



WRIGLEY FIELD CHICAGO CUBS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### Daily Herald

Musical chairs for Cubs' pitching staff  
By Bruce Miles

The Cubs' moving-pitchers show continued, as expected, Wednesday.

Relievers Matt Guerrier and Pedro Strop joined the team in Oakland after their trades to the Cubs on Tuesday.

To make room, the Cubs optioned lefty Chris Rusin back to Class AAA Iowa and designated reliever Shawn Camp for assignment.

After working in 80 games last season, Camp looked to have nothing in the tank this year. His record was 1-1 with a 7.04 ERA and a WHIP of 1.87.

"Unfortunately, we had to (designate) Camp, which obviously wasn't my finest day as a manager," manager Dale Sveum told reporters. "It was tough because Camp did so much for me my first year as manager and God knows where we would've been last year without him.

"Those days are tough when a guy's a great guy and obviously done a lot for you. He did a lot for me when I was managing in Double-A. We go way back."

The pitching picture will change again in the coming days. The Cubs will need a starter for Sunday's home game against the Pittsburgh Pirates. Rusin would be ineligible unless there was an injury to someone on the 25-man roster.

The Cubs also said they won't start Carlos Villanueva, who has just begun to get "stretched out" to start again. He worked 22/3 innings in Tuesday's 8-7 loss to the Athletics.

Jake Arrieta also won't start Sunday. He came over with Strop from Baltimore in Tuesday's trade that sent Scott Feldman to the Orioles. Guerrier was obtained from the Los Angeles Dodgers for former closer Carlos Marmol.

Matt Garza started Wednesday night for the Cubs, and he may be the next Cubs starter to be traded.

### International talk"

The most interesting aspect of Tuesday's flurry of trades was the Cubs netting \$963,000 in international signing-bonus money.

This is another example of progressive thinking from the Theo Epstein/Jed Hoyer front office. The Cubs like the current group of international free agents, and they're making sure they have the money to sign some of the better ones.

A report surfaced Wednesday that they had signed their top target, 16-year-old outfielder Eloy Jimenez out of the Dominican Republic.

The Cubs traded a slot to the Dodgers in the Marmol deal, but they picked up four slots in the trades with Baltimore and Houston.

Cubs management has been trying to low-key the acquisition of monies for international signings, with GM Hoyer saying this Tuesday when asked about getting \$388,100 in slot money from the Orioles in the trade that sent pitcher Scott Feldman to the Baltimore.

Hoyer wanted to talk more about getting Arrieta and Strop.

"Certainly, it was an important part of the deal," Hoyer said of the international slots. "But frankly, it was the last part. We talked really for quite a while about the various players. The focus for us was adding two more power arms that are controllable for a long time."

What the Cubs are doing is trying to exploit every advantage possible in the new international-signing system. They had the second-most money to work with after Houston, but to get the players they want, they needed more.

The baseball site FanGraphs had an interesting analysis by Dave Cameron.

"So, yes, the Cubs traded Scott Feldman for Jake Arrieta, but that was likely not the primary motivation for this deal from Chicago's perspective," Cameron wrote.

"I'm sure the Cubs are happy to have both of those arms in their organization, but this was a trade about the long-term future in Chicago, and securing premium international talent in the process."

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#### **Cubs.com**

Garza outduels Colon for third straight win  
Right-hander continues to dominate amid trade rumors  
By Carrie Muskat

OAKLAND -- If Wednesday was Matt Garza's last start for the Cubs, he left a good impression.

Garza held the A's to four hits in eight innings, Luis Valbuena belted a solo home run, Brian Bogusevic added an RBI double and Alfonso Soriano hit an RBI single to lead the Cubs to a 3-1 victory and end Bartolo Colon's eight-game winning streak.

Garza was the star of the show.

"That was as good as I've seen him in two years, especially against seven left-handers in the lineup," Cubs manager Dale Sveum said. "His command of his fastball down and away [was sharp]. He had the extra velocity when he needed it, first-pitch strikes, you can go on and on. That was as impressive as you're going to get."

"I had a game plan and kept attacking," Garza said.

There were plenty of scouts among the sellout crowd of 35,067 at O.co Coliseum to watch Garza, whose name has been mentioned in trade rumors since Spring Training.

"In the world of trading for starting pitchers, when you think you have a chance at the playoffs, you want them for more than eight or nine starts," Sveum said. "You don't want to give up prospects for eight starts."

Last year, Sveum watched as two-thirds of his rotation was dealt at the Trade Deadline. That could happen again. On Tuesday, Scott Feldman was shipped to the Orioles. Garza may be next.

"I don't brace for anything, because I don't have control over that," Sveum said. "It's part of the business and that's where we are at that part of the season."

Garza is well aware of the rumors and has done everything he can to ignore them.

