



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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February 9, 2018

- Daily Herald, **Grimm loses arbitration case with Chicago Cubs**
<http://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20180208/grimm-loses-arbitration-case-with-chicago-cubs>
- The Athletic, **Letters from Camp: Jason Heyward breaks down what's going on with free agency**
<https://theathletic.com/235194/2018/02/08/letters-from-camp-jason-heyward-breaks-down-whats-going-on-with-free-agents/>
- The Athletic, **10 Questions: Can a slimmed-down Kyle Schwarber live up to lofty expectations in 2018?**
<https://theathletic.com/234888/2018/02/08/10-questions-can-a-slimmed-down-kyle-schwarber-live-up-to-lofty-expectations-in-2018/>
- Cubs.com, **Montgomery preparing for starting rotation**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cubs-mike-montgomery-prepared-to-start/c-266114288>
- Cubs.com, **Cubs reportedly win arbitration case with Grimm**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cubs-win-arbitration-case-with-grimm/c-266156742>
- Chicago Tribune, **Four positions Cubs must fill during spring training**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-roster-holes-spring-training-20180208-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Brewers to hold presale for Cubs games — for Wisconsin residents only**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-brewers-tickets-20180208-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs manager Joe Maddon invests in upcoming Wrigleyville restaurant**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-joe-maddon-20180208-story.html#nt=oft03a-1gp2>
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<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-justin-grimm-arbitration-20180208-story.html>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs win arbitration case against reliever Justin Grimm**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-win-arbitration-case-against-reliever-justin-grimm/>

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Daily Herald

Grimm loses arbitration case with Chicago Cubs

By Bruce Miles

It might have been the oddest salary-arbitration case in all of baseball this off-season.

While the Chicago Cubs quickly settled with five of their arbitration-eligible players -- including third baseman Kris Bryant, pitcher Kyle Hendricks and shortstop Addison Russell -- they went to a hearing with right-handed reliever Justin Grimm, who has had an up-and-down career so far.

On Thursday, word came down that the Cubs had won the case. Grimm will get \$2.2 million, not the \$2.475 he had sought.

This was the first salary-arbitration case to go to a hearing under the regime of team president Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer, who came here in the fall of 2011. It was the first hearing for the Cubs since then-GM Jim Hendry beat infielder Ryan Theriot in arbitration before the 2010 season.

Last season, Grimm went 1-2 with a 5.53 ERA and a WHIP of 1.34. He spent time at Class AAA Iowa during the season and did not appear in the playoffs. Grimm came to the Cubs in a July 2013 trade with the Texas Rangers.

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The Athletic

Letters from Camp: Jason Heyward breaks down what's going on with free agency

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. — Jason Heyward began to see this coming with the Atlanta Braves and the teardown of the franchise he followed as a kid growing up in Georgia. Heyward got another economics lesson when the St. Louis Cardinals went all-out trying to woo him both as a rental player and again in a free-agent bidding war. Heyward sensed the pressure points in Dexter Fowler taking only a one-year guarantee to return to the 2016 Cubs team that would make history.

“Someone’s making a statement,” Heyward said Thursday, analyzing the cold war between the Major League Baseball Players Association and the owners who clearly won the last round of labor negotiations.

It does feel like all talk and no action. Super-agent Scott Boras chats up reporters and delivers the money quotes that will make headlines, trying to drum up interest in high-profile clients like Jake Arrieta. Commissioner Rob Manfred’s office fires back with its own press release after union chief Tony Clark calls out the “race to the bottom.” The union prepares to organize a training camp in Florida for all the unsigned free agents in the middle of February.

“Maybe I’m different, but I’m honestly not that surprised,” Heyward said, standing in the Arizona sunshine in blue shorts and a light blue T-shirt, still sweaty after a long workout with his personal trainer at the Cubs’ complex. “Dealing with the team that I started with in Atlanta, you could kind of see them wanting to head that direction, with the way they were operating.

“[When] Dexter didn’t get signed right away, Ian Desmond — we’re talking about guys that had good seasons that helped teams win a lot of games — you just kind of gradually see that’s the way the game’s heading.

“They want to go young. They’re trying to — not force their hand — but pretty much let players know that, hey, we want you to take these deals that you get offered before free agency. And that’s kind of it. They’re just trying to make it harder. That’s a business move. There’s a business side of everything.”

