



### **WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF JANUARY 24, 2018**

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### **Anderson on mission after challenging 2017**

*White Sox infielder experiencing renewal following season of tragedy, personal strain*

By Scott Merkin/ MLB.com/ Jan. 23, 2018

CHICAGO -- For White Sox shortstop Tim Anderson, 2017 was a year of challenges, both on the field and off.

And he is determined to get right, as his recent Tweet illustrates:

But he's not speaking of revenge in the traditional sense. Rather, he wants to rebound with a vengeance from a season and year that was a painful one, both personally and professionally. Anderson simply has vowed to get after the next 12 months in a rejuvenated, upbeat manner.

"I'm so excited to be able to get a new perspective on things," Anderson said in a phone interview from his home in Charlotte, N.C., a few days before he travels to Chicago for SoxFest. "I understand the game more, and I had a chance to mature a little bit more this offseason and get to know myself more, while learning a lot of things from this past season."

Anderson lost his close friend, Branden Moss, when the 23-year-old was shot and killed last May while trying to help the victim of a fight outside a bar in Tuscaloosa, Ala. But the forthcoming Anderson said he was dealing with "a bunch of family problems way before that" tragedy.

"It was more tacked on," said Anderson, who elected not to elaborate on the other issues. "It was just a lot."

The personal strain came on the heels of a six-year, \$25 million extension with club options for 2023 and '24 that he signed last Spring Training, which no doubt added to the pressure on the 24-year-old entering just his second big league season.

Anderson's defense wobbled early and he finished with a Major League-worst 28 errors. After batting .204 with a .538 OPS through April, he rebounded with .319/.833 marks in May, but it didn't last. Offensive struggles throughout June and July led Anderson to seek counseling to help him handle his off-the-field issues.

It helped, and Anderson was able to end the season on an up note, batting .293 with eight homers, 13 doubles and 27 RBIs over his final 230 plate appearances. More importantly, Anderson's mental fortitude grew stronger, both on the field and away from the game.

The offseason brought another opportunity for healing. When Tim and his wife, Bria, married one year ago, there was no reception, but this offseason they made time to celebrate their marriage with a reception and also take a honeymoon to Costa Rica. They also spent time with their daughter, Peyton, who turns 2 on March 7.

Anderson, who was lovingly raised by his aunt and uncle, also had a chance to see and talk with his biological mom. And he spent time with Moss' mother, Dorothy, giving her the jersey worn during Players Weekend with the "B. Moss" tribute to her late son on the back.

While he was in Chicago working out with Curtis Granderson, Anderson got an unexpected lift from college football's championship game when his beloved Alabama Crimson Tide rallied to defeat Georgia.

"I got locked in on being with my family and being happy and having a good time," he said. "It got my mind away from things and kind of getting me back in the right mode."

The next chapter arrives in less than four weeks when the White Sox report for Spring Training. Anderson feels like a better version of his prior self, the guy who before last year was known for "having a lot of fun and just running around like my head was on fire and not afraid to do whatever."

That guy is back. And, as they say, better than ever. Perhaps better for what he has gone through.

"There were a lot of dark moments, a lot of tough spots, a lot of off-the-field issues," Anderson said. "I was overwhelmed. Just stuck in a tough spot. Getting away from it definitely helped me and kind of gave me some breathing room.

"I'm hungry and excited about this season coming up."

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### **Jake Burger is one of baseball's top 10 third-base prospects, per MLB Pipeline**

By Vinnie Duber /NBC Chicago Sports / Jan. 23, 2018

Jake Burger was the White Sox first-round draft pick last summer, but he's gone a bit under the radar thanks to the organization's wealth of highly touted prospects.

Well, MLB Pipeline hasn't missed Burger's big bat, ranking him as one of the top 10 third-base prospects in baseball Tuesday.

MLB Pipeline has been rolling out its top-10 lists at every position since last week, and the White Sox have been well represented, with Michael Kopech the site's No. 3 right-handed pitching prospect and Zack Collins its No. 9 catching prospect. The site will unveil its shortstop and outfield lists on Wednesday and Thursday, and you're almost guaranteed to see Eloy Jimenez's name at or near the top of that list of outfielders.

But seeing Burger's name this high should give White Sox fans yet another reason to get excited about the future. After all, third base has been projected as one of the few places on the diamond that might need an outside addition to put the South Siders over the hump — especially with huge names like Manny Machado and Nolan Arenado slated to hit the free-agent market in the next couple offseasons.

