Phillies

For two years running, the big first baseman has led the organization in homers (tying with Hoskins in 2017) and RBIs. He's hit 54 homers over those two seasons, reaching Double-A for the first time in 2018. An improved approach should let him tap into his power even more.

NL Central

Keston Hiura, 1B, Brewers No. 1 (MLB No. 30)

You'd be hard-pressed to find a right-handed hitter with a more impactful right-handed swing and better bat-to-ball skills than Hiura, who slashed .293/.357/.464 with 52 extra-base hits in his first full season. Corey Ray and Jake Gatewood also have impressive power, however Hiura's consistent stroke and feel for using the big part of the field make him a better candidate to apply his power all the way up the ladder.

Nolan Gorman, 3B, Cardinals No. 2 (MLB No. 73)

All Gorman did was lead all 2018 draftees with 17 homers in 63 total games that led to a .570 SLG and .950 OPS in his pro debut. The No. 19 overall pick out of the Arizona high school ranks was so impressive, he reached full-season ball and silenced some who worried about how his hit tool would play in pro ball.

Nelson Velazquez, OF, Cubs No. 21

Though Velazquez wasn't ready for full-season ball in his first full pro season, he still has the best power potential in the Cubs system and hinted at it by slugging .458 in the short-season Northwest League. A fifth-round pick as a Puerto Rico high schooler in 2017, he has a quick right-handed bat and a take-no-prisoners approach.

Oneil Cruz, SS, Pirates No. 4

Others hit more home runs than he did in the Pirates system in 2018 (Will Craig topped it with 20), but the 6-foot-6 shortstop took a big step forward overall offensively and did hit 14 out as a teenager in the South Atlantic League. There is no question there's much more pop to come as he fills out that frame.

Ibandel Isabel, 1B, Reds

Isabel's power started showing up big time in 2016 when he slugged .579 and reached full-season ball with the Dodgers. He followed that up with a 28-homer breakout in 2017. The Reds acquired him last April and he finished with 36 home runs, tying for the Minor League lead, and has a career .513 SLG.

NL West

Kristian Robinson, OF, D-backs No. 12

He has a long way to go as a 17-year-old with just 222 career at-bats on his professional resume. But people talk about his raw power in hushed tones and it was on display during instructs more consistently. As he fills out his 6-foot-3 frame, his .428 slugging percentage will assuredly increase.

DJ Peters, OF, Dodgers No. 8

Peters has a long track record of power production, setting a Western Nevada CC home run record (16) in the program's final season in 2016; leading the Rookie-level Pioneer League in total bases (161) and OPS (1.052) in his pro debut that summer; topping the high Class A California League in extra-base hits (61) and slugging (.514) en route to MVP honors in 2017; and pacing the Double-A Texas League in homers (29), extra-base hits (55) and total bases (232) this summer. He derives his pop from impressive strength and leverage in his 6-foot-6 frame.

Chris Shaw, OF, Giants No. 4

The best college power hitter available in the 2015 Draft, Shaw led the Cape Cod League with eight homers the previous summer and the short-season Northwest League with 12 in his pro debut. The Boston College first-rounder has since mashed 69 homers in three full Minor League seasons, then smoked a Seunghwan Oh slider 468 feet for his first big league blast in September.

Fernando Tatis Jr., SS, Padres No. 1 (MLB No. 2)

He became the first 18-year-old in Midwest League history to post at least 20 home runs and 20 stolen bases in 2017, and would have posted another 20-20 season in Double-A at age 19 this past season if not for a season-ending thumb injury in late July. Tatis has already shown in-game power to all fields and has massive raw power to his pull side.

Brendan Rodgers, INF, Rockies No. 1 (MLB No. 9)

The No. 3 overall pick in the 2015 Draft, Rodgers looks like the heir apparent to DJ LeMahieu at second base in Colorado. He has a knack for barreling balls and making loud contact, which has resulted in 57 homers and a .491 slugging percentage in 350 pro games.

Biggest takeaway from the GM Meetings: The White Sox sure seem willing to spend

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / November 8, 2018

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Being willing to hand out a big contract and actually getting a player to sign on the dotted line are two very different things. But you can't have the second without the first, and the White Sox sure seem willing.

The GM Meetings this week in Southern California kicked off with a rumor that the White Sox were interested in the two biggest names on the free-agent market, Bryce Harper and Manny Machado. That report has had White Sox fans buzzing for days.

And it might have added a little something to some of the things general manager Rick Hahn has been saying for a while during this rebuilding process.

Entering into a rebuild was a big change in approach for a team that spent years spending on free agents and in trades to try and assemble a contender on an annual basis. And on an annual basis from 2009 to 2016, it didn't work. That hard turn out of patchwork assembly and into a full-scale rebuild, according to Hahn, was something folks believed the White Sox would never do. But they did it.

At this moment in time, no move has more bearing on the future of this franchise than the trade made with the Cubs during the 2017 season, a Crosstown swap that sent Jose Quintana to the North Side and added Eloy Jimenez and Dylan Cease to the White Sox bevy of highly touted prospects. Jimenez now ranks as one of the top three prospects in the game, and Cease was MLB Pipeline's minor league pitcher of the year. That high-leverage trade with the Cubs, according to Hahn, was something folks believed the White Sox would never do. But they did it.

And so we reach this offseason, and while the White Sox might not be able to outbid some of baseball's biggest spenders or convince top players to believe in the planned success of the future over the ability to win a championship right now, they apparently have "a seat at the table." Spending big is something a lot of folks believe the White Sox will never do. But in line with the other smashing of preconceived notions — not to mention the incredible financial flexibility the rebuild has created — the White Sox sure seem willing to do that, too.

"One of the things we're looking to accomplish, in addition to creating a critical mass of potentially impact talent, is to create some economic flexibility so we would be in the position to add, whether it's via trade or free agency, other impact talent to continue the process that we started," Hahn said Tuesday. "We've gotten ourselves in a position now where we have minimal commitments going forward. We are able to enjoy that flexibility. Whether we use it now, in July or use it next offseason to augment this group remains to be seen. We've made no secret that having that flexibility and the ability to add impactful talent is part of what we set out to do."

It might turn out that this isn't the right time. Perhaps we'll be having these same conversations next year. But Hahn has talked so often about being opportunistic when the time comes, and it's hard to imagine bigger and better opportunities than adding Harper and Machado. He said this week that no one should be surprised to hear the White Sox linked to the game's best players, as much a declaration that the team is taking the necessary steps to get in the running as anything.

We'll see how it plays out, if the White Sox end up spending on the biggest-ticket items on the market or if their pitch isn't strong enough to win against some of baseball's powers. But the impression that's going around is that the South Siders aren't going to sit on the sidelines, that they sure seem willing to spend.

