



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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March 12, 2018

- NBC Sports Chicago, **Farewell: Jake Arrieta's Cubs career has come to an end**
<http://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/farewell-jake-arrietas-cubs-career-has-come-end>
- Chicago Tribune, **Cubs pitcher Yu Darvish relieved that Jake Arrieta found spot with Phillies**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-yu-darvish-reacts-jake-arrieta-20180311-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Joe Maddon praises Cubs spring roster's depth, competitiveness**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-spring-roster-depth-notes-20180311-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Sunday's recap: Athletics 7, Cubs 2**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-athletics-recap-20180311-story.html>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Yu Darvish strong, Kyle Schwarber powerful in Cubs' spring-training loss to A's**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/yu-darvish-strong-kyle-schwarber-powerful-in-cubs-spring-training-loss-to-as/>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs glad to avoid Jake Arrieta in division, happier ex-Cub finally lands deal**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-glad-to-avoid-jake-arrieta-in-division-happier-ex-cub-finally-lands-deal/>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs' Justin Wilson — remember him? — looks to put '17 'aberration' behind him**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-justin-wilson-remember-him-looks-to-put-17-aberration-behind-him/>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **With possible bargains to be had as FA market peters out, Cubs to stand pat**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/with-possible-bargains-to-be-had-as-fa-market-peters-out-cubs-to-stand-pat/>
- Daily Herald, **Cubs' Schwarber ready to be in left field full time**
<http://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20180311/cubs-schwarber-ready-to-be-in-left-field-full-time>
- The Athletic, **Can Yu Darvish live up to Jake Arrieta's big-game reputation?**
<https://theathletic.com/270057/2018/03/12/can-yu-darvish-live-up-to-jake-arrietas-big-game-reputation/>
- The Athletic, **'Bryzzo' bids adieu to their friend Jake Arrieta, who's off to Philadelphia**
<https://theathletic.com/269846/2018/03/11/bryzzo-bids-adieu-to-their-friend-jake-arrieta-whos-off-to-philadelphia/>

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- Cubs.com, **Darvish 'where I should be' after 2nd spring start**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/yu-darvish-sharp-as-cubs-see-arrieta-reports/c-268455838>
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NBC Sports Chicago

Farewell: Jake Arrieta's Cubs career has come to an end

By Tony Andracki

Cubs fans can stop dreaming: Jake Arrieta won't be walking out to the backfield at Cubs Park in Arizona this spring in another Dexter Fowler-esque surprise.

The 2015 NL Cy Young winner will not be returning to the Cubs, instead signing a multi-year deal with the Philadelphia Phillies, according to multiple reports.

It was all but guaranteed that Arrieta would move on from Chicago, choosing instead to cash in on his first trip to free agency and securing what is likely to be the only major contract in his career.

But with teams so fearful of handing out big-money contracts - especially to pitchers who will be 32 at the start of the 2018 season - the Cubs remained in on Arrieta throughout much of the winter, checking in with his agent (Scott Boras) as the price fell and his status remained unclear.

Arrieta finished in the Top 10 in Cy Young voting from 2014-16, posting a 3-year stretch that included a stellar 50-19 record, a 2.42 ERA, 0.97 WHIP and 593 strikeouts in 583 innings.

He took a step back in 2017 as he dealt with a dip in velocity, but still managed to go 14-10 with a 3.53 ERA and remained one of the toughest pitchers in baseball to square up (150 hits in 168.1 innings).

Arrieta helped put this current Cubs team on the map as a bonafide contender, shutting down the Pittsburgh Pirates in a masterful performance in the 2015 NL Wild-Card Game. He also won two World Series games in Cleveland in 2016, playing a huge role in ending the 108-year championship drought.

The trade that brought Arrieta to Chicago from the Baltimore Orioles will go down as one of the best moves in Cubs franchise history, altering the course of the city's North Side forever.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs pitcher Yu Darvish relieved that Jake Arrieta found spot with Phillies

By Mark Gonzales

Yu Darvish expressed an amusing regret Sunday upon hearing that former Cubs ace Jake Arrieta had agreed to terms with the Phillies — five weeks after Darvish did so with the Cubs.

“After I signed, (Arrieta), Eric Hosmer, J.D. (Martinez) and all these other guys signed,” Darvish said. “Now that I look back, I feel I should have signed earlier for those guys. Not necessarily (Arrieta) signing, but the whole market, in general, began moving.”

Darvish, who signed a six-year, \$126 million contract with the Cubs, followed the tedious pace of his fellow free agents — including Arrieta, whose deal is for a reported three years and \$75 million.

“It’s a good thing Jake has a team in the Phillies,” Darvish said after striking out five in a 55-pitch outing in a 7-2 loss to the Athletics. “I was aware of him being a free agent. And then he’s really succeeded with the Cubs. I’m glad he ended up somewhere.”

Because both were free agents during the same period — with Darvish signing first with Arrieta’s former team — their future performances will be compared closely.

Darvish, 31, has been all business since joining the Cubs. He carries his own motivation, some of it stemming from the chance to redeem himself after a terrible performance in the 2017 World Series with the Dodgers.

“There’s a little bit of a factor in the postseason, but more than that — as a Cub — I want to spend quality time pitching and to concentrate, and I can really concentrate on what I need to be doing here,” Darvish said.

Manager Joe Maddon declined to divulge his thoughts about Darvish’s struggles in the World Series, revealing only that “I think I have an idea what went wrong, so that’s what I got in my pocket.”

“But I think you got a really motivated guy right now in Darvish, and I think he’s going to come out feeling he’s got something to prove right now. So I like that attitude, combined with that stuff.”