But Burger's rise might prevent a need for a superstar upgrade at the hot corner. He hit a combined 43 home runs in his final two seasons at Missouri State, and he slashed .271/.335/.409 with nine doubles, four home runs, 27 RBIs and 13 walks compared to 28 strikeouts in 47 games at Class-A Kannapolis last season.

Whether Burger sticks at third base or not remains to be seen — something that's been speculated about — as he's obviously got plenty of development left, having just joined the organization last summer.

But to have some folks in the know to rate Burger so highly is only a good sign for the White Sox as the rebuild rolls on.

Plus, look what he's been doing during the offseason:

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### **Meet the Prospects: Alex Call**

By Vinnie Duber/NBC Sports Chicago/ Jan. 23, 2018

Alex Call

Call, the 23-year-old outfielder, was a third-round pick of the White Sox in the 2016 draft.

Call played his college ball at Ball State University in Indiana, slashing .358/.443/.667 during his final season in Muncie. He also hit 13 home runs and had 44 RBIs to go along with 17 stolen bases. And he struck out just 29 times, also walking 29 times.

After being drafted in 2016, he played in 73 minor league games, including 46 at Class A Kannapolis, where he slashed .308/.361/.449 with 18 RBIs and 10 stolen bases.

Last season, his first full year as a pro, he split time between rookie ball, Kannapolis and Class A Winston-Salem. All in all, he slashed .207/.295/.316 with 13 doubles, three homers, two triples, 34 runs scored, 33 RBIs and five stolen bases.

As of their most recent rankings, MLB Pipeline had Call rated as the No. 26 prospect in the White Sox organization.

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### **Minor league infielder and Lincoln-Way East alum Dean Anna tweets he's signing with hometown White Sox**

By Vinnie Duber /NBC Sports Chicago/ Jan. 23, 2018

Playing for the team you grew up cheering for is a dream for many baseball players.

Dean Anna is getting a chance to live that dream with the White Sox.

A 31-year-old infielder born in Glenwood, Anna has played in numerous minor league systems, including those of the San Diego Padres, New York Yankees, Pittsburgh Pirates, St. Louis Cardinals and Kansas City Royals. Tuesday, he tweeted that the White Sox will be his next team.

Dean Anna

✓ @DinoBamBino1124

Excited to sign with the Chicago White Sox. I watched them growing up as a kid. Now get to play in the org. #southSider #WhiteSox

Anna, a Lincoln-Way East alum and Ball State University product, was a 26th-round pick of the Padres in the 2008 draft. He spent six years in the Padres' organization and has spent the past four years at the Triple-A level with four different organizations.

Most recently, he played 112 games with the Omaha Storm Chasers, a Royals affiliate, last season, where he slashed .285/.364/.376 with 53 runs scored and 33 RBIs. Anna played 64 games at second base and 26 at third base last season.

Anna has played a few big league games, too. He played 12 games with the Yankees in 2014, picking up three hits including a home run in that stint. He also played one game with the Cardinals during the 2015 season.

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### **White Sox pitcher Carlos Rodon not expected to be ready for start of 2018 season**

By Chris Kuc/Chicago Tribune/ Jan. 23, 2018

The timetable for Carlos Rodon to return to pitch for the White Sox after his late-September shoulder surgery ranged from six to eight months.

Now it appears it will be closer to eight as the left-hander has yet to begin a throwing program and Sox pitching coach Don Cooper said Tuesday he is “not anticipating (Rodon) being ready to start the season.”

Rodon, 25, had significant bursitis in his shoulder and had arthroscopic surgery to debride the area, a procedure that removes dead, damaged or infected tissue to promote healing. The projected ace of the Sox staff missed nearly three months at the start of the 2017 season with bursitis issues and subsequently made only 12 starts during which he went 2-5 with a 4.15 earned-run average, 76 strikeouts and 31 walks over 69 1/3 innings. While warming up for a Sept. 7 start, Rodon complained of discomfort in the shoulder and was shut down for the season. He then had the surgery Sept. 27 in Los Angeles.

Cooper has been in touch with Rodon and the pair will speak again during SoxFest, which runs Friday through Sunday at the Hilton Chicago. But it is when spring training begins in mid-February that the Sox will have a better idea of a possible return date.

