



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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March 11, 2018

- Cubs.com, **Baez (hamstring) has MRI, out until next week**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cubs-javier-baez-has-mri-on-ailing-hamstring/c-268362546>
- Cubs.com, **Special Olympics near, dear to Hendricks, wife**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/kyle-hendricks-special-olympics-ambassador/c-268365590>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs pitcher Kyle Hendricks has high hopes for new curveball grip**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-kyle-hendricks-curveball-grip-notes-20180310-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Saturday's recap: Dodgers 6, Cubs 5**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-dodgers-recap-20180310-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs starter Kyle Hendricks evolves from student to professor**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-kyle-hendricks-20180311-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Saturday White Sox recap: White Sox 4, Cubs 4**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/whitesox/ct-spt-white-sox-cubs-recap-20180310-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs manager Joe Maddon: Chris Gimenez in mix before Yu Darvish's arrival**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-chris-gimenez-joe-maddon-20180310-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs' Javier Baez could be sidelined through Tuesday**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-javier-baez-20180310-story.html>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **MRI reveals no serious damage to Cubs second baseman Javy Baez's hamstring**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/mri-reveals-no-serious-injury-to-hamstring-for-cubs-second-baseman-javy-baez/>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Kyle Hendricks encouraged by performance in Cubs' 4-4 tie against White Sox**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/kyle-hendricks-encouraged-by-performance-in-cubs-4-4-tie-against-white-sox/>
- Daily Herald, **Rozner: Will Astros suffer same hangover as Chicago Cubs?**
<http://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20180310/rozner-will-astros-suffer-same-hangover-as-chicago-cubs>

- The Athletic, **Eloy Jimenez, Jose Quintana and the Cubs-White Sox trade that keeps on giving**
<https://theathletic.com/268772/2018/03/10/eloy-jimenez-jose-quintana-and-the-cubs-white-sox-trade-that-keeps-on-giving/>
- The Athletic, **What pitching prospect Thomas Hatch learned in Cubs camp**
<https://theathletic.com/268886/2018/03/10/what-pitching-prospect-thomas-hatch-learned-in-cubs-camp/>
- The Athletic, **Cubs playing it safe while Javier Baez gets MRI**
<https://theathletic.com/268665/2018/03/10/cubs-playing-it-safe-while-javier-baez-gets-mri/>

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Cubs.com

Baez (hamstring) has MRI, out until next week

By Carrie Muskat

MESA, Ariz. -- Javier Baez underwent an MRI on his left hamstring Friday, and Cubs manager Joe Maddon described the injury as "minimal," but the second baseman will remain sidelined until early next week.

"We wanted to make sure about everything and it was honestly very minimal," Maddon said of the test results. "This is a precautionary tale right now. Talking to [athletic trainer PJ Mainville], if it was during the season, we'd be a little more aggressive. I just talked to Javy and he says he feels fine. You'll see him back out at the beginning of next week. It's something we don't want to press on right now."

The Cubs have two weeks remaining in Spring Training and could get Baez some at-bats in Minor League camp if needed to make up for lost time.

"I'm not going to push on this," Maddon said. "I just want him out hitting, I want him out taking his ground balls and I want him out moving because he's looked so good. [I told him] 'Take your time, be careful, but if you feel good enough, I'd like to see you out there moving because you're really clicking right now and you don't want him to lose that feel.'"

Kyle Hendricks struck out seven over four-plus innings, giving up two runs on five hits, and had a chance to test his new curveball grip in the Cubs' 4-4 tie against the White Sox on Saturday.

New pitching coach Jim Hickey recommended the tweak. Instead of having his pointer finger and middle finger on the ball, Hendricks lifts his pointer finger off.

"It feels completely different," Hendricks said. "Just taking a finger away from it, it feels like my ability to spin the baseball harder is easier for me. I just struggled with the other grip and felt I had to create spin. This one, I feel locks me into the right slot. It's the tightest it's felt ever."

It's still a work in progress. Of the six or seven Hendricks threw, only a couple were for strikes. But he got good feedback from catcher Victor Caratini.

"Hopefully, I can start to use it more," Hendricks said.

Caratini hit his first spring home run leading off the third, but former Cubs top prospect Eloy Jimenez smacked a two-run pinch-hit homer in the eighth to give the White Sox a 4-3 lead. Cael Brockmeyer led off the Cubs' ninth with a homer to tie the game.