Darvish showed his talents during his first three innings by fooling Matt Olson with runners at first and second to end the first, then striking out the side in the second.

After Bruce Maxwell’s grounder grazed Darvish’s glove for an infield hit to open the third, Darvish quickly induced a double-play grounder.

“I treat (spring training) as the regular season,” Darvish said of his situational adjustments, whether it’s trying to induce strikeouts or ground balls.

“Right now I’m where I should be. Usually I have trouble with one pitch, but everything seems to work well.”

And Darvish wasn’t about to hold back any of his deep array of pitches.

“I (put) all my cards on the table because they probably have the data by now, so there’s no point,” Darvish said.

As part of his latest attempt to mix art and baseball, Maddon had another painting placed in front of the clubhouse entrance. This work of art was inscribed with themes of building relationships, trust, exchanging ideas, constructive criticism and flow.

As for Darvish, Maddon plans to do his best to keep the pitcher at an even keel.

“We all have our personal wiring, so how you react to it is going to be up to him,” Maddon said. “But my part during the course of the season is to talk to him.”

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Chicago Tribune

Joe Maddon praises Cubs spring roster's depth, competitiveness

By Mark Gonzales

The quality depth Joe Maddon has observed at Cubs camp has made the manager even more comfortable with a 25-man roster that's virtually set.

So don't expect a late spring addition as the last batch of marquee free agents are finally signing, including former Cubs ace Jake Arrieta agreeing to terms with the Phillies on Sunday.

“Jake did so much wonderful work for the Cubs,” Maddon said Sunday. “And as a person and family member, he benefited my family. He ascended to a Cy Young Award and three years of playoffs. Wow.

“I want nothing but good things to happen to Jake.”

The Cubs never came close to an agreement with Arrieta, whose three-year, \$75 million contract includes an opt-out after two years but can reach \$135 million over five years, according to FanRagSports.com.

Maddon didn't seem worried about the prospects of other top-tier free agents signing with National League Central rivals, especially after watching the precision of his team for nearly four weeks.

“The players are pretty much on the same page right now,” Maddon said of his spring roster. “The JV team exceeds previous JV teams.”

The only unsettled spot appears to be at backup catcher, where veteran Chris Gimenez has worked with Yu Darvish and drawn praise from Jon Lester. The switch-hitting Victor Caratini and right-handed hitting Gimenez can play other positions, but Caratini has minor-league options left.

Maddon praised President Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer for constructing a deep roster, especially in the pitching department.

“This is probably the best group of other pitchers that we've had in camp — younger pitchers, guys from other groups,” Maddon said. “There's much greater competition, better arms, guys who we can see helping us at some point in this year more easily than in the past.

“I thought Theo and Jed have had a great offseason.”

Extra innings: Hoyer acknowledged a strong dialogue up to the decision to renew Ian Happ's salary at \$570,000 — a \$25,000 raise from his rookie season. But, “there are zero hard feelings,” Hoyer said. “We've had great conversations with him about it.” ... Second baseman Javier Baez (\$657,000) and left-handed pitcher Mike Montgomery (\$611,250) were among the 20 players who agreed to terms. The Cubs could continue to explore long-term deals with these players. ... Baez said his left hamstring cramp feels “110 percent now,” but he remains unlikely to return until Wednesday at the earliest.

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Chicago Tribune

Sunday's recap: Athletics 7, Cubs 2

By Mark Gonzales

The Cubs lost their second consecutive game for the first time this spring as Kyle Ryan surrendered a three-run home run to Matt Chapman in the fourth inning of the Athletics' 7-2 victory Sunday before a sellout crowd of 10,029 at Hohokam Stadium.

At the plate: Several Cubs hitters, including Anthony Rizzo, gave long stares to home plate umpire Doug Eddings over his curious strike zone. But there was no questioning Kyle Schwarber's home run that landed well past the right-field berm. Chris Gimenez, bidding for the backup catcher job, hit the next pitch from left-hander Sean Manaea just to the left of the right-field bullpen.

On the mound: Left-hander Justin Wilson threw strikes with more consistency, but he allowed a home run to Sean Murphy with one out in the seventh. Justin Grimm hung a pitch that Mark Canha smacked for a two-run homer in the eighth.

In the field: Gimenez, who caught Yu Darvish with the Rangers in 2014-15, seemed in sync behind the plate. With Addison Russell receiving a rest after Saturday night's game, non-roster invitee Ryan Court started at shortstop and started a double play in the third.

Key number: 2 — Home runs allowed by Grimm in four appearances.

Up next: vs. Padres, 3:10 p.m. Tuesday at Peoria Sports Complex; LH Mike Montgomery vs. RH Jordan Lyles. Vs. Giants, 9:05 p.m. Tuesday at Sloan Park; RH Tyler Chatwood vs. TBA.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Yu Darvish strong, Kyle Schwarber powerful in Cubs' spring-training loss to A's

By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — Big-ticket Cubs starter Yu Darvish threw 55 pitches in his second start of the spring for the Cubs, striking out five, pitching one out deep into the fourth and giving up two runs – one that scored after he left the game. The Cubs eventually lost the Cactus League game to the Athletics 7-2 at HoHoKam Park.

After a one-out double in the first, followed by his only walk of the game, Darvish retired five straight, including four consecutive strikeouts.

"I think right now I'm really where I should be," Darvish said in Japanese. "All of my pitches, fastball, changeup, cutters, those were all [good]. I usually have trouble with one pitch that needs work [in March], but at this point, everything seems very good."