“Spring training is the time that I’m going to know kind of where he is at,” Cooper said. “Right now, he’s rehabilitating and he’s probably getting close to a throwing program. He’s doing what he needs to do post-surgery.”

The long-time pitching coach said he has no doubt Rodon will return to form and make a significant impact during the 2018 season and beyond.

“What I believe is this: Carlos last year missed a good chunk of time and then the problem came out and he had that problem taken care of,” Cooper said. “He’s going to get through this. He’s going to work, he’s going to get back and then we’ll restart his process, so to speak. But as far as when, I don’t know.”

Local signee: Dean Anna, a Lincoln-Way East graduate, tweeted Tuesday that he had signed with the Sox. The 31-year-old infielder has played 13 career games in the majors, including 12 with the Yankees in 2014 and one with the Cardinals in '15. Anna spent last season at Triple-A Omaha in the Royals system, hitting .285 with five home runs and 33 RBIs in 112 games.

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### **The next Christian Yelich? Blake Rutherford has the right mentor to make it happen**

By James Fegan/NBC Sports Chicago/ Jan. 24, 2018

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Why would the White Sox trade for Marlins outfielder Christian Yelich when they have the next Yelich already in their organization?

“If I’m anywhere close to the player he is, I’ll be happy with that,” Blake Rutherford said.

Alright, so that sort of comparison wouldn't be fair to the 20-year-old even if he wasn't coming off a .244/.301/.312 second-half slump at Low-A Kannapolis that got him bumped from top-100 prospect lists around the baseball world. But as a fellow lefty-swinging Californian who prides himself on being able to

play all three outfield positions and strives for an all-around offensive game blending speed, power and hitting for average, Yelich is the type of player Rutherford aspires to be, so who better for Rutherford to learn from than Yelich himself?

"We work out together the whole offseason, so it's someone I get to hit really close with, pay really close attention to and I talk to him every day," Rutherford said. "I just work really hard with him and he watches my swing and we talk about why I do what I do, and why he does what he does and kind of go from there."

White Sox general manager Rick Hahn and hitting coach Todd Steverson have both indicated the real benefit of hitters minicamp isn't seen in 45-second Twitter videos of batting practice sessions, it's in the classroom work with the coaching staff. From what we can glean, those meetings are about reading pitchers and dissecting how they attack, and for young players, figuring out their identity. That means watching other successful hitters, trying to break down what they did to be successful, both at the lower minor league levels up to the majors, and seeing who might have a game close enough to their own to be worth modeling. In Rutherford's case, someone like Yelich.

Marlins outfielder Christian Yelich, a lifetime .290 hitter and a former Gold Glover, isn't a bad player to imitate. (Downing/USA TODAY Sports)

The classroom focus is part of why Rutherford, who was a regular at instructional league in October before returning to Glendale in January, is not worried about his workload. Even after a second half when most of the Kannapolis lineup was playing in either their first full professional season or the longest baseball year of their life, there are no concerns about fatigue here.

"I feel like this is the perfect amount of work and the perfect amount of rest at the same time," Rutherford said. "When we come here, we have a good hitters meeting or we get here later and we get right into the cage. It's usually two hours, lot of focus, lot of hard work, and then you're done for the day to go rest. It's just about listening to your body right now, obviously you still have a long season to go."

Not that it looks like Rutherford took much rest physically. He only admits to allowing himself about two and a half weeks of vacation, not even a full three, and says he's put on weight and muscle and sports the biceps to back up his claim. Currently listed at 6-foot-3, Rutherford said he's grown another inch to inch-and-a-half, backing up his assurances throughout last season that his power might just come without having to alter his swing to enhance it.

"Hopefully it starts to come this year, but I'm just more focused on trying to make good swings on the ball, make good contact, and then hopefully that leads to more home runs," Rutherford said. "Just trying to get into my legs more, trying to get more extension on the ball. This year I ran into a problem of being too late on too many pitchers, forcing myself to try to play catchup instead of being out in front. So just working on my timing, being on my legs, drive the ball to all fields like I used to be able, which is one of my strengths."

It was windy last Wednesday in Glendale, and every Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher in the history of their franchise could tell you about the dry air down there and its effects on fly balls. But balls driven by the easy stroke that made Rutherford such a draft day darling cleared the fence easily and repeatedly in batting practice. After a 2017 season marred by a power outage that limited him to two home runs, it's a notable occurrence, even if Rutherford aspires for a specific type of all-around game