

BASEBALL UNDER GLASS

A-Ram/Lofton in '03 only deadline deal where Cubs were clear winners

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OK, the countdown starts. Will the Aroldis Chapman transaction that cost the Cubs a prime shortstop prospect help deliver a World Series and rank as the best trade-deadline deal in team history?

Wait until at least the National League Division Series. If Chapman can help the Cubs avoid the trap of the 100-win team-killing five-game series, he'll be on his way. And he'll zero in on the No. 1 designation if, say, he can nail down the final five outs of a Game 6 of the National League Championship Series. That situation has a familiar ring.

Right now, Chapman has to beat out a 2003 deal to zoom to the top of mid-season trades that were completed to make a difference – but sometimes blew up in the Cubs' collective faces.

Here is a ranking, from worst to first, of such prominent deals. Only the final deal did not have any negative ramifications for the Cubs. The trade deadline moved from June 15 to July 31 in 1987:

Lou Brock to St. Louis for Ernie Broglio with bit-part guys on both sides, June 15, 1964. How Brock quickly developed – actually, he was coming on fast as a Cub – as a Hall of Fame player has been well-documented. The question was whether curveball specialist Broglio, who was 18-8 in 1963, already was hurt at the time of the deal.



Lou Brock (left) and Ernie Broglio.

Broglio' strikeout totals dropped significantly in his two months in the Cubs rotation. Then, on the morning of Aug. 23, 1964 in New York, Broglio woke to find his elbow had locked up. He complained to roomie Joey Amalfitano. Funny guy, Pal Joey was. He threw the room key to Broglio with the admonition to unlock the joint. After the season, Broglio had maximum-invasive surgery on his ulnar collateral ligament, 10 years before the transplant Tommy John surgery was conceived. He tried to come back the following spring, and could not pitch more than a few cameo appearances.

Our old friend Les Grobstein always claimed Cardinals GM Bing Devine knowingly traded an injured pitcher. On a "Diamond Gems" radio program on the 40th anniversary of the deal in 2004, Devine angrily denied Grobstein's charge. Hmm. 1964 Cubs reliever Lindy McDaniel, a former Broglio Cardinals teammate, claimed the word was around the league Broglio was hurting at the time of the trade.

Pitchers commonly concealed injuries in that era of antediluvian sports medicine and job insecurity. For example, Cubs lefty Dick Ellsworth had arm problems as Broglio arrived and could not throw his slider. But Ellsworth still made every start as his record dropped from 10-6 to a final 14-18 in 1964. Bottom line, after Brock exceeded the speed limit in St. Louis and Broglio struggled to the end of this career, MLB enacted a rule that medical information should be exchanged between teams when trades were made.

Promoted to Chicago after just one pro season in Class C St. Cloud, Brock never had a chance in Chicago if he had not immediately become a star. Cubs GM John Holland was impatient coming and going with young players.

Jon Garland to the White Sox for Matt Karchner, July 29, 1998. This time, GM Ed Lynch joined Holland to craft a deal that ended up with egg all over his face. The Garland-Karchner swap might be worst in team deadline annals if not for the massive impact of Brock.

Garland had been the Cubs. 1 draft pick in 1997. Karchner had a decent Sox season in 1997 with 15 saves, but was no lights-out closer. Lynch needed bullpen depth to set up closer Rod Beck, and right on the July 31 deadline landed lefty Felix Heredia from the Marlins.



Jon Garland (left) and Matt Karchner.

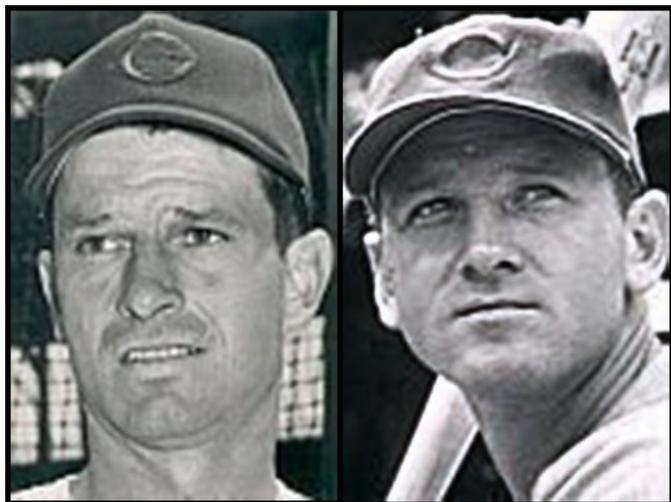
Karchner had a 5.15 ERA in 32 Sox games in '98. He was consistent as a Cub. He had a 5.14 ERA in 29 games. The trade sounded so hazardous to Cubs President Andy MacPhail that he said later the deal was the one he wished he had stepped in and stopped Lynch from consummating.

