



WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF JANUARY 19, 2018

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Inbox: Who replaces Rodon in the rotation?

Beat reporter Scott Merkin answers fans' questions

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / Jan. 18, 2018

CHICAGO -- Let's take a look at this week's Inbox questions, with SoxFest 2018 a little over one week away.

Do we have an option besides Carson Fulmer while we wait for Carlos Rodon? If not, are we expected to sign someone, or stick with Fulmer? I feel like we need one more veteran to eat innings.

-- Michael, @mike__prousa

Having another veteran who could move between the rotation and the bullpen is something I've mentioned a few times over the past month or so. I'm guessing that option would be someone not currently on the roster, or maybe a player already in the system with starting experience.

- Submit a question to the White Sox Inbox

Don't sleep on Fulmer, though, as I look for the right-hander to take full advantage of his starting opportunity. He worked his way through a tough 2017 season by finding great rhythm and confidence on the mound at the end, posting a 1.56 ERA over his last four starts.

The White Sox have a bunch of good right-handed pitching prospects. How long before we have a good idea which are going to be starters, which go to the bullpen and which should be traded?

-- Bob, Reading, UK, @bobito64

Year 2 of the rebuild centers on development, an unofficial theme general manager Rick Hahn has pointed out on a number of occasions. But that development also will give the White Sox a chance to see a little more of what they have in each of these prospects to make those decisions you've mentioned, Bob.

- Kopech could join rotation by midseason

Hahn's past comments have focused on giving a pitcher they view as a starter the chance to stay a starter as long as possible, but as things line up now, there seems to be a few too many quality-looking pitchers to fit into one rotation. It's a good problem to have if it plays out.

How about Mike Moustakas on a one-year deal to play third? If it works, then discuss long-term contract. Thanks, Scott.

-- Mike, Chicago Midway, @mikewalsh4609

The White Sox lack pure left-handed power, but I haven't heard any rumblings of the team's interest in the 30-year-old Moustakas. I like the combination of Yolmer Sanchez and Matt Davidson at third for this season.

Yes, they can be opportunistic at this stage of the rebuild. Then again, taking a one-year chance on a player who might leave even after a positive experience this season only becomes worth it if the White Sox ultimately envision him as part of their long-term plan. The White Sox certainly could surprise in '18, but this season is one year early for prime contention.

If Avisail Garcia plays like he did last season, what kind of return could we get at the [Trade Deadline]?
-- Stephen, Chicago, @slynch34

It's interesting that Garcia, who turns 27 during the 2018 season, is being looked at by many as trade potential as opposed to a part of the rebuild. That outlook is influenced by the White Sox having just two years of control over Garcia and a plethora of elite outfield prospects coming through the system. Another strong year from Garcia increases his value in a trade, but also within the organization.

What is a realistic debut date for Eloy Jimenez?
-- Joe, Midlothian, @jdwyer02

There's a chance Jimenez plays the whole 2018 campaign at the Minor League level, with 73 plate appearances for Double-A Birmingham in '17 marking his high point of competition. But Jimenez is the sort of elite player who should force the issue, so I'll say somewhere later in the season -- maybe August.

Meet the Prospects: Zack Collins

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / Jan. 18, 2018

The White Sox rebuild is in full swing. While it might still be a year or two before the big league team is expected to start competing for championships, the minor leagues are stocked with highly touted talent fans will be eagerly following in 2018. With that in mind, it's time to Meet the Prospects and get to know the future of the South Side.

Zack Collins

Collins, the 22-year-old catcher, has been projected as the White Sox catcher of the future since he was selected with the 10th overall pick in the 2016 draft.

A Florida native and University of Miami product, Collins initially was celebrated for his batting prowess and faced questions about his defensive abilities, only to improve with the glove in 2017 while he watched some offensive numbers slip a bit.

After joining the White Sox organization in 2016, Collins slashed .258/.418/.467 with six homers and 18 RBIs in 36 games at Class A Winston-Salem. In 2017, he played 101 more games at Winston-Salem, slashing .223/.365/.443 with 17 homers and 48 RBIs. He also played a dozen games at Double-A Birmingham, where he added a couple more homers and five more RBIs.

This offseason's signing of Welington Castillo installs a veteran backstop for two or three seasons at the big league level, meaning there's no rush for Collins to get to the majors.

As of their most recent rankings, MLB Pipeline had Collins rated as the No. 7 prospect in the White Sox organization.

WLS-AM's parent company asks court to end 'unprofitable' radio deals with White Sox, Bulls

By Phil Rosenthal / Chicago Tribune / Jan. 18, 2018

The radio rights of the White Sox and Bulls abruptly look to be up for grabs soon.

WLS-AM 890's parent company, Atlanta-based Cumulus Media, on Thursday said it has filed motions with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in New York seeking to get out from under "a handful of extremely unprofitable contracts, including those with the Chicago White Sox and the Chicago Bulls" and its deal to operate and eventually acquire Merlin Media's Chicago stations WKQX-FM 101.1 and WLUP-FM 97.9.

The White Sox are in the middle of a six-year deal with WLS-AM that began in April 2016. The Bulls are in a five-year agreement with the station that began in November 2016.

Cumulus said it expects the court to rule Feb. 1 on its requests concerning these and fewer than 20 of its more than 15,000 contracts.

"As part of our operational turnaround, we have been focused on taking proactive steps to address unprofitable areas of our business," Cumulus Chief Executive and President Mary G. Berner said in a statement. "We are taking this action because the economic terms of these legacy contracts guarantee that we lose money and, as such, continuing them in their current form is not in Cumulus's best interests."

“In many of these situations, we have been engaged in discussions with the counterparties to these agreements for months and have not been able to arrive at revised terms that work for both Cumulus and the counterparty. We will continue to take the necessary steps to strengthen our competitiveness and position Cumulus for continued profitability.”

Cumulus, whose Chicago holdings also include WLS-FM 94.7, has been operating WKQX and WLUP for former Chicago Tribune parent CEO Randy Michaels’ Merlin Media under a local marketing agreement (LMA) since 2014 and last October announced it was acquiring the stations.

“The company has determined that the legacy terms to acquire WKQX-FM and WLUP-FM in Chicago for approximately \$50 million is significantly in excess of the stations’ market value,” Cumulus said Thursday.

The trade publication Radio Ink on Thursday reported Cumulus, which has been paying Merlin a \$600,000 LMA fee per month, said the two stations have lost \$8.4 million since 2014. The court filing may lead to Michaels retaking control of the stations, it was reported.

“These contracts represent only a tiny fraction of the thousands of contracts that Cumulus has, and our relationships with the vast majority of our partners remain strong,” Berner said. “We look forward to continuing to deliver premium content choices to the 245 million people we reach each week across our collection of stations and Westwood One affiliates.”

Neither the White Sox nor Bulls have issued a statement concerning Cumulus’ action.