Heyward — the son of two Dartmouth-educated parents and a former first-round pick who could have gone to UCLA — understood the system that gave him the biggest contract in franchise history.

Before the Braves started tanking, they made Heyward their Opening Day right fielder in 2010, watching him hit a three-run homer off Carlos Zambrano in the first inning of a 16-5 win over the Cubs at Turner Field. That burned the extra year of club control the Cubs saved by stashing Kris Bryant at Triple-A Iowa at the beginning of the 2015 season.

Heyward also cashed in with the data revolution that quantified his Gold Glove defense, making believers out of the new guard within front offices that analyzed the aging curve and didn't focus so much on homers and RBIs. The Cubs guaranteed eight years and \$184 million and didn't necessarily even make the biggest offer among a group that also included the Cardinals and Washington Nationals.

"You just got to be ready and be fortunate," Heyward said. "That's why I tell myself every day since I started: I was blessed to start at 20. In my mind, I was hoping to be with Atlanta for forever. And God had other plans for me. It didn't work out that way. But I still made it to free agency at 26.

"I feel like if there were other 26-year-old free agents [out there now], then teams would kind of look at it the same. You look at [Robinson] Cano and [Albert] Pujols — I feel like those are going to be your last big deals for guys that were around 30, because obviously it's hard not to pay them and reward them for what they've done.

"But right now, I feel like teams are looking at it like: 'Hey, we're really going to try and pay guys for what they're going to give us here going forward, and not just pay them for what they did for someone else.'"

The Cubs can justify Heyward's megadeal with their 2016 World Series rings — and only hope that his offseason work in Mesa with new hitting coach Chili Davis will spark a turnaround in the player who has a .669 OPS across the past two seasons and is 7-for-65 in his last 24 postseason games.

But the Cubs rationalized the \$184 million investment by thinking of it as adding another young core player — Heyward and Anthony Rizzo were born only one day apart in 1989 — and figuring that his body and skills wouldn't completely deteriorate in his late 20s.

It doesn't help Arrieta that he will be 32 by Opening Day, and win-now, big-spending teams like the Los Angeles Dodgers and New York Yankees feel more urgency to get under the \$197 million luxury-tax threshold.

"Naturally, people are used to things being a certain way," Heyward said. "A lot of guys that we're talking about that don't have jobs yet, they've done a lot of great things for the sport, and a lot of great things for cities.

"But when you look at the on-the-field resume and they're sitting there like, 'OK, well, I don't have a job yet' or 'I only have a conversation' ... it feels disrespectful to them.

"It's just a tough reality. It looks like it's going to be the new thing, so to speak. The game changes year to year. If you had told us that we would have had replay and slide [rules] when I came [up] in 2010, you probably would have been like, 'Yeah, right.'

"Some people may not like it, but we have to adjust."

Whatever decision Yu Darvish ultimately makes, it's easy to see the Cubs winning the staredown by getting a good starting pitcher at their price, living up to the promises that have made this such an attractive destination.

"The front office here, they're never going to stop trying to win," Heyward said, "especially while we have certain guys in place. But as far as moves go, who knows what's going to happen? We can't expect that. All we know is the cards we're dealt. And we got some pretty good cards around here."

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The Athletic

10 Questions: Can a slimmed-down Kyle Schwarber live up to lofty expectations in 2018?

By Sahadev Sharma

Trying to live up to lofty expectations isn't always easy. Theo Epstein was able to do so by taking over an organization starving for a culture change and delivering on a promise to make the Cubs perennial contenders. The Cubs as a team were able to live up to grand forecasts for almost all of 2016, coming out of the gates blistering hot and finishing off a dream season in dramatic fashion.

But it rarely works out so smoothly. Coming into 2017, there was much hype surrounding Kyle Schwarber. The focus was placed on Schwarber's .412/.500/.471 slash line in 20 World Series plate appearances and the offensive potential he oozed every time he stepped to the plate. That he entered the season as a 24-year-old with just 278 plate appearances under his belt and an entire season of development missed due to a catastrophic knee injury was brushed to the side. Far too many seemed to ignore that fact, myself included. Even Joe Maddon suggested as much.

"I'm really eager to watch him play," Maddon recently said. "I'm not going to say anything more than that because last year I said all that crazy stuff, I said stupid things at the beginning of the year that probably negatively impacted him. Kyle's a solid human being and he's going to have a great year."