The Cubs fell to 11-4-3 after losing back-to-back games for the first time this spring.

Schwarbombs

Kyle Schwarber launched a no-doubt homer to right with two out in the second (followed by another homer from Chris Gimenez on the next pitch) for an early lead.

It was Schwarber's fifth consecutive start with an extra-base hit – third homer in five days.

He's 9-for-27 (.333) this spring with five walks (.438 on-base percentage) and a .704 slugging percentage.

Baez update

Second baseman Javy Baez, who has been out of the lineup since experiencing tightness in his left hamstring Thursday, isn't scheduled to play until at least the middle or end of next week.

But as he hurried to treatment Sunday morning, he said: "I'm good, I can tell you that. I'm 110 percent."

Said GM Jed Hoyer: "Tell him 125's what we're looking for."

First blemish for Wilson

Left-hander Justin Wilson, who's trying to rebound this season from a command-challenged finish to last season after a trade to the Cubs, gave up a one-out solo homer to Sean Murphy during his one inning of work – the first run he has allowed this spring.

But he retired the three others he faced, including a strikeout, and has not walked a batter in four outings this spring.

Happ watch

The hottest leadoff candidate in camp for the Cubs this spring didn't play Sunday, but he walked in three trips to the plate during Saturday's late night game against the Dodgers.

He's 9-for-23 (.391) with three walks (.481 OBP) and seven extra-base hits (1.087 slugging) in nine games this spring – all batting leadoff.

On deck

After a day off Monday, Cubs play a split-squad doubleheader: Cubs at Padres, Peoria, Ariz., Mike Montgomery vs. TBA, 3:10 p.m. Tuesday, cubs.com audio; Giants at Cubs, Mesa, Ariz., Madison Bumgarner vs. Tyler Chatwood, 9:05 p.m. Tuesday, cubs.com audio.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs glad to avoid Jake Arrieta in division, happier ex-Cub finally lands deal

By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — News of Jake Arrieta's three-year deal with the Phillies surfaced just about the time his replacement with the Cubs, Yu Darvish, was in the middle of striking out four consecutive Athletics early in his spring start Sunday.

The two pitchers were ranked 1-2 at the outset of the winter, each expected by many to command a deal worth \$25 million or more annually for four to six years.

Neither had a job by the end of January as the slowest free-agent market since the collusion years in the 1980s left scores of free agents unemployed as camps opened.

"I obviously was aware of him being a free agent, of course," said Darvish (through a translator), whose market seemed most directly tied to Arrieta's all winter. "I'm just glad he's going to end up somewhere."

The Cubs never were seriously involved in the Arrieta market, putting Darvish at the top of their wish list but expecting to settle for a next-level pitcher such as Lance Lynn or Alex Cobb. That was until it became clear that market values would remain suppressed by the large number of tanking teams opting out of the market, the big-market teams committed to keeping payrolls under the luxury-tax ceiling and/or collusion.

On the eve of Cubs camp opening last month, Darvish wound up with the largest total-value contract among the free-agent pitchers — a front-loaded \$126 million deal that made the luxury-tax numbers work for the Cubs by a sixth year being added.

Arrieta? As other free agents began coming off the board after the Darvish deal — including Lynn, Carlos Gonzalez and Mike Moustakas taking discounted one-year deals in recent days — Arrieta held as firm as anybody on the market.

"After I signed, [Eric] Hosmer signed [with the Padres], J.D. Martinez signed [with the Red Sox] and all these other guys signed," Darvish said. "Now that I look back, in retrospect, I feel like I should have signed earlier for those guys."

That got a few laughs. But it was a bitter experience for most free agents.

Ultimately, Arrieta got the highest annual value for any free agent on the market but settled for the short-term guarantee and for a rebuilding team that hopes it's close to turning a competitive corner.

The deal is front-loaded with a \$30 million salary this year, has an opt-out clause after two years, and could extend to as much as five years, \$135 million with club options and incentive clauses, according to Jon Heyman of Fangraphs.com. One upside for the Cubs is they avoid their 2015 Cy Young winner signing within the division and making the Brewers or Cardinals a potential co-favorite in the NL Central.

"I want what's best for Jake and his family, period," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said Sunday. "Jake did so much wonderful work for the Cubs. And as a person and as a family member, he benefitted my family. That's the way I look at it."

Arrieta makes his Wrigley Field return with the Phillies for a series June 5-7.

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs' Justin Wilson — remember him? — looks to put '17 'aberration' behind him

By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — Asked the other day about his options in the ninth inning if closer Brandon Morrow needs a day off, Cubs manager Joe Maddon rattled off five names, casually including Justin Wilson.

Wait, what?

“I’m going to tell you right now – he’s going to have a great year,” the manager said.

Great year. Wilson? The guy who walked the first batter he faced as a Cub, gave up a run-scoring double two batters later, added a wild pitch, and by the end of the season had 19 walks, a 5.09 ERA in 17 2/3 innings as a Cub and no apparent confidence.

The hard-throwing left-hander, who was Detroit’s closer and considered a key acquisition when the Cubs got him in a trading deadline deal, pitched maybe three innings of consequence down the stretch and wasn’t trusted enough to make the roster for the National League Championship Series.

“It didn’t really go how I expected it or how I think anyone else expected it,” said Wilson, who had a 2.68 ERA with Detroit before the trade, and 13 saves in 2 ½ months as closer – and a WHIP under 1.00. “It didn’t start out well. I tried to make a lot of different changes to just get some good feel back. But it was an uphill battle.

