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<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-cubs-joe-maddon-wade-davis-20170224-story.html>
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<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-tommy-la-stella-cubs-roster-spt-0224-20170223-story.html>
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<http://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/strange-anxious-winter-lit-a-fire-in-cub-bullpen-hopeful/>
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<http://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/from-jay-to-zobrist-cubs-look-to-define-leadoff-spot/amp/>
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<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20170223/sports/170229415/>
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## Cubs.com

Maddon looking at Schwarber for leadoff spot

By Carrie Muskat

MESA, Ariz. -- Who will be the Cubs' leadoff man now that Dexter Fowler is gone? Manager Joe Maddon likes the idea of Kyle Schwarber at the top of the lineup, although don't expect the outfielder to be setting any stolen base records, and that's not because of a lack of speed.

Schwarber, who missed virtually all of the 2016 regular season after tearing two ligaments in his left knee, must continue to get on base. Asked if the outfielder had a green light on the bases, Maddon quickly responded, "No."

"I'd prefer that he subscribe to the Brian Downing method of leading off," Maddon said of the former White Sox, Angels and Rangers player who was never a threat on the bases, totaling 12 steals in 606 games while batting first.

Schwarber, Ben Zobrist and Jon Jay are the leading candidates for the No. 1 spot in the batting order. Maddon is waiting on the Cubs' baseball operations geeks to crunch some numbers to figure out the bottom of the order. "We're still toying with the idea of the pitcher [batting] eighth and either Jay or [Albert Almora Jr.] in the nine hole, which makes it more interesting to me," Maddon said.

Maddon had the pitcher bat eighth in 2015, his first season with the Cubs, but that was designed to help young shortstop Addison Russell ease into the big leagues. This year, Russell could bat as high as fifth. If the pitcher does bat eighth, Almora or Jay would be the likely candidates to hit ninth and give Schwarber more RBI opportunities.

"Theoretically, it would be perfect if it went Almora or Jon to Schwarber to [Kris Bryant]," Maddon said. "That's kind of nice. The only concern I have there is who's hitting seventh? We have a nice lineup, so the seven-hole hitter would then lose the benefit of having the pitcher hit eighth. It has nothing to do with the eight hole and hitting sooner. My concern is who's hitting seventh, and what that's going to do to that guy."

Because Schwarber is coming off the knee injury, he is not projected to play every game, and also would likely sit against tough left-handed starters.

"I definitely want to be proactive and want to rest him," Maddon said.

The Cubs possess a pretty formidable lineup with Schwarber, Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and Zobrist at Nos. 1-4. "There's pause involved there," Maddon said. "If you don't want to pitch to [Schwarber], the guys coming up behind are pretty interesting. It's formidable so it's uncomfortable from the other side."

Worth noting

- Maddon and Wade Davis are reunited after spending four seasons together with the Rays from 2009-12. Any difference in the right-hander?

"The only way he's changed is he's a relief pitcher," Maddon said of Davis, who was a starter for the first three years with the Rays. "He's the same cat. ... I think he's gotten slightly funnier and opened up more and is more relaxed. He's got this really deliberate slow pace about him."

- The Cubs had a team golf event on Thursday. How is Maddon's game? "I hit the ball a little bit too often," he said.
- The regular position players had a dress rehearsal at Sloan Park on Thursday, taking batting practice there. The Cubs' first home Cactus League game is Saturday against the Athletics.

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## Cubs.com

### Breaking down the Cubs' Top 30 Prospects

By Jim Callis

After the Theo Epstein/Jed Hoyer regime came into power following the 2011 season, the Cubs used the Draft, international market and trades to assemble the best group of position prospects in recent memory. Albert Almora, Javier Baez, Kris Bryant, Willson Contreras, Addison Russell and Kyle Schwarber all would go on to play key roles when Chicago ended its 108-year World Series championship drought last fall.

Because of graduations and trades, such as the one that sent elite shortstop prospect Gleyber Torres to the Yankees for Aroldis Chapman last summer, the Cubs farm system isn't nearly as strong as it was when it ranked as baseball's best two years ago. But that doesn't mean it's devoid of talent. Chicago has two more potential star hitters on the way in outfielder Eloy Jimenez, who had a coming-out party at last year's SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game, and second baseman/outfielder Ian Happ, who possesses 20-20 upside.

While the Cubs haven't been as successful at developing their own pitchers, they have a trio of high-ceiling right-handers Dylan Cease, Oscar de la Cruz and Jose Albertos. They're a few years away from Chicago as De la Cruz's six starts in low Class A make him the most advanced member of the group, but if they realize their potential, there may be no stopping a Cubs dynasty from happening

#### Biggest jump/fall

Here are the players whose ranks changed the most from the 2016 preseason list to the 2017 preseason list.

Jump: Jose Albertos, RHP (2016: NR | 2017: 9)

Fall: Justin Steele, LHP (2016: 17 | 2017: NR)

#### Best tools

Players are graded on a 20-80 scouting scale for future tools -- 20-30 is well below average, 40 is below average, 50 is average, 60 is above average and 70-80 is well above average.