Pro day lineup cards

Saturday's lineup cards for the Cubs' split-squad doubleheaders were all pro. For example, "Proward" was starting in right field, "Proant" at third base, and "Probrist" in left field. In case you didn't get it, that's Jason Heyward, Kris Bryant and Ben Zobrist, respectively. Saturday was pro day.

"We were in the dugout [Friday], talking about, 'That was a pro at-bat, that was a pro move, that's a pro play on defense,'" Maddon said of a conversation he had with bench coach Brandon Hyde. "I said, 'Let's go pro.' So, [Hyde] and I kept giggling back and forth so we decided with the split doubleheader today and guys all over the place, and how well they've been going about their business, we wanted to indicate they were pro."

It took a while to figure out some of the names. "Co-Pro" was Ryan Court. Yu Darvish studied the lineup card, and he got them right away.

"My favorite is 'La Pro' -- [Tommy La Stella]," Hyde said.

Injury updates

Catcher Willson Contreras, who has been feeling ill, will catch Darvish on Sunday if he's feeling all right. Reliever Pedro Strop, who has been slowed because of a tender left calf, was sent home because he wasn't feeling well.

Catcher Taylor Davis, who has been dealing with a concussion suffered March 2, was able to play catch Saturday.

"Everything's been OK," Davis said. "I've had no symptoms in 72 hours, maybe even more."

Camp battle

Jon Lester raved about working with catcher Chris Gimenez on Friday, and Maddon wasn't surprised at the feedback. Gimenez, who is a non-roster invitee in camp, played for Maddon on the Rays in 2012 and '13.

"He's very bright and willing to share his opinion," Maddon said of Gimenez, who's looking for a spot as a backup catcher. "He's not afraid, he knows how to play well when he's not playing often. Not everybody can [do that]. He communicates really well with his pitchers, he communicates well with everybody."

"On the other hand, Caratini is looking really good, too, behind the plate and at the plate," Maddon said of the young catcher, who is another option as a backup. "It's a good spot for us to be in. Both Caratini and 'Jimmy' are attacking it properly. Having Lester say that does not surprise me."

Up next

Darvish will make his second spring start for the Cubs on Sunday (3:05 p.m. CT, exclusive audio webcast on cubs.com) when he faces the Athletics at HoHoKam Park in Mesa.

After an off-day Monday, Mike Montgomery will get his first Cactus League start Tuesday. The Cubs have a split-squad doubleheader that day, and Montgomery will start the early game against the Padres, while Tyler Chatwood will start the night game against the Giants.

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Cubs.com

Special Olympics near, dear to Hendricks, wife

By Carrie Muskat

MESA, Ariz. -- Kyle Hendricks wanted to make sure Special Olympics athlete Ella Stoklosa had a great time at a Spring Training game last weekend, even if it meant that he wasn't her favorite Cubs player for the entire time.

Hendricks, who is a special ambassador to Special Olympics Illinois, and believed to be the first Major League Baseball player in that role, hosted Stoklosa, 27, of Wheeling, Ill., on March 3. She has Down syndrome, but that doesn't stop her. Stoklosa competes in nine sports and showed up at the Cubs' complex wearing a Hendricks' jersey.

"She warned me," Hendricks said. "[She said] 'I'm going to wear your jersey -- but can I see [Kris Bryant]? I have his jersey, too.' I said, 'I can get anything you need.'"

"As soon as [Bryant] walks around the corner, she's got my jersey off and his is on," Hendricks said, laughing. "I didn't even see her change -- it took her two seconds. It was so funny."

Hendricks has taken on the Special Olympics as his cause, and has done so quietly, as is his style.

"For some reason, there's never been a spokesperson for Special Olympics from Major League Baseball," said Hendricks, who tuned up for the season with four-plus innings Saturday against the White Sox, striking out seven.

His yoga instructor, Christine Schwan, introduced him to some people in Special Olympics Illinois, and they did a yoga session with some of the athletes.

"Once I did that, it was over," Hendricks said of the commitment to the organization. "You have so much fun with these athletes and they bring us so much joy. Plus, there's the ability for my wife, Emma, to be involved in it -- it kind of just fell into our laps. We're always looking to give back and do something. We have some things in our family, [people with] different diseases, but we were open to anything and it didn't have to be something that affected our family."

Both Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo and pitcher Jon Lester are cancer survivors, and have dedicated their foundations to help battle that disease. Hendricks was able to connect with the Special Olympic athletes.

"It's amazing -- they're always so happy and so positive, it blows us away every time we go and spend time with them," Hendricks said. "It got to the point where, how could we not do this? We have so much fun. We love going to hang out with them. They get the joy of hanging out with us, but we're just having fun hanging out with them."

