

### **Tribe gets 3 back from Nats in Gomes trade**

By Anthony Castrovine MLB.com @castrovine

CLEVELAND -- The Indians have spent this Hot Stove season looking for ways to pare down the payroll without sacrificing the overall quality of the Major League club. Only time will tell if their trade on Friday night, in which they sent catcher Yan Gomes to the Nationals, achieves that feat, but what can be said for now is that the Tribe dealt from an area of perceived depth, saved money and received a couple of controllable pieces in outfield prospect Daniel Johnson (No. 7 on the Nationals' Top 30 list, per MLB Pipeline) and right-hander Jefry Rodriguez.

The Tribe will receive a third player to be named by April 15.

Gomes is the second high-profile catcher dealt from the 40-man in the last four-plus months, joining former top prospect Francisco Mejia, the sole piece surrendered in a July swap for closer Brad Hand and reliever Adam Cimber. The Indians have two more years of control of Roberto Perez, who is coming off the worst offensive season of his career (.519 OPS), and, barring any offseason additions, Gomes' departure would elevate 25-year-old Eric Haase, who had a solid 2018 season at Triple-A Columbus, to a Major League role.

"We did trade from an area of depth here," Indians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said. "For a while, you've heard us say we feel we have two regular catchers within the organization at the Major League level, and now Roberto will have an opportunity to step in and be that regular guy. He's done that for us over the course of the past few seasons when Yan's been injured. He's demonstrated that ability to lead our pitching staff. He's caught some of the most meaningful games that we've played over the last five to six years, including that run in the 2016 postseason."

But in 2018, Gomes was the guy. And if the Indians do as well in this Gomes trade as they did in the last Gomes trade, it will be a heck of a deal. From the time he arrived with Mike Aviles in a low-profile deal that sent reliever Esmil Rogers to the Blue Jays in November 2012, Gomes provided great value to the Indians.

"In that time since we acquired Yan, we've had the opportunity to watch him grow and develop from an unheralded Triple-A corner utility player to an All-Star-caliber Major League catcher," Antonetti said. "He's been an instrumental part of our team and our success and helped lead us to the best record in the American League over the past six years. Not only has he been a great performer on the field, he's been a leader in the clubhouse and a great ambassador for the organization within the community."

Coming off his first All-Star season, Gomes was due to see a modest bump in his salary, from \$6.03 million in 2018 to \$7.08 million in '19. The Indians also held club options on Gomes for '20 (\$9 million) and '21 (\$11 million).

That was valuable cost control in a Major League market in which productive catchers are scarce. The Dodgers and Mets were among the teams that showed interest in Gomes in recent weeks, but the Nats came through with the offer that most appealed to the Indians, who needed breathing room in their offseason budget because of in-house raises and arbitration cases. The Indians tendered contracts to all of their arbitration-eligible players on Friday, including a one-year contract worth a reported \$4.5 million for off-injured but talented right-hander Danny Salazar.

"The catching position was an interesting one," Antonetti said. "There were a number of teams that were seeking to upgrade their alternatives at catcher, and there were also a number of alternatives on the market in both free agency and trades. That was the dynamic we were navigating at the start of the offseason. It got to a point on a deal that we thought made sense for us."

Rather than directly filling a Major League need, the Gomes swap gives the Indians depth in different areas.

Johnson, 23, was a fifth-round selection in the 2016 Draft out of New Mexico State. The left-handed hitter has a combination of speed and raw power and can play all three outfield spots. He spent the majority of 2018 at Double-A Harrisburg, where he had a .267/.321/.410 slash line with six homers, 19 doubles, seven triples and 21 steals in 89 games, but he battled a hamate fracture during the season.

In the Arizona Fall League this year, Johnson had the highest exit velocity (116.4 mph) tracked by Statcast™, albeit on a groundout. He had four of the six highest-tracked outfield throws, topping out at 100.9 mph. He was one of very few players to go home to first in north of 30 feet per second.

Rodriguez, 25, spent time at Double-A, Triple-A and the big leagues in 2018, going a combined 7-5 with a 3.40 ERA in 19 Minor League starts. He made six stints with the Nats, with a 5.71 ERA in 14 games, including eight starts. He had a 2.70 ERA in relief. He will compete for a spot in the big league bullpen in Spring Training.

"With this trade, we feel we've acquired two upper-level prospects to add to our system," Antonetti said. "I can't get into specifics about the player to be named later. It'll be another player of some value that we do like."

### **Indians, Carrasco 'engaged' in extension talks**

By Daniel Kramer MLB.com @DKramer\_

The Indians' offseason agenda has turned to Carlos Carrasco. The club is actively engaged in negotiations for a contract extension with the star right-hander, a source confirmed to MLB.com's Anthony Castrovine, which could affect how it navigates through the rest of the offseason.

If a deal with Carrasco is completed, the Indians -- who by many reports are intent on trading a starter this offseason -- would instead choose between dealing away Corey Kluber or Trevor Bauer, per MLB Network insider Ken Rosenthal. The Indians would not attempt to trade Carrasco after a new deal was in place.

On Thursday, Bauer, who has two years of club control remaining before he becomes a free agent, said that he does not intend to sign a long-term contract with Cleveland, opting instead to go year to year, per Rosenthal. USA Today's Bob Nightengale reported earlier this week that the club is much more inclined to deal Bauer than Kluber, the latter of whom has three years of club control remaining with a \$17.5 million option for 2020 and an \$18 million option for '21, with a \$1 million buyout for each year.

Multiple reports in recent weeks have indicated that the Tribe intends to deal away from some of its depth-heavy rotation in order to restock needs elsewhere, such as the outfield. However, any deal for one of its top starters would need to net enough of a return to keep the club competitive in 2019, according to multiple reports.

Should it deal one of its three premier starters, the Tribe would still have personnel that could fill in the rest of the rotation, such as Mike Clevinger, Shane Bieber, Triston McKenzie and Danny Salazar -- should the Indians tender the oft-injured right-hander a contract for 2019.

Carrasco, who will turn 32 in March, has one year and \$9.75 million left on his current deal, along with a \$9.5 million club option for 2020. He initially signed a four-year, \$22 million extension after his health scare relating to a heart condition in 2015.

