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White Sox sign 4 for '18; Avi, Yolmer unsigned

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / Jan. 12, 2018

CHICAGO -- The White Sox announced Friday they agreed to terms on one-year contracts with first baseman Jose Abreu (\$13 million), infielder Leury Garcia (\$1.175 million) and left-handed pitchers Luis Avilan (\$2.450 million) and Carlos Rodon (\$2.3 million). But they could go to salary arbitration for the first time since 2001.

Outfielder Avisail Garcia and infielder Yolmer Sanchez remain unsigned for 2018 and are eligible for arbitration. Reliever Keith Foulke, who won, was the last arbitration case for the White Sox.

Abreu, who will turn 31 on Jan. 29, hit .304 with 33 home runs, 43 doubles, 102 RBIs, 95 runs scored and a .906 OPS in 2017. The first baseman lead the American League with 343 total bases and became the third player in Major League history to begin his career with four or more consecutive seasons of 25-plus homers and 100-plus RBIs, joining Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio (1936-41) and Albert Pujols (2001-10).

Originally agreeing upon a six-year, \$68 million deal when joining the White Sox, Abreu opted into arbitration and out of his guaranteed salaries on Nov. 14, 2016. Abreu earned \$10.825 million in avoiding arbitration last season and would have made \$10.5 million in '17 and \$11.5 million in '18 in his original deal.

Avilan, 28, was acquired from the Dodgers on Jan. 4 as part of a three-team, five-player deal that saw right-hander Joakim Soria also join the White Sox. Avilan notched a 2-3 record and 2.93 ERA in 2017, including 52 strikeouts over 46 innings. He allowed just 18.2 percent of inherited runners to score while limiting first batters to a .196 average and left-handers to a .195 mark.

Leury Garcia, 26, appeared in 87 games last season, batting .270 with 15 doubles, nine homers, 33 RBIs, 41 runs scored and eight stolen bases. He started 74 games in the outfield and two apiece at second base and shortstop.

Rodon, 25, went 2-5 with a 4.15 ERA and 76 strikeouts over 12 starts and 69 1/3 innings in 2017. He was on the disabled list from April 2 to June 8 with left biceps bursitis and again from Sept. 8 through the remainder of the season with left shoulder inflammation. Rodon underwent arthroscopic surgery on his left shoulder (bursitis and debridement) on Sept. 27 with an expected recovery time of six to eight months. White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper recently told MLB.com he isn't counting on Rodon for the start of the 2018 season.

Sanchez, 25, set career highs with his .267 average, 12 home runs, eight triples, 59 RBIs and 63 runs scored in 141 games. The switch-hitter played mostly second and third base while making three starts at shortstop.

Avisail Garcia's .330 average was the third highest in the Majors. The first-time All-Star also hit 18 home runs, 80 RBIs and 27 doubles. According to MLB Network insider Jon Heyman, Garcia filed at \$6.7 million and the White Sox filed at \$5.85 million

White Sox avoid arbitration with four players, including Jose Abreu and Carlos Rodon

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / Jan. 12, 2018

The White Sox avoided arbitration with four players, the team announced Friday night.

Agreeing to one-year deals with the South Siders were Jose Abreu, Carlos Rodon, Leury Garcia and the newly acquired Luis Avilan.

Abreu's \$13 million salary for the upcoming 2018 campaign was reported earlier Friday. Rodon agreed to a \$2.3 million deal, Garcia to a \$1.175 million deal and Avilan to a \$2.45 million deal.

Abreu was terrific last season, joining Joe DiMaggio and Albert Pujols as the only players ever to hit 30 home runs and drive in 100 RBIs in each of their first four big league seasons. Mentioned in trade speculation throughout the offseason, Abreu is highly valued by the White Sox not only for his production at the plate but also for his clubhouse presence, leadership abilities and mentorship role toward fellow Cubans Yoan Moncada and Luis Robert.

Rodon spent much of last season on the disabled list, not making his first start until the end of June. He was injured again in September and had shoulder surgery. His recovery could again knock him out for a good chunk of the campaign in 2018, but the young pitcher is obviously part of the White Sox long-term plans.

Garcia figures to be the White Sox first option in center field after he slashed .270/.316/.423 last season. His campaign was also limited by injury, though, as he appeared in just 87 games.

Avilan was acquired earlier this month in a three-team trade that strengthened the White Sox bullpen and perhaps added a couple potential midseason trade chips. Avilan was very good last season with the Los Angeles Dodgers, posting a 2.93 ERA in 46 innings of work.

Two players, Avisail Garcia and Yolmer Sanchez, remain unsigned.