Thoughts on Bryce Harper's fit with the White Sox

By Chris Kamka / NBC Sports Chicago / November 8, 2018

Rare are the opportunities to acquire a superstar, let alone a superstar just entering his prime. Even more rare is to be in a position to sign such a player. All of the stars are aligned, and it's an exciting time to be a White Sox fan. Bryce Harper is on the radar. Here are four things to consider on the free agent phenom.

Forget about batting average.

Simply forget it exists. It doesn't matter. Bryce Harper had a .393 on-base percentage in 2018. Eight White Sox players qualified for the rate statistic leaderboard in 2018. The highest OBP among them was José Abreu's .325. Harper's was SIXTY-EIGHT points higher. The White Sox haven't had a player with a .393-or-better OBP since Paul Konerko in 2010 (also .393). Harper was ninth in the Majors in OBP in 2018. Better than Paul Goldschmidt (.389). Better than Freddie Freeman (.388). Better than José Altuve (.386). Harper reached base 273 times this past season. Three players were on base more. Mike Trout (279), Alex Bregman (278) & Freeman (274). Being on base is the most important thing you can do on offense.

He's a generational talent entering his prime.

Seven players have had at least three seasons of 20+ HR and 100 Walks through their age 25 seasons. Mickey Mantle, Frank Thomas, Ted Williams, Mel Ott, Charlie Keller, Adam Dunn (yep) and Bryce Harper. Harper is entering his age 26 season. He already has 30.7 wins above replacement (via Fangraphs). White Sox great Paul Konerko had 23.8 WAR in his entire career. Only 11 players in MLB history have topped Bryce Harper's total of 184 home runs before turning 26. Eight of them went on to hit at least 500 career home runs. One other is in the Hall of Fame (Orlando Cepeda). The other two are Andruw Jones... and Mike Trout.

Don't worry that Harper is a lefty who last played for the Nationals.

Besides, his first name is Bryce, not Adam. Dunn & LaRoche struggled mightily with the White Sox after coming over from the Nationals. But let that be where the comparison ends. When the Sox acquired the pair of Adams, they were already in their early to mid 30s. Struggles when moving from one league to another do occur from time to time. However Frank Robinson, Dick Allen & Vladimir Guerrero are examples of players who moved from NL to AL and won MVP in their first season in the new league. The difference is talent level. I'm willing to place Bryce Harper, having already won an MVP (2015), on that higher talent level.

In Defense of his Defense...

Harper scored -26 in Defensive Runs Saved in 2018. Only Charlie Blackmon (-28) was worse among outfielders. It stands out for sure, but it's way out of line with the rest of Harper's career. Harper's Defensive Runs saved by year, beginning with 2012: 14, 4, 0, 9, -3, 4, -26. Did he all of a sudden become terrible at defense? It's possible but I doubt it. Defensive metrics are a work in progress; it's unwise to evaluate a player using single seasons. Either way, Harper's offensive value far outweighs any defensive shortcomings he may have.

The money is there, the future is in place. Chicago is a big stage, and a good fit for Bryce Harper. It would be a great signing if it were to happen.

Jose Abreu wins second Silver Slugger Award

By Dan Santormita / NBC Sports Chicago / November 8, 2018

Jose Abreu may have had the worst of his five years with the White Sox, but he still won the Silver Slugger award at first base.

Abreu has now won Silver Slugger twice, adding to his 2014 award.

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Chicago White Sox



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#WhiteSox first baseman José Abreu has won his second career American League Silver Slugger™ Award. Congrats, José!

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This season the 31-year-old hit .265/.325/.473 with 22 home runs and 78 RBIs in 128 games. His home run and RBI totals suffered from him playing just six games after Aug. 20 due to injury. Even on top of that, Abreu had the lowest batting average and on-base percentage of his career.

Despite that, his numbers compared well enough to other AL first baseman this season. His .798 OPS was fourth at the position, but only 18 points off C.J. Cron's .816.

Last season Abreu led AL first basemen with a .906 OPS and was towards the top in a number of categories, but Eric Hosmer won the award. In 2015 and 2016 Miguel Cabrera was the clear cut winner for the award, as was Abreu in his rookie season in 2014.

So Abreu had a down year by his lofty standards, but this can make up for having great seasons and not being awarded for it in the past.

Abreu joins Carlton Fisk (1981, 1985, 1988), Frank Thomas (1991, 1993, 1994, 2000), Magglio Ordoñez (2000, 2002) and Alexei Ramírez (2010, 2014) as the only players in club history to win multiple Silver Sluggers.

White Sox won't worry about rebuilding unknowns if game-changing opportunities — like adding Bryce Harper — arise

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / November 8, 2018

CARLSBAD, Calif. — The White Sox don't need Bryce Harper to achieve their rebuilding goals. But they sure as hell will take advantage of an opportunity if one presents itself.

General manager Rick Hahn has been talking about being "opportunistic" for months now, his word for looking into acquisitions that don't necessarily fill an immediate need but would line up with the team's long-term plans.

Harper coming to the South Side didn't seem like an idea even worthy of consideration until this week, when MLB.com's Jon Morosi reported the White Sox were interested in the services of the top free agent on the market, a guy who is expected to command the biggest contract in baseball history. While the odds might not figure to be in their favor — other deep-pocketed clubs can pitch the ability to win a championship right now — the White Sox sure seem willing to spend, with Hahn spending more than a year discussing the team's recent string of shattering preconceived notions and trumpeting the current financial flexibility as a win during this rebuilding process. He said earlier this week that no one should be surprised to see the White Sox linked to some of the game's best (and most expensive) players.

A question this writer has had leading up to this offseason, however, is whether a big addition right now would be entirely worth it. After all, how much of that contract would be spent still waiting for a team to form around the big-name addition? There's still plenty of player development and other acquisitions to be made before the White Sox look like the perennial contender they plan to be. Harper is as good as they come in baseball, but would even he alone turn the 2019 White Sox into a playoff team?

But Hahn explained that an "opportunistic" move would be a smart one. The White Sox don't expect to be rebuilding forever, of course, and even if 2019 wouldn't end in a playoff appearance, the move would be made for the long term, for the many playoff seasons that would follow during the course of that contract, once the organization's highly touted prospects reach the major leagues.

In other words, he's not worrying about the unknowns when it comes to making such a move because the known would mesh with, not be in place of, the carefully laid rebuilding plans.

"The opportunistic ones are the easy ones, actually," Hahn said Wednesday at the GM Meetings in Southern California. "Those are the ones where you see how it aligns in the short-term and potentially the long and you feel a level of excitement about the immediate benefit as well as how it fits in your potential long-term plan.

"You don't know exactly how it's going to come together in two years, three years, but when you see pieces that conceivably can be part of a championship club that are available to you now at a price that makes sense and is economically reasonable, you feel a level of excitement moving on that."

Hahn is confident, too, that the prospect of winning in 2019 wouldn't end up being the deciding factor for a player the caliber of Harper.