Since '15, Carrasco has gone 60-36 with a 3.40 ERA over 119 outings while blossoming into one of the American League's elite starters. He's topped the 200-strikeout plateau three times in the past four seasons, including a career-best and team-high 231 in 2018, which was good for fourth most in the AL.

### **Takeaways from Tribe's revamped roster**

By Anthony Castrovince MLB.com @castrovince

CLEVELAND -- Here are three key things we learned about the Indians on Friday: Yan Gomes is gone, Danny Salazar is staying for at least a little while and Carlos Carrasco might be staying for a long while.

The big news, of course, was that the Tribe simultaneously completed a money-saving swap sending Gomes to the Nationals while tendering contracts to all of their remaining arbitration-eligible players. That means the star-crossed Salazar, who did not throw a pitch in 2018, will stay in the fold, as he and the Indians agreed to a one-year deal that MLB Network insider Jon Heyman reported to be worth \$4.5 million. The Indians also avoided arbitration with right-handers Neil Ramirez and Nick Goody and came to terms on a deal with infielder Eric Stamets.

Meanwhile, a source confirmed the Indians have had discussions with Carrasco about an extension that would keep him in Cleveland beyond the club's current contractual control through 2020. Though the deal may or may not actually get done, the talks serve as an intriguing subplot at a time when the Indians have been known to be listening to offers on their controllable starters, Carrasco included.

If the Indians do end up moving a starting pitcher, the soon-to-be-29-year-old Salazar's importance as a depth piece in either the rotation or the bullpen only grows. For now, the Indians felt him worthy of the gamble, given his pedigree as a 2016 All-Star, despite him missing '18 with a right shoulder issue that led to a surgery to clean up inflammation in July. Various arm and shoulder issues limited Salazar, who made \$5 million in 2018, to 240 1/3 innings in 2016-17.

"Danny continues to progress well in his rehab at this point," Indians president Chris Antonetti said. "We've all seen what he's capable of doing when he's healthy. Hopefully he can be a contributing member of our pitching staff next year."

Ramirez, like Salazar, is a bit of a gamble, as his effectiveness in the Indians' bullpen waned considerably as 2018 evolved. He went from not allowing a run in 12 1/3 innings in the month of June and filling a valuable setup role to posting a 6.10 ERA in the second half and not making the American League Division Series roster.

"For a while in that time when our bullpen was really struggling Neil and Oliver Perez came in and really stabilized it," Antonetti said. "Hopefully he's on the path to being a regular contributor for us moving forward."

The arbitration cases of Lindor and Bauer, both of whom are projected by MLB Trade Rumors to see their 2019 salaries jump into the eight-figure range, are a big reason why the Indians are being especially careful with how they allocate their resources this offseason and why they've deemed trading established talent from the Major League roster to be necessary.

But if a Carrasco extension does get completed, that would yank him off the trade table in an offseason in which his name -- along with those of Bauer and two-time AL Cy Young Award winner Corey Kluber -- has been bandied about quite a bit. For now, Carrasco is due to make \$9.75 million in 2019, and the Indians hold a 2020 club option on him with a base value of \$9.5 million.

Antonetti would not comment on the state of negotiations with Carrasco or with other clubs about the Tribe's starters.

"We're in the fortunate position to have a lot of players on our team that other teams value," he said. "It leads to a lot of conversations this time of year."

In other roster news on a busy Friday, the Indians non-tendered James Hoyt, a reliever they had acquired in a minor trade with the Astros midseason. Hoyt had a 10.13 ERA in 2 2/3 innings at Triple-A Columbus and dealt with a knee injury.

### **Bauer extremely logical about his trade value**

By Anthony Castrovince MLB.com @castrovince

CLEVELAND -- One big bit of Hot Stove hubbub surrounding the Indians this week was a tweet from USA Today's Bob Nightengale reporting that the Indians are "much more inclined to trade Trevor Bauer than Corey Kluber or Carlos Carrasco."

The reason, Nightengale explained, is that Bauer -- who has two rounds of arbitration remaining before free agency -- carries less cost certainty than Carrasco and Kluber, who are already signed to locked-in extensions (Carrasco through 2020, Kluber through '21). Because the budget-conscious Indians don't know exactly how high Bauer's salary could escalate by '20, it might make sense to prioritize moving him.

Well, one baseball analyst thinks trading Bauer right now is a terrible idea: Bauer.

No, it's not a sentimental situation in which Bauer is too emotionally tied to the Tribe to be rational. On the contrary: Bauer, true to form, breaks down his own trade value in a cold, calculated and unusually detached manner.

"There's a lot of reasons I think that [the Indians should not trade me]," Bauer said on MLB Network's "Hot Stove" show Thursday. "Ultimately, I think the surplus value on me this year is just way too high. Even with an arbitration raise, you're probably talking about \$15 to \$20 million of surplus value."

What is Bauer talking about here?

Surplus value is the backbone of baseball trades in our increasingly analytical era. Every team has its own proprietary means of calculating surplus value, but we can do our own quick and dirty math right here.

Bauer was worth 6.1 Wins Above Replacement in 2018, according to the FanGraphs calculation -- even though his innings were limited to 175 1/3 by the stress fracture in his right leg after he was struck by a comebacker in August. Bauer made \$6.525 million.

To calculate surplus value, you've got to ascribe some sort of dollar value to a "win." A reasonable estimate in the current marketplace is \$9 million (even if it's too high, all that matters is that it is used as a constant for all players being analyzed to keep the playing field level). If we multiply Bauer's 6.1 WAR by 9, we guesstimate that he was worth \$54.9 million to the Indians in 2018. Subtract his actual earnings from that total, and you have a calculation of what he was worth over and above what the Indians paid for him -- his surplus value.

With that in mind, here are the surplus values for the three starters in question in 2018:

Bauer (6.1 WAR, \$6.525M salary): \$48.375M (Bauer's estimate of his own worth may have been on the shallow side)  
Kluber (5.9 WAR, \$10.7M salary): \$42.4M  
Carrasco (5.3 WAR, \$8M salary): \$39.7M

"I think of the starters that they were talking about trading -- Kluber, Carrasco and me -- I think all of us bring a tremendous return," Bauer said. "So I think you can get a very similar package of players in return in a trade. But I think me and Carrasco have the largest surplus value going into this year."