In July, Special Olympics Illinois will celebrate its 50th anniversary. The first Special Olympic Games were held in July 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago, thanks to the efforts of Eunice Kennedy Shriver. Hendricks wasn't sure the Cubs' schedule -- and his pitching timetable -- would allow him to attend but he was going to try.

For his part, Hendricks said he just wants to have fun with the athletes whenever they're together. His involvement is low key, which is natural.

"That's me," Hendricks said. "That's probably why I gravitated toward it. ... It's a perfect situation and it fell into our lap."

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs pitcher Kyle Hendricks has high hopes for new curveball grip

By Mark Gonzales

Kyle Hendricks actually was a little disappointed Saturday after striking out seven White Sox in only four-plus innings because he wanted to induce contact earlier in counts.

But the Cubs' reliable right-handed starter was encouraged after using a new, more comfortable curveball grip during the 4-4 tie that he believes will be more effective.

"It came out of my hand sharper," Hendricks said. "It didn't really pop out of my hand. And the feedback from the catcher (Victor Caratini) and even the swings and takes I got on it were good. That's a good sign.

"I've only been throwing that grip for 10 days, two weeks. It's a good sign. That's coming along quick for me. Hopefully I'll use it more than a get-me-over (pitch) to a lefty."

Hendricks said he learned the grip — with his index finger pulled back to apply less pressure to the ball — from new pitching coach Jim Hickey, who also taught the grip to Cubs left-hander Mike Montgomery when both were with the Rays.

With his previous grip, "I felt I had to create spin," Hendricks said. "This one locks me into the right slot. It's the tightest it's felt ever spinning a curve overhand."

Hendricks said the new grip won't add pressure to his middle finger, in which he strained a tendon that forced him to miss six weeks last season.

Wait till Wednesday? Manager Joe Maddon intimated that second baseman Javier Baez might be held out through Tuesday as a precautionary measure. Baez's left hamstring cramped Thursday, and he underwent an MRI test that was "very minimal," according to Maddon.

"I'm not going to push this at all," Maddon said.

Baez will continue to perform tolerable baseball activities, as Maddon wants him to stay sharp.

Extra innings: Reliever Pedro Strop was sent home due to flulike symptoms. The right-hander, who has been bothered by a sore calf, hopes to pitch in a game by the end of the week. ... Right-handed reliever Shae Simmons (shoulder tightness) has yet to resume throwing off a mound.

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Chicago Tribune

Saturday's recap: Dodgers 6, Cubs 5

By Mark Gonzales

Enrique Hernandez hit a three-run home run in the seventh inning against Dillon Maples, and Donovan Solano hit a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth off Alec Mills as the Dodgers rallied for a 6-5 win over the Cubs in a split-squad game Saturday night at Camelback Ranch.

At the plate: It will take an injury for Peter Bourjos to make the opening day roster, but he came through with a two-run single in the fifth to snap a 2-2 tie. Chesny Young returned two days after he was shaken up in a collision with Anthony Rizzo and started the rally with a single.

On the mound: This marks another important season for Duane Underwood Jr., for whom the Cubs have waited patiently to break through. Underwood came through in relief of starter Luke Farrell by inducing Yasiel Puig to ground out to shortstop with a runner at third to end the third.

In the field: The Cubs employed a shift on Cody Bellinger in the first when shortstop Addison Russell played to the right of second base, and Russell was in perfect position. Catcher Ali Solis, who caught 58 games for Triple-A Iowa last season and has 13 games of major league experience with the Padres and Rays, made a strong throw to nail Hernandez on a steal attempt in the second. First baseman Efen Navarro made an over-the-shoulder catch of Austin Barnes' pop in foul territory in the fourth.

On the bases: Bourjos is one of the fastest players in the game, and he beat Bellinger's throw to second after breaking early from first on a steal attempt. Bourjos advanced to third on an errant throw by Hernandez and eventually scored on a sacrifice fly by Russell.

Key number: 10 — Starting pitchers used by the Cubs this spring.

Up next: at Athletics, 3:05 p.m. Sunday at HoHoKam Park. RH Yu Darvish vs. LH Sean Manaea.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs starter Kyle Hendricks evolves from student to professor

By Mark Gonzales

Kyle Hendricks was dubbed "the Professor" early in his career because of his Dartmouth background and ability to dissect batters with finesse.

The 28-year-old right-hander found it amusing this spring to see many of the Cubs' young pitching prospects watching him work closely.