"I don't think for any long-term commitment the deciding factor is going to be our ability to win immediately," he said Tuesday. "With any major investment, it's going to be a long-term commitment with a belief on both sides that this union is going to produce multiple championships over the long term. The timing when that first starts is going to be relevant, it's going to be a part of any conversation. But I don't think 'Are you going to win a championship in '19 alone?' is going to be the deciding factor."

That doesn't change the fact that the White Sox will be pitching planned long-term success while teams like the Cubs, New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers and even the Philadelphia Phillies can pitch rosters that can go on dynastic runs right now. But it shows the confidence the White Sox have in their plans, a confidence they hope can turn into buy in from one of the game's best players, be it this offseason or sometime down the road.

There's plenty of mystery in any rebuilding effort, and 2018 injuries to a large swath of the organization's list of top prospects didn't help when it comes to forecasting when the White Sox contention window will open. But Harper is expected to get a contract that will last many years. Same goes for Manny Machado, the other superstar in this free-agent market. If the White Sox get the opportunity to add one of those guys, they'll take it with no concern that doing so wouldn't line up with the planned fruits of the rebuild.

White Sox GM Rick Hahn weighs in on Jerry Reinsdorf's patience level — 'It's not running out' — and Michael Kopech's season-ending injury — a 'kick in the gut'

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / November 8, 2018

Is Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf losing any patience with the rebuild after the White Sox's 100-loss season in 2018?

Not yet.

"He's patient," general manager Rick Hahn said Wednesday night at the general managers meetings. "It's not running out."

"It was a tough year for all of us. We knew the second year of this rebuild was likely going to be the most difficult, and unfortunately we were right with that projection. We're all fundamentally fans, we're all fundamentally competitors, and we don't like sitting around losing."

"At the same time, Jerry, like the rest of us, has been focused on the bigger picture. He sees the progress we see. He sees the bright future and the rational reasons it's going to come to fruition here. But like the rest of us, he wants to get going, get closer to that and get winning."

Well, the Sox better hurry up because Reinsdorf isn't getting any younger, right?

"None of us are," Hahn said with a laugh.

Kick in the gut

Hahn called Michael Kopech's devastating elbow injury in September a "kick in the gut" to the organization, which was starting to feel good about the progress of the rebuild.

"Not simply because it left a void for us to fill in the short term for '19 and caused him to miss a year in his development, but because there was that level of enthusiasm and excitement," Hahn said. "Not necessarily because he singularly was some kind of savior and singularly was going to turn this thing around. We're trying to build something that's not dependent on any one guy. ... But I think he represented for some people the progress of the rebuild."

"White Sox fans have been extremely supportive. At the same time, it has been a trying two years, and Kopech coming to Chicago and doing well initially was a little bit of positive reinforcement for everybody, made everybody feel: 'OK, this thing is moving along. Maybe it's not going to be one guy, but it's a little taste of progress.' And when that got taken away, it hurt. We get that.

"And though we won't have Michael's services in '19, we do have others who I think are going to add to that good feeling, whether it's Eloy (Jimenez) or Dylan Cease or a surprise or two along the way from guys whose development comes a little quicker. The good news is come 2020, when those guys who came in '19 are a little more established and the guys who came in '18 are two years more established, there's going to be another wave in 2020.

"So it stunk in the short term and we're deprived of the benefit of him in '19. It was just a taste of things to come. There's more excitement like that on the horizon."

Stealth extension

Hahn defended his decision not to announce manager Rick Renteria's contract extension until Tuesday, several months after Renteria re-signed.

"Nobody asked," Hahn said. "This happened last spring."

Why not show fans you're pleased with the job Renteria has done and announce it back then?

"Every time I get asked about Ricky, everyone knows I tell you how much we love Ricky," Hahn said. "And anyone who is following us on a regular basis knows that we believe in him for the long term. And quite frankly, maybe it's not a popular view or even the proper view, the length of his contract really isn't relevant to whether we're making a change."

Burger watch

Third base prospect Jake Burger, who blew out his Achilles tendon last spring, will resume baseball activities early next spring, and the Sox are targeting June 1 as a preliminary return date. Burger, their first-round draft pick in 2017 (11th overall), hit .271 with four home runs and 27 RBIs in 181 at-bats at Class A Kannapolis in 2017. He's likely to start out in Class A next year.

Cubs' Javier Baez and White Sox's Jose Abreu win Silver Slugger awards

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / November 8, 2018

Cubs second baseman Javier Baez and White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu were named winners of the 2018 Silver Slugger awards.

Baez, one of the three finalists for National League MVP award, earned his first Silver Slugger after hitting .290 with 34 home runs and 111 RBIs. Last week he lost out to D.J. LeMahieu for the National League Gold Glove award.

Despite playing only 128 games because of injuries, Abreu won his second Silver Slugger, and first since 2014, knocking out 22 home runs and driving in 78 runs with a .265 average. It wasn't one of Abreu's more productive seasons, but his numbers still outpaced all American League first basemen.

Angels center fielder Mike Trout won his sixth Silver Slugger award in the outfield, while the Red Sox's J.D. Martinez became the first player to win two Silver Sluggers in the same season, at DH and in the outfield.

Managers and coaches for all 30 teams vote on players in their respective leagues.

Is Chicago baseball landscape on verge of tilt to south?

By Gordon Wittenmeyer / Sun-Times / November 8, 2018

CARLSBAD, Calif. — About the time the White Sox started their tanking-based rebuilding effort two years ago, their top role models were riding toward Grant Park along a World Series parade route, providing the Sox with a confetti-filled skyline of cover for the process.

Now, with the close of this week's general managers meetings in Carlsbad, Calif., the Sox are in position to make a serious run at generational free agent Manny Machado, have a restocked farm system poised to start testing impact prospects in the big leagues and have the manager they want to take them there extended through at least 2021.

If anything, the buzz surrounding each of Chicago's two teams this week was as strikingly different as their finishes in the standings the last two years.

And, yet, it was the 100-loss Sox brimming with optimism and big ideas heading into the meat of the offseason — while the 95-win Cubs try to tinker with fixes under payroll constraints and a field staff in flux.

Talk about role reversal.

Is it possible the landscape of Chicago baseball is about to undergo a seismic tilt to the south?

Could success the Sox envision not only resemble the Cubs' arc but also start commanding their dominance of the airwaves and back pages of the city's baseball attention in the next two years?

"In all candor, I really don't look at vis-à-vis them in terms of competitiveness," Sox general manager Rick Hahn said. "It's much more important for us to be in a position to win vs. our division than it is a team we play four to six times a year."

But it certainly wouldn't hurt their long-dormant profile in town if the buzz their minor leaguers and early offseason rumors already are receiving ascends as their competitive star rises.

The Sox already traded for some of the Cubs' buzz in 2017 when they sent Jose Quintana to the north side and landed top prospect Eloy Jimenez — who should debut early in 2019.

Meanwhile, the Cubs go into next season with their third hitting coach and likely third pitching coach in three years and a manager in a lame-duck contract year despite four consecutive playoff appearances.