We're not smart enough to know how any of these pitchers will perform in 2019, and Bauer's salary is not yet settled. But just for the sake of discussion, let's use MLB Trade Rumors' best guess at Bauer's salary and last year's WAR numbers for a frame of reference. This is what the 2019 surplus values would look like:

Bauer (6.1WAR, \$11.6M salary): \$43.3M  
Kluber (5.9 WAR, \$17M salary): \$36.1M  
Carrasco (5.3 WAR, \$9.75M salary): \$37.95M

That backs up Bauer's point. Most players will see a decline in surplus value as their salaries escalate, but, as you can see, the decline could be steepest with Kluber, who gets a big raise in 2019 as a result of Cy Young Award-voting escalators that were built into his contract (his club options for '20 and '21 are worth \$17.5M and \$18M, respectively).

And when taking a stab at the 2019 WAR estimates, keep in mind that Bauer is entering his age-28 season, has pitched 904 regular-season innings in the big leagues and nearly cut his ERA in half from 2017 to '18. So his arrow would appear to be pointed upward, while Carrasco (age 32, 1,094 1/3 innings) and Kluber (age 33, 1,306 innings) are less likely to have an uptick in performance.

Of course, if Bauer does replicate or even improve upon his 6.1 WAR from 2018 in the coming year, his price tag for 2020 -- his final arbitration season before free agency -- will be substantial. And Bauer has already made it known publicly that he intends to sign one-year contracts in free agency at max value, which means there is very little chance of him remaining with the Indians in '21.

"In 2020," said Bauer, "when my salary raises up to like the \$20 million range, then the surplus value isn't nearly as much. And they're most likely not going to be able to sign me in free agency, even on one-year deals. So it would make sense to trade me and get some prospects in return."

So Bauer actually provided very good reasons why the Indians should and shouldn't trade him.

They shouldn't trade Bauer because in 2019 -- on a team that still expects to be built to win -- he likely represents the most upside and the best performance-to-paycheck ratio of the three most established members of the starting staff.

They should trade Bauer because -- unlike Carrasco and Kluber -- the cost of doing business in 2020 (by which point, it must be noted, the competitive field in the AL Central could evolve substantially) is an unknown, and the current upside and projected surplus value make him arguably the best trade chip of the three. Plus, he's gone in two years, no matter what they do in the trade market.

The Indians' needle-threading situation -- trying to pare payroll while injecting a built-to-win ballclub with younger, cost-controlled players -- is fascinating, and the decision whether to actually pull the trigger on a trade involving one of these three starters will be the most pivotal one made by Chris Antonetti, Mike Chernoff and Co. this winter.

That one of the three is weighing in on the situation with such casual lucidity adds value -- maybe even surplus value -- to the conversation.

### **These top prospects could draw trade interest**

By Mike Rosenbaum, Jim Callis and Jonathan Mayo MLB.com Nov. 29th, 2018

A pair of American League teams got together last week to make the first major trade of the offseason, as the Mariners dealt ace James Paxton to the Yankees in exchange for a three-prospect package headlined by left-hander Justus Sheffield, the former New York top prospect who now ranks No. 1 on the Mariners' Top 30.

And with rumors now circulating about the Mets' possible willingness to part with some of their top prospects, it seems increasingly likely that there will be even more young talent dealt as the offseason unfolds -- especially with the Winter Meetings on the horizon and a blockbuster class of free agents yet to sign.

Of course, trades involving highly touted prospects for big leaguers such as the recent Yankees-Mariners deal usually happen between a competitive, win-now team and one that's rebuilding.

So which prospects are realistic candidates to be traded this offseason? Here is a look at one player from each organization.

AL Central

Aaron Civale, RHP, Indians No. 18

Civale's strikeout numbers dipped in his first Double-A campaign, and he also spent a month on the disabled list with right shoulder soreness. But the 2016 third-rounder once again demonstrated plus control (1.8 walks per nine innings) with strong ground-ball tendencies. Provided he's healthy, the 23-year-old right-hander has a realistic chance of contributing as a backend starter or long reliever.

### **Cleveland Indians avoid arbitration with Danny Salazar and Neil Ramirez; tender contracts to Francisco Lindor, Trevor Bauer**

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com jnoga@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Danny Salazar has agreed to terms on a one-year deal with the Cleveland Indians, avoiding arbitration for \$4.5 million according to reports, and ending speculation that the club might cut ties with the oft-injured former All-Star.

Meanwhile, the Indians offered contracts to three arbitration-eligible players prior to Friday's 8 p.m. non-tender deadline, including All-Stars Francisco Lindor and Trevor Bauer and pitcher Cody Anderson.

The club also reached a \$1 million deal with reliever Neil Ramirez while avoiding arbitration with reliever Nick Goody and infielder Eric Stamets. The Salazar and Ramirez deals were first reported by MLB Network insider John Heyman.

Right-handed reliever James Hoyt, acquired by Cleveland in a July trade with Houston, was the only arbitration-eligible player on the Indians' 40-man roster that was not tendered a contract offer, but president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said late Friday that the club is hopeful that it can re-sign Hoyt and keep him in the organization.

Salazar made \$5 million in 2018 but did not appear in a game for Cleveland after a sore right shoulder led to season-ending surgery. Goody appeared in 12 games before an elbow injury ended his season in May.

Antonetti said Salazar continues to make progress in his rehab program.

"We've all seen what he's capable of doing when he's healthy," Antonetti said of Salazar. "We think he's on a good path and are hopeful that he can be a contributing member of our pitching staff next year."

Ramirez, a spring training invitee, paired with Oliver Perez to rescue a struggling Indians bullpen midway through the season. He appeared in 47 games with a 4.54 ERA, throwing 41⅓ innings and striking out 51. Ramirez pitched some meaningful innings for the Indians, according to Antonetti.

"We felt last year was a step forward in his development," Antonetti said. "Hopefully he's on the path to being a regular contributor for us. He's got good stuff and we've seen what he's capable of doing when he's right and at his best."

Goody also continues to progress in his recovery, according to Antonetti.

"He's thrown off the mound a couple of times already out in Arizona," Antonetti said. "We're hopeful that he can continue on the path he's on and be healthy for us at the start of the season."