Maddon, like many of us, had very high expectations for Schwarber heading into last season. Perhaps unrealistically so. But when you think about what he was able to do in the World Series, coming in after missing an entire season with a major injury and making pitchers like Corey Kluber and Andrew Miller look eminently hittable, it's hard not to get carried away.

What happened last year to Schwarber was actually rather complex. There was the obvious — and often overlooked — issue of missing a year of development and coming back from a major injury. Then there was the fact that as the early struggles continued to mount, Schwarber began to overthink things and started to press at the plate, which only led to him digging a deeper hole for himself.

Physical issues helped lead to mental issues, which culminated in Schwarber's first-half struggles and eventual demotion to the minors. Schwarber's .673 OPS prior to being sent down to Triple-A was rough. He'd get ahold of a pitch every now and then, but those hard-hit balls lined all over the field that we saw so often his rookie season and during the World Series were just not nearly as frequent. But there were times he looked just a hair off from really driving a pitch.

"Hitting is such a fine line," Epstein said last month. "There were so many balls last year that he just clipped and fouled back. Balls that maybe in the past he'd have driven. If he's a little bit more athletic, it can only help. And another year removed from his knee issues."

Earlier in the offseason, I wrote about how Schwarber's swinging-strike rate (12.2 percent) didn't match up with his 30.9 percent strikeout rate. One of the reasons I determined he may have such a high strikeout rate was because he was fouling off so many pitches. It's not always a bad thing as it means the batter is often keeping an at-bat alive by spoiling a pitch while driving up the pitch count. However, in Schwarber's case, it appears more often than not, he was missing the pitch he wanted to drive.

While much of the focus on Schwarber's offseason workouts has been on his increased athleticism and quickness, there's a good chance this could also lead to positives on the offensive side as well. Perhaps that split second he needs to be on top of those pitches he was barely missing last year will be gained by this offseason's commitment to reshaping his body. As Epstein said, it was a "lifestyle change." One that could be a turning point in Schwarber's career.

"We were actually getting ready to ask him to do it and had some goals in mind," Epstein said. "But he came to see us before we had a chance to meet him. He laid out his goals for the offseason and how he was going to accomplish them. It was exactly what we had in mind, we're really supportive of his efforts. We've talked about some of these things in the past. Getting more flexible, getting in good shape that will allow him to be more effective in the outfield. He's had a whole lifestyle change and you can't be forced into that. That has to come when you're ready for it. He's putting everything into this lifestyle change. The way he eats, the way he sleeps, the way he trains, the way he lives his life day to day. The type of changes that can allow you to have a really long career, maximize your career."

Schwarber's offensive ceiling once seemed limitless. Scouts were always divided about what his ultimate role would be and some just didn't see enough value in the bat to atone for what they felt would always be well-below average defense. But others gushed about his potential. We know the Cubs brass has always been high on Schwarber, both the potential with his bat and what they saw as a unique and special work ethic. A drive that leads to offseasons like the one Schwarber had this year.

"Just give the guy credit," Maddon said. "Obviously he didn't like the way last year went down and he did something about it. Did you expect him not to? That's who he is. He's attacked it with a verve that's kind of unmatched."

That type of makeup is what leads those who remain very optimistic about Schwarber's future to be so confident. Those who were high on Schwarber's offensive potential, both inside and outside the organization, always saw a special talent. A player who could hit .300, post a walk rate above 10 percent and slug 40-plus home runs.

But last year showed the risk in betting on a player whose value comes almost exclusively from his bat. What Schwarber has done this offseason is attempt to reduce that risk. By changing his body, he hopes to improve his athleticism with the goal of making an average to slightly above-average offensive season more impressive by providing greater value with his glove and on the basepaths. And of course, perhaps being in tip-top shape will turn some of those hittable pitches he was barely fouling off into line drives in the gap or over the fence.

It's rare that a player is a finished product by 25. Yet far too often, we want to make grand conclusions on what a player is and will be based almost solely on the most recent information. That new information is surely valuable, but it's not all that should be considered. A year ago, Schwarber was a trendy sleeper pick for MVP. Nine months later, many were wondering whether he could even be much more than a three-outcome DH. Now, after an eye-catching offseason in which he's impressed many with his dedication to completely transform himself physically, the buzz is back. It's interesting how quickly the pendulum can swing in and against a player's favor.