“You try to reset and try different things, and I really just had to go out there and compete with what I had and I felt like I did well with that, but it wasn’t always my best. Luckily these guys were really good and picked me up.”

By the time the Cubs signed Brandon Morrow and Steve Cishek this winter to lengthen the bullpen, Wilson had become an afterthought in most analyses of the Cubs’ pitching strengths. By the start of camp it’s doubtful many in Chicago were thinking much of him at all.

“Believe me, they’re going to be thinking about him,” pitching coach Jim Hickey said. “I think pretty quickly, too, because I’d be very surprised if he didn’t just replicate the success he’s had in the past.”

That’s the thing about Wilson. He’s an uncommon power lefty – flashing upper-90s velocity – with a 3.20 career ERA before last summer’s trade.

And he’s probably the most under-the-radar pitcher on the staff this spring relative to his larger track record.

“I just think you come over, and it’s a very big deal, and you’re considered a pretty big piece of the puzzle and you go out there and struggle a little bit and then you want to do nothing more than to do better,” Hickey said, “so you put a little pressure on yourself. And then it doesn’t go well again, and those kind of things have a tendency to snowball.”

“With his ability to hit the reset button in the offseason, I think he’s going to be fine. I consider that last half of last season more of an aberration than any kind of a trend or anything.”

He certainly looks sharper so far this spring. He hasn’t walked a batter in four outings, and when he gave up a one-out, solo homer run to Sean Murphy Sunday, it was the first run he’d allowed. He retired the next two batters.

“It’s nice to get a fresh start,” said Wilson, who has lowered his leg kick on his delivery this spring to help with command. “I’m glad to at least feel like I’m back in the right spot, and I just want to keep improving.”

And if this spring glimpse is a sign of Wilson's return to career form, what becomes the impact on an already deep bullpen?

"It would be spectacular," Maddon said.

Said teammate Justin Grimm: "Everybody in this clubhouse knows that when he's on, he's got that electric fastball. Once he gets rolling he could be dangerous."

He might even remind some people that the Cubs considered him a potential 2018 closer when they traded for him.

"I wasn't myself last year," he said. "So, yeah, I would think that would surprise some people. But I also think the Cubs brought me over for a reason, and they know I can pitch well."

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Chicago Sun-Times

With possible bargains to be had as FA market peters out, Cubs to stand pat
By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — The Cubs have just enough room in their payroll to stay under the luxury-tax threshold and make a bargain-hunting run at a free agent in a market that has gone from slow burn to desperation mode for some of the remaining players.

But team sources say that's not likely to happen as the Cubs try to stay flexible for possible moves at the trade deadline in July — although one said the front office would never completely rule out the right move.

Then again, Joe Maddon doesn't sound like a manager who believes the Cubs need to add anyone, not even, say, an All-Star closer such as Greg Holland.

"Man, the arms to me — it might be the best group we've assembled," Maddon said of his 13-man pitching staff. "And then beyond that, the next layer [of depth] is the best group assembled also."

After higher-end free agents Carlos Gonzalez, Mike Moustakas and Lance Lynn signed one-year deals in recent days, speculation intensified around whether a player such as Holland could be had for a short-term bargain.

The suddenly accelerating market also included former Cubs ace Jake Arrieta agreeing to terms Sunday on a three-year, \$75 million deal with the Phillies, according to multiple reports.

The Cubs, meanwhile, finished off their 2018 contracts with the signings of 20 pre-arbitration players, including second baseman Javy Baez (\$657,000), outfielder Kyle Schwarber (\$604,500) and catcher Willson Contreras (\$604,500).

For luxury-tax purposes, the Cubs' projected opening-day roster counts for about \$170.2 million against the \$197 million limit before paying penalties. After accounting for benefits payments and roster churn (prorated salaries of players called up during the season, etc.), the Cubs might have around \$8 million in flexibility.

“We do have some, not a ton,” team president Theo Epstein said of that flexibility early in camp. “It’s something we have to manage through the course of the year.”

If that means saving their money for July, that’s fine with Maddon.

“We’ve got a nice cache right now. I like what we’ve got a lot, not a little bit,” Maddon said of a pitching staff that includes newcomers Yu Darvish, Tyler Chatwood, Brandon Morrow and Steve Cishek.

“Obviously, if somebody were to get hurt, then you might do something like that [seek outside help]. But barring injury, the guys had a great offseason.”

If anything, the Cubs are likely to focus more of their efforts internally, exploring possible extensions with some of the young core players — an annual effort since the second spring of Epstein’s tenure.

Given the history of talks in recent years and the arbitration plans of several of those players, Contreras could be one of the few candidates for an extension — though nothing appeared imminent with any player over the weekend.

The pre-arbitration signings included four more among the 25 projected to break camp with the team: left-hander Mike Montgomery (\$611,250), right-hander Carl Edwards Jr. (\$594,000), center fielder Albert Almora Jr. (\$584,500) and infielder/outfielder Ian Happ (\$570,000). All agreed to terms except for Happ, who was “renewed” by the club. Clubs are allowed to pay pre-arbitration players anything they want at or beyond the \$545,000 big-league minimum, and when players don’t agree to terms, teams “renew” their contracts.

Happ, whose deal reflects a \$25,000 raise, is the first player the Cubs have renewed in Epstein’s seven years with the club.

“There’s zero hard feelings,” said general manager Jed Hoyer, whose staff uses a pay scale based on service, workload and performance combinations. “We’ve had great conversations with him about it. It’s not a punitive process. We couldn’t quite get to the number [he wanted], and that’s OK. We love having Ian. We’ve got a great relationship.

“With a scale like that, sometimes that happens.”

