

Harper, Machado, Kimbrel, Keuchel on market as camps open

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, Craig Kimbrel and Dallas Keuchel won't be around when the bat and ball bags are opened at spring training throughout Florida and Arizona this week.

They are among the dozens of free agents still looking for jobs, joined by Mike Moustakas, Marwin Gonzalez, Carlos Gonzalez and Gio Gonzalez.

For the second straight winter, camps are opening with many rosters in exceptional flux.

"The market will sort itself out," St. Louis Cardinals chairman Bill DeWitt Jr. said at last week's owners' meetings. "There is a long time between the end of the season and spring training, and there's maybe not so much a sense of urgency on whichever side it happens to be."

Among the 164 players who exercised free agency rights at the end of last year's World Series, 84 had announced agreements on the eve of spring training. That is up from 65 of 166 at roughly the same



AP Photo/Elise Amendola, File

In this Oct. 24, 2018, file photo, Los Angeles Dodgers' Manny Machado, right, hits a single in front of Boston Red Sox catcher Christian Vazquez during Game 2 of the World Series baseball game in Boston.

point last season, but down from 105 of 158 two years ago.

Boston added J.D. Martinez last Feb. 26 and Philadelphia brought in Jake Arrieta on March 12. All but 26 of the free agents last off-season eventually reached deals,

but some with big-money contracts flopped after late starts: Yu Darvish joined the Chicago Cubs on Feb. 13, went 1-3 and didn't pitch after May 20 because of arm problems. Eric Hosmer finalized his agreement with San Diego on

Feb. 19 and hit a career-worst .253 with 69 RBIs. Alex Cobb signed with Baltimore on March 26 and went 5-16.

A drawn-out negotiating process means clubs have lost time in marketing new acquisitions, which seems especially significant to a sport coming off three straight years of attendance declines. Average attendance dropped below 30,000 last year for the first time since 2003.

"We want players signed, particularly star players. I wish they were signed and ready to go," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said Friday. "We got another week before they have to report. I'm really hopeful that it's going to get resolved during that period."

Oakland starts workouts Monday in Mesa, Arizona. Seattle follows Tuesday in Peoria, Arizona, with both teams getting early starts because they open the season in Tokyo on March 20-21, a week before other teams get underway. Every other club launches practice Wednesday or Thursday except for Atlanta, which waits until Saturday.

Six new managers are in charge and five of them are big league rookie skippers. Rocco Baldelli (Minnesota), David Bell (Cincinnati), Brandon Hyde (Baltimore), Charlie Montoyo (Toronto) and Chris Woodward (Texas) are first-timers running a big league dugout, joined by the Los Angeles Angels' Brad Ausmus, Detroit's manager from 2014-17.

One of last year's rookie managers was Alex Cora, who led Boston to its fourth World Series title in 15 seasons.

Among the major trades of the offseason, Philadelphia obtained catcher J.T. Realmuto from Miami, St. Louis got first baseman Paul Goldschmidt from Arizona and the New York Mets got second baseman Robinson Cano and closer Edwin Diaz from Seattle.

In the free-agent market thus far, Washington added left-hander Patrick Corbin and the Los Angeles Dodgers signed outfielder A.J. Pollock, Atlanta got third baseman Josh Donaldson and Colorado picked up second baseman Daniel Murphy.

Place your bets: NASCAR pushes its chips on sports gambling

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Brendan Gaughan is the son of a casino magnate and has long grasped the allure of throwing down a few bucks to wager on a sporting event.

Heck, Gaughan once bet on himself in Las Vegas to win the 2004 Daytona 500. Gaughan got a stern talking to from NASCAR back in the day when gambling was perhaps the most taboo topic

in sports. March Madness brackets, Super Bowl prop bets, they all go hand-in-hand with the biggest games as much as the highlights, but wagers on the upstart underdog or 5-1 favorite were saved for Vegas, office pools and the neighborhood bookie operating illegally.

But societal attitudes — and more to the point, laws — toward betting have evolved, leading even sports leagues to loosen their stances as a new world of potential partnerships and

revenue streams has opened. Count NASCAR as the latest sport racing toward the gambling industry.

"The more people betting and playing fantasy games on your sport, the more people watch," Gaughan said. "When it comes to fantasy sports and betting on NASCAR races, there's nothing wrong with it."

NASCAR is on board — and on the betting boards of sportsbooks on Nevada and beyond — with legalized betting in 2019.

NASCAR scanned the gambling landscape before implementing gambling guidelines in the rulebook for this season. Among the new restrictions: drivers and team members are banned from betting on races or disclosing confidential information. They are allowed to participate in fantasy sports relating to the three national touring series, but may not accept prizes with a value of more than \$250 in any games. The bans are in line with other major sports.



AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack

Drivers sit on pit road while in a rain delay during the NASCAR Clash auto race at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday in Daytona Beach, Fla.

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