

COMMENTARY

Cubs and White Sox fans are already in midseason form

BY PAUL SULLIVAN, CHICAGO TRIBUNE
The Tribune Content Agency

CHICAGO

Months from now we might not remember the great tarp incident at The Rate or the Chicago Cubs bullpen implosions at Chase Field in Phoenix.

Everything seems magnified at the start of a baseball season, especially for Cubs and White Sox fans who hope to exorcise the nightmares of the last few years.

Fortunately they're already in midseason form, finding things to worry about only a week (or two) into the regular season.

Here's what we've learned from the first breath of a typical Chicago baseball spring.

1. White Sox rookie Shane Smith, a Rule 5 pick who had a terrific spring and a good start Tuesday in his major league debut, told us in Arizona he was "banging my head against the wall for a couple of years trying to throw a change-up and made a small tweak and started to see the promise."

So where did he find the tweak? "Baseball Twitter," he said, referring to X accounts such as @PitchingNinja. "They have a lot of good stuff on there. ... It's something I did a little project on."

Pitching Ninja is the preferred account for those who enjoy watching videos of pitching mechanics.

Many players and personnel visit the site frequently, including Sox pitching adviser Brian Bannister.

"If you are a baseball guy and you have Twitter, you are taking pointers from anybody," Smith said.

When Chicago Sports Network's Brooke Fletcher relayed Smith's anecdote to viewers during Tuesday's game, Sox play-by-play man John Schriffen said: "Pitching Ninja is a real thing, and it's become very popular. But if that's how you want to find some info, go for it. It won't be my source, but" Rob Friedman, who runs the popular account, then retweeted the clip of Schriffen's comment and added: "Appreciate it. LOL."

Instead of the story ending there, Bannister chimed in, tweeting at Friedman: "Keep up the great work Rob. Our sport needs more people that celebrate the awesomeness of what these guys can do. You're one of the best things to ever happen to baseball." Bannister added three flexing emojis.

Another Schriffen controversy? Maybe not. Friedman tweeted Wednesday that Schriffen apologized and was a "big fan" of his site. His comment was meant to say he was no longer on X.

It took Schriffen five games to get into trouble this year, so maybe that's progress.

White Sox baseball:

Never a dull moment.

2. It's understandable that CHSN wants its pre- and postgame duo of Chuck Garfien and Ozzie Guillen to do their shows from the ballpark, even with an empty stadium in the background. It's incomprehensible, however, that they make the two sit outside in the cold and rain instead of finding one of the many unoccupied suites to do the show.

Someone needs to fix this before Guillen catches pneumonia.

3. Who will be the first major league player to go on the 10-day injured list with "Torpedo-bat elbow soreness?" This is one betting line I'd like to see.

4. The Cubs bullpen had a 6.52 ERA going into Wednesday's game against the Athletics, allowing 38 hits and 20 walks in 29 innings. This time you can't blame Héctor Neris or the other usual suspects.

The salary-dump deal that sent Cody Bellinger to the New York Yankees for reliever Cody Poteet, who was designated for assignment and then dealt to the Baltimore Orioles for cash, could be one of Jed Hoyer's worst moves as Cubs president.

5. Marquee Sports Network's crawl at the bottom of the screen during Cubs games repeats the same message repeatedly: Watch Marquee programming and follow @WatchMarquee on X.

Since we're already watching Marquee during



GEOFF STELLFOX Getty Images/TNS

Shane Smith of the White Sox delivers against the visiting Twins in his MLB debut on April 1, 2025.

the games, the nonstop advertisements for Marquee seem a little gratuitous. Maybe a story on the Cubs bullpen would be nice.

6. It's amazing the Sox were able to play last Sunday after the tarp incident that led to a soaked infield with 3 inches of water on the dirt. Groundskeeper Roger "The Sodfather" Bossard called it the second-toughest day in his 59-year career tending to the fields at old Comiskey and the new park.