Hit: Ian Happ (60)

Power: Eloy Jimenez (60)

Run: D.J. Wilson (65)

Arm: Eddy Martinez (65)

Defense: Albert Almora (65)

Fastball: Jose Rosario (75)

Curveball: Dylan Cease (60)

Slider: Thomas Hatch (55)

Changeup: Jose Albertos (65)

Control: Ryan Williams (60)

#### How they were built

Draft: 17

International: 11

Trade: 2

#### Breakdown by ETA

2017: 9

2018: 6

2019: 12

2020: 2

2021: 1

## Breakdown by position

C: 2  
1B: 0  
2B: 3  
3B: 1  
SS: 2  
OF: 6  
RHP: 13  
LHP: 3

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## ESPNChicago.com

Before looking forward, Cubs relive World Series run

By Jesse Rogers

MESA -- Since a Cactus League-style rematch with the Cleveland Indians looms Sunday in their second spring training game, we asked Cubs players to share the one lasting memory they have from their 2016 World Series run. Here's what stands out most to the Cubs who ended 108 years of North Side heartbreak.

### The Double

Ben Zobrist: "Looking over at (Anthony) Rizzo (on third base) when I was on second base (in the top of the 10th), and seeing him with his hands on top of his head and an unbelievable kind of look on his face (after Zobrist's double gave the Cubs a 7-6 lead). It encompassed how I felt, how we all felt. I've seen it 1,000 times from different angles, but I'm the one with that perspective of Rizzo, and got to look him in the eyes. We thought we had it, it was slipping out of our grasp, then we had it again. We kind of knew we had the rest of the game."

Willson Contreras: "When Zobrist hit the double (in the top of the 10th inning). That was the moment in the game I'll keep with me my whole life. When that happens, I came to life again -- so did the dugout. But for me, until then I was kind of sad, waiting for something to happen. I can still picture that dugout exploding."

### The Rain-Delay Meeting

Munenori Kawasaki: "The last game. Raining outside and all of us meeting inside. J-Hey (Jason Heyward) talking, Kris (Bryant) talking, Anthony (Rizzo) talking. I knew 100 percent we were going to win. We came together. We were together. J-Hey was talking. Chappy (Aroldis Chapman) crying (after giving up a game-tying homer in the bottom of the eighth). I don't understand English, but I knew 100 percent we were going to win."

Kyle Schwarber: "That meeting that we had. I still feel like that was the key component to how we came out of that rain delay and performed. I can picture the room. I was standing by the door, and J-Hey was all the way in the back and addressing everyone."

Pedro Strop: "Chappy was crying after everything happened, so during the delay I went to his locker. He was like, 'Everything is done, finished.' I was like, 'Bro, you're human. Things happen. I know it's a moment you want to do the best for us and the team, but just relax. We're going to come back and win this game, and everyone is going to be happy.'"

### The Game 7 Drama

Rob Zastryzny: "When David Ross hit that home run. It was the first time someone hit a HR like that and the dugout didn't immediately go crazy. At least that's how I remember it. It was like a delayed, 'Did that just happen?' I kind of took a step back and was like: That was a home run, that was David Ross, that was Andrew Miller, this is Game 7 and it's (Ross') last game. ... That's the image for me when I lie down and go to sleep. It's David Ross hitting a home run in his last game."

Albert Almora: "When Addison (Russell) hit that sacrifice fly in Game 7, KB (Bryant) scores and it's a bang-bang play. As I walk towards the plate and Addison is walking towards me, we kind of stopped and looked at the replay and then saw for sure he was safe and screamed and gave each other a hug. We actually talked about it during the game. We were like, 'I'm never going to forget that moment.' Go ask Addy -- he'll remember it."

Addison Russell: "I remember coming back to the dugout and seeing Almora and his eyes so big and my eyes so big: 'Yeah!' We yelled and we hugged each other. It gives me tingles through my body just talking about it. It's one of my favorite World Series moments right there."

Miguel Montero: "Walking off after the third out in the ninth inning to keep it tied. I became really confident because the most difficult part was catching Aroldis Chapman in the bottom of the ninth inning (Montero was catching). I knew it wasn't going to be an easy three outs after what happened in the eighth. ... But after we got through that ninth, I was confident because we had Schwarber coming up. Rain delay or not, we still had Schwarber up."

### The Final Out

Mike Montgomery: "Right before I went in (in relief in the bottom of the 10th), I kind of took a quick glance at all the other guys in the bullpen. They gave me a look of lasting encouragement: You got this. You can do this. That gave me the feeling of, 'I gotta do this so I don't let them down.' That sticks with me even more than pitching. That's our team. We were all rooting for each other. Every time anyone went out on the mound, we were so much rooting that guy on. I knew everyone in that bullpen was ready to celebrate, and running out there I got that calm feeling because of that."

Russell: "I think about the final out as well. Us jumping up and down on the mound. I think of all the faces. Just everyone smiling, laughing. The hugs. Just the companionship between all these guys in the clubhouse. That's another thing I take from it."

### The Celebration

Jake Arrieta: "Remember, it began to rain heavily after the game, and all our friends and family are running from the field and dugout to the tunnel still embracing each other. Everyone was sopping wet. I was hugging people I didn't know. People's friends, uncles. It was just a really cool moment. My kids, my family, everyone was there. We were there as one big family in the confines of a tiny hallway. We were overly emotional and kind of shocked over what just happened. It was such a neat experience."

Kyle Hendricks: "The whole situation after the game ended. I think about that a lot. It started raining and we went down between the dugout and the weight room. It was all family, staff guys, front-office people and everyone hanging out. It was really special to have a small area and just party and hug everyone. It was a special moment to soak it in and really realize it. Lots of tears of joy and so many emotions. I had the biggest smile on my face no matter who I ran into. The range of emotions was pretty overwhelming."