Lindor and Bauer both stand to earn significant raises based on their performances in 2018 if their cases go to arbitration in February. Lindor, who earned \$675,000 in 2018, is expected to challenge the \$10.85 million record awarded to Chicago's Kris Bryant in his first year of arbitration eligibility. Bauer, who won his arbitration case for \$6.525 million in 2018, could see his salary jump to a projected \$11.6 million according to MLBTraderumors.com.

Anderson has not pitched in the big leagues since 2016. He earned \$675,000 last season and appeared in a handful of minor-league rehab games in Arizona as he recovered from elbow surgery.

In October, manager Terry Francona left open the possibility that both Salazar and Anderson could contribute in bullpen roles, though he said both would be conditioned as starting pitchers.

"I fall back on if a guy is good, his innings are going to help us win, regardless of where he ends up pitching," Francona said. "If he's a good pitcher, we'll all be happy to figure that out. That will be a heck of a lot more fun than sending him to Arizona for rehab."

### **Cleveland Indians trade catcher Yan Gomes to Washington Nationals for three players; restructuring of team payroll has begun**

By Paul Hoynes, [cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com](mailto:cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – The reworking of the Indians' salary structure has begun.

The Indians traded catcher Yan Gomes to the Washington Nationals on Friday night. The Indians will receive minor-league outfielder Daniel Johnson, right-hander Jefry Rodriguez and a player to be named.

Gomes will make \$7 million in 2019. He has club options for 2020 and 2021.

With Gomes gone, it's expected the Indians will trade starting pitchers Corey Kluber or Trevor Bauer sometime this winter. They are reportedly in negotiations with Carlos Carrasco to extend his contract beyond his 2020 club option. If they do that, Carrasco will stay.

The Tribe played last season with a franchise-record \$135 million payroll. They watched 12 players dive into the free agent market, but said they received no salary relief because of arbitration costs and raises due players with multiyear deals. That left them with little choice but to trade away pieces of a team that has won three straight AL Central titles. Gomes was the first on to go. Kluber or Bauer are expected to be the next.

The trade of Gomes leaves Roberto Perez and rookie Eric Haase as the Tribe's top two catchers. The Indians, however, could add another catcher if they trade Kluber or Bauer.

"We feel we have two regular catchers within the organization at the major league level and now Roberto will have an opportunity to step in and be that regular guy," said Chris Antonetti, Indians president of baseball operations. "He's done that for us over the course of the past few seasons when Yan's been injured. He's demonstrated that ability to lead our pitching staff. He's caught some of the most meaningful games that we've played over the last five or six years. Including that run in the 2016 postseason."

Perez, with Gomes recovering from a broken hand, was the starting catcher in the Tribe's postseason run to Game 7 of the World Series in 2016.

MLB.com ranked Johnson as Washington's seventh-best prospect. Johnson, 23, is a left-handed hitter who has played center and right field. Last season Washington's fifth-round pick in 2014 hit .267 (95-for-356) with six homers and 31 RBI at Class AA Harrisburg.

He has speed and a strong throwing arm.

"Daniel Johnson has a very good combination of power and speed," said Antonetti. "He's capable of playing all three spots in the outfield. Spent most of the time in center and right. We believe he has a chance to contribute and help us at the major league level at some point over the next few years."

Rodriguez, 25, appeared in 14 games, including eight starts, for the Nationals last season. He went 3-3 with a 5.71 ERA. In 52 innings, he struck out 39, walked 37 and allowed 43 hits. He made 19 starts while bouncing between Harrisburg and Class AAA Syracuse, going 7-5 with 102 strikeouts in 100 2/3 innings.

"He has an above-average fastball and curveball with a developing changeup," said Antonetti. "We think he can come into spring training with a chance to compete for a spot on our pitching staff. And if he doesn't make that, he again adds to our upper level pitching depth and could be a contributor for us next year."

Antonetti said the Indians should receive the player to be named well before the start of the 2019 season.

Kluber will make \$17 million in 2019. He's club options for 2020 and 2021. Bauer is projected to make \$11.6 million in arbitration this winter. Kluber won 20 games for the first time in his career last season. Bauer ranked second in the AL with a 2.21 ERA and struck out 221 batters in only 175 1/3 innings.

When asked if he anticipated trading Kluber or Bauer, he said, "I have no idea. Where we are right now is at the early stages of the offseason in which we're focused on trying to build a team that's capable of winning another American League Central Division title in 2019, but is also positioned for success beyond that. As I've shared with you in the past, we're in a fortunate position that we have a lot of players on our team that other teams value. And that leads to a lot of conversations this time of year."

Regarding a possible extension for Carrasco, he said, "Nothing really to report on that. We're focused on this trade and some of the other things we've already announced."

The Indians had until 8 p.m. Friday to offer contracts to players including Bauer, Francisco Lindor, Nick Goody and Danny Salazar, Neil Ramirez and Cody Anderson. They reached one-year, non-guaranteed deals with Goody, Salazar and Ramirez to avoid arbitration. Bauer, Lindor and Anderson were tendered contracts.

Gomes is coming off an All-Star season in which he hit .266 with 16 homers and 48 RBI. He's signed through 2019 with club options for 2020 and 2021. He will make \$7 million in 2019.

Perez, who is playing winter ball in the Dominican Republic, is coming off the worst season in his career. Haase made his big-league debut in September after hitting .236 (102-for-433) with 20 homers and 71 RBI at Class AAA Columbus.

The Tribe considered catching a position of strength, which is why it made the trade. But they could use some help behind the plate especially after trading top catching prospect Francisco Mejia to San Diego for relievers Brad Hand and Adam Cimber in July.

"We realized we've lost some depth in that area, but we do feel good with the guys we have going into camp," said Antonetti. "I would expect that over the course of the winter it's an area will look to add depth if at all possible."

Antonetti acquired Gomes in a great under-the-radar deal with Toronto in November of 2012. Acting on a tip from then bullpen coach Kevin Cash, he acquired Gomes and Mike Aviles from the Blue Jays for right-hander Esmil Rogers. Gomes was a utility man for the Blue Jays, but soon beat out Carlos Santana for the starting catcher's job.

"Yan has been such an important member of our organization since the time we acquired him in 2012," said Antonetti. "In that time since we acquired Yan, we've had the opportunity to watch him grow and develop from an unheralded Triple-A corner utility player to an All-Star caliber major league catcher. He's been an instrumental part of our team and our success and helped lead us to the best record in the American League over the past six years. . .He and his wife, Jenna, who made so many contributions to the Cleveland community in their time here will definitely be missed."