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Daily Herald

Cubs' Schwarber ready to be in left field full time

By Bruce Miles

Over the years, the Cubs have gotten by with the left-field play of Dave Kingman, Henry Rodriguez and Glenallen Hill.

They can get by -- and even thrive -- with Kyle Schwarber in left.

The days of Schwarber working with the catchers in spring training are over, even though he promises to sneak back behind the plate and be ready for emergency duty.

Schwarber will have his hands full in left field, but much like anything else when it comes to this player, if you tell him he can't do something, he'll at least give it a go.

"I would say a self goal would be to be really good at defense," he said. "I want to be a really solid defender out there and be out there and make those plays and go shake hands at the end of the game. That's what I want to be. I don't want to be the National League DH. I just want to go out there and keep working on my defense. At the end of the day, I'm going to work my butt off. If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out, but I'm planning on it working out."

By all accounts, Schwarber is giving it a serious go in spring training. Part of the good early results might be attributed to his much-publicized effort to get into better playing shape by losing about 20 pounds this off-season.

Manager Joe Maddon always has been a backer of Schwarber as a outfielder. He says the weight loss can only help in making Schwarber more nimble in left. He said Schwarber looks even better to him this spring.

"He honestly does," Maddon said. "I don't think it's just, 'Oh, he looks thinner so he's going to be quicker or more nimble.' He is. I've watched him run the bases. It seems everything moves a lot more easily. Having said that, I never thought he was slow. I've always thought that he moved pretty well for a big man. I just think that all this is going to help."

Maddon also said Schwarber's hard work should be rewarded.

"When you mentally do what he did, when you just do that mentally, it's kind of like you deserve to do that even better," he said. "He's going to be better for the work that he did, plus the information he's received. Now he's going about his business as always. Plus he's playing the outfield for another year. In and of itself, that's going to help."

Of course, the old saying is that if a player can hit 30 home runs -- even in a "down" season as Schwarber had last year -- a team will find a place for his bat.

Schwarber's overall line last year was .211/.315/.467 with 59 RBI to go along with the 30 homers. He spent a short stint at Class AAA Iowa after a failed experiment as a leadoff hitter but finished with an OPS of .938 with 6 homers over the final month of the season.

Schwarber may be subbed out of games late if the Cubs have the lead. Ben Zobrist, Ian Happ and Albert Almora Jr. can all play left field. It will be up to Schwarber if he can stay on the field to shake hands after victories.

"There's no negativity," he said. "It's just I want to go out there and finish that game. I want to take pride in what I do. I'm an outfielder now so that's my job. I want to go out and be really good at the outfield and not leave anything out. That's kind of what this off-season was about. It wasn't the year I wanted it to be (last season). So try to control what I can control, and that's what I'm doing now -- just go out there and work on defense and everything like that."

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The Athletic

Can Yu Darvish live up to Jake Arrieta's big-game reputation?

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. – Whatever happens from here, Jake Arrieta will always be a legend in Chicago. Jake Being Jake meant doing Pilates and showing up to the press conference in onesie pajamas after throwing a no-hitter at Dodger Stadium.

Arrieta trolled fans on Twitter, posed naked for ESPN The Magazine and let his young son, Cooper, pour champagne all over his bearded face after silencing PNC Park and shutting out the Pirates in the 2015 National League wild card game.

Just remember Arrieta's classic response before the 2016 wild card game and the first round of an unforgettable World Series run that would impact generations of Cubs fans all around the globe.

Mets or Giants?

"Who gives a shit?" Arrieta said.

It really didn't matter who they faced during Arrieta's Cy Young Award campaign – or how much pressure they felt during his two World Series starts in Cleveland – the Cubs still had an unshakeable confidence.

The Phillies will feel it if their rebuild suddenly accelerates with Sunday's reports that Arrieta agreed to a three-year, \$75 million contract, news that broke in the middle of Yu Darvish's second Cactus League start as a Cub.

For all the logic behind Darvish's six-year, \$126 million contract, giving up Arrieta's big-game track record is the one area where the Cubs might have some concerns or reservations.

"Honestly, no," manager Joe Maddon said before watching Darvish during a 7-2 loss to the A's at Hohokam Stadium in Mesa.

The Cubs will need more than a "Try Not To Suck" T-shirt to get the best out of Darvish, but there are reasons to believe the second half of his career could be better than his first. This environment might allow Darvish to flourish, the same way the Cubs unlocked Arrieta's full potential.

"It's a good thing that Jake has a team," Darvish said through a translator after working into the fourth inning, allowing two runs and striking out five of the 14 batters he faced. "Obviously, I was aware of him being a free agent, and he's really succeeded here with the Cubs.

"I'm just glad he ended up somewhere."

Darvish also acknowledged finding extra motivation in those two bad losses against the Astros in the World Series. But more than that, he said, he's driven by this opportunity with the Cubs.

"I have my thoughts about what went wrong," Maddon said. "I don't want to talk about them. I didn't see the performance. But hearing and listening and trying to derive, I think I have an idea of what went wrong, so that's what I got in my pocket.

"But I think you got a really motivated guy right now in Darvish. He's going to come out feeling like he may have something to prove a little bit, so I like that attitude combined with that stuff.

“I’ve talked about this organic change. Knowing what had happened with him and the Dodgers and the method, I think that our method might be a little bit different, so I’m looking for a different result in a positive way.

“We’ll see, but I have a lot of faith in the guy.”

Darvish is no different from Arrieta in that Maddon will stress the same ideas that helped allow the Cubs to be so loose and so relaxed during the surprising surge in 2015 and the 2016 dream season.