White Sox avoid arbitration with 4 players, including Jose Abreu

By Chris Kuc / Chicago Tribune / Jan. 13, 2018

It was a mixed result for the White Sox as Friday's deadline for teams and arbitration-eligible players to exchange salary figures for the 2018 season came and went.

The Sox avoided arbitration with four players by agreeing to terms with each on one-year contracts, including Jose Abreu to a deal worth \$13 million. That is a raise from the \$10,825,000 the 30-year-old Abreu made in 2017, when he batted .304 with 33 home runs and 102 RBIs.

Abreu led the American League with 343 total bases and became the third player in major-league history to begin his career with four consecutive seasons of 25-plus homers and 100-plus RBIs, joining Joe DiMaggio and Albert Pujols.

Left-handed pitchers Luis Avilan (\$2.45 million) and Carlos Rodon (\$2.3 million) and utility player Leury Garcia (\$1.175 million) also agreed to terms.

Meanwhile, the Sox and right-fielder Avisail Garcia couldn't come to an agreement and could be headed to arbitration in February. Garcia filed for \$6.7 million while the Sox filed at \$5.85 million, according to multiple reports. Garcia, who batted .300 with 18 homers and 80 RBIs and was selected to his first All-Star Game, made \$3 million last season. The sides can avoid arbitration if a deal is struck before a hearing.

Infielder Yolmer Sanchez also remains unsigned for 2018 and is eligible for salary arbitration.

The Sox haven't had a player go to arbitration since reliever Keith Foulke in 2001. Foulke won the hearing and received \$3.1 million that season.

White Sox avoid arbitration with Abreu, Rodon, Avilan, Leury Garcia

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times / Jan. 12, 2018

The White Sox avoided arbitration on Friday with first baseman Jose Abreu and three others but did not come to terms with right fielder Avisail Garcia or infielder Yolmer Sanchez.

Abreu agreed to a \$13 million contract for 2018. The Sox also agreed to terms with left-hander Carlos Rodon (\$2.3 million), outfielder-infielder Leury Garcia (\$1.175 million) and left-hander Luis Avilan (\$2.45 million).

Avisail Garcia, coming off a breakout All-Star season, filed for \$6.7 million, according to Jon Heyman of FanRag Sports, while the Sox filed at \$5.85 million. According to MLBtraderumors.com, Garcia was projected to make \$6.7 million.

Unless the Sox negotiate a deal in the coming weeks, Avisail Garcia and Sanchez will go to arbitration, a process the Sox have avoided since 2001, when Keith Foulke won his hearing for \$3.1 million.

Abreu was projected to be paid \$17.9 million. After the 2016 season, he opted into salary arbitration for the final three years of the six-year deal he signed with the Sox as a highly sought free agent out of Cuba. He made \$10.825 million in 2017.

Abreu has been the subject of trade rumors as the Sox proceed in their rebuild. His \$13 million price tag would seem to enhance his value on the market, although projections aren't always on the money and Abreu's particular case wasn't clear-cut. He and Avisail Garcia, also considered a potential trade target, are under club control for two more seasons.

Abreu, 30, batted .304 with 33 homers, 43 doubles and 102 RBI in 2017, leading the American League with 343 total bases. He was the third player in major-league history to begin his career with four or more consecutive seasons of 25-plus homers and 100-plus RBI, joining Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio and Albert Pujols.

Rodon, 25, who isn't expected to be ready by Opening Day after having arthroscopic surgery on his left shoulder, went 2-5 with a 4.15 ERA over 12 starts last season. Avilan, 28, was acquired from the Dodgers in a three-team trade Jan. 4. He was 2-3 with a 2.93 ERA last season.

Leury Garcia, 27, missed most of September with a thumb injury but put up his best career numbers in 2017, batting .270 with nine homers, 15 doubles and 33 RBI. He started 47 games in center field and could start there on Opening Day.

Avisail Garcia, 27, and Sanchez, 25, are coming off the best seasons. Garcia had 18 homers, 80 RBI and an .885 OPS. Sanchez batted .267 with 12 homers and 59 RBI and was the Sox' best defensive infielder in 2017. He ranked third in Baseball Reference WAR (3.5) among the Sox, behind Abreu (4.7) and Avisail Garcia (4.5). MLBtraderumors.com projected Sanchez's salary at \$2.1 million.

White Sox, Abreu settle at \$13 million, avoid arbitration

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times / Jan. 12, 2018

The White Sox on Friday avoided arbitration with first baseman Jose Abreu, settling on a \$13 million salary for the 2018 season.