"It is weird," said Hendricks, a fifth-year veteran. "It feels I've been up here for 30 seconds."

But Hendricks isn't bashful about providing tips to the youngsters, especially after absorbing and appreciating the knowledge Jake Arrieta, John Lackey and Jon Lester gave to him over the last three seasons.

"I love talking pitching and baseball any time I can talk to these young guys," Hendricks said. "That's what I had coming up here, and now to be able to pass that (information) along to them."

Hendricks felt honored to be part of the Cubs' small contingent that made a presentation in December to prized Japanese free agent Shohei Ohtani, who eventually agreed to terms with the Angels.

'I'll talk about anything," Hendricks said. "I'm into it."

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Chicago Tribune

Saturday White Sox recap: White Sox 4, Cubs 4

By Paul Sullivan

Lucas Giolito turned in the best outing of any White Sox starting pitcher this spring, and Eloy Jimenez cranked an opposite-field, pinch-hit, go-ahead, two-run home run in the eighth inning of a 4-4 tie against the Cubs.

On the mound: Mixing all his pitches, Giolito struck out the first four hitters and eight overall, allowing one run on two hits in four-plus innings. Rob Scahill served up a tying, ninth-inning home run.

At the plate: Third baseman Yolmer Sanchez went 3-for-4 with an RBI and is hitting .379 this spring. Leadoff candidate Yoan Moncada was 0-for-3 and is at .214.

Key number — 15,508: Saturday's attendance. The Cubs have drawn 127,644 to Sloan Park this spring. The Sox have drawn 30,408 to Camelback Ranch.

The quote: "Coming out here, they sell out here for spring training, all the people on the lawn. It's kind of a louder atmosphere than most spring training games so it gets you going a little bit." —

Up next: vs. Arizona. 3:05 p.m. Sunday in Glendale. LH Patrick Corbin vs. RH Reynaldo Lopez.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs manager Joe Maddon: Chris Gimenez in mix before Yu Darvish's arrival

By Mark Gonzales

The popular assumption was that the Cubs' signing of veteran backup catcher Chris Gimenez was tied to the luring of prized pitcher Yu Darvish.

But one day after Jon Lester praised Gimenez's defensive instincts, manager Joe Maddon stressed that Gimenez was already part of the Cubs' mix for 2018 and that interest wasn't tied exclusively to the fact that Gimenez and Darvish were teammates with the Rangers in 2014-15.

"We talked since last season (prior to New Years Day)," Maddon said Saturday, one day after Gimenez caught Lester's five scoreless innings and caught a runner in a rundown from third base.

Maddon and Gimenez exchanged text messages and alerted President Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer, but dialogue "got away from us," Maddon said.

Gimenez eventually agreed to terms in late January, about two weeks before Darvish and the Cubs signed a contract.

Maddon's association with Gimenez, 35, dates back to their days with the Rays in 2012.

"He didn't hit well but did everything else well," Maddon said. "When we got him, that's what I was told, but he got some big hits. With two strikes, he was really good (hitting) to right side and learned to pull the ball more.

"He always was a pretty good catcher. He had an average arm but plays first and left if you need him to. That was part of the allure at this time, and he can still be able to do that. He fits anywhere. He's malleable, regardless of whether it's with the Cubs or whatever."

Gimenez, however, isn't taking his veteran status for granted despite Lester's praise.

"I've never been afforded the luxury of taking anything for granted," Gimenez said. "So even if I was in that position, I wouldn't think about it."

Based on his nine years of catching experience and array of defensive assets, Gimenez would seem to have the edge over 24-year-old Victor Caratini as the backup catcher.

The Cubs insist Gimenez must earn the spot, adding that they're pleased with Caratini's work, his ability to play first and third base and switch-hit.

Gimenez, however, has faith in his skills.

"I'm a big believer in doubling down what you're good at," said Gimenez, who was signed to a minor league contract last January. "And not that you're not working on other things, but I feel like I can offer a lot of value to this team. If they decide to go that way, that's great."

Gimenez knows he can't change people's perceptions over the fact he caught Darvish but stressed he had a "halfway decent year" in 2017 with the Twins, where he hit seven homers with a .350 on-base percentage in 74 games and helped guide a young pitching staff to the American League wild-card game.

"Not to sound really gushy and mushy about it, but I'm very happy," Gimenez said.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs' Javier Baez could be sidelined through Tuesday

By Mark Gonzales

Cubs second baseman Javier Baez underwent an MRI on his left hamstring that turned out to be "minimal," manager Joe Maddon said Saturday.