Perhaps dulled a little compared to last year, Schwarber should once again enter the spring with some solid hype and expectations high. It's unfair to write off the possibility of Schwarber one day possessing a potentially elite bat, but 2018 will be a critical year for him to show just how close he can get to reaching his still immense ceiling.

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Cubs.com

Montgomery preparing for starting rotation

By Carrie Muskat

MESA, Ariz. -- For Mike Montgomery to be a more effective pitcher, he has to learn to say no.

With less than one week before Cubs pitchers and catchers have their first workout, Montgomery is considered a starter. That's what he prepared for this offseason; that's what he wants to do. The Cubs signed Tyler Chatwood to fill one of the two vacancies in the rotation following the departures of Jake Arrieta and John Lackey to free agency. Right now, Montgomery has the other spot.

However, the lefty knows that could change. Montgomery is not checking Twitter every few seconds for the latest rumor -- his girlfriend and family filter the gossip, he said. What he doesn't want is a repeat of last season, when he was bouncing back and forth between starting and relieving.

"From a physical standpoint, it was hard," Montgomery said Wednesday about last season, when he made 14 starts and appeared in 30 games in relief. "It took a toll on my body, my arm. Making starts and coming out of the bullpen three days later, and pitching multiple innings out of the bullpen, I don't think it's something I want to do long term.

"It's balancing my health in my mind and being able to help the club -- they kind of go hand in hand," he said. "If I'm at my best, even if it's a role I might not want to be in, I'll still physically be at my best to help the team. I think me at 70, 60 percent because I'm worn down is not going to help the team."

Montgomery, 28, has talked to Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein and new pitching coach Jim Hickey, and both agree with the lefty that they need to use him in the most productive way.

"I was in a role that's not very common in baseball," Montgomery said of being a swingman. "From their end, they might not have known how to handle it. My mentality was, 'I'm going to be ready to pitch at all times.' I kept saying, 'Yeah, yeah, I can pitch.'"

But Montgomery did so when it might have been more prudent to ask for a breather.

"I've always been a guy who has said, 'Yeah, I can pitch today,'" Montgomery said. "For me to learn that it's probably not the best to say that all the time [will be better]."

In Montgomery's first big league season with the Mariners, he was used exclusively as a starter. In the past two seasons with the Cubs, he's totaled more relief appearances, including his first career save in Game 7 of the 2016 World Series.

Montgomery is looking forward to working with Hickey again. He was in the Rays' organization in 2013-14, and still recalls a conversation when the pitching coach encouraged him to use his curveball more.

"I wanted to be fastball, changeup," Montgomery said, "and I remember he said, 'Look, you're 6-5, a lefty [who] throws low to mid 90s. You need that breaking ball, so just focus on the breaking ball.' That kind of helped me out. ... He definitely knows what he's doing. I'm excited about [being together]."

Montgomery is also eager to see what the Cubs can do this year, especially if he's in the rotation.

"My goal and my mindset now is to be a starter and get in that routine," Montgomery said. "If something changes, it'll change. For now, I'm ready to take that starter role."

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Cubs.com

Cubs reportedly win arbitration case with Grimm

By Adam McCalvy

The Cubs' first arbitration hearing of the Theo Epstein era went the team's way on Thursday, when a panel of judges reportedly ruled against reliever Justin Grimm in setting his salary for 2018.

Grimm will earn \$2.2 million instead of the \$2.475 million he'd sought, as first reported by MLB Network insider Jon Heyman. The 29-year-old right-hander has pitched 263 times over the past four-and-a-half seasons with the Cubs, and had a 5.53 ERA in 50 games in 2017.

He was the Cubs' only arbitration-eligible player who did not come to terms ahead of a Jan. 12 deadline for clubs and players to exchange salary proposals. When he reached a hearing room Wednesday, it marked the first such procedure since Epstein took over the Cubs' baseball operation in 2011.

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Chicago Tribune

Four positions Cubs must fill during spring training

By Mark Gonzales

With very little activity in the free-agent market this offseason, the Cubs remain in the hunt to improve their roster.

Here's a look at some of the openings they face with the first workout for pitchers and catchers scheduled for Wednesday in Mesa, Ariz.

Starting pitching depth

If the Cubs don't land a coveted frontline starting pitcher, they'll have the following candidates at the back end of their rotation: left-hander Mike Montgomery (whom team officials seem to prefer in a swing role), Eddie Butler (who is out of options), Alec Mills and Jen-Ho Tseng. Montgomery and Butler have all but one of the quartet's 77 career starts.