"Disco Demolition (in 1979) is No. 1 on my hit list, of course," he said. "This is probably No. 2."

Disco Demolition was the night when Sox fans and Steve Dahl followers invaded the field during a promotion blowing up disco records. They promptly tore the field to shreds, causing a forfeiture of the second game of a doubleheader against the Detroit Tigers.

As one of those knuckleheads, I'm glad to see it's still No. 1 on the Sodfather's hit list nearly 46 years later.

7. Boston Red Sox starter Garrett Crochet became the latest former White Sox pitcher to get a big, multiyear contract with his new team, signing a six-year, \$170 million deal.

Ex-Sox pitchers include the Atlanta Braves' Chris

Sale, who signed a five-year, \$145 million deal in 2019 with the Red Sox; the Toronto Blue Jays' Chris Bassitt (three years, \$63 million); and the Yankees' Carlos Rodon (six years, \$162 million). The San Diego Padres' Dylan Cease is next up for a megadeal.

"There's always risk associated with these types of contracts," Red Sox chief baseball officer Craig

Breslow told reporters in a videoconference call. "I think we recognize that. At the same time we're talking about an elite starting pitcher who's 25 years old and someone we believe will continue to develop and whose best days are ahead of him."

I asked Crochet in June if he knew the Sox's history of not re-signing their own pitchers. "I feel like I remember Cease saying something along those lines, that he wanted to stay here," Crochet replied. "(Lucas Giolito) might have said the same. I never talked to him specifically, though."

Sad to see the Sox continuing to ignore the fact top starters deserve to be paid. The last Sox starter to receive a relatively lucrative deal was Dallas Keuchel, who signed a three-year, \$55.5 million free-agent deal in December 2019. The Sox released Keuchel in May 2022.

Some things never change.

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Public Notice
Request for Proposal (RFP)
Human Resources Information System (HRIS)

The Lexington-Fayette County Health Department (LFCHD) is seeking proposals from qualified vendors for the implementation of a comprehensive Human Resources Information System (HRIS). This system will support our HR function, including employee records management, payroll integration, benefits administration, performance management, and reporting capabilities.

Proposals will be received by the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department (LFCHD) on the date listed for the following:

Proposal Item: PAYROLL/HRIS SOFTWARE SYSTEM
Opening Time: 12:00pm Eastern Standard Time
Date: April 7, 2025
Location: Lexington-Fayette County Health Department
Office of Human Resources
650 Newtown Pike
Lexington, KY 40508

Interested vendors are invited to review the full RFP document, which outlines the scope of work, requirements, and submission guidelines. The RFP is available at www.lfchd.org.

- Key Dates:**
- **RFP Issuance Date:** April 7, 2025
 - **Deadline for Questions:** April 25, 2025
 - **Proposal Submission Deadline:** May 16, 2025
- For more information or to obtain a copy of the RFP, please contact Dee Hogston at hris.rfp@lfchd.org.

We look forward to receiving proposals from qualified vendors who can provide a robust and scalable HRIS solution to meet our organizational needs.

The proposal documents shall be submitted electronically in PDF format at <https://www.lfchd.org/rfp-hris>.

Proposals must be completed and signed by an individual authorized to bind the vendor submitting the proposal.

Any questions or clarifications, requests for more information or to obtain a copy of the RFP should be directed to Dee Hogston at hris.rfp@lfchd.org.
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Please take notice Interstate Storage located at 3099 Lexington Rd Richmond KY 40475 intends to hold a public sale to sell the property stored in the following units stored at the Facility. The public sale will occur as an online auction via www.lockerfox.com on 4/14/2025 at 9:00AM. Unit #143-158; Unit #84. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Certain terms and conditions may apply.
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Employment

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St. Pete officials approve \$22.5M for Trop roof

Field Level Media

The city council in St. Petersburg, Fla., voted Thursday to replace the roof of Tropicana Field, which was destroyed in October by Hurricane Milton.