Jon Lester: "Just the celebration on the field. Running on the field. Hugging everyone. Just going crazy."

Carl Edwards Jr.: "I was more nervous facing Joey Votto in an extra-inning game than I was in Game 7, so coming into the World Series isn't my lasting image. It's just me waving the W flag around ... running around afterwards with the W flag."

### The Process

Kris Bryant: "When you play a Game 7, you kind of forget everything that happens in Games 1-6, but a personal one for me is hitting that home run in Game 5 off of Trevor Bauer. That got me out of a little funk because I was still trying to figure out their pitching staff. Then the hits came in Game 6, but I took a deep breath after that. It all played into what we did in Game 7."

Justin Grimm: "Well, there are the team memories, but a personal one was getting that double-play ball in Game 3 against Francisco Lindor. That image stands out. It was a scoreless game and I just remember being so pumped. ... It fired everyone up, including me."

Anthony Rizzo: "Honestly, the whole grind. The whole thing. The image I think of is the guys. Everything that went on in the clubhouse and off the field with the guys. The dinners, the bus rides, everything. Teams win and not all the guys are together. We were all together. That's the biggest thing. From day one of spring training, I picture the whole thing. The slumps, the All-Star Game, the jokes. Those are the images for me, and that's what we'll all talk about, not just the final out."

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### **CSNChicago.com**

Braves Way: How Cubs Are Still Focused On Next Wave Of Young Talent

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. – Chairman Tom Ricketts wants the Cubs to be known someday as one of the greatest sports franchises in the world, right up there with global brands like the New England Patriots, Manchester United and Real Madrid.

But the most relevant blueprint for baseball operations right now might be the Atlanta Braves model that won 14 consecutive division titles between 1991 and 2005, an unbelievable run that still only resulted in one World Series title.

In a "Chicks Dig The Long Ball" era, the Braves had 60 percent of a Hall of Fame rotation (Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, John Smoltz) and a manager (Bobby Cox) who would get his own Cooperstown plaque.

The Braves Way still didn't only revolve around baseball immortals. The churn of young talent and under-the-radar contributors makes big-time prospects Eloy Jimenez and Ian Happ — and somehow finding a next wave of pitching — so important to The Plan.

"The Braves did such a great job during their run of always breaking in a guy or two," general manager Jed Hoyer said this week. "There's a lot of benefits to always trying to break in a guy every year, trying to add new blood every single year. Young guys are great even for a veteran team, because they provide the spark. They provide new energy.

"I thought Willson (Contreras) was a big part of that last year. Coming up in the middle of the season, it was like a great spark for our guys. Maybe one of these guys can provide that spark."

During that 15-year window, the Braves had 14 different players show up in the National League Rookie of the Year voting:

1991: Brian Hunter, Mike Stanton

1992: Mark Wohlers

1993: Greg McMichael

1994: Ryan Klesko, Javy Lopez

1995: Chipper Jones

1996: Jermaine Dye

1997: Andruw Jones

1998: Kerry Ligtenberg

1999: Kevin McGlinchy

2000: Rafael Furcal

2001: —

2002: Damian Moss

2003: —

2004: —

2005: Jeff Francoeur

The Braves produced Rookie of the Year winners in 1990 (David Justice), 2000 (Furcal) and 2011 (Craig Kimbrel). That gap in the early 2000s foreshadowed a relative down cycle where the Braves averaged almost 82 losses between 2006 and 2009 and made zero playoff appearances.

Jason Heyward's big-league debut in 2010 coincided with a run of four straight seasons where the Braves averaged 90-plus wins and made the playoffs three times.

Baseball America put Jimenez (No. 14) and Happ (No. 63) on its preseason top-100 list of prospects. Whether it's making an impression on Joe Maddon's coaching staff, being showcased for a future trade or getting more comfortable in the spotlight, Jimenez and Happ will be two players to watch when the Cubs begin their Cactus League schedule on Saturday.

"Everyone thinks our future is here," Hoyer said. "It's really important to never get caught in that. You always want to have guys in the minor leagues ready to come up. Having organizational depth is really important. Those guys are good players and they're going to help us at some point."

Jimenez is a dynamic 6-foot-4 corner outfielder from the Dominican Republic who figures to begin his age-20 season at advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach. Happ, a 2015 first-round pick, finished last season at Double-A Tennessee and can switch-hit and move between the infield and the outfield.

Contreras is trying to make the leap from energizer to everyday frontline catcher. Albert Almora Jr. — who also contributed to a championship team as a rookie — is trying to earn the center-field job. The Cubs already trusted Carl Edwards Jr. in the 10th inning of a World Series Game 7 and now hope he can keep evolving into an Andrew Miller-type reliever.

The Cubs need the assembly line that's rolled out Anthony Rizzo (June 2012), Kyle Hendricks (July 2014), Javier Baez (August 2014), Kris Bryant and Addison Russell (April 2015) and Kyle Schwarber (June 2015) to keep delivering talent.

"It's something that we have to be really mindful of," Hoyer said, "to make sure that we continue to put a lot of focus on player development, the same kind of focus that we put on it when we were rebuilding, because those guys are going to have a huge impact on us."

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### **CSNChicago.com**

Cubs: Could Ian Happ Or Eloy Jimenez Be This Year's Gleyber Torres At Trade Deadline?