"Six, seven years, my name has been thrown around," he said. "Until my phone rings, I'm going to be a Cub and I'm going to stay a Cub. We'll see."

For Garza, it was business as usual. He now has given up three earned runs over his last 30 innings, and won his third straight start.

"I'm just pitching and not even worrying about anything," he said. "I'm just worried about the next five days. I've got the White Sox in the next five days."

Still, the right-hander has rebounded from an elbow injury that shut him down for the last two months of last season. He missed all of Spring Training with a lat injury.

"Early on, I kept saying it was mechanical," Garza said. "Now, I've ironed it out and now I'm not worried about mechanics and I'm more worried about hitting my spots and not focused on anything else."

Starlin Castro was safe on an infield single with one out in the first, moved up on a wild pitch by Colon, his first since May 2009, and scored one out later on Soriano's single.

Valbuena made it 2-0 with a solo home run with one out in the third that right fielder Josh Reddick just missed. Reddick slammed his glove against the wall in disgust. For Valbuena, it was his second home run in three career at-bats against Colon. Valbuena's first big league home run came June 7, 2009, off the right-hander when he was with the White Sox.

The Cubs used an extreme defensive shift against Brandon Moss, who cleared all defenders by hitting his 15th home run with two outs in the fourth.

Colon, 40, named the American League Pitcher of the Month for June, scattered nine hits over seven innings and did not strike out anyone.

The Cubs had multiple scoring opportunities. Nate Schierholtz tripled with two outs in the third and was stranded, and Julio Borbon tripled with one out in the seventh and didn't score. Finally, with two outs in the eighth, Dioner Navarro and Bogusevic hit back-to-back doubles for a 3-1 lead.

Sveum had pitchers up in the bullpen in case Garza struggled.

"Bogusevic's double off [Sean] Doolittle kept Garza in the game and added a run there," Sveum said.

Kevin Gregg worked a scoreless ninth for his 14th save in 15 opportunities.

Now, Garza is thinking about pitching in October. And not necessarily for another team.

"My job right now is to try to get my team to October," he said. "We're scratching and clawing our way back. We're going to keep playing and keep going and see where it ends up."

"I love pitching in October and would love to take this team to October," he said of the Cubs, who were 15 games out and would have to stage a historic rally to do so. "October sounds like a lot of fun, but I have to get past the next five days."

And for whom? We'll see.

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## **Cubs.com**

Cubs set to sign top international prospect Jimenez

Dominican outfielder agrees to terms for \$2.8 million bonus, plus college scholarship

By Jesse Sanchez

It appears that Eloy Jimenez's dream of being the next Sammy Sosa and running around the outfield at Wrigley Field is one step closer to becoming a reality.

An industry source told MLB.com on Wednesday that the prospect has agreed to a \$2.8 million bonus and a \$250,000 college scholarship with Cubs, and is currently working out at the team's academy in the Dominican Republic.

Jimenez will officially sign with the club soon, the source said, but a timetable has not been set. The team did not confirm the agreement.

The 6-foot-4, 198-pound Jimenez, who ranks No. 1 on MLB.com's Top 30 International Prospects list, is considered the crown jewel of the 2013-14 international signing period and has impressed scouts with his intelligence, plus-speed, and gap-to-gap power.

He's considered a five-tool player.

"It's my dream to be a Major League baseball player, but I don't want to just get there," Jimenez told MLB.com less than two weeks ago. "I want to be one of the best players in the game and to ever come from the Dominican Republic."

He might be on his way.

A star in MLB's RBI program in the Dominican Republic and for the International Prospect League (IPL), Jimenez is considered an advanced hitter with quick hands who should hit for average. He projects as a corner outfielder and is expected to improve on all aspects of his game once he becomes a regular in the academy.

Like many international teens his age, Jimenez could use more in-game experience, but scouts rave about his makeup.

Jimenez, who also does karate, started playing baseball at age 9, primarily in the infield until he moved to the outfield three years ago. At 14, he caught the eye of trainer/agent Amauris Nina during a youth league game and started training with him. Jimenez's signing will mark the culmination of almost two years of hard work, and countless tryouts and showcases in front of Major League teams.

The outfielder will join a talented group if he finalizes the agreement.

So far, sources have linked the Cubs to some of the top prospects on the market. On Tuesday, sources confirmed that the team agreed to a deal with shortstop Gleyber Torres, the top player from Venezuela and third-ranked international prospect, for \$1.7 million, and Colombia's right-handed pitcher Erling Moreno, who ranked No. 17, for \$650,000.

The club also signed right-handed pitcher Jefferson Mejia for \$850,000 and added catching prospect Johan Matos for \$270,000.