Leadoff spot

The Cubs offense would be more potent if they could find a table-setter who can improve their .324 on-base percentage. There's no pure candidate, unless you consider 36-year-old Ben Zobrist, strikeout-prone Kyle Schwarber or sluggers Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo. They've downplayed this need since they scored 822 runs last season without Dexter Fowler.

Backup catcher

There's no David Ross or Miguel Montero on the horizon, although Chris Gimenez, 35, was signed to a minor league contract last month with the speculation he could help entice free-agent pitcher Yu Darvish (the two played together with the Rangers). Gimenez has batted .218 in limited play over the last two seasons but has been praised for his handling of pitching staffs. Victor Caratini, 24, received positive reviews from the coaching staff in his rookie season, but his growth could be stunted if he backs up Willson Contreras.

Closer insurance

There's plenty of faith in former Dodger Brandon Morrow, 33, who possesses closer-type stuff, but he has notched only two saves since transitioning from a starting role two years ago. Steve Cishek earned 25 saves in 2016 with the Mariners but blew seven chances. Carl Edwards Jr. needs to throw more strikes before he can be fully trusted in save situations.

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Chicago Tribune

Brewers to hold presale for Cubs games — for Wisconsin residents only
By Mark Gonzales

Cubs fans who seek premium seats for games against the rival Milwaukee Brewers at Miller Park might want to ask their Wisconsin relatives and friends for a favor.

That's because the Brewers announced via Twitter that fans can purchase up to eight tickets for any of their 10 games against the Cubs. The catch is that interested fans must possess a valid Wisconsin address to buy tickets.

Tickets to those games will go on sale at 9 a.m. Friday and can be purchased at Brewers.com/wisconsinpresale. The exclusive sale runs through Feb. 15.

For several seasons, Cubs fans have made the trek north on Interstate 94 and often have provided a majority of the support at Miller Park.

The Cubs will visit Miller Park to play the Brewers on April 5-8, June 11-13 and Sept. 3-5.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs manager Joe Maddon invests in upcoming Wrigleyville restaurant
By Mark Gonzales

Joe Maddon is signed through 2019, and the Cubs manager is committed to a longer investment in the Wrigleyville area.

Maddon, who already owns a part of Ava, an Italian restaurant in Tampa, Fla., will be involved in a yet-to-be-named establishment near Wrigley Field, according to a press release.

Maddon, who turned 64 on Thursday, will join award-winning chef Tony Mantuano in the new venture, which will be operated by Levy Restaurants.

“While my primary focus is bringing another title to Chicago, I’m also excited to partner with another group of talented individuals and bring an incredible concept to one of the most amazing cities on the planet,” Maddon said in a statement. “I’ve always enjoyed being in the restaurant business and am excited to offer something different and unique to the Wrigley neighborhood, not only for Cubs fans but all year round.”

Details on the concept and menu will be revealed this spring, according to the release.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs beat Justin Grimm in arbitration

By Mark Gonzales

The Chicago Cubs earned a victory Thursday over Justin Grimm.

An arbitrator chose the team’s offer of \$2.2 million over the reliever’s bid for \$2.475 million after a hearing Wednesday.

Grimm, 29, earned \$1.825 million last season. He posted a 5.53 ERA in 50 appearances with the Cubs.

This was the Cubs’ first arbitration hearing since 2010, when they defeated infielder Ryan Theriot.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs win arbitration case against reliever Justin Grimm

By Gordon Wittenmyer

Until Wednesday, Cubs team president Theo Epstein had avoided arbitration hearings for 15 years as a baseball operations boss for the Red Sox and Cubs.

He’s now 1-0 in cases after the Cubs beat reliever Justin Grimm in a decision delivered Thursday by the three-member arbitration panel.

Grimm, 29, a right-hander who was acquired from the Rangers in the Matt Garza trade in 2013, makes \$2.2 million this season. He had sought \$2.47 million.

Last season he struggled with a 5.53 ERA and 1.337 WHIP in 50 big-league appearances and also spent time in the minors, where he had a 3.86 ERA in 10 relief appearances for Class AAA Iowa. He gave up 14 home runs in a combined 67 innings at the two levels.

He was the only one of six arbitration-eligible Cubs who didn’t settle on a 2018 contract the week salary arbitration numbers were to be exchanged last month.

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