But Baez, who suffered a cramp while running out a double on Thursday, might not return until at least Tuesday as a precautionary measure.

"If this was during the season, we'd be more aggressive right now," Maddon said. "But we don't want to be."

In the meantime, Maddon said Baez will accelerate his baseball work after Monday's day off.

"I'm not going to push on this at all," Maddon said. "I don't know that he's going to play Tuesday, either. I just want him out hitting, taking his ground balls, want him moving because he's looked so good."

In other medical news, reliever Pedro Strop was sent home because of flu-like symptoms. Before leaving, Strop said his calf felt fine and that he threw three bullpen sessions earlier this week and believes he might pitch in a game later next week.

Catcher Taylor Davis (concussion) has resumed light work, such as riding a stationary bicycle and playing catch.

"I still have to go through all the protocols and get all the OKs," said Davis, who was struck by a foul ball during live batting practice March 2.

"Everything is OK. I've had no symptoms for 72 hours now."

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Chicago Sun-Times

MRI reveals no serious damage to Cubs second baseman Javy Baez's hamstring
By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — Second baseman Javy Baez had an MRI on the left hamstring he hurt in Thursday's game, and results showed no serious damage.

"It's very minimal," said manager Joe Maddon, who predicted a return to the lineup toward the middle or end of next week. "This is a precautionary tale right now."

Baez said he felt tightness in the hamstring his first few steps out of the box when he hit a double in the second inning Thursday. He coasted into second, tried to stretch the muscle and then left the game with the trainer.

"It's something we don't want to press on right now," said Maddon, who wants Baez to continue to take batting practice and grounders up to his comfort level in the days leading up to his return.

"I told him, 'Take your time, be careful, but if you feel good enough, I'd still like to see you out there moving because you're really clicking right now,'" Maddon added. "And you don't want him to lose that feel."

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Chicago Sun-Times

Kyle Hendricks encouraged by performance in Cubs' 4-4 tie against White Sox
By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — Kyle Hendricks, the Cubs' No. 2 starter, had his best feel of the spring on his signature changeup, helping lead to seven strikeouts among the 12 outs he recorded against the White Sox in a Cactus League game that finished in a 4-4 tie Saturday at Sloan Park.

The Cubs, who were to play a second split-squad game Saturday night against the Dodgers in Glendale, Arizona, tied the game when minor-leaguer Cael Brockmeyer homered leading off the bottom of the

ninth — a half-inning after former Cubs prospect Eloy Jimenez returned from a knee injury to deliver a go-ahead, pinch-hit, two-run homer off Cory Mazzoni.

More important was Hendricks' performance, especially when it came to the changeup.

"That's the thing that really hasn't been up to par [this spring]," said Hendricks, who pitched one batter into the fifth and gave up two runs — one of which scored after he left the game. "I threw a couple of really good ones today and had good velo difference between my fastball."

Hendricks gave up five hits and didn't walk a batter.

"I'm not pitching for strikeouts, so going forward I need to work on that second-pitch contact and getting a few quick outs," he said. "Other than that, at least I'm making good pitches at this point."

Strike force

Carl Edwards Jr., the right-hander manager Joe Maddon calls a closer in the making, retired Welington Castillo (grounder), Tim Anderson (fly ball) and Yolmer Sanchez (strikeout) in order to extend his spring scoreless streak to four outings.

Most significant, Edwards — who struggled with command late last season and in the postseason — hasn't walked a batter.

He has three strikeouts and has allowed two hits in four Cactus League innings.

Brother, can you spare a backup job?

Victor Caratini, the second-year catcher on the outside looking in when it comes to the opening roster, continued his effort to make a case for a spot over veteran backup Chris Gimenez.

His go-ahead homer to right-center in the third was the Cubs' first hit off Lucas Giolito, and he added a leadoff walk off Giolito in the fifth.

The switch hitter is 6-for-22 (.273) with two extra-base hits and five walks (.429 OBP) this spring.

"Caratini's been looking really good," Maddon said, "behind the plate and at the plate."

On deck: Cubs at Athletics, Mesa, Yu Darvish vs. Sean Manaea, 3:05 p.m. Sunday, cubs.com audio.

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Daily Herald

Rozner: Will Astros suffer same hangover as Chicago Cubs?

By Barry Rozner

Kris Bryant stood in the Cubs' clubhouse and patiently answered all comers.

He paused frequently, took deep breaths and never did flash that million-dollar smile.

The man was gassed after the Dodgers eliminated the Cubs in last fall's NLCS.