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. — An agent sort of joked that this is where every big-leaguer wants to play — and no minor-league prospect wants to be. Of course, that is an oversimplification, but it sums up life around the Cubs, where the World Series champs are treated like kings and it can be difficult for the kids to see the path to Wrigley Field.

With no obvious blue-chip pitching prospects in the upper levels of the farm system yet — and Jake Arrieta and John Lackey positioned to become free agents after this season and the fifth-starter job up for grabs this spring — the Cubs are hoping for someone to take a big step forward.

Theo Epstein's front office and Joe Maddon's coaching staff certainly have a long track record of committing to young talent and developing players at the major-league level. That open-minded philosophy will not change.

But if a frontline starting pitcher who makes sense in a pennant race and for the future suddenly becomes available — or the Cubs have to rebuild their bullpen on the fly again or respond to a different roster emergency — then Ian Happ or Eloy Jimenez could be this year's Gleyber Torres.

"You know that's the reality of our business," general manager Jed Hoyer said this week. "But you also try to develop each guy and focus on each guy as if they're definitely going to come up and impact us.

"We didn't want to trade (Gleyber). We felt like we needed to do it. But certainly the way we have to think about these guys is that they're going to have a big impact on the Cubs someday. And both guys have the right makeup to do that."

While shipping their elite shortstop prospect to the New York Yankees in a blockbuster 4-for-1 deal for rental closer Aroldis Chapman last summer, the Cubs asked themselves: If not now, when?

Chapman joined a team that had a 98.8-percent chance to make the playoffs on the Baseball Prospectus odds report and a 56-1 record when leading entering the ninth inning. It would be almost impossible to do another deal on that kind of all-or-nothing scale — the 1908 stuff is over — but the Cubs have a reputation for being bold, creative and aggressive.

"It's out of your control," Happ said. "You have to go out and try to be better every day and work hard. The team is so good. We have so many good players to learn from here. It just really motivates you to continue to improve and try to get better every day."

Happ fits a Cubs Way demographic as a polished, fast-track switch-hitter who performed at the University of Cincinnati, in the Cape Cod League and in the classroom (first-team academic All-American). The potential to play second base and shift to the outfield would also fit on a Maddon team.

Happ — the ninth overall pick in the 2015 draft — has already played a half-season at Double-A Tennessee, homered from both sides of the plate in an Arizona Fall League title game and appeared on top-prospects lists for MLB.com (No. 28), Baseball Prospectus (No. 54), ESPN (No. 63) and Baseball America (No. 63).

While the 2016 Cubs experienced that unforgettable playoff run, Happ and his Mesa Solar Sox teammates would hover around an iPad in the dugout in between innings. This is the next phase for a player-development system that used to revolve around the idea of "When It Happens."

"I think this team is going to be good for a long time," Happ said. "It's nice to be part of an organization that doesn't feel like it's a one-and-done situation. It feels like they're building something here and you're going to have a chance to play for the pennant, for the World Series, for years to come. But just being able to be a part of the organization when that happened was special."

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## **CSNChicago.com**

Why Joe Maddon Sees Kyle Schwarber As The Leadoff Guy In Cubs Lineup

By Patrick Mooney

MESA, Ariz. — The analytical and emotional sides of the brain — the Big Data influence and obvious intimidation factor — are leading Joe Maddon to this conclusion: Kyle Schwarber should be the leadoff guy for a thumping Cubs lineup.

"Schwarber is the frontrunner," Maddon said Thursday at the Sloan Park complex. "You could always consider (Ben) Zobrist if you wanted to. You could talk about Jon Jay. I'd say they're the leaders in the clubhouse right now. But primarily I like the idea of 'Schwarbs.'"

Because that would fit the Bill Jamesian ideal of lineup construction — put your best hitters at the top to get them more at-bats — as well as force the opposing pitcher to worry about Schwarber, reigning National League MVP Kris Bryant and Silver Slugger Anthony Rizzo in the first inning.



"None of it's attractive," Maddon said. "There's pause involved there, because if you don't want to pitch to him, then the guys coming up behind are really pretty interesting. It's formidable, so it's uncomfortable from the other side."

That left-right-left balance would set up the switch-hitting Zobrist, a World Series MVP known more for his patience, clutch-time nerves and contact skills than brute force.

"When people say cleanup hitter or third-place hitter, everybody's applying conventional means from several years ago," Maddon said. "My thinking is more: Better hitter, get on base and then who can actually protect Rizzo. Who's going to make them pitch to Rizzo as often as possible?"

The conditionals: The Cubs are a deep team built around versatile players with a seven-month marathon in mind. Schwarber is coming off a traumatic knee injury that limited him to two regular-season games and designated-hitter duties during the World Series. Daily matchups and inevitable injuries will shape the lineup.

Still, Maddon said 140 games "sounds like a nice number" for Schwarber, who has five homers and a 1.178 OPS in 51 career postseason plate appearances.

"He's everyday, but you have to do that with some kind of foresight," Maddon said. "You don't want to beat him up and have that knee bark on him. You give him his day off probably against a tough left-hander you just don't want him to see. And then you just do something differently. But otherwise you'll see him up there."

The Geek Department still needs to send more information to Maddon, but the Cubs are toying with the idea of again hitting the pitcher eighth, in front of the Jay/Albert Almora Jr. platoon.