“I think we can really nurture the right thoughts going into the latter part of the season,” Maddon said, “where if you do it a certain way all year long, then here comes October, maybe even November, then you go out there the same cat.

“You don’t try to be anything different. That’s always what I try to do with all of our guys. I want to play the same game today that we’re going to play a month from now that we’re going to play two months from now.

“But, listen, man, human beings, we all got our own personal wiring, so how you react to it is going to be up to him.”

Whatever happens with Darvish, there will never be another Cubs pitcher quite like Arrieta, or another season with the same historical weight as 2016. That’s why Arrieta will always be linked to the Cubs for the rest of his life.

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The Athletic

'Bryzzo' bids adieu to their friend Jake Arrieta, who's off to Philadelphia

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. — A black Boras Corp. hat rested on the top of Kris Bryant’s head as he processed the Jake Arrieta news that broke in the middle of Sunday’s Cactus League game.

Bryant’s 6-foot-5 frame had collapsed onto a low stool in front of his locker inside Hohokam Stadium’s visiting clubhouse. Arrieta never experienced spring training at the Cubs’ old dumpy facility which has been transformed by the Oakland A’s and the city of Mesa. In so many ways, the Cubs are Before Jake and After Jake.

Bryant had mixed emotions to Arrieta’s reported three-year, \$75 million deal with the Philadelphia Phillies, understanding how hard he worked to transform himself into a Cy Young Award winner and what that usually meant for a free agent with a World Series ring.

“Good for him,” Bryant said. “I’m sure he was hoping for a longer contract. He definitely earned it. But considering the circumstances of this offseason, it seemed like a lot of people were following suit. That’s pretty good for how the whole offseason has gone.”

As he talked, Bryant wore a black Adidas T-shirt, one of several companies in his endorsement portfolio as a rare crossover superstar in Major League Baseball, a \$12 billion industry where so many franchises are either tanking or doing luxury-tax gymnastics.

Bryant took this winter personally as a Scott Boras client and Arrieta's friend. He's a former MVP volunteering to become the team's union representative this year, knowing what would be at stake when he becomes a free agent after the 2021 season.

A confluence of forces meant Arrieta wouldn't come close to Max Scherzer's seven-year, \$210 million megadeal with the Washington Nationals, or match Jon Lester's six-year, \$155 million contract with the Cubs. But now it's time to focus on what Arrieta can do for the young Phillies.

"He wanted the ball every game and he always gave us his best," Bryant said. "Some of the biggest games in Cubs history are pitched by him. Two no-hitters, World Series Game 6, so I can't say enough about him. I'm happy for him. I'm glad he's not in our division."

Arrieta's \$25 million average annual value is still the highest of this disappointed class of free agents. The contract's overall worth could escalate to the range of \$125-\$135 million over five years, according to Jon Heyman of Fanrag Sports, if the Phillies void an opt-out clause.

"Sick," Anthony Rizzo said when he heard \$75 million guaranteed. The All-Star first baseman flashed back to the blackout atmosphere at PNC Park in 2015 and how Arrieta absolutely dominated the Pittsburgh Pirates in a complete-game shutout.

"The wild-card game was one of those moments I'll never forget," Rizzo said. "I know we did a lot of special things on top of that, but that's our first time winning and advancing in the playoffs here."

"He did a lot of good things for us. And when we play them, I would expect nothing but loud standing ovations, videos, because he deserves all of it. He's part of the Cubs' family forever."

The Phillies will be at Wrigley Field for a three-game series in early June and the memories will come flooding back to Arrieta, who spent parts of the 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013 seasons on the Triple-A level before that franchise-altering trade with the Baltimore Orioles.

The Phillies have now invested almost \$170 million in a team that lost 96 games last year while building up a farm system that MLB.com recently ranked as No. 5 overall, with six prospects among the industry's top 100.

"That's a young team that seems ready to win and Jake knows how to win," Rizzo said. "He brings leadership. He's going to come in every day and do his routine and work hard. These young players will see that and it makes them work hard."

While the Phillies could derail a playoff run near the end of The Bryzzo Era, a more immediate threat would have been Arrieta joining the win-now Nationals or a division rival like the St. Louis Cardinals or Milwaukee Brewers.

"I care about him," Rizzo said. "I don't care if he goes over to Japan and pitches – if he's happy with his family. That's all [that matters] because he's a good guy. But on the professional side, I don't care. As long as he's happy personally, that's the most important thing in this game."

Whether or not the Phillies see the 24-game improvement the Cubs experienced after Lester picked a last-place team during the 2014 winter meetings, Arrieta can be the same magnetic presence for next winter's star-studded class of free agents that includes Bryce Harper and Manny Machado.

Between the young talent, big-market resources and an old-school operation now embracing analytics, Arrieta might be waking up a sleeping giant all over again.

“Absolutely,” Bryant said. “They have a good group of young hitters, too. That surprised me last year. They obviously have [ex-Cubs hitting coach John] Mallee, too. I know how much he helped me, so I definitely think he’s going to help that team. And then their pitching staff’s solid. They got some young arms and adding Jake – with his status as a veteran pitcher – is only going to help. I think they’re a sleeper.”

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The Athletic

How the Cubs view disagreement with Ian Happ, extending young players and saving for future
By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. – The Cubs weren’t considering a last-minute reunion with Jake Arrieta, who’s now expected to go to the Philadelphia Phillies to be their discounted version of Jon Lester. And the Cubs aren’t planning on building a super-bullpen around All-Star closer Greg Holland, even as free-agent prices drop to unforeseen levels.