### **Cleveland Indians could trade Yan Gomes to Nationals; Neil Ramirez signs 1-year deal to avoid arbitration**

By Paul Hoynes, [cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com](mailto:cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – The Indians are talking about trading catcher Yan Gomes to the Nationals. The talks have traction.

The Nationals just signed veteran catcher Kurt Suzuki so perhaps they're looking for a strong one-two punch behind the plate because they're both right-handed hitters. The Indians need help in the bullpen and outfield.

UPDATE: The Indians have traded Gomes to Washington for minor leaguers Daniel Johnson, Jefry Rodriguez and a player to be named later.

In other news, the Indians are reportedly talking about a contract extension for right-hander Carlos Carrasco. The Indians just exercised Carrasco's 2019 option, and he has another option for 2020. The Indians have been talking about trading one of their three top starters – Corey Kluber, Trevor Bauer or Carrasco. If they signed Carrasco to an extension that would probably take him off the market.

The Indians must decide by 8 p.m. Friday if they are going to offer contracts to their playes who are eligible for arbitration – Trevor Bauer, Francisco Lindor, Nick Goody and Danny Salazar. Neil Ramirez came off that list Friday when he signed a one-year, \$1 million deal. They were close to coming to terms with Goody on a similar deal. They were also trying to negotiate a deal with Salazar, who made \$5 million last season but didn't appear in a game because of a sore right shoulder that eventually needed surgery.

Ramirez appeared in 47 games last season, going 0-3 with a 4.54 ERA. He struck out 51 and walked 18 in 41 2/3 innings.

Goody missed much of the season after hyper-extending his right elbow. He needed surgery, but reportedly has been doing well on his throwing program.

Gomes is coming off an All-Star season in which he hit .266 with 16 homers and 48 RBI. He's signed through 2019 with club options for 2020 and 2021. He will make \$7 million in 2019.

If the Indians trade Gomes that could give them payroll relief.

The Indians have catchers Roberto Perez and Eric Haase behind Gomes on their depth chart. Perez, who is playing winter ball in the Dominican Republic, is coming off the worst season in his career. Haase made his big league debut in September after hitting .236 (102-for-433) with 20 homers and 71 RBI at Class AAA Columbus.

The Tribe considers catching a position of strength, but without Gomes they could use some help behind the plate. Especially after trading top catching prospect Francisco Mejia to San Diego for relievers Brad Hand and Adam Cimber in July.

### **Omar Vizquel to headline Lake County Captains Hot Stove Dinner**

By Marc Bona, [cleveland.commbona@cleveland.com](mailto:cleveland.commbona@cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Tickets go on sale Saturday, Dec. 1, for the Lake County Captains Hot Stove Dinner, which will feature former Indians shortstop Omar Vizquel.

The dinner is 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5, at Holiday Inn Mentor in the Lakeshore Ballroom, 7701 Reynolds Road, Mentor.

Pre-sale-only tickets are \$75 (\$65 for ages 4-12.) A table for eight is \$600. Individual tickets holders will seat themselves upon arrival. The event will include an upscale buffet dinner, soft drinks, cash bar and question-and-answer session with Vizquel.

VIP Experience is 5:30-6:30 p.m. and limited to 50 attendees. Tickets are \$100 (children or adults). VIP tickets include a pre-event reception with hors d'oeuvres, two drink tickets, and meet-and-greet with Vizquel.

Other speakers will be announced, but Vizquel is the headliner. Vizquel will sign one autograph per person, time permitting. Bob Wickman spoke at this year's Hot Stove Dinner.

Vizquel played 11 of his 24 Major League seasons with Cleveland. He won 11 Gold Glove awards, hit .272, and amassed 2,877 hits. He received 37 percent of the vote for Hall of Fame inclusion this year. A player needs 75 percent to get in. The dinner, which usually sells out, includes a 50-50 raffle and Chinese auction of Captains, Indians, Browns and other memorabilia, with proceeds benefiting Captains Charities.

For tickets, go online or call Tim O'Brien at 440-975-8085, ext. 136.

The Captains open the 2019 season Thursday, April 4, at Classic Park against the Great Lakes Loons.

### **Trevor Bauer says this is the wrong time for the Cleveland Indians to trade him**

By Paul Hoynes, [cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com](mailto:cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – The Indians have been talking about trading one of their three top starting pitchers – Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco or Trevor Bauer – since the end of the 2018 season.

Kluber is the flagship starter, with two Cy Young awards. But it has been suggested that Bauer might be the pitcher the Indians are really trying to move. He's the youngest of three at 27 and may have the most upside.

But some say this would not be a good time to trade Bauer. One of those people is Bauer, himself.

Speaking on MLB Network's Hot Stove program Thursday morning, Bauer said, "Of the starters they were thinking about trading – Kluber, Carrasco and me – I think all of us bring a tremendous return. So, I think you can get a very similar package of players in return regardless of who you trade. I think Carrasco and me have the largest surplus value going into this year. So that's why I said that."

Bauer was referring to one of his Tweets earlier this month in which he responded to a fan by saying, "And let's be honest. It makes no sense to trade me this year. I'm still playing at a massive discount. Next year is when it would make sense to trade me."

This year Bauer made \$6.525 million. He's projected to earn \$11.6 million in arbitration this winter. But based on his surplus value he contends he's still be a bargain in 2019.

Bauer said that could change headed into the 2020 season.

"In 2020, when my salary rate is up to about the \$20 million range, their surplus value isn't nearly as much," said Bauer. "And they're most likely not going to be able to sign me in free agency. Even on one-year deals. So, it would make sense to trade me and get some prospects in return."

Teams measure players by their surplus value to set guidelines for trades.

Bauer received a 5.7 WAR (wins above replacement) from Baseball-Reference.com last season even though he missed significant time with a stress fracture in his right leg. Each team puts its own value on a win. If that number is \$8 million, then Bauer's value to the Indians last season was worth \$45.6 million. Subtract his actual 2018 salary from that total (\$6.525), and Bauer's surplus value to the Indians was just over \$39 million.

"Ultimately, I think the surplus value on me this year is just way too high (for the Indians to trade him)," said Bauer. "Even with an arbitration raise, you're probably talking about \$15 million to \$20 million of surplus value."