"I'm just waiting to hear back from the boys if there's a significant bump or difference in that or not projection-wise," Maddon said. "This would be theoretically perfect, in a sense, where either like Almora or Jon to Schwarber to KB. That's kind of nice."

"The only concern I have there is who's hitting seventh. We have a nice lineup, so the seven-hole hitter then would lose some benefit by having the pitcher hitting eighth. So that's the give-and-take with something like that. And it has nothing to do with the eight-hole and hitting sooner and all that. My concern is who's hitting seventh and what that's going to do to that."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Would-be Chicago sports villain Rajai Davis relives Game 7 homer — every day

By David Haugh

Another curious teammate in the A's clubhouse at Hohokam Park stopped Rajai Davis on Thursday to relive the moment Davis homered in World Series Game 7 against the Cubs.

"Just to talk about it and tell me he was jogging when I hit it," Davis said, laughing.

This happens regularly since Davis, then with the Indians, drilled a game-tying, two-run, 369-foot home run off Aroldis Chapman in the eighth inning. Davis and former Cubs outfielder Dexter Fowler enjoyed reminiscing earlier this winter at a golf event in Las Vegas where Fowler razed him about almost ruining everything. From players to clubhouse attendants to random people at airports, every day somebody feels compelled to ask Davis about the line drive that cleared the left-field fence at Progressive Field and created such hysteria.

Every Cubs fan can relate to the impact — and remembers all too well the time Davis nearly became the biggest villain in Chicago sports history.

"It's really amazing to affect so many people," said Davis, who signed a one-year, \$6 million contract with the A's last month. "It blows my mind that everybody remembers exactly where they were, what they were doing when that happened. For so many people to share that with me, it's something special."

Davis woke up the morning of Game 7 convinced he would do something special. He had carried that feeling around since before the Series began. That's when Bobby Kingsbury, a former teammate from the Pirates minor-league system, sent his buddy a long text that mentally prepared Davis for stepping to the plate with one on and two outs in the eighth trailing 6-4.

"So that moment for me really started seven games earlier with that text," Davis said. "I was expecting it from Game 1, and now we get to Game 7, I see it developing. But I felt like I didn't really have the power to come through, so I appealed to a greater power. I asked God for strength to help me in this at-bat."

Seeing Chapman on the mound actually strengthened Davis' resolve. A single off the lefty in Game 5 at Wrigley Field gave Davis confidence he carried into that at-bat. To prepare, Davis made a quick trip to the indoor batting cage before stepping out to the on-deck circle for a few cuts.

"I simulated the velocity as best I could," Davis said. "But I felt good. I was just focused on dead red, a fastball. He wasn't throwing any sliders. He hadn't given up a home run since June, so why would he change it?"

Davis choked up more than usual, locked in on the lefty's release point and worked the count to 2-2. Then Davis recalled fouling off a Chapman fastball clocked at 102 mph. Indians teammate Brandon Guyer stood on second, America sat on the edge of its seat and Davis saw the next pitch as clearly as any that had come out of Chapman's hand. It landed in the worst possible spot for Chapman, a knee-high strike at 98 mph — slower than his standard heat — that left the park in a hurry to tie the game at 6.

"When I made contact, I knew off the bat it was solid," Davis said. "I was saying to myself if that doesn't get out, I better be on second base. Once I saw it go into the stands, I was amazed. I didn't realize the magnitude of it until I rounded second and saw my teammates outside the dugout."

By then, Davis had pointed to the sky rounding first and pounded his chest twice. Bedlam erupted. First baseman Anthony Rizzo described the Cubs' reaction that mirrored Chicago's.

"You kind of just go numb," Rizzo told reporters afterward.

In the Cubs clubhouse, workers who had begun wheeling in T-shirts and memorabilia for a celebration started wheeling everything back out. In the dugout after the inning, a shaken Chapman fought back tears. In the Cubs radio booth, WSCR-AM 670 play-by-play man Pat Hughes later said he felt "kind of sick to my stomach for a minute or two, to be honest. Stunned." On the North Side, every heart sank.

Meanwhile, Cleveland rocked as Davis high-fived Guyer twice at the plate before Indians teammate Carlos Santana picked up the man who had just hit one of the most dramatic homers ever in the World Series, whose life never would be the same.

"To see your teammates excited and filled with enthusiasm, I've never seen anything like that," said Davis, a 38th-round draft pick who has been with six teams over 10 seasons. "I was thanking God. I was like, this is something I've expected my whole career. I've always been that guy, always struggling, always fighting but still there."

A rain delay, which Davis acknowledged "really helped them regain their composure," allowed the Cubs to recover, and you know the rest of the story. Davis chuckled recalling how his 10th-inning RBI single to center off Carl Edwards Jr. came close to tying the game again, and altering it.

"I hit that ball hard," Davis said. "If he had gotten that ball a little higher..."

Shaking his head, Davis doesn't have to finish the sentence. The 36-year-old journeyman enjoying his newfound celebrity doesn't have to do anything else in baseball, in fact, to secure a spot in baseball lore.

"As a ballplayer, you want to leave a legacy, otherwise you will be forgotten and when you die, nobody's going to remember you," Davis said. "Everybody wants to be remembered. I think they're going to remember me."

Chicagoans agree, relieved they still can smile when they do.

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Joe Maddon pondering his many non-conformist lineup options

By Mark Gonzales

Manager Joe Maddon wisely shot down the thought of new leadoff batter Kyle Schwarber getting the opportunity to run at every opportunity.