Abreu was projected to make \$17.9 million, according to MLBTraderumors.com estimates. Abreu's settlement was first reported by Fan Rag Sports

After the 2016 season, Abreu opted into salary arbitration for the final three years of the six-year deal he signed with the Sox as a highly sought free agent out of Cuba. He made \$10.825 million in 2017.

Abreu has been the subject of trade rumors as the Sox proceed in their rebuild. Should the Sox be shopping him, the \$13 million price tag would seem to enhance his value, although projections are not always on the money and Abreu's particular case was not clear cut. Abreu is under club control for two more seasons.

Friday is the deadline for players and teams to exchange salary figures. If an agreement is not reached for arbitration eligible players, an arbitrator determines the salary at a hearing in February.

Right fielder Avisail Garcia, infielder Yolmer Sanchez, outfielder-infielder Leury Garcia and left-handers Carlos Rodon and Luis Avilan are also arbitration eligible. Garcia's salary is projected at \$6.7 million.

White Sox avoid arbitration with Abreu, three others

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / Jan. 12, 2018

The Chicago White Sox avoided arbitration with first baseman Jose Abreu and three other players on Friday. Outfielder Avisail Garcia and infielder Yolmer Sanchez remain unsigned for 2018 and are eligible for salary arbitration.

Abreu signed a six-year, \$68 million contract with the Sox before the 2014 season. He had an opt out after the first three seasons and exercised it for the first time last year, earning \$10.825 million instead of the \$10.5 million in the original deal.

Abreu agreed on a \$13 million contract for the upcoming season, up from \$11.5 million in the original contract.

Last year, Abreu batted .304 with 43 doubles, 33 home runs and 102 RBI. He led the American League with 343 total bases and became the third player in major-league history to begin his career with four or more consecutive seasons of 25-plus homers and 100-plus RBI, joining Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio (1936-41) and Albert Pujols (2001-10).

The White Sox also agreed to one-year contracts with left-handed starting pitcher Carlos Rodon (\$2.3 million), new lefthanded reliever Luis Avilan (\$2.45 million) and infielder Leury Garcia (\$1.175 million).

Rodon had arthroscopic shoulder surgery in late September and was given a recovery time of 6-8 months.

As for Avisail Garcia, he is coming off a career season in 2017. The 26-year-old right fielder finished second in the AL with a .330 batting average and established career highs with 171 hits, 27 doubles, 18 home runs, 80 RBI, 75 runs scored and 262 total bases.

According to USA Today's Bob Nightengale, Garcia requested a \$6.7 million contract for this season and the Sox countered at \$5.85 million. Garcia made \$3 million last year.

In his first full season with the White Sox last year, Sanchez batted .267 with 12 home runs and 59 RBI while playing second base, third base, shortstop and 2 innings in right field.

The Sox haven't taken a player to salary arbitration since 2001, when reliever Keith Foulke won his hearing.

Pitcher Gonzalez 'pumped' to rejoin Chicago White Sox on one-year contract

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / Jan. 12, 2018

After Miguel Gonzalez was traded to the Texas Rangers for minor-league infielder Ti'Quan Forbes on Aug. 31, there was a strong sense the veteran right-hander hadn't pitched his final game for the Chicago White Sox.

"He did like it here a lot," Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He's going to miss everybody; he expressed that. We're very appreciative of what he was capable of doing for us. We wish him well. You never know your paths might cross again."

With the White Sox still in need of veteran starters to eat up innings while prospects such as Michael Kopech, Alec Hansen, Dylan Cease and Dane Dunning continue pushing toward the South Side, Gonzalez returned Thursday.

The Sox signed the 33-year-old free agent to a one-year, \$4.75 million contract.

"As a player, it's hard to let go when you're feeling comfortable in an organization," Gonzalez said. "The White Sox treated me well since the first day I got there. You never want to leave, but when it happens you do start thinking about what's going to happen.

"We really talked about it this off-season. I talked about it with my wife and she loves Chicago. She enjoys it there. As soon as we started talking with the White Sox about the contract, I was pretty pumped, pretty excited to come back."

Gonzalez combined to go 8-13 with a 4.62 ERA in 27 starts with the Sox and Rangers last season. He was 7-10 with a 4.31 ERA in 22 starts with the White Sox.

In 5 starts with Texas, Gonzalez was 1-3 with a 6.45 ERA.

A shoulder injury slowed Gonzalez last season, but after he spent a month on the disabled list, he quickly got back up to speed and was 2-0 with a 1.85 ERA in the final 5 starts with the Sox before being traded.

"It's not easy when you have some setbacks," Gonzalez said. "I was out for a month and I wasn't able to help out the team. You just feel like no one likes you during that moment, no one really pays attention to you.