Bauer went 12-6 with a 2.21 ERA in 28 games, including 27 starts. He struck out 221 batters despite being on the disabled list from Aug. 12-Sept. 20. Kluber, who will pitch at 33 next year, went 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA in 33 starts. He finished third in the AL Cy Young voting. Carrasco, who will pitch at age 32, went 17-10 with a 3.38 ERA last year.

Normally, a team with the Indians' talented rotation would try to keep it together. But this winter they're entertaining offers in an effort to keep their payroll under control.

### **Indians trade catcher Yan Gomes to Nationals**

Associated Press

CLEVELAND -- The Indians traded one of their big arms -- from behind the plate

Cleveland, which has discussed moving right-handers Corey Kluber, Trevor Bauer and Carlos Carrasco in possible trades while restructuring its payroll, dealt All-Star catcher Yan Gomes to the Washington Nationals on Friday night.

In return, the three-time defending AL Central champions got right-handed pitcher Jefry Rodriguez, minor-league outfielder Daniel Johnson, and a player to be named. Team president Chris Antonetti called Johnson and Rodriguez "upper-level prospects" who should be able to help the Indians in the next few seasons.

Rodriguez, 25, appeared in 14 games for the Nats last season, going 3-3 with a 5.71 ERA in 52 innings. Johnson, 23, spent most of 2018 with Double-A Harrisburg.

The Gomes deal is unlikely to be the last move this offseason by the Indians, who followed up another strong regular season stretch run with a disappointing performance against Houston in the AL Division Series. Cleveland got swept, and with its window for contention possibly closing, the team is looking to fill some holes in the outfield and bullpen.

Cleveland may have to move Kluber, a two-time Cy Young Award winner, or Bauer to find help. Antonetti would not comment on any potential deals involving the right-handers.

"We're focused on trying to build a team that's capable of winning another American League Central Division title in 2019 but is also positioned for success beyond that," he said. "We're in a fortunate position that we have a lot of players on our team that other teams value. And that leads to a lot of conversations this time of year. I wouldn't want to get into any speculation around that.

"We do view our starting pitching to be a strength of our team and our organization and that's something we place a great deal of value on."

Antonetti declined to discuss possible negotiations on a new contract with Carrasco. The Indians exercised their \$9.75 million option on Carrasco in October, and the club also had a 2020 option on the 31-year-old.

Cleveland also reached agreement with right-handers Danny Salazar, Nick Goody and Neil Ramirez as well as infielder Eric Stamets on contracts for next season. The team was facing a deadline to offer contracts to unsigned players on the 40-man roster.

Salazar, who underwent season-ending shoulder surgery in July, will make \$4.5 million. The Indians believe he can fill one of their relief openings.

Ramirez will make \$1 million. After spending the first six weeks at Triple-A Columbus, Ramirez joined the Indians in June and helped stabilize the bullpen.

Goody will make \$675,000. He was limited to 12 games this year before elbow surgery.

The Nationals went into the offseason in need of a new catcher -- and now have two new ones. They also signed 35-year-old free agent Kurt Suzuki to a \$10 million, two-year contract last week.

Washington needed an upgrade after Matt Wieters batted under .240 in each of the past two seasons as the primary catcher.

Gomes has been a steady player -- on and off the field -- for Cleveland since coming over from Toronto in 2012. The 31-year-old had one of his best offensive seasons in 2018, batting .266 with a career-high 26 doubles, 16 homers and 48 RBIs in 112 games. He was also excellent behind the plate and got selected an AL All-Star for the first time.

Gomes will make \$7 million next season and his contract includes club options for 2020 at \$9 million with a \$1 million buyout and for 2021 at \$11 million.

"The Nationals have expressed consistent interest in Yan throughout the offseason," Antonetti said. "They're one of a handful of teams that expressed interest in him. The catching position was an interesting one. There were a number of teams that were seeking to upgrade their alternatives at catcher and there were also a number of alternatives on the market in both free agency and trades. That was the dynamic we were navigating at the start of the offseason. It got to a point on a deal that we thought made sense for us."

Gomes' departure leaves the Indians with Roberto Perez and rookie Eric Haase as their primary catchers, and Antonetti said it's possible the club will look to add depth at catcher this winter.

The Nationals also agreed to a \$850,000, one-year deal with left-hander Sammy Solis, who struggled in 2018. He had a 6.41 ERA in 56 games.

### **Cleveland Indians trade Yan Gomes, but what matters most is what comes next**

By Zack Meisel Nov 30, 2018 37

CLEVELAND — The doors were closed. The lights were out. Three reporters huddled outside of the visitors clubhouse in Minneapolis, attempting to confirm whether their ears were playing tricks on them.

Nope. "Circle of Life" and "Hakuna Matata," a pair of "The Lion King" anthems, blared from the room full of Indians players.

The team hosted a sacrifice to the baseball gods in honor of Yan Gomes that Saturday afternoon in July 2016. The catcher, clad in a white sheet, stabbed a rotisserie chicken purchased earlier that day at a Target a few blocks from the ballpark. Everyone cheered. Gomes then struck a piñata. Typical clubhouse goings-on.

Gomes' teammates wanted to try anything to help him break out of his season-long funk at the plate. The next day, he promptly stumbled over first base and separated his shoulder, triggering a 10-week stint on the disabled list.

No, Gomes' tenure in Cleveland wasn't perfect. He stumbled here and there. But even when his bat wasn't functioning properly, he provided plenty behind the plate. When Corey Kluber captured his first Cy Young Award in 2014, he dragged his most trusted co-pilot to New York with him for the acceptance of the hardware.

Only four catchers in Tribe history slugged more home runs than Gomes, who swiped the starting gig from Carlos Santana during the club's mad dash to the Wild Card Game in 2013.



Now the position belongs to Roberto Pérez and Eric Haase. Chris Antonetti contended that the Indians dealt from a unit of strength when they traded Gomes to the Nationals for a couple of prospects and a player to be named later. It's more than fair to question that, of course, given Pérez's profound struggles at the dish, Haase's lack of experience and the dearth of depth behind those two.

Francisco Mejía isn't walking through that door.

"We realize we've lost some depth in that area," Antonetti said, "but we do feel good with the guys we have going into camp. I would expect that over the course of the winter it's an area we'll look to add depth if at all possible."