"I would prefer he subscribes to the Brian Downing method of leading off," Maddon quipped Thursday in referring to the former leadoff hitter for the White Sox and Angels who was called the "Incredible Hulk" because of his stout, muscular frame.

Maddon's desire to lengthen the Cubs lineup involves the batters hitting behind Schwarber — Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and Ben Zobrist — as well as the ninth spot that could revert back to a position player.

Maddon hopes to maximize a lineup that led the National League in walks (656) and hit by pitches (96). The switch-hitting Zobrist, who could bat leadoff when Schwarber needs a day off to rest his surgically-repaired left knee or when the Cubs are facing a tough left-handed starter, stabilized the lineup with 61 RBIs in the fourth and fifth spots last season in addition to his .386 on-base percentage.

With the left-handed Schwarber possessing the ability to reach base frequently and hit for power, Maddon has asked the Cubs' analytics department to provide data to determine whether it would be beneficial for a position player — such as Albert Almora or Jon Jay — to bat ninth and serve sort of as a second leadoff hitter to set up run-producing opportunities for Schwarber, Bryant and Rizzo.

Maddon batted Addison Russell in the ninth spot in 2015 partly to protect the rookie. Since then, Russell has blossomed into a formidable run-producer who moved from the seventh spot to fifth midway through the 2016 season.

Maddon's biggest issue is actually a nice problem — deciding who bats seventh. He has the option of keeping Russell in the five hole or possibly inserting Jason Heyward and his revamped swing there, with either player dropping to sixth. He also could elevate Willson Contreras, who batted .282 with 12 home runs in 252 at-bats in 2016.

Regardless, Maddon seems willing to examine all options as long as possible.

"We have a nice lineup," he said. "The seventh hitter would lose (some protection with) the pitcher batting eighth. So that's the give and take with like that. (But) it has nothing to do with the (No. 8 spot) and hitting (higher in the lineup). My concern is who is batting seventh, and what it will do to that guy."

Maddon believes getting 140 starts from Schwarber "sounds like a nice number. (But) we definitely want to be proactive in resting him."

The Cubs also must be careful about their use of Zobrist, particularly at the leadoff spot as he wore down during a brief stint there while Dexter Fowler was healing from a hamstring injury for five weeks. The left-handed hitting Jay also has extensive experience hitting leadoff.

The right-handed hitting Almora had a higher batting average and on-base percentage against right-handers (.286/.324) than against left-handers (.262/.279).

"With good health, you're going to see all these guys get better — every one of them," Maddon said. "I'm talking from an offensive perspective because they're young, good and learned a lot over the last year or so."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Joe Maddon on reuniting with Wade Davis: 'He's the same cat'

By Mark Gonzales

The most noticeable change in Wade Davis after spending most of his first three seasons as a starting pitcher under manager Joe Maddon with the Rays is that he's now a closer.

As for any other changes, Maddon smirked about any other differences he's seen in Davis in the past four seasons.

"He's the same cat," Maddon said. "He's very deliberate in his methods and conversation. I think he's gotten slightly funnier. I think he's opened up a little more and a little more relaxed."

Davis, 31, emerged as a premier closer during the past two seasons with the Royals but has remained largely consistent in his demeanor.

"He's always been that guy who has a really deliberately slow pace about him," Maddon said. "Even talking to him now, he's more confident in himself. He should be. The primary difference is that he's a little bit more willing to engage in conversation and slightly funnier."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Tommy La Stella all-in on his attempt to earn Cubs roster spot

By Mark Gonzales

Tommy La Stella showed off a strong arm Thursday as he worked at third base at Sloan Park.

For La Stella, there were no signs of the discontentment that caused him to decline an assignment to Triple-A Iowa for nearly three weeks last summer. Nor was La Stella willing to say what he would do if he doesn't earn one of the few open spots on an otherwise set Cubs roster.

"I really go one day at a time," La Stella said. "That's all I can control. The roster is so far out of my control."

La Stella, 28, has one minor-league option remaining but has displayed plenty of desire to earn a roster spot. He has stuck with a diet he started before last season that allowed him to become more agile. He also has worked on improving his arm strength and arm angle to become a more reliable option at third base after spending most of his career at second.

La Stella said he appreciates the support offered by the front office since his departure and subsequent return, and he was delighted merely to be in the dugout throughout the playoffs despite not being on the active roster.

"To get to watch something like that and be a part of it in the dugout was incredible," La Stella said. "The composure those guys played with, given the magnitude of the situation, it was such a privilege to even watch it. And to know that I and the rest of the guys in the dugout had a small hand in it was a special moment."

Man in demand: Manager Joe Maddon was eager to watch left-handed reliever David Rollins, who cleared waivers before rejoining the Cubs as a non-roster invitee.

Rollins, 27, has been designated for assignment six times this offseason.

"I know he had a tough winter," Maddon said. "He didn't know where he was going to land. He really has good stuff. When you talk to him, he's a very confident young man. He can really ride an elevated fastball and has a nice breaking ball.

"I want to see him in a game situation. To be sought after by so many groups, there has to be something in there."

Rollins has pitched in 31 games over two seasons with the Mariners, posting a 7.60 ERA.

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### **Chicago Sun-Times**

Strange, anxious winter 'lit a fire' in Cub bullpen hopeful

By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — It got to the point during the winter where -David Rollins cringed every time he saw the area code of his employer pop up on his phone.

"Half the time, I'm like, 'I don't even know if I want to answer the phone,' " the left-hander said.