The top baseball executive, Theo Epstein, who made his name in nine seasons in Boston, heads into his eighth season with the Cubs — with a personal philosophy of 10-year limits for one job or place.

And this: A bloated payroll with as much as \$50 million in bad salaries, based on recent trends, has left them strapped this winter as they try to fix a "broken" offense and add bullpen help.

Without some bounce-back performances and production from the farm system, the Cubs might discover a whole new meaning to "Try not to suck" within the next two or three years.

Right about the time the Sox rebuild hits its competitive stride?

"Look, if we're capable of winning 95, 100 games on an annual basis and capable of competing for championships, it's not going to matter where another team in another league is, frankly," Hahn said.

"White Sox fans are going to be supporting this club," he added. "People will be excited about this club for us. I don't think where we rank against anyone else is going to matter other than our ability to get into the postseason on a regular basis."

A lot has to happen before the Sox can start thinking about their own parade routes — never mind rushing past the Cubs in the city's baseball consciousness.

But the optimism in California this week was palpable.

“We feel we’ve put ourselves in a pretty good position from a prospect standpoint, put ourselves in a very good position from an economic standpoint,” Hahn said. “We’ll use each of those hopeful advantages over the next few years to put together a championship roster.”

White Sox’ Jose Abreu wins second Silver Slugger Award

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / November 8, 2018

White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu won his second American League Silver Slugger Award on Thursday, given to the best hitters at each position in each league.

Abreu captured the honor despite recording career lows in homers (22), RBI (78) and across the board lows with a .265/.325/.473 hitting line during a season in which he was named an All-Star starter for the first time in his five seasons but was limited to a career low 128 games for health reasons.

Abreu, 31, was sidelined from Aug. 21 through Sept. 9 after undergoing surgery for testicular torsion and did not play after Sept. 16 because of an infection in his thigh.

Among AL first basemen, Abreu was first with 36 doubles, was tied for second in extra-base hits with 59 and was third in average and slugging percentage. He became the first White Sox to hit 20 or more home runs in each of his first five seasons and joined Albert Pujols (2001-10) and Ted Williams (1939-42, '46-49) as the only players in major-league history to record 30-plus doubles and 20-plus home runs in each of his first five seasons.

Abreu, who won the award as a rookie in 2014, also became the first player in White Sox history to record 30-plus doubles in each of his first five seasons. He joins catcher Carlton Fisk (1981, 1985, 1988), first baseman and designated hitter Frank Thomas (1991, 1993, 1994, 2000), outfielder Magglio Ordoñez (2000, 2002) and shortstop Alexei Ramirez (2010, 2014) as the only players in Sox history to win multiple Silver Slugger Awards.

The award is voted on by major-league managers and coaches and presented by Louisville Slugger. Matt Olson of the Athletics and Yuli Gurriel of the Astros were among the other contenders for the honor.

Sports media: How would Chicago’s coaches, managers fare in broadcasting?

By Jeff Agrest / Sun-Times / November 8, 2018

Once the shock of former Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville’s firing faded, I pondered his future. Naturally, my first thought turned to broadcasting.

Could Quenneville be on TV as a game or studio analyst?

Odds are, his next job will be as a coach. He’s only 60 years old, and clearly the fire still burns. But for the purpose of this story, let’s say no team comes calling. What then? Can you imagine Quenneville sitting behind a studio desk, opining about some defenseman’s “compete level,” as he’d say?

I can’t. Some in the industry can’t, either. Just listen to Quenneville’s postgame news conferences. You can tell right there it wouldn’t work. He often speaks in a murmur, and his gravelly voice makes you want to clear your throat.

Quenneville will forget more about hockey today than I’ll ever know, but communicating that knowledge to a TV audience rather than an audience of players is vastly different. Eddie Olczyk is the best at it in hockey. Can you see Quenneville using a telestrator? I can see him throwing the pen across the booth.

At the news conference announcing his firing, the Hawks' brass praised new coach Jeremy Colliton's communication skills often enough to make you think Quenneville lacked them. If he can't communicate with players, he wouldn't communicate with viewers.

All of this is likely moot. Quenneville doesn't come off as someone itching to get into broadcasting. He doesn't seem cut out for it, and that's fine. He belongs behind a bench.

What about the other Chicago coaches/managers in the big four sports? If they lost their job and went into broadcasting, how do you think they'd fare? Here's my take; feel free to share yours.

Fred Hoiberg, Bulls

Hoiberg seems like the nicest guy, which is why I can't imagine him saying anything controversial on the air. Being critical is a must for a sports analyst. The person doesn't have to be mean, but the viewer has to know that the analyst is seeing what the viewer is seeing.

I'll never forget when former "Monday Night Football" analyst Ron Jaworski told the nation how excited he was to see then-Chiefs quarterback Tyler Palko make his first NFL start against the Patriots in November 2011. Outside of Palko's family and friends, no one in America shared that feeling. Palko proved why, throwing three interceptions. In February 2012, Jaworski was taken off "MNF."

I can see Hoiberg breaking down plays as an analyst, but his demeanor wouldn't allow for much enthusiasm. Hubie Brown is the best at it in basketball. He breaks down the game so well and with such passion, the viewer could go run the plays for him. Sometimes, the Bulls can't run the plays for Hoiberg.

Joe Maddon, Cubs

There are plenty of Cubs fans who would like to see Maddon move to television today. (He won you a World Series, people. Get over it.) Regardless, Maddon instantly would become the best analyst in baseball. He's insightful and unique. He understands the new school of baseball but has been around long enough to remember the old school.

Can he rub you the wrong way with his shtick? Sure. But he always is open to explaining his decisions, and that kind of analysis would be invaluable on a broadcast. It also would be rare. The Diamondbacks' Bob Brenly and the Blue Jays' Buck Martinez are the only former managers broadcasting games. John Farrell (ESPN) and Joe Girardi (MLB Network) work in the studio. Ex-players dominate the landscape.

Whom do viewers second-guess more: players or managers? It's managers. For whatever reason, that perspective is missing on broadcasts. Maddon would be perfect.

Matt Nagy, Bears

After three seasons of listening to John Fox, Nagy has been a breath of fresh air. He actually, you know, says things. He shares his thoughts, explains his decisions and isn't afraid to show his personality. We're still getting to know him, but it seems that what you see is what you get.

He tries to protect his players sometimes, and that's fine. But after watching his offense for eight games, I bet it'd be fascinating to listen to him analyze a game. Hopefully, he'd be able to translate his verbiage for viewers.

Rick Renteria, White Sox

With some kind of double-secret contract extension in hand (why so stealthy, Rick Hahn?), Renteria won't be subjecting viewers to his powers of positivity anytime soon. But if he could, it wouldn't go over well. Though he's upbeat and personable, he likely wouldn't be critical, and he shares very little at his news conferences.