Team president Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer always take a never-say-never approach, but the Cubs already like the way their Opening Day roster looks, don’t have any real job openings and would rather save up money for the July 31 trade deadline to respond to the inevitable injuries and underperformance.

The details of Arrieta’s reported three-year, \$75 million contract leaked out on Twitter in the middle of Yu Darvish Day at Hohokam Stadium in Mesa, where the Cubs’ \$126 million investment made his second Cactus League start during Sunday’s 7-2 loss to the Oakland A’s.

The financial picture came into sharper focus after the Cubs finalized their pre-arbitration deals, the major-league payroll now projected to be just above \$170 million, with roughly \$14 million more budgeted for benefits for luxury-tax purposes. That leaves a nice cushion for roster churn plus trade-deadline additions while still staying beneath the \$197 million threshold.

The Cubs reached agreements with infielder Javier Baez (\$657,000), swingman Mike Montgomery (\$611,250), outfielder Kyle Schwarber (\$604,500), catcher Willson Contreras (\$604,500), reliever Carl Edwards Jr. (\$594,000) and outfielder Albert Almora Jr. (\$584,500).

The Cubs technically renewed Ian Happ’s contract at \$570,000, meaning the two sides could not agree to a salary number for 2018. This is Year 7 for the Epstein regime and Happ becomes their first player to have his contract renewed like this.

The Cubs use a scale that weighs variables like service time, playing time, postseason rosters and awards. Happ is a versatile switch-hitting infielder/outfielder who put up 24 homers last season and finished eighth in the National League Rookie of the Year voting.

Happ’s \$570,000 salary will be \$25,000 above the big-league minimum. The Cubs technically could have renewed all their pre-arbitration players at that rate – \$545,000 – but don’t have that hardball reputation. Coming off an MVP campaign and a World Series championship, the Cubs rewarded Kris Bryant with a \$1.05 million salary last season.

“There’s zero hard feelings,” Hoyer said. “We’ve had great conversations with him about it. It’s not a punitive process. But we couldn’t quite get to the right number, and that’s OK. We love having Ian. We’ve got a great relationship. We’ll move forward.”

It’s standard operating procedure for the Cubs to discuss long-term extension concepts during spring training. But this is a depressed free-agent market where one agent predicted teams will try to prey upon that insecurity and strike club-friendly deals.

The Cubs haven’t ruled out extending one of their young players – it will be something to monitor before the team leaves Arizona – but that’s easier said than done.

The St. Louis Cardinals last week guaranteed shortstop Paul DeJong six years and \$26 million in a deal that contains two club options that would buy out free-agent years in 2024 (\$12.5 million) and 2025 (\$15 million).

Happ and Schwarber (Excel Sports Management), Baez (Wasserman), Contreras (Octagon) and Almora (Boras Corp.) are all represented by high-powered agencies that generally don’t operate that way.

As first-round picks, Happ, Schwarber, Baez and Almora all got signing bonuses worth between \$2.6 and \$3.9 million coming out of the draft. Being a Cub now also means lucrative off-the-field endorsement opportunities, appearance fees and playoff shares.

DeJong – a fourth-round pick out of Illinois State University in 2015 – finished second in last season’s NL Rookie of the Year voting after hitting .285 with 25 homers and 65 RBI in 108 games.

Whether or not the Cubs go in that direction, manager Joe Maddon doesn’t expect a big-name free agent to make a surprise appearance at the Sloan Park complex.

“We’ve done a nice job in the offseason coming into the camp, whether it’s augmenting the immediate 25 guys or that next layer,” Maddon said. “This is probably the best group of ‘other pitchers’ that we’ve had in camp – younger pitchers, guys that we’ve picked up from other groups. Much greater competition. Better arms. Guys you can really see helping us at some point this year more easily than in the past.

“Theo and Jed have had a great offseason.”

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Cubs.com

Darvish 'where I should be' after 2nd spring start

By Carrie Muskat

MESA, Ariz. -- Both Cubs manager Joe Maddon and Yu Darvish kept an eye on Jake Arrieta this offseason to see where the right-hander would sign, but for different reasons.

"Primarily, he came here to be a Cub, and he did that, and he ascended to a Cy Young [in 2015] and three years of playoffs -- wow," Maddon said of Arrieta, who reportedly has a deal with the Phillies. "I want nothing but good things to happen to Jake. I want what's best for him."

The Cubs signed Darvish to take Arrieta's spot in the rotation, and on Sunday, Darvish made his second spring start, giving up two runs on four hits over 3 1/3 innings against the Athletics.

At the start of the offseason, Darvish and Arrieta were considered the top two free-agent starting pitchers available. Darvish signed his six-year deal with the Cubs in mid-February. It took Arrieta another month to find a match.

"First of all, I think it's a good thing that Jake has a team," Darvish said. "He really succeeded with the Cubs, so I always had in mind [to watch] where he was going to go. I'm glad he ended up somewhere."

And Darvish is happy to be with the Cubs.

"I love the team," Darvish said. "There's a lot of freedom, there's room for everyone to grow. First time pitching on the visitor side [on Sunday], I was amazed at how many fans were here [at Hohokam Stadium]. I like the vibe of the whole team."

He threw 55 pitches, although 20 came in the first inning. He struck out the side in the second, relying on a changeup, fast curveball and fastball to get Stephen Piscotty, Dustin Fowler and Matt Chapman, respectively.

"Right now, I'm where I should be," Darvish said. "All of my pitches, like the fastball, changeup and all the cutters were all up there. I usually have trouble with one pitch I need to work on, but everything is going well."