Really, this trade only underscores the prevailing headline of the Indians' offseason. They can't simply dump a catcher, otherwise stand pat and assume they can hang with the Red Sox, Yankees and Astros. The deal Friday — in which the Indians acquired outfield prospect Daniel Johnson, right-handed pitcher Jefry Rodriguez and a player to be named later — highlights how critical it is for the Indians to make a second (and, perhaps, third) trade.

"The Nationals have expressed consistent interest in Yan throughout the offseason," Antonetti said. "They're one of a handful of teams that expressed interest in him. The catching position was an interesting one. There were a number of teams that were seeking to upgrade their alternatives at catcher and there were also a number of alternatives on the market in both free agency and trades. That was the dynamic we were navigating at the start of the offseason. It got to a point on a deal that we thought made sense for us."

And the deal seems ... odd. Rodriguez's arm has drawn rave reviews, but there's plenty of uncertainty involved. Johnson needs more time in the minors. The player to be named probably isn't Juan Soto or Max Scherzer, and it definitely isn't Bryce Harper.

The Indians didn't boost their chances of breaking their soon-to-be-71-year championship hex Friday. Using the \$7 million they saved by shedding Gomes' salary would be one step in the right direction. Swapping a starting pitcher for major league-ready talent, or finding a taker for Jason Kipnis or Yonder Alonso would be another.

The outfield still needs maintenance. Johnson spent last season at Class AA, so he's likely a year away. As it stands — assuming Michael Brantley signs elsewhere — the Indians would go to war with Leonys Martín, Greg Allen, Tyler Naquin, Jordan Luplow, Oscar Mercado and, once he's healthy, Bradley Zimmer manning the outfield.

While each player brings a certain degree of optimism to the table — Johnson and Luplow were their respective franchises' Minor League Player of the Year in 2017 — the theme for this group is "Quantity over Quality." And the Indians have needed quality in the outfield for years.

That's where the second domino comes into play. Might it be Gomes' companion, Kluber, in a deal for a bona fide outfielder? Or Trevor Bauer, perhaps? It appears as though the field has been narrowed to two starting pitchers, as The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal reported Friday that the Indians prefer to secure Carlos Carrasco to a contract extension rather than trade him.

The other alternative is to clear more salary off the books and locate solutions via free agency (Andrew McCutchen anyone?). Whatever route the Indians travel, their next move could define the next few years of the franchise. They can't afford to settle or stand still.

Otherwise, they might need to sacrifice another rotisserie chicken to the baseball gods to have a shot to win a World Series.

### **Indians trade Yan Gomes to Nationals for minor-leaguer Daniel Johnson**

By Jeff Schudel JSchudel@News-Herald.com @JSProInsider on Twitter 13 hrs ago Comments

The Indians have to give up something to get something, and on Nov. 30 they traded All-Star catcher Yan Gomes to the Washington Nationals for a player they hope will be their right fielder in years to come.

In the deal first reported by Jon Heyman of Fancred Sports, the Indians acquired minor-league right fielder Daniel Johnson, a 2015 fifth-round pick by the Nationals, known best for his speed on the bases.

The Indians also got right-handed pitcher Jefry Rodriguez and a player to be named later in a trade that will pay immediate dividends to the Nationals but one the Tribe is confident will pay off for them down the road.

"With this trade we feel we've acquired two upper-level prospects," Indians president Chris Antonetti said on a conference call. "Daniel Johnson is a left-handing hitting outfielder with a combination of power and speed.

"He is capable of playing all three sports in the outfield. He spent most of his time in center field and right field. We feel has a chance to contribute and help us at the Major League level over the next three years."

Johnson, 23, spent most 2018 with the Double-A Harrison Senators, a farm team of the Nationals in the Eastern League. He hit .267 with six home runs and 21 steals last season. He is projected to spend most of 2019 with the Indians Triple-A team in Columbus.

Rodriguez, 25, climbed from the Harrisburg Senators to the Triple-A Syracuse team to the Nationals last season.

Gomes was the Indians' primary catcher last season. He played in 112 games. He homered 16 times and drove in 48 runs while batting .266. He struck out 119 times and walked 21 times.

"Jefry Rodriguez has an above average fastball and curve ball developing changeup," Antonetti said. "We think he can come into spring training with a chance to compete for a spot on our pitching staff. If he doesn't make that he'll begin at our upper level pitching depth and be a contributor for us (in 2020)."

The trade clears the way for Roberto Perez to be the Indians primary catcher. Eric Haase gives the Tribe catching depth.

The trade for Daniels does not solve the Indians immediate outfield needs. Left fielder Michael Brantley is a free agent, center fielder Bradley Zimmer is recovering from shoulder surgery and right fielders Melky Cabrera are free agents. So is outfielder Brandon Guyer.

Leonys Martin and Tyler Naquin are expected to occupy two outfield spots next season.

### **TRIBE NOTES For the Indians, payment comes due for title that never was**

Jim Ingraham | The Chronicle-Telegram Published on Nov. 29, 2018 | Updated 8:27 a. m.

The Indians have run the race, and they've lost. Well, maybe not lost, but they didn't win it all. At least not with the cast they thought was capable of winning it all, which it was. But it didn't.

Now comes the next challenge. How do they execute a necessary reconfiguration of assets in order to maintain their place and stature in the championship hunt?

At this point, all we know for sure is that the Indians seem willing to trade one of their top three starting pitchers to fill a hole elsewhere on their roster — that Grand Canyon-sized crater in their outfield comes to mind — but also, reality being the grim reaper it so frequently is, because the Indians simply can't afford to employ indefinitely three starting pitchers as great as Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco and Trevor Bauer.

That, boys and girls, is the REAL tragedy of the lost opportunities to win the World Series in any of the last three years. The Indians had a World Series championship-caliber starting rotation all three years. Sure, there were some injuries, but that's all part of it.

On paper, the Indians' rotation was good enough to win the World Series at least once. But, for a variety of reasons, they didn't. And now they are forced to contemplate dismantling part of that rotation they worked so hard to assemble.

These are tricky times and complex maneuvers being contemplated by the Chris Antonetti Dance Company. Trading starting pitching in a market starved for it sounds like a seller's dream, which it is — but only to a point, beyond which it can become a dangerous game of roster roulette.