Meanwhile, the big prize, the Big Unit, went to the team the Cubs were chasing in the NL Central. The Astros landed Randy Johnson from the Mariners, in a case of the pitching-rich getting richer. I wrote that Lynch could have been more aggressive in pursuing Johnson. The following February, peeved by what I wrote, Lynch called me into his Fitch Park office during spring training in Mesa. "Carlos Guillen and Freddy Garcia," he protested, repeated the names for emphasis. Houston had prime talent to trade for Johnson; he didn't. The big question: Why?

Injured, Karchner worked in just 16 games for the pitching-challenged 1999 Cubs. He worked the last of his 13 games (6.15 ERA) on June 14, 2000. Lynch released Karchner Sept. 5, 2000. He was 33 and never again pitched in the big leagues.

Meanwhile, Garland made his MLB debut on July 4, 2000 with the Sox. He went on to back-to-back 18-win seasons in 2005-06, pitching well in the postseason of the Sox's World Series championship run. He won 92 of his 136 games with the Sox.

Andy Pafko, Johnny Schmitz, Wayne Terwilliger and Rube Walker to Brooklyn for Bruce Edwards, Joe Hatten, Gene Hermanski and Eddie Miksis, June 15, 1951. This was a case where easy-fooled Cubs player boss-man Wid Mathews over-valued talent on the Dodgers, his old team where he worked as a lieutenant for Branch Rickey.



One of the most popular Cubs of his era, Pafko was in his prime, coming off his best season with 36 homers in 1950. But Mathews was hot after all-potential catcher Edwards.

He merely shuffled the deck chairs on the Titanic. Edwards was sore-armed, and his fellow Dodger emigres were all backup players. Pafko went on to help the Dodgers in the 1951 pennant race. He played in the World Series in Brooklyn in 1952 and had two good years as a Milwaukee Braves regular in 1953-54. Handy Andy was a utilityman by the time the Braves made the World Series in 1957-58, but still logged plenty of post-season time. He outlasted all but one player in that trade.

Joe Carter, Mel Hall and Don Schulze to Cleveland for Rick Sutcliffe, George Frazier and Ron Hassey, June 13, 1984. The Cubs do not finish on top in the NL East for the first two times since World War II without Sutcliffe's stalwart pitching. But...where would the Cubs overall have finished over the years had they kept Carter, author of 396 homers and one World Series-clinching walkoff blast?



Joe Carter (left) and Rick Sutcliffe.

The inter-league trade required waivers at the time, and the process nearly got goofed up. Once straightened out, Sutcliffe went on a Jake Arrieta-style streak, going 16-1 the rest of the '84 season, earning the Cy Young Award and winning Game 1 of the NLCS.

Problem was, enriched by a free-agent contract from Dallas Green, the stubborn Sutcliffe came back too fast from a hamstring injury in May 1985, hurting his shoulder as a result. He was no longer a power pitcher. He went 16-12 for the 1989 Cubs, but had more shoulder issues and never had another big Cubs year.

Scouted by the immortal Buck O'Neil, Carter was a surefire slugging prospect. The team's top pick in 1981, he was first African-American taken No. 1 by the Cubs in the 17 seasons of the June amateur draft. The Cubs had an age-old dearth of home-grown position players – going back to 1965 -- up through Carter's ascension. He went on to lead the AL with 121 RBIs in 1986, amassing six 30-homer seasons with the Indians and Toronto Blue Jays through 1996.

Frazier had a decent half-season in the '84 Cubs bullpen, but was part of the overall pitching collapse in 1985-86.

Jose Hernandez, Bobby Hill and Matt Brubeck to Pittsburgh for Aramis Ramirez and Kenny Lofton, July 23, 2003. The Cubs' best deadline trade ever can be credited to salary-dumping Pirates GM Dave Littlefield, whom Cubs counterpart Jim Hendry later rewarded with a scouting job after the Buccos fired Littlefield.

Hendry needed another RBI bat and a replacement for injured center fielder Corey Patterson at mid-season 2003, when first baseman Eric Karros proclaimed the Cubs were "ready to win." The GM hinted he'd pursue center-fielder Lofton, who grew up a Cubs

fan in East Chicago, Ind., if he did not have to give up much. Hendry didn't, and he also corralled third baseman Ramirez, the Cubs' top RBI man the next half-decade.

By the time he had an abbreviated second-stint with the Cubs, Hernandez was a strikeout-prone aging infielder. Hill was an over-hyped middle-infield prospect. But Lofton provided the classic leadoff man the Cubs sorely lacked, and still have not acquired 13 years later. Ramirez gave the Cubs a huge run-production

boost the rest of the '03 season. He went on to amass three consecutive 100-RBI seasons from 2006-08 as the team's best third baseman since Ron Santo.



Jose Hernandez (left) and Aramis Ramirez.