'PTI' coming to Northwestern

ESPN will broadcast "Pardon the Interruption" with Tony Kornheiser and Michael Wilbon next Friday from Welsh-Ryan Arena before Northwestern's game against Binghamton. The "PTI" taping is free and open to the public. Doors open at 2:45 p.m., and taping will run from 3:15 to 4:15. For more information, go to NUSports.com/PTI.

Then, Kornheiser, a Binghamton grad, and Wilbon, a Northwestern grad, will call the game on ESPNNews with play-by-play voice Will Flemming. The broadcast begins at 6.

Bears announcers

For the second consecutive week, the Fox crew of Chris Myers, Daryl Johnston and Laura Okmin will call the Bears game. But the next two weeks, fans will be graced by NBC's "Sunday Night Football" team of Al Michaels, Cris Collinsworth and Michele Tafoya, followed by CBS' top crew of Jim Nantz, Tony Romo and Tracy Wolfson on Thanksgiving.

Do the White Sox have a future bright enough to sell?

By James Fegan / The Athletic / November 8, 2018

CARLSBAD, Calif. — The thunderous clap of Luis Robert connecting on a massive home run in the Arizona Fall League stands out more for how it interrupts the surrounding silence of a near-empty Sloan Park.

For Robert, whose power has mostly been sequestered to batting practice sessions as he's worked through two separate left thumb sprains, his second AFL home run was an important, tangible demonstration of impact talent that has largely remained theoretical thus far in his professional career.

"My power is there," Robert said through White Sox team interpreter Billy Russo. "I think it's going to be showing up little by little. I'm confident. I know I'm going to hit homers."

After Robert hit just .244/.317/.309 at High-A Winston-Salem in 2018, White Sox general manager Rick Hahn indicated he could return there to start next year, albeit likely not for long.

At this point in the offseason, every team in baseball, the White Sox included, is finalizing its presentations for every conceivable free-agent target on its list. And for the Sox, especially when seeking a long-term, star-level player, using Robert as a selling point wouldn't be out of place.

"That, as well as our flexibility, our commitment from ownership to the front office through the coaching staff about what we're trying to do for the long term, I think, is a compelling story," Hahn said when asked if the Sox farm system is a compelling part of their pitch. "I don't think for any long-term commitment the deciding factor is going to be our ability to win immediately. With any major investment, it's going to be a long-term commitment with a belief on both sides that this union is going to produce multiple championships over the long term. The timing when that first starts is going to be relevant, it's going to be a part of any conversation. But I don't think 'Are you going to win a championship in '19?' alone is going to be the deciding factor."

The White Sox have a strong farm system and money to spend. That double-barreled reasoning for why they feel they can be a compelling option for free agents looking for a long-term home also acts as the strongest selling point of the franchise's future. They still believe head athletic trainer Herm Schneider and director of conditioning Allen Thomas are exceptional in their ability to limit injuries — after two rough years, the White Sox had the fifth-fewest disabled-list days in baseball in 2018 per Spotrac. They still believe in Don Cooper's ability to head up the development of their young pitching staff, as Sox pitching has accumulated the third-most fWAR in baseball since the start of Cooper's first full season in 2003.

But those are organizational constants that have been in place throughout their struggles, and the situation they have wriggled themselves into is the new hope for how a franchise that has never topped the league

in payroll (though they were in the top 10 earlier this decade), and is not known for having one of the larger analytics departments in the game, can still rise to the top someday.

“The future that you can project based on the prospects we have,” Hahn said, listing attributes. “The economic flexibility we’ve created going forward that’s going to help us contend and then on a macro level, the allure of winning a championship in Chicago. There’s something special about that. It’s obviously a fantastic sports town, and you see how much the ’05 guys are still embraced. You go back to the ’85 Bears and see how this team, how this city embraces a championship-caliber club. There’s nothing better than winning baseball games in Chicago in the summertime. I think that appeals across the board to a lot of guys.”

The tangible impact of the appeal of winning in Chicago is a bit harder to pin down than the specifics of the White Sox operation. They do not publicly discuss the length of manager contracts, though Rick Renteria is locked in for multiple years and Hahn affirmed the belief that he can “steward a championship-caliber club.”

They also are like many teams in that they do not disclose the size of their analytics department but do refute the report that they have only two analysts on staff.

“I saw the chart that ran out there,” Hahn said. “It’s inaccurate as to the number of employees we have devoted to that space. We’ve never really been into publicly disclosing what we may be looking into and what we’re not looking at or who’s handling what. But just like with scouting, when there’s good analysts available, we like to expand and include them and continue to increase the areas we’re involved in. We’ll be adding more this offseason. We’ve already started that process.”

It’s scouting where the White Sox might distinguish themselves most as an operation, chiefly in their investment and faith in it as a practice. Scouting and sabermetrics peacefully co-existing is the balance that every public analyst might preach and seek to achieve in their work, but it’s certainly not the reality for on-the-ground scouts. Teams have been eager to explore what functions of scouts they can replace with high-speed video and in-house analysts for years, have been cutting scouts from their staff in response and will continue to around the league in the years to come.

The White Sox, who prioritize their scouts getting not just in-person views of players in action but also observation of their on-field and dugout demeanor, have bucked this trend. With 29 domestic amateur scouts, around 10 scouts in an international operation rebuilt from the David Wilder scandal by special assistant to the general manager Marco Paddy, and 10 to 12 more scouts assigned to the professional side, they boast one of the largest departments in the league.

“You keep playing this competitive advantage angle, which I’m not quite down with,” Hahn said when asked about this setting the Sox apart.

Fair enough. While the White Sox may not consciously set their philosophy around the value of traditional scouting over video analysis, Hahn acknowledged that the team has a process in place to immediately assess whether scouts who leave other teams are a fit for them. That’s come in handy the past few years as they added former Cleveland and Houston scouts to their amateur side.

“We are significantly larger than most staffs and continue to add while others subtract,” said Sox amateur scouting director Nick Hostetler in a text message.

Will Manny Machado’s agent breathlessly relay to him the list of crosscheckers the White Sox have on staff as he weighs his options? It seems unlikely. But the Sox have the third overall pick in 2019 draft next June and are accordingly pushing all their resources toward it. The White Sox are selling the future, and the idea that they are prepared to navigate it.

They don’t have a star-studded lineup (at least not for 2019) and certainly can’t promise a packed house of fans who will immediately greet any new free-agent signing, at least not until they earn that attention again

with consistent winning. But they have that video of Robert blasting a home run into the black void of a Mesa night as a little proof they're on the right track.

Bowden: 30 teams, 30 sets of needs to fill this offseason

By Jim Bowden / The Athletic / November 8, 2018

The annual General Managers' meeting in Carlsbad, Calif. has officially concluded, which means that all 30 front offices now clearly understand each team's needs and priorities for this offseason. In fact, the trade and free agent negotiations have already commenced. All eyes are now on next month's Winter Meetings in Las Vegas, where many of those negotiations will be finalized in dramatic fashion under the bright lights at the podium.