Darvish got some offensive help in the second when Kyle Schwarber and Chris Gimenez hit back-to-back homers.

Maddon didn't watch Darvish's two World Series starts against the Astros, but he heard about the allegations that the right-hander was tipping his pitches.

"I have my thoughts about what went wrong," Maddon said. "I don't want to talk about them. I didn't see the performances, but hearing and listening, I think I have an idea of what went wrong. That's what I've got in my pocket."

"I think you have a really motivated guy right now in Darvish, and I think he's going to come out feeling he may have something to prove a little bit. I like that attitude combined with that stuff. I've talked about this organic change. Knowing what happened with him and the Dodgers, I think our method might be different and get a different result in a positive way. I have faith in the guy."

One of the reasons Darvish signed with the Cubs is the opportunity to get back to the World Series. Maddon has emphasized that players should play the game the same way in October as they do in May or August.

"If you do it a certain way all year long, then here comes October, maybe November, that you go out there the same cat and don't try to be anything different [he'll be fine]," Maddon said.

And Darvish's motivation? It's not just a chance to get back to the postseason.

"It comes off the postseason, but more than that, just being a Cub in general," Darvish said.

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Cubs.com

Cubs agree to 2018 contracts with 20 players

By Carrie Muskat

MESA, Ariz. -- The Cubs have agreed to contract terms with 20 players on their 40-man roster with zero-to-three years of Major League service and renewed the contract of infielder/outfielder Ian Happ.

Among the players who reached an agreement were Javier Baez (\$657,000), Mike Montgomery (\$611,250), Kyle Schwarber (\$604,500), Willson Contreras (\$604,500), Carl Edwards Jr. (\$594,000), and Albert Almora Jr. (\$584,500).

Procedurally, Happ's contract was a renewal, not an agreement, but he is still above the \$545,000 minimum and will be paid \$570,000.

"In Happ's case, we had a small disagreement over [the figures]," Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer said Sunday. "We couldn't come to an agreement, but there are zero hard feelings and we've had great conversations about it. It's not a punitive process. We couldn't quite get to the right number, and that's OK. We love having Ian, we have a great relationship, good conversations about it, and we'll move forward."

It's the first time since Theo Epstein took over as president of baseball operations that the Cubs have renewed a player.

Other players to agree to terms include right-handers Adbert Alzolay, Eddie Butler, Oscar De La Cruz, Luke Farrell, Cory Mazzoni, Dillon Maples, Alec Mills, Jen-Ho Tseng and Duane Underwood Jr.; left-handers Randy Rosario and Rob Zastryzny; catcher Victor Caratini; infielder David Bote; and outfielder Mark Zagunis.

Baez feels ready to return

Baez said he was ready to go Sunday, but he was held out of the lineup. Baez underwent an MRI on his left hamstring Friday, one day after coming out of a game because of tightness in the hamstring. He was expected to return to game action this week.

"I'm 110 percent. That's good enough," Baez said. "I'm serious."

Hoyer said they are being careful.

"This is the time of year where there's zero reason to rush anything," Hoyer said. "He says he feels good, and we'll probably be cautious, and that's the smart and prudent thing to do this time of year."

Told that Baez said he was "110 percent," Hoyer said, "Tell him 125 [percent] is what we're looking for."

Meanwhile, Contreras, who has been ill, is expected to get back in a game on Tuesday. Reliever Pedro Strop, who has been slowed because of a tender left calf, was sent home on Saturday because he wasn't feeling well. He's been slowed by a sore left calf.

Maddon's art collection grows

The Cubs players were greeted by new artwork Sunday when they arrived at the complex. It's another creation by Tampa, Fla., artist James Skeldon and features a young boy with a backpack writing on a fence and is a take on work by the artist Banksy. The message is "Build relationships. Trust. Exchange ideas. Constructive criticism. Flow."

"You build relationships, and when you've done that, then you can create trust, and then you can exchange ideas openly, and then constructive criticism flows and conversation occurs," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. "I've utilized that a lot. If you ask me, what's the culture building, the premise, that would be No. 1.

"It's not about shifts and better methods of teaching or building a batting order or how to utilize the bullpen. You have to have that other stuff in place and then the other stuff works."

Piece of mind

Sunday's Cubs lineup card was full of pieces. Actually, the players were listed as "Alpiece" for Almora, "Brypiece" for Kris Bryant, "Rizpiece" for Anthony Rizzo and "Zopiece" for Ben Zobrist.

"You always throw 'piece' at the end of stuff when you're talking in the dugout," said Maddon, who had created a "pro" lineup on Saturday with plays on the players' names. "[Saturday] was about 'pro,' today was about piece. 'That was a good 3-2 piece, that was a good slide piece.'"

Camp battle

Chris Gimenez caught Jon Lester on Friday, and on Sunday against Oakland, the catcher was back behind the plate for Yu Darvish. Gimenez, who is a non-roster invitee in camp and hit his first homer of the spring against the A's Sean Manaea, played for Maddon on the Rays in 2012 and '13.

Up next

Monday is an off-day for the Cubs, who will resume Cactus League play on Tuesday with split-squad games against the Padres in Peoria at 3:10 p.m. CT (watch on MLB.TV) and the Giants in Mesa at 9:05 p.m. (audio webcast). Montgomery will get his first spring start in the early game, and Tyler Chatwood will make his fourth start in the night game. Chatwood has given up one run on three hits over six innings.

Jose Quintana will get his work done in the Minor League camp on Monday. Lester is scheduled to start Wednesday when the Cubs travel to Surprise, Ariz., to face the Royals.

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