Bryant spoke of the year before, of it being Thanksgiving 2016 -- after weeks of World Series celebrations -- by the time he allowed his Las Vegas couch to secure his beaten body.

By then, most of baseball had rested a month, and been back training another month, in preparation for the 2017 season.

Bryant just wanted to sleep. And the turkey hadn't even been sliced.

That is your definition of the World Series hangover, something the Houston Astros are currently fighting, even if they don't know it yet.

"We're not the Cubs," Houston starter Dallas Keuchel told The Washington Post a few days ago. "I firmly believe we have better players."

Well, on paper it's hard to argue. They are the World Series champs and they have added Justin Verlander and Gerrit Cole for an entire season.

A year ago, on paper, it was very hard to argue against the Cubs as the most talented team, and no one from the top to the bottom of the Cubs' organization would admit to the hangover.

Until it was over. And then everyone did.

A pale and shivering Bryant looked like something from "The Walking Dead" after Game 5, while Addison Russell said, "There were times when we showed fatigue."

After a year of parties and a third consecutive NLCS, the Cubs were on fumes when 2017 concluded.

Good for Keuchel for believing what he does about his team. It should be no other way for the champs. But he knows not what he says, because he has not yet felt the lack of energy, hunger and focus, and he has not yet seen the team suffer from a lack of rest and health.

It will happen. It always does.

George Springer spent November on the road, appearing on just about every national TV show you can imagine, this after a championship parade, a Disney World procession, an NYSE bell ring, "Saturday Night Live" and all the rest.

"Thanksgiving," Springer told the Post, "snuck up on me real quick."

Like Bryant said, two months of a normal off-season were gone, no time to sleep in or catch his breath.

"I did everything you can think of; shows, appearances, interviews," Springer said. "My first weekend with nothing to do was Week 11 of college football."

If it sounds tiring, it is, even for young men in perfect physical condition. They are creatures of habit, and this is all so very different.

Thus, the stench of hangover and all that it brings invades long before they can smell it.

"That demand on your time is more of the 'hangover' than anything else," Astros hurler Lance McCullers told the Post. "It's just the time you didn't get to devote to preparing for the season."

"I did all the media stuff, all the requests -- sometimes two, three times a day. That's not an off-season. That's a media tour.

"That first month after the World Series, other guys are lifting, getting stronger, getting ready for the season, and you're running around doing interviews and other stuff, which is great because you won the World Series.

"But at the same time, it just contributes to the mental fatigue that you deal with during the season."

Of course it's worth it because of the ring you get on Opening Day, but the physical exhaustion doesn't hit everyone at the same time, and most do all they can to deny it.

The mental challenge doesn't reveal as quickly or as obviously, but human nature insists that you don't need to win as much as you did the year before, and the focus on details gets lost amid banner-raising, rings and media requests.

At least some of the Astros are aware of it, but there is no answer for the short winter. The good news for Houston is they are deep and loaded.

So were the Cubs a year ago.

Now, the Cubs are angry, hungry, rested and -- oh, yeah -- still very, very good.

Maybe Dallas Keuchel will be right. The last two decades of baseball say he will be wrong.

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The Athletic

Eloy Jimenez, Jose Quintana and the Cubs-White Sox trade that keeps on giving
By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. — Jose Quintana gets the save for last season, breathing new life into a Cubs team that had been two games under .500 at the time of that stunning All-Star break trade with the White Sox.

Quintana gets the assist on the Yu Darvish deal because of his club-friendly contract — \$8.85 million this season plus team options worth \$22 million combined in 2019 and 2020 — created financial flexibility that allowed the Cubs to invest \$126 million in the star Japanese pitcher.

Quintana's intangible value can be seen just hanging out with teammates in the middle of the clubhouse, interacting with a group that includes top pitching prospect Adbert Alzolay.

But, man, Eloy Jimenez is going to be fun to watch, especially if the White Sox become the same kind of perfect storm that hit the North Side. Jimenez, who's been dealing with tendinitis in his left knee, wasn't even supposed to make his Cactus League debut with the White Sox until Sunday, but he kept lobbying manager Rick Renteria to get into Saturday's WGN game and play in front of 15,508 fans.

Jimenez delivered with a pinch-hit, two-run, eighth-inning homer off Cubs right-hander Cory Mazzoni, launching a hanging slider over the fence in right-center field.

“The best is to come,” Jimenez told reporters through a translator as “Sweet Home Chicago” blasted from the Sloan Park sound system after a 4-4 tie in gray, rainy Mesa.