I reached out to all 30 teams to get a sense of their biggest needs and priorities for the next month and the remainder of the winter. I then tried to figure out possible free agent and trade targets to help them solve some of those needs.

So let's begin. Happy Hot Stove, everyone!

NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST
ATLANTA BRAVES
Executive: Alex Anthopoulos

Needs:

- Corner outfielder
- Catcher to pair with Tyler Flowers
- Outfield depth

Possible Free Agent Targets: Bryce Harper, A.J. Pollock, Michael Brantley, Andrew McCutchen, Nick Markakis, Carlos González, Adam Jones, Steve Pearce, Rajai Davis, Yasmani Grandal, Wilson Ramos, Jonathan Lucroy, Martín Maldonado, Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton

Possible Trade Targets: J.T. Realmuto, Domingo Santana, Yasiel Puig, Wil Myers, Mitch Haniger, Nick Castellanos, David Dahl, Nomar Mazara

MIAMI MARLINS
Executive: Mike Hill

Needs:

- Finding right deal for J.T. Realmuto
- Offense
- Bullpen

Possible FA Targets: Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Tyler Clippard, Ryan Madson, Adam Warren, Jake Diekman

Possible Trade Targets: Mike Soroka, Kyle Wright, Ian Anderson, Touki Toussaint, Luiz Gohara, Cristian Pache, Bryse Wilson, Koby Allard, Joey Wentz, Kyle Muller, Forrest Whitley, Josh James, Tony Kemp, Kyle Tucker, Corbin Martin, J.B. Bukauskas, Cionel Pérez, Framber Valdéz, Víctor Robles, Alex Verdugo, Dustin May, Garrett Hampson, Peter Lambert

NEW YORK METS
Executive: Brodie Van Wagenen

Needs:

- Right-handed hitting outfielder
- Catching
- Bullpen

Possible FA Targets: Michael Brantley, A.J. Pollock, Andrew McCutchen, Adam Jones, Wilson Ramos, Yasmani Grandal, Jonathan Lucroy, Kurt Suzuki, Adam Ottavino, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Shawn Kelley

Possible Trade Targets: Raisel Iglesias, Mitch Haniger, J.T. Realmuto, Wil Myers

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Executives: Andy MacPhail and Matt Klentak

Needs:

- Offense
- Defense
- Left-handed pitching

Possible FA Targets: Manny Machado, Bryce Harper, A.J. Pollock, Michael Brantley, Andrew McCutchen, Josh Donaldson, José Iglesias, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Gio González, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Zach Britton, J.A. Happ, Yusei Kikuchi

Possible Trade Targets: Kevin Kiermaier, Mitch Haniger, James Paxton

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

Executive: Mike Rizzo

Needs:

- Starting pitching
- Catching
- Bullpen

Possible FA Targets: Bryce Harper, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Wilson Ramos, Yasmani Grandal, Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Tyler Clippard, Ryan Madson, Adam Warren, Jake Diekman

Possible Trade Targets: J.T. Realmuto, Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Blake Snell, Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard

NATIONAL LEAGUE CENTRAL

CHICAGO CUBS

Executives: Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer

Needs:

- Professional hitter
- Bullpen depth
- Veteran leadership

Possible FA Targets: Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, Michael Brantley, A.J. Pollock, Josh Donaldson, Andrew McCutchen, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Tyler Clippard, Ryan Madson, Adam Warren, Jake Diekman

Possible Trade Targets: Mitch Haniger, Nolan Arenado, Eugenio Suárez, Jed Lowrie, Jean Segura, Marwin González

CINCINNATI REDS

Executives: Dick Williams and Nick Krall

Needs:

- Pitching
- Finding a position for Nick Senzel

Possible FA Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Trevor Cahill, Marco Estrada, Drew Pomeranz, Clay Buchholz, Edwin Jackson, Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Tyler Clippard, Ryan Madson, Adam Warren, Jake Diekman

Finding Position for Senzel: Second base, left field or the best option, third base, which means someone else has to change positions or be traded this winter

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

Executive: David Stearns

Needs:

- Starting pitching
- Bullpen
- Catching

Possible FA Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Joe Kelly, Wilson Ramos, Yasmani Grandal, Kurt Suzuki

Possible Trade Targets: James Paxton, Carlos Carrasco, Dylan Bundy, Kyle Gibson, Jake Odorizzi

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

Executive: Neal Huntington

Needs:

- Young player progression (SP and power)
- SS depth ahead or to supplement Kevin Newman
- Bat to fill in for Gregory Polanco, who will start the year on DL

Possible FA Targets: Marwin González, Asdrúbal Cabrera, José Iglesias, Alcides Escobar, Freddy Galvis, Adeiny Hechavarria, Adam Jones, Rajai Davis, Jon Jay, Denard Span, Austin Jackson

Possible Trade Targets: Jean Segura, José Peraza, Amed Rosario, Miguel Rojas, Tim Anderson

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

Executives: John Mozeliak and Mike Girsch

Needs:

- Improve overall offense
- Left-handed reliever

Possible FA Targets: Manny Machado, Josh Donaldson, Mike Moustakas, Michael Brantley, A.J. Pollock, Jed Lowrie, Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton, Andrew Miller, Justin Wilson, Brad Brach, Jake Diekman, Oliver Pérez, Tony Sipp, Jerry Blevins

Possible Trade Targets: Paul Goldschmidt, Nolan Arenado, Giancarlo Stanton, Jean Segura, Scott Alexander, Luis Avilán

NATIONAL LEAGUE WEST ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

Executive: Mike Hazen

Needs:

- Starting Pitching

Possible FA Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley

Possible Trade Targets: José Berríos, Blake Snell, Jonathan Loaisiga, James Paxton, Kyle Wright, Ian Anderson, Touki Toussaint, Dylan Bundy, Luis Castillo, Carlos Carrasco, Mike Minor, Kyle Gibson, Matt Boyd, José Ureña, Danny Duffy

COLORADO ROCKIES

Executive: Jeff Bridich

Needs:

- Offense
- Offense
- Offense

Possible FA Targets: Bryce Harper, A.J. Pollock, Michael Brantley, Andrew McCutchen, Jed Lowrie, DJ LeMahieu

Possible Trade Targets: Paul Goldschmidt, Mitch Haniger, Nick Castellanos, Carlos Santana, José Martínez, Starling Marte

LOS ANGELES DODGERS

Executive: Andrew Friedman

Needs:

- Catching
- Bullpen

Possible FA Targets: Yasmani Grandal, Wilson Ramos, Adam Ottavino, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, David Robertson, Joe Kelly, Brad Brach, Andrew Miller, Cody Allen

Possible Trade Targets: J.T. Realmuto

SAN DIEGO PADRES

Executive: A.J. Preller

Needs:

- Third base
- Pitching
- Continued development of young players

Possible FA Targets: Manny Machado, Josh Donaldson, Mike Moustakas, Jed Lowrie, Marwin González, Josh Harrison, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Trevor Cahill, Marco Estrada, Drew Pomeranz, Clay Buchholz, Edwin Jackson, Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Tyler Clippard, Ryan Madson, Adam Warren, Jake Diekman

Possible Trade Targets: Nolan Arenado, Eugenio Suárez, Nick Senzel, Miguel Andújar, Kyle Seager, Maikel Franco, Rafael Devers

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

Executive: Farhan Zaidi

Needs:

- TBD

The San Francisco Giants did a phenomenal job in hiring Farhan Zaidi as president of baseball operations this past Tuesday. Since it's his first week on the job, it's obviously too early for him and the organization he's now representing to establish what the team needs, and what the vision and priorities are going to be in both the short and long term. Will they play heavily in free agency and chase the Manny Machados and Bryce Harpers? Will they do a complete rebuild from scratch? Will they entertain offers for Madison Bumgarner or extend him? Will they try to move veteran players or try to patchwork the team as they rebuild? None of us know yet, but we'll keep you posted once he settles into the job and makes those next-generation decisions.

AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST

BALTIMORE ORIOLES

Executive: N/A

Needs:

- Hiring a General Manager
- Rebuilding Player Development and Scouting
- Trading and signing players for the long run

Possible Front Office Targets: Mike Elias, David Chadd, Ben Cherington, Ned Colletti, Kim Ng, Scott Sharp, Matt Arnold

BOSTON RED SOX

Executive: Dave Dombrowski

Needs:

- Bullpen
- Starting pitching depth

Possible FA Targets: Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, David Robertson, Joe Kelly, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu

Possible Trade Targets: Raisel Iglesias, Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Kyle Gibson, Jake Odorizzi, Matt Boyd, Luis Castillo, James Paxton

NEW YORK YANKEES

Executive: Brian Cashman

Needs:

- Starting pitcher
- Middle infielder because of Didi Gregorius injury

Possible FA Targets: Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, José Iglesias, Alcides Escobar, Marwin González

Possible Trade Targets: Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard, Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Madison Bumgarner, Blake Snell, James Paxton, Addison Russell, Paul Goldschmidt

TAMPA BAY RAYS

Executives: Erik Neander and Chaim Bloom

Needs:

- Catching
- Right-handed power bat
- Backend reliever

Possible FA Targets: Yasmani Grandal, Wilson Ramos, Jonathan Lucroy, Brian McCann, Kurt Suzuki, Martín Maldonado, Matt Wieters, Josh Donaldson, Steve Pearce, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, Joe Kelly, Sergio Romo, Brad Brach, Ryan Madson, AJ Ramos, Joakim Soria, Bud Norris

Possible Trade Targets: J.T. Realmuto, Austin Hedges

TORONTO BLUE JAYS

Executives: Mark Shapiro and Ross Atkins

Needs:

- Starting pitching
- Bullpen
- More pitching

Possible FA Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Adam Ottavino, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Shawn Kelley

Possible Trade Targets: Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Luis Castillo, Kyle Gibson, José Ureña, Dylan Bundy, Mike Leake, Matt Boyd

AMERICAN LEAGUE CENTRAL

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

Executive: Rick Hahn

Needs:

- Long-term assets
- Starting pitching
- Bullpen

Possible FA Targets: Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, A.J. Pollock, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Adam Ottavino, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Shawn Kelley

Possible Trade Targets: Nick Senzel, Brian Anderson, Kyle Tucker, Byron Buxton

CLEVELAND INDIANS

Executives: Chris Antonetti and Mike Chernoff

Needs:

- Outfield
- Bullpen

Possible FA Targets: Michael Brantley, Andrew McCutchen, Nick Markakis, Carlos González, Adam Jones, Marwin González, Steve Pearce, A.J. Pollock, Gerardo Parra, Nelson Cruz, Evan Gattis, Adam Ottavino, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Shawn Kelley

Possible Trade Targets: Controllable top prospects

DETROIT TIGERS

Executive: Al Avila

Needs:

- Shortstop
- Starting pitcher
- Utility INF/OF

Possible FA Targets: Jordy Mercer, Marwin González, Alcides Escobar, Freddy Galvis, Asdrúbal Cabrera, José Iglesias, Adeiny Hechavarria, Josh Harrison, Steve Pearce, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana

Possible Trade Targets: José Peraza, Jurickson Profar, Tim Anderson, Amed Rosario, Miguel Rojas

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

Executive: Dayton Moore

Needs:

- Bullpen

- Backup shortstop
- Reduce payroll to \$90-95 million
- Keep building minor league system

Possible FA Targets: Adam Ottavino, Jeurys Familia, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Shawn Kelley, Jordy Mercer, Freddy Galvis, Asdrúbal Cabrera, José Iglesias, Adeiny Hechavarria

Possible Trade Targets: Prospects, prospects and more prospects, preferably close to the major leagues

MINNESOTA TWINS

Executives: Derek Falvey and Thad Levine

Needs:

- First base (Depending on Joe Mauer decision)
- Second base
- Starting pitcher

Possible FA Targets: Joe Mauer, Daniel Murphy, Marwin González, Matt Adams, Steve Pearce, Lucas Duda, Mark Reynolds, Neil Walker, Brad Miller, Ryan Rua, DJ LeMahieu, Jed Lowrie, Josh Harrison, Asdrúbal Cabrera, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana

Possible Trade Targets: Justin Smoak, Carlos Santana, Max Muncy, Wil Myers, Ronald Guzman, Scooter Gennett, Starlin Castro, Jean Segura, Daniel Robertson, Scott Kingery, César Hernández, Jonathan Schoop

AMERICAN LEAGUE WEST

HOUSTON ASTROS

Executive: Jeff Luhnow

Needs:

- Catching
- Middle/back end of the rotation
- Another bat if Kyle Tucker is not ready
- Utility role

Possible FA Targets: Yasmani Grandal, Wilson Ramos, Kurt Suzuki, Jonathan Lucroy, Matt Wieters, Brian McCann, Martín Maldonado, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Michael Brantley, Andrew McCutchen, Marwin González, Adam Jones, Steve Pearce, Josh Harrison, Neil Walker, Asdrúbal Cabrera

Possible Trade Targets: J.T. Realmuto, Luis Castillo, Dylan Bundy, James Paxton, Carlos Carrasco, Corey Kluber, Michael Wacha, Carlos Martínez

LOS ANGELES ANGELS

Executive: Billy Eppler

Needs:

- Starting pitching
- Bullpen

— Catching

Possible Free Agent Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Trevor Cahill, Marco Estrada, Drew Pomeranz, Clay Buchholz, Edwin Jackson, Craig Kimbrel, Zach Britton, Jeurys Familia, Adam Ottavino, Kelvin Herrera, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Joakim Soria, Andrew Miller, Bud Norris, Joe Kelly, Greg Holland, AJ Ramos, Brad Brach, Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Tyler Clippard, Ryan Madson, Adam Warren, Jake Diekman, Wilson Ramos, Yasmani Grandal, Kurt Suzuki, Jonathan Lucroy, Martín Maldonado, Brian McCann, Matt Wieters

Possible Trade Targets: Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Dylan Bundy, James Paxton, Jake Odorizzi, Kyle Gibson

OAKLAND ATHLETICS

Executives: Billy Beane and David Forst

Needs:

- Starting pitching
- Did I mention starting pitching?