Meet the one man in Cubs camp who's not dishing fake news when he claims to take his baseball -career one day at a time.

No less than six times since the end of last season, Rollins was waived by his team — twice by the Rangers, twice by the Cubs and once by the Mariners and Phillies. He finally cleared the last time, which ultimately cost him a 40-man roster spot, allowing the Cubs to keep him as a non-roster player.

"Yeah, it was rough," he said. "It was just one of those things where I was just trying to figure out where I'm going to end up at. ... The third, fourth, fifth, sixth time, it's like, 'All right, what are we going to do now?'

"It definitely plays mind games with you, that's for sure."

Rollins, who had a 7.60 ERA in 31 relief appearances for Seattle over the last two seasons, eventually took a chance and drove his truck 1,250 miles from his home in Texas to the Cubs' training site earlier this month, only to learn two weeks ago he had been waived again.

After sweating out the possibility he might not wind up with a team in spring training, Rollins, 27, joins a crowded field vying for few openings in the Cubs' bullpen.

This is a guy who was drafted in the 24th round, was part of a 10-player trade in his first year in the majors, became a Rule 5 pick of the Mariners when he was left unprotected by the Astros and in 2015 served an 80-game suspension for a failed drug test (apologizing to the Mariners and calling it a "serious error in judgment").

What does his new manager know about him?

"I know he had a tough winter," said Joe Maddon, who likes what he has seen from Rollins' fastball and breaking ball early in camp. "He's just one of those guys that probably needs more opportunity. I do like when we had our conversation. He's a very confident young man.

"To be sought after by so many groups, there's got to be something there."

If not something extra after the last few months.

"It definitely toughened me up some more," Rollins said, "and [gave me] kind of a little fire, too."

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## Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs leadoff story from Jay to Zobrist – with lots of Schwarber  
By Gordon Wittenmyer

MESA, Ariz. — For two years, 200 regular-season victories and six rounds of playoffs, the Cubs' leadoff solution was as easy as "you go, we go."

But after Dexter Fowler took his .367 on-base percentage and 186 runs scored the last two years to St. Louis, the Cubs for right now are penciling in Kyle Schwarber as the replacement in the leadoff spot.

Former Cardinals outfielder Jon Jay also could be in the mix, manager Joe Maddon said. Ben Zobrist also might get a shot.

"I have no idea," said Jay, who signed a one-year deal over the winter. He said he'll be ready for anything.

It's sure to be one of the more intriguing subplots of the spring.

As the Cubs prepare for their biggest lineup transition in an effort to repeat, Maddon is waiting for the "geeks" in the analytics department to provide some projections for a lineup with the pitcher batting eighth, either Jay or Albert Almora in the No. 9 spot and Schwarber leading off (followed by the Kris Bryant-Anthony Rizzo-Ben Zobrist heart of the order).

But, Maddon said, "I like the idea of Schwarbs."

He considers that 8-9-1 sequence "theoretically perfect," anticipating perhaps 140 starts for Schwarber.

Switch-hitting Zobrist is Maddon's first thought for a leadoff option against a tough left-hander when Schwarber sits, "although Albert really hits lefties well," Maddon said.

"Things will change. Who knows? Maybe Addison [Russell]'s going to be the guy [against those lefties]."

Stay tuned.

The Cubs' lineup has enough balance and firepower that it might not make much difference who bats where; or it could be an important piece of this year's puzzle in the absence of Fowler, whose .393 on-base percentage last year was a major part of the Cubs' success.

The Cubs had their only slump of the season — three weeks leading up to the All-Star break — when Fowler was on the disabled list.

The "theoretical perfection" is based simply on the best hitters near the top, getting the most plate appearances, Maddon said, and making sure the dangerous Rizzo gets pitches to hit in the third hole — which worked best with Zobrist hitting cleanup last year.

"This is one of those times where I could have a strong feeling or opinion on it," Maddon said, before alluding to the analytics again. "I need more to really try to make a better decision with it, and I think I'll just wait and listen right now."

Schwarber, still working on staying healthy for a full season in the majors, has a .386 on-base percentage in 85 games, which includes the playoffs. Maddon wants Schwarber to keep his same approach when he's in the top spot of the lineup.

"His DNA is to see pitches, accept walks, work good at-bats," Maddon said. "I will have a conversation with him, and it will be about, 'please do not change anything, just go up there and hit.'"

Jay, 32, has 809 career plate appearances as a lead-off hitter, second for him in any spot in the order. He has 1,056 appearances in the No. 2 spot.

"The good thing on this team is guys can hit anywhere in the lineup," Jay said.

"We have a real deep lineup, and whoever's not playing that day we have a deep bench. Those are signs of a good team, and that's what it takes to play in October and to win the championship we saw last year.

"You're going to have opportunities to drive in runs whether you're hitting early in the lineup, late in the lineup, or to score runs, or whatever the case may be. It's a deep lineup and it's great to be a part of it."

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### **Daily Herald**

Maddon says Schwarber still front-runner to lead off

By Bruce Miles

MESA, Ariz. -- Just before the Cubs convention in January, manager Joe Maddon tossed out the idea of Kyle Schwarber being the leadoff hitter.

That hasn't changed. Maddon reiterated that preference Thursday.