"Sometimes that's just part of the game and I just started working hard again to get back to where I needed to be and then I started pitching well and teams that were interested in the trade market, that's when I got traded to Texas."

Gonzalez didn't pitch well for the Rangers, but he has value to the White Sox on the mound and in the clubhouse as a mentor to young starters such as Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez.

"I got a chance to spend time with most of the young guys that were coming up late in the season," Gonzalez said. "There's definitely a lot of talent, but they always like to come to the older guys and feel comfortable talking to us.

"I love to give them feedback and try to help them out as much as I can. That's what we're here for also, so every time we have that opportunity to help guys out, that's what I'm here for."

To clear a spot on the 40-man roster, the White Sox designated outfielder Jacob May for assignment.

May, 25, spent most of last season at Class AAA Charlotte and batted .248. He opened the season with the Sox and was 2-for-36 (.056) before being optioned to Triple-A on May 1.

Avisail Garcia and Yolmer Sanchez eligible for arbitration, but the White Sox always settle family business

By James Fegan / The Athletic / Jan. 13, 2018

The White Sox have not gone to an arbitration hearing with a player since 2001 with Keith Foulke, and the experience didn't leave anyone very inspired to repeat the process.

Foulke, the technical victor of the process, who received the \$3.1 million salary he was requesting, got to listen to his team critique the shortcomings of his performance as the closer of the White Sox first playoff team in seven years. He did not enjoy it.

"Not that they said any real bad stuff," Foulke told the Chicago Tribune's Paul Sullivan, "But this is your team and you think they respect you. It is business, and I guess you have to learn the hard way how arbitration goes. I don't want to do it every year."

The White Sox wound up paying more money than they wanted, and likely greased the track to no longer enjoying the services of Foulke. As Jim Margalus recapped around this time last year, the bitterness of the exchange lingered over Foulke's relationship with the Sox from then until he was shipped to Oakland for Billy Koch in 2003, between which talks on a contract extension ultimately failed.

It's not like the Sox were fond of the arbitration process before, but that's a rather emphatic beginning of a 17-year streak of reaching contract settlements before the courts get involved. The Sox already aren't prone to sweeping changes in their way of doing business, and 17 years is multiple lifetimes in terms of contractual trends, and yet this practice has stayed consistent.

So it is with this jaundiced eye that I would approach the potential that Avisail Garcia and Yolmer Sanchez, both omitted from the list of contract settlements the White Sox announced Friday night on the soft deadline for reaching agreements before players become arbitration eligible, will actually head to arbitration.

Jon Heyman of FanRag Sports reports that Garcia is filing for \$6.7 million—the amount MLB Trade Rumors projected him at—while the White Sox filed for him at \$5.85 million. That's not an insignificant gap, but it's not utterly intractable like Mookie Betts' \$3 million split with the Boston Red Sox, and seems like an impasse that should be resolved in the coming weeks. The same goes for Yolmer Sanchez, who was projected to receive \$2.1 million in his first year of arbitration as a Super Two, as well.

The White Sox entered Friday with \$34 million committed to seven players: James Shields, Joakim Soria, Welington Castillo, Miguel Gonzalez, Nate Jones, Danny Farquhar and Tim Anderson. To that group they added Jose Abreu at \$13 million, Luis Avilan at \$2.45 million, Leury Garcia at \$1.175 million, and Carlos Rodon—also in the first year of arbitration as a Super Two—at \$2.3 million.

Assuming they will fill out their roster with no further major league free agents and use league minimum players for the final 12 slots, that would put their Opening Day, 25-man payroll at around \$65 million, pending the result of Sanchez and Garcia's situations. If they both got their MLBTR projections, the Sox payroll would wind up just shy of \$74 million, which would have been 28th in baseball for Opening Day of 2017. Some small raises for pre-arb players, some veteran minor league free agents receiving incentives for making the major league team, could both, and likely will raise that total in time.

Abreu's \$13 million salary exceeds the \$11.5 million he was originally due for 2018 when he signed his free agent deal in 2013, but is a far shot from the \$17.9 million projection he got from MLBTR after his thunderous 2017 campaign. He'll be

able to afford plenty more New Balance workout tees with that money, and should break the bank even more in his final year of arbitration, but is nowhere close to an albatross or a financial burden in trade talks at his current price.

Between getting a nice deal on Abreu, potentially being under the gun to reach a deal with two breakout stars from last year's team, and getting one step closer to a very low "we're saving up for Manny Machado" level payroll for 2018, the White Sox almost made the arbitration settlement deadline—which is not really a deadline—an interesting day. That's an accomplishment in itself.