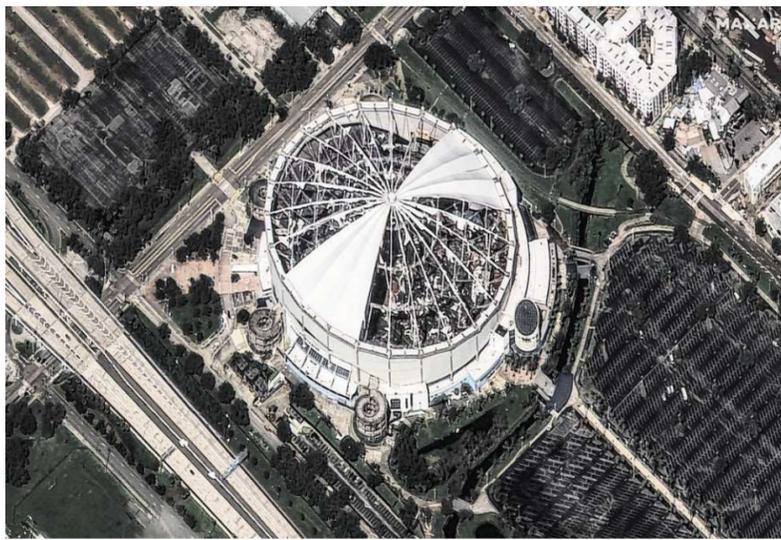
St. Petersburg owns the ballpark and is contractually obligated to provide the Tampa Bay Rays with a playable home. The new Teflon-coated fiberglass roof will cost the city \$22.5 million.

The council voted 7-1 in favor of the project.

"I'd much rather be spending that money on hurricane recovery and helping residents in our most affected neighborhoods," council member Brandi Gabbard told the Tampa Bay Times, "but this is our obligation."

The Rays are expected to return to the indoor facility for the 2026 season.

The damages to Tropicana Field came amid a longstanding tussle between



Imagn Images

The roof of Tropicana Field, home of the Tampa Bay Rays, was torn off by Hurricane Milton's powerful winds. Satellite imagery from Maxar shows the destruction on Oct. 10, 2024. On Thursday, the St. Petersburg, Fla. city council voted to replace the roof.

Rays ownership and local government over the future of the club in the Tampa Bay area. The Rays wanted to build a new ballpark that would cost \$1.3 billion, and local

officials had approved the sale of bonds to pay for their share, but the Rays could not move forward because of the project's shifted timeline and cost overruns.

The Rays are playing the 2025 season in George M. Steinbrenner Field, the spring training home of the American East rival New York Yankees.

PGA rejects \$1.5B offer from Saudi investment fund

Field Level Media

It doesn't look like the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund will be settling their differences any time soon.

ESPN sources confirmed that the PGA Tour has rejected the PIF's recent offer to invest \$1.5 billion into PGA Tour

Enterprises. The investment offer came with the provision that the rival LIV Golf league would remain intact.

That reportedly does not work for the PGA Tour, which wants to have the world's top golfers all competing on one circuit. The PGA Tour replied to the PIF's offer in a letter on Monday, according to

The Guardian of London. "We will not do so in a way that diminishes the strength of our platform or the very real momentum we have with our fans and our partners," PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said at last month's Players Championship. "So while we've removed some hurdles, others remain. But like our fans, we still share the same sense of urgency to get to a resolution."

The two sides met at the White House on Feb. 20. President Donald Trump, speaking Thursday to reporters on Air Force One, said he hopes the

two organizations can reach a deal. Trump was flying to Miami to meet with LIV Golf officials at Trump National Doral, which is owned by the president.

"Ultimately, hopefully, the two tours are going to merge. That'll be good. I'm involved in that too," Trump told the press on the flight, per reports. "But hopefully we're going to get the two tours to merge. You have the PGA Tour and the LIV Tour. And I think having them merge would be a great thing."