"Schwarber is the front-runner," Maddon said after the Cubs worked out lightly and then headed for a team golf outing. "You could always consider (Ben) Zobrist if you wanted to. You could talk about Jon Jay. I'd say they're the leaders in the clubhouse right now. But primarily I like the idea of Schwarbs.

"We're still toying with the idea of pitcher 8 (batting eighth) and then either Jay or (Albert) Almora in the 9-hole, which really makes it much more interesting to me."

Dexter Fowler was the Cubs' primary leadoff man the last two seasons, and his absence leaves a void. Maddon likes the power-hitting Schwarber in the leadoff spot because of his on-base ability. Schwarber will see most of his action in left field while being the third catcher behind Willson Contreras and Miguel Montero.

If Maddon does bat a position player ninth, he says it sets up that hitter with Schwarber, No. 2 hitter Kris Bryant and No. 3 man Anthony Rizzo.

"It's formidable, so it's uncomfortable from the other side," Maddon said. "We've got to keep these guys healthy. I believe with good health, you're going to see all these guys get better, every one of them."

About the only thing Maddon said he won't do is give Schwarber the green light to steal, especially coming off knee surgery last April.

"No, I don't (want him running)," Maddon said. "And it's not from a lack of speed. All these guys try to be situational. With a hitting lineup like that, you don't want to run yourself into outs necessarily."

If Maddon goes with the pitcher batting eighth -- as he did for much of the 2015 season -- he said one concern would be making sure that whoever bats seventh can handle hitting in front of the pitcher.

The next step:

The Cubs regulars took Thursday's batting practice and some fielding work at the main Sloan Park Stadium.

The Cactus League season opens for the Cubs Saturday. They play the Athletics at Sloan Park while a split-squad of Cubs will play the Giants in Scottsdale.

"The guys always want to play in the regular ballpark," Joe Maddon said. "I heard it went really well."

Maddon stayed back at one of the other practice fields to watch younger players hit.

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### **Daily Herald**

Cubs' Almora gifted with abundance of baseball sense

By Bruce Miles

MESA, Ariz. -- Call it what you will: baseball acumen, baseball IQ or baseball sense.

Some players are blessed with an overabundance of it and some aren't.

The Chicago Cubs' Albert Almora Jr. is a baseball IQ prodigy.

Look no further than Game 7 of the 2016 World Series at Cleveland's Progressive Field. Kyle Schwarber led off the 10th inning with a single and was replaced as a pinch runner by Almora, a 22-year old rookie who had all of 47 games of regular-season major-league experience entering the postseason.

The next batter, Kris Bryant, flied out to deep center field. Instead of going halfway down the baseline, Almora tagged up at first and advanced to second after the catch. That's a veteran move, not a rookie move.

After the Indians walked Anthony Rizzo intentionally, Ben Zobrist doubled to left field to score Almora, and the Cubs went on to a thrilling 8-7 victory.

"The baseball IQ, I've had the gift, thank God," Almora said Thursday before the Cubs held a light workout. "Also, when I've gone to professional baseball, I've had a lot of help, a lot of guys. Just overall, (Cubs coach) Dave Martinez in the big leagues with the outfield work. I've got (right fielder) Jason Heyward next to me helping me out.

"I've been blessed. I've had a lot of great players and people help me out. I also have my father, who's taught me the game of baseball since I was 3½ years old. I've just had a lot of help, and I'm a student of the game. I love learning. I always listen to everybody, and I pick what I feel would help me personally. So it's been really good. Along with some gifts, I've also been a great listener. I loved the game, and I love learning."

Almora, the current Cubs regime's first draft pick, in 2012, made his major-league debut last June before going back to Class AAA Iowa for more seasoning. He came back in September, and the Cubs thought enough of him to make him a part of the postseason roster, mainly for his outfield defense, which can best be described as authoritative.

Manager Joe Maddon also sees the high baseball IQ.

"He likes to talk, just in general, just about baseball," Maddon said. "He has a really good awareness of what's going on out there. Definitely loves to play, man. This kid loves to play, loves to be part of this, is always looking for growth. He's always looking to get better at different things. It's always entertaining and enjoyable to be with him. He's all about that.

"Coming from Miami and his background, he's a baseball junkie. He's really bright."

Speaking of Miami, the Cubs will have a pair of Miami guys sharing center field this year after the departure of Dexter Fowler to St. Louis via free agency.

In the off-season, the Cubs signed veteran Jon Jay to a free-agent contract. Jay and Almora are workout buddies in Miami, so Jay knows all about the kid's baseball smarts.



"I think it's just the intangible of being a baseball player," Jay said. "I think if you talk to him, maybe he picked that up growing up in Miami, where baseball is serious. We were taught the fundamentals of the game and just to do the little things right, and everything was so competitive."

Hence, Jay was not surprised by Almora's heads-up baserunning play in Game 7.

"I said, 'Man, he probably did that in high school or even when he was 13 years old or something like' that because that's what we were taught when we were younger," he said. "That's obviously a great sign to see. It was a huge play during the World Series."

There figures to be no tension between Jay and Almora about playing time because they are friends. The Cubs expect Jay to continue mentoring Almora.

As for Almora, he's growing up fast. He became a father last season, so that's changed things just a bit.

"How hasn't it changed me?" he said with a smile. "It just puts things into perspective. Baseball is a game of failure, and you have your 0-for-4s, you have your bad games. But when you get home and you see your son, he doesn't know anything about that. He doesn't care about that. He just cares that you're home and you're going to be with him. So it puts things into perspective for sure."

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