The latest hint that the Indians are apparently willing to push more chips to the center of the table than was previously believed, occurred with USA Today's Bob

Nightengale reporting that, according to teams talking to Cleveland, the Indians are more inclined to trade Bauer than Kluber or Carrasco, primarily for economic reasons.

Being proactive is never a pretty sight, but this is the reality the Indians, and other non-major market teams face. It hurts more and looks worse in the Indians' case, only because they have been so adroit, and worked so hard to construct a consistent winner, despite their financial limitations.

The trade of one of their top three starting pitchers, which at this point seems slightly more likely than unlikely, is by itself not an unreasonable strategy. The Indians do have a couple of major roster holes. They need an impact outfield bat and at least one, preferably two, dependable relievers.

One of those three starters could be used to address those needs. Kluber makes the most sense, because he's the oldest of the three and has the most impressive resume.

Bauer would be the most painful to trade. He's younger than the other two, and may one day have a portfolio every bit as extraordinary as Kluber's.

But there is only so much money under the mattress to go around, and the hard decisions Indians officials knew they would one day have to make, are now knocking on the door.

If there's a silver lining — and, let's face it, in Cleveland, we specialize in searching for silver linings — it's that the Indians, by reducing the Big Three by one, can presumably fortify another area of a roster that needs fortifying.

Small consolation there, however. Because, ideally, you'd prefer to keep riding the Kluber/Bauer/Carrasco road grader into postseasons until you finally win one. But that's apparently not going to happen.

Not only that, but what shouldn't happen is what might happen. If the Indians trade Bauer, they would potentially have to cope with the queasiness they would feel for having ushered him to the brink of stardom, only to have another team cash in on his peak years.

Those peak years are going to be pricy years, the kind of pricy that only teams such as the Yankees, Red Sox and Dodgers can afford.

Bauer is eligible for arbitration this winter and next winter, and he'll become a free agent after the 2020 season. There is probably no pitcher in the game more likely to become a free agent after the 2020 season than the ultra-confident Bauer, who knows there is a monster contract waiting for him in free agency. The Indians will have no chance — none — of keeping him beyond 2020.

So, as painful as it might be, why not trade him now? Or a year from now? The Indians can't afford to not trade him at some point. The only question is not why, but when?

Who knows? We may have already seen the last of the Indians' Big Three. They should have won a World Series with this rotation. But they didn't. And now, they probably won't.

Nationals acquire catcher Yan Gomes in trade with Indians

By Jesse Dougherty and Chelsea Janes November 30 at 7:11 PM

The Washington Nationals acquired all-star catcher Yan Gomes in a trade with the Cleveland Indians, the team announced Friday night. The Nationals will send the Indians right-handed pitcher Jefry Rodriguez, outfield prospect Daniel Johnson and a player to be named as they continue to be one of the most aggressive teams of the baseball offseason.

The addition of Gomes gives the Nationals a formidable catching duo, as the 31-year-old joins newly acquired Kurt Suzuki. The Nationals signed Suzuki to a two-year, \$10 million contract earlier in November, and it was unclear then what Suzuki's role would be on a team that got little offense from its catchers in 2018. Now it is expected that he and Suzuki will split starting duties and give the Nationals needed offensive production from that position.

The 25-year-old Rodriguez made eight starts and posted a 5.71 ERA for the Nationals in 2018. He also came out of the bullpen toward the end of the season, mostly because his innings count was much higher than the Nationals expected, and flashed potential with a high-90s fastball and sharp breaking ball. The Nationals don't have a ton of pitching depth at the moment, as they shop for a front-line starter in the free agent market, and Rodriguez's departure puts a higher emphasis on Joe Ross and Erick Fedde proving themselves as back-of-the-rotation arms.

Johnson, 23, was drafted by the Nationals in the fifth round of the 2016 draft and spent almost all of 2018 with the Class AA Harrisburg Senators. He hit .267 with six home runs, seven triples, 31 RBI and 21 steals in 89 games with the Senators and has been pegged as a strong outfielder with good speed on the base paths. The Nationals' current logjam in the outfield — with budding young stars in Juan Soto and Victor Robles, veteran Adam Eaton, a strong fourth option in Michael A. Taylor and possibly Bryce Harper if the star's free agency leads him back to Washington — makes Johnson a logical piece in the return for Gomes.

Gomes's current contract will pay him \$7.8 million in 2019 with club options for 2020 (\$9 million with a \$1 million buyout) and 2021 (\$11 million with a \$1 million buyout). Gomes made 111 starts at catcher for the Indians in 2018, hitting 16 home runs to go with 48 RBI while posting a .266 batting average and .762 on-base-plus-slugging percentage. He hit a career-high 21 home runs in 2014, his most productive season, and has maintained his power into the back half of his career.

Couple that with Suzuki's continued offensive success at 35 — a .271 average, 12 home runs and 50 RBI in 105 games last season — and the Nationals have made major upgrades behind the plate. Suzuki will be paid \$4 million in 2019; between the two catchers, the Nationals will spend about \$12 million for the upcoming season. Matt Wieters made \$10.5 million last season and, hampered by injuries, finished with a .238 average and eight home runs in 76 games.

The catching position gave the Nationals 12 home runs and 55 RBI in 622 plate appearances last season. Gomes, in his seventh major league season, hit four more home runs and drove in just seven fewer runs in 435 plate appearances. Suzuki, in his 12th year, had the same number of homers and only five fewer RBI in 388 plate appearances.

The Nationals have not wasted any time this offseason, one that could see Harper depart in free agency and leave a sizable offensive void to fill. They started by padding their bullpen by trading for Kyle Barraclough and then signing former all-star closer Trevor Rosenthal. They have also already asserted themselves into conversations regarding Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel and Nathan Eovaldi, the three top starting pitchers on the market, and may have strengthened their appeal given Gomes's reputation as a strong pitch framer.

The Gomes deal allows the Nationals to fully shift their attention to their remaining offseason objectives: signing or trading for a premier starter, assessing where they stand in the Harper sweepstakes, exploring another bullpen option and adding a left-handed-hitting first baseman, possibly among other pieces, to their bench. The catcher spot, after slowing the Nationals throughout a disappointing 82-80 season, won't be a worry for the foreseeable future.

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