Jimenez — a right-handed hitter Cubs manager Joe Maddon compared to Edgar Martinez and Miguel Cabrera in spring training last year (no pressure) — got his wish to face the team that originally signed him out of the Dominican Republic for \$2.8 million during the early stages of the Cubs’ rebuild.

“There’s no doubt in my mind he’s going to be very good,” Maddon said. “With good health, this kid is going to be outstanding. The combination of skill and who he is — I really liked him as a person. I liked talking to him. He is very mature and he speaks really well. He comes from an educated background in his family.

“I don’t want to say he’s a ‘can’t-miss,’ because nobody’s a ‘can’t-miss,’ but this guy has a chance to hit some homers, especially there in that ballpark, where the ball goes. He could really tear that up.”

Jimenez could become a star on the South Side and it will still be worth it for the Cubs. Quintana enjoyed the pennant-race pressure last year, going 7-3 with a 3.74 ERA in 14 starts as a Cub, matching up well against Max Scherzer and Clayton Kershaw in the playoffs and wanting another chance to get to the World Series.

“What he did for us last year already is immeasurable — and then what he’s going to do with us in the future,” Maddon said. “I’ve had meetings with some of the Hispanic kids, Latin kids, and as they’re leaving, as we send them back out to [minor league camp], they reference watching Quintana.

“Q is already blending well into our fabric. And he’s going to be a big influence on a lot of guys.”

Quintana got two outs as a lefty reliever in the epic Game 5 at Nationals Park that ended with Wade Davis striking out Bryce Harper. After a delirious celebration in Washington, the team’s charter flight to Los Angeles was diverted to New Mexico when Quintana’s wife, Michel, experienced what was described as a panic attack. A Cubs official observed that the sense of calm and patience on the plane — during a delay that lasted several hours for millionaire athletes who aren’t used to waiting for anything — was a sign of how much teammates respect Quintana.

After a whirlwind year of trade rumors and the adrenaline rush of the playoff chase, Quintana has quietly settled into Camp Maddon.

“It’s all good,” Quintana said. “[Joe’s] a man in no rush. He doesn’t like too many rules. Everybody knows what they need to do. He says to us every time: ‘Respect the game.’ Everybody knows we need to do our jobs.

“I know the responsibility I got coming here. And I like it.”

The Cubs also have a wave of young pitchers developing who want to follow Quintana’s lead, coming over from Colombia and gradually turning into an All-Star and a 30-start, 200-inning machine. Between Alzolay (Venezuela), Jose Albertos (Mexico) and Oscar De La Cruz (Dominican Republic), three of the organization’s top six prospects on the Baseball America rankings are international signings.

“That’s worth its weight in gold right there,” Maddon said. “Any time you get a young veteran like Q is — when you get that guy out there who’s really good and then he’s willing to share — that’s when you get good, man. You get really good when you have young, talented guys that are not being raised by wolves.”

Jimenez, Baseball America's No. 4 overall prospect, missed two-plus weeks of meaningless baseball and instantly created a jolt. Imagine what he might do in his first at-bat at Wrigley Field.

"The best trades are when they are good for both sides," Maddon said. "When you make a deal, you want the other guy to do well, because otherwise the group's not going to want to mess with you anymore."

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The Athletic

What pitching prospect Thomas Hatch learned in Cubs camp

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. — The Cubs invited Thomas Hatch to big-league camp with no intention of having him throw in an actual Cactus League game, at least not yet anyway. The Cubs gave Hatch a locker in between Yu Darvish and Kyle Hendricks, wanting him to soak up as much information as possible before sending him to the other side of their Mesa training facility.

Hatch is smart enough to pay attention. He did 15 credit hours at Oklahoma State University last fall, leaving him only one more semester away from earning his degree with a major in finance and a minor in accounting.

Hatch observed The Professor, as the Dartmouth-educated Hendricks has become a billboard for The Cubs Way, sitting in on the offseason recruiting pitch to Shohei Ohtani at a Creative Artists Agency headquarters in Los Angeles.

Hatch threw bullpen sessions next to Darvish, watching the movement of his slider while the Japanese media camped out on the sidewalk with cameras.

Hatch's main takeaway after the Cubs assigned him to minor-league camp on Friday was "how they go about their business," Arizona lessons he will apply this year in the Double-A Tennessee rotation.

"You grow up watching them on TV and you kind of play them [up] as these superheroes," Hatch said. "They're human, too. They make mistakes. It's just they make less of them and they're more consistent. That's the thing. Everybody in professional baseball has talent, but these guys do it well more consistently."