Possible FA Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Trevor Cahill, Marco Estrada, Drew Pomeranz, Clay Buchholz, Edwin Jackson, Brett Anderson, Jeremy Hellickson, Jordan Lyles, Erasmo Ramírez, Francisco Liriano, Matt Harvey

Possible Trade Targets: José Berríos, Kyle Gibson, Lucas Giolito, Matt Boyd, Dylan Bundy, Mike Leake, José Ureña, Luis Castillo, Andrew Heaney, Jacob Junis, Steven Matz, Tanner Roark, Ivan Nova, Alex Wood, Wei-Yin Chen

SEATTLE MARINERS

Executive: Jerry Dipoto

Needs:

- Add more young, upside talent
- CF, both short and long term
- Impact pitching

Possible FA Targets: A.J. Pollock, Nelson Cruz, Daniel Murphy

Possible Trade Targets: Víctor Robles, Starling Marté, Kevin Kiermaier, Kevin Pillar, Brandon Nimmo, Aaron Hicks, Clint Frazier, Manuel Margot, Billy Hamilton, Alex Verdugo, Lewis Brinson, Justus Sheffield, Jonathan Loaisiga, Domingo Germán, Kolby Allard, Ian Anderson, Kyle Wright, Jordan Hicks

TEXAS RANGERS

Executive: Jon Daniels

Needs:

- Controllable talent
- Starting pitching
- Catcher
- Add RH balance to lineup

Possible FA Targets: Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ, Charlie Morton, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Yusei Kikuchi, Gio González, Lance Lynn, Ervin Santana, Aníbal Sánchez, Wade Miley, Yasmani Grandal, Wilson Ramos, Kurt Suzuki, Jonathan Lucroy, Matt Wieters, Brian McCann, Martín Maldonado, Steve Pearce, Marwin González, A.J. Pollock, Andrew McCutchen, Michael Brantley, Adam Jones, Josh Donaldson

Possible Trade Targets: Controllable non-arbitration eligible players and prospects

In a league full of non-competitive teams, the White Sox are just doing what's best for them

By James Fegan / The Athletic / November 8, 2018

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Positioned atop a white stone staircase at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa, Scott Boras delivered an hour-long (at least) session Wednesday in front of roughly 100 reporters. It carried the feel of an address from a Roman senator, which given the speech he came prepared to deliver and his sense for presentation, was probably not lost on the 66-year-old agent.

From this mount, and well before I beat the odds and fired in one quick question about Boras Corp. client Carlos Rodón, Boras described a scourge of falling attendance across more than half the league and drew a straight line to the cause.

“Fans of baseball have clearly rejected this voluntary approach that owners have made where they are not competitive,” Boras said. “We have teams that have responded appropriately. The Cleveland Indians have retained their players. The Cleveland Indians have signed free agents. The Cleveland Indians have won their division. They have been in the playoffs regularly. They’ve done a lot of things right. But the Cleveland Indians are in a division of non-competitive teams and as a result of that, despite the fact that they are a franchise doing a lot of right things for their fans, they’ve had a decline in their attendance. And the reason is, that in their division, the mystery of the game is lost to the non-competitive teams.”

It is not necessary to specify that the White Sox were 26th in road attendance, with fellow AL Central rebuilders Detroit and Kansas City ranking even lower, to discern the crux of Boras’ argument. Rebuilding — setting aside multiple seasons for organizational development at the cost of contending — has become a commonplace strategy across the game. With the league struggling to determine a cause for falling attendance, this is as convincing an argument as any, and with 195 losses in the last two seasons and all the “financial flexibility in the world,” the White Sox are a current poster child for a completely commonplace phenomenon.

Facing a considerably smaller smattering of reporters who inevitably were on hand for Boras’ sermon, Rick Hahn depicted himself as a man entrusted to fulfill a straightforward task: to give the White Sox the best chance to win the World Series. Given that mission, he feels he is set upon the best path available to him, and weighing its role in the fate of the sport at large is not in his job description.

“I really don’t spend a lot of time focused on the overall trend necessarily,” Hahn said. “Our view is we’re going to do the best job we can under the current rules to put ourselves in the best position to win for the long term. If those rules change, we’ll adjust. But to speculate on what may be coming or how we would have to react is not the best use of our energy at this time.”

The White Sox can certainly not be said to have come by the rebuilding path eagerly. A critique of their competitiveness as an organization is better lodged at how willing their ownership was to deploy financial resources when they were trying to win in 2015 and 2016, and will be best measured again by how much they will deploy for the 2020 season and beyond. But last year’s exhaustive teardown — dismantling a roster superior to those the Astros and Cubs rebuilds began with — came after multiple instances through the years of front office members presenting it as the possible best path.

The White Sox saw roughly 1,700 fewer fans per night in 2018 than they did two years prior when they trotted out Chris Sale every fifth day, but Hahn has regularly expressed pleasant surprise with how well the process has been received. Cutting salary to the bone while being praised as a smart and savvy

organization seems like it would be appealing to every cost-conscious team owner (which is every owner), but the White Sox are in an odd place to be publicly identified as one of the vanguards of rebuilding, when their involvement is more of a testament to how common and accepted it has become. The rejection of the product that Boras describes is clear to see in attendance numbers, but a lot harder to see in fan response to Eloy Jiménez not getting called up.

Correctly, Boras's calls for change, and his accompanying elaborate proposal for an incentive system that provides reasons to win even for teams out of playoff contention, was aimed at baseball owners at large, not general managers trying to succeed at their jobs within the parameters they have been provided. And ultimately, with that group, the argument of "adapt or die" will always be more compelling than "do the right thing for the game." If attendance really reaches a point of being unpalatable for their bottom line, they will probably institute changes. If it doesn't, they probably won't. The romance of a packed house revved up for a meaningful ball game on a late-August night probably won't be enough to institute a relegation system.

In the same session, Boras addressed the direction of the Philadelphia Phillies. For a team that is only a year or two ahead of the White Sox in its own rebuild, and even more transparent about its ambitions to spend aggressively this offseason — possibly on Boras Corp. client Bryce Harper — after similarly reducing its payroll obligations to a minimum, Boras praised the "winning intent" of Phillies ownership. And in that moment, for a figure who has claimed such a distinct perception as being intractable by the White Sox fan base, which is likely only burnished by Boras publicly identifying them as a source of baseball ills, it could not be more clear what would be needed to flip that perception on its head. They'll just need to show some "winning intent" of their own.