The Cubs targeted Hatch leading up to the 2016 draft that kept them sidelined until near the bottom of the third round, the tradeoff for signing free agents Jason Heyward, John Lackey and Dexter Fowler and making a World Series run. With the No. 104 overall pick, the Cubs bet on Hatch, the Big 12 pitcher of the year for a College World Series team, as well as their medical assessments of his right elbow.

The sprained ulnar collateral ligament that wiped out Hatch's 2015 season didn't require surgery or impose any restrictions on his 2017 campaign with advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach, other than standard monitoring during his first full year in professional baseball (5-11, 4.04 ERA, 26 starts).

"I feel great right now," Hatch said. "My arm feels great. I'm ready to face some live competition."

Baseball America ranks Hatch as the No. 8 prospect in a farm system now tilted toward pitching and given some breathing room with the trade for Jose Quintana, the \$164 million combined investment in Darvish and Tyler Chatwood and the reliability of Hendricks and Jon Lester.

“It’s a fun environment,” Hatch said. “It’s hang loose and do your thing, the way you do it best. Don’t be someone you’re not. That’s really what they stand for. That’s cool. It allows you to play your game and not try to be someone you’re not. And I think that’s why they have success.”

So is it Grandpa Hendricks now?

“It does feel like that a little bit,” Hendricks said with a smile after throwing four innings during Saturday’s 4-4 tie with the White Sox at Sloan Park. “It is weird, because it still feels like I’ve been up for like 30 seconds.

“It doesn’t feel like I’ve been here for very long. But when you hear things like that – and even when we’re out doing PFPs (pitchers’ fielding practice) — some of the young guys will follow me around a little bit and ask questions, which never has happened in the past.

“It’s just definitely different for me, but I love it. I just love talking pitching and baseball, so any time I can talk to any of these young guys, that’s what I had coming up here. To be able to pass that on to them, [it’s a tribute] to Lackey, [Jake] Arrieta, [Jon] Lester, everything they did for me.”

Hatch has low-to-mid 90s velocity, a developing changeup and a background that suggests he should be able to follow the team’s game-planning system.

“In terms of just raw stuff, he’s one of our top guys,” said Jason McLeod, the senior vice president who oversees scouting and player development. “If he continues on this path, we want to work with him on where he’s going to attack the strike zone with his fastball, using his breaking ball on both sides of the plate. He does have swing-and-miss stuff. He’s a great competitor.”

Hatch’s parents, Dean and Mary, are both certified public accountants. Depending on how this season ends, Hatch plans to return to Oklahoma State next fall to finish his final 15 credit hours.

“Hopefully, we get that done and get that off my back and focus on baseball,” Hatch said. “Hopefully for good.”

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The Athletic

Cubs playing it safe while Javier Baez gets MRI

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. – Even after Javier Baez said he felt “100 percent” – and seemed to think it was only a cramping/dehydration issue – the Cubs had enough concerns to get an MRI on his left hamstring.

“We just wanted to make sure about everything,” manager Joe Maddon said Saturday morning before Cubs-White Sox at Sloan Park. “It was honestly very minimal. This is a precautionary tale right now.”

Baez felt it running out of the batter’s box on Thursday in Mesa, easing up after hitting a two-run double, exiting the Cactus League game in the second inning and creating a freak-out for Cubs fans on Twitter.

Baez is one of the most valuable Cubs, a Gold Glove-caliber second baseman with the skills to handle shortstop and third base, a 23-homer force who put up a .796 OPS last season and a daring, instinctive baserunner.

“Talking to [athletic trainer] PJ [Mainville], if it was during the season, we’d be a little bit more aggressive right now, but we don’t want to be,” Maddon said. “I just talked to Javy, he said he feels fine, actually. So you’ll see him back out at the beginning of next week at some point. But honestly, it’s something we don’t want to press on right now.”

The Cubs have an off day on Monday, two split-squad games on Tuesday, four split-squad games next weekend and almost three weeks until Opening Day at Marlins Park in Miami.

“I’m not going to push on this at all,” Maddon said. “I just want him out hitting. I want him out taking his groundballs. I want him out moving, because he’s looked so good. I don’t want [to risk] all that.

“This is my conversation with Javy a couple minutes ago, just what I’m telling you right now: ‘Take your time. Be careful. But if you feel good enough, I’d still like to see you out there moving, because you’re really clicking right now. You don’t want to lose that feel.’”

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