Between their deals with the Astros, Orioles and Dodgers, the Cubs added \$963,000 in international slot money to up their total pool to \$5.52 million to pay for these prospects.

Like every club, the Cubs are hopeful their investments on the international market will pay off.

"I feel like I've done a great job so far," Jimenez said. "I know there are going to be highs and lows, but I'm staying

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### **Cubs.com**

Camp designated, Rusin optioned for Strop, Guerrier

By Carrie Muskat

OAKLAND -- For Pedro Strop, getting traded to the Cubs means he's reunited with his friend, Kevin Gregg. For Matt Guerrier, it's a chance to get back on track.

The two relievers joined the Cubs on Wednesday at O.co Coliseum, taking the roster spots of Shawn Camp and Chris Rusin. Camp was designated for assignment, and Rusin, who started on Tuesday for Scott Feldman, was optioned to Triple-A Iowa.

Camp, 37, who was sidelined with a sprained right big toe in June, was 1-1 with a 7.04 ERA in 26 games with the Cubs. He gave up 34 hits and walked nine in 23 innings.

Cubs manager Dale Sveum called Camp the MVP of the first half last year when Camp compiled a 2.80 ERA in 43 games.

"Unfortunately, we had to outright Camp, which obviously wasn't my finest day as a manager," Sveum said. "It was tough, because Camp did so much for me my first year as manager and God knows where we would've been last year without him. Those days are tough when a guy's a great guy and obviously done a lot for you. He did a lot for me when I was managing in Double-A. We go way back. It was a tough day today."

The Cubs needed a starter to replace Feldman, who was dealt to the Orioles earlier on Tuesday, and Rusin filled in against the Athletics. He gave up three runs on six hits over 3 1/3 innings in the start, which he made on three days' rest.

Strop and Guerrier were acquired in separate deals. Strop was picked up from the Orioles along with Jake Arrieta, who was assigned to Iowa, while Guerrier was acquired from the Dodgers for Carlos Marmol.

Guerrier, 34, was 2-3 with three holds and a 4.80 ERA in 34 relief outings with the Dodgers before he was designated for assignment on Sunday. He and Gregg were teammates in Spring Training on the Dodgers, and had talked then about their roles.

"I was unsure about what was going to happen there in Spring Training with the amount of pitchers they had in camp and the decisions they had to make," Guerrier said of the Dodgers. "The way things worked out, they ended up needing all those starters and more. It was a weird situation that most teams don't run into."

Does he believe that a change of scenery will help him?

"We'll see," Guerrier said. "Obviously, things weren't going exactly as I'd like in L.A. We'll see how it goes."

Strop, 28, was one of the Orioles' primary set-up men last season, posting a 2.44 ERA in 70 appearances. This year, he missed time due to back problems, and was 0-3 with a 7.25 ERA in 29 relief appearances.

"Obviously, I wasn't doing a good job there, so anything can happen," Strop said about being traded. "I'm just going to put that aside. I'm here, I'm a Cub now. I just want to help."

The right-hander said he changed his mechanics, and then struggled. Now, Strop said he feels back in his normal rhythm.

Villanueva could find his way back into rotation

OAKLAND -- Carlos Villanueva began the season in the Cubs' starting rotation and could find himself back there by the All-Star break.

The right-hander pitched 2 2/3 innings on Tuesday, and will continue to be stretched out. The Cubs do not have a starter set for Sunday against the Pirates, and could have Villanueva start and then get help from the bullpen. If the Cubs need Villanueva before Sunday, then they'll likely have to make a roster move and call someone up from the Minors.

Villanueva, whose last start was May 14, has posted a 2.04 ERA in 16 games as a reliever. He didn't feel he needed much time to prepare.

"The last two years, I've basically thrown without any buildup," he said. "I remember in New York, my first game in May, I went 75 [pitches], and last year, I went 95 in my first start in July. It's not the way you want to go and they're taking care of me here."

The Cubs need a starter to fill in for Scott Feldman, traded on Tuesday to the Orioles.

"We lost 'Feldy,' loved him, great teammate," Villanueva said. "I'm happy to see him go to a contender, but obviously, I'm sad for selfish reasons because he was a really good teammate. We've got the rumors swirling around [Matt] Garza. You've got to be prepared for it. The team has to do what's best for the future, obviously."

Although Villanueva has done everything but pick up a save this season, he does like starting the best.

"I've always been a starter, ever since I was a kid," Villanueva said. "I like having the control from pitch one. I'm sure all of our bench players would like to be starting."

But he'll never complain about his role.

"I want to be a guy who isn't trouble," Villanueva said.

He was 1-3 in eight starts with a 3.93 ERA.

"If there's an opportunity for me to help the team out, I feel with me starting, we have a good chance to win," he said. "From the heart, that's how I feel. I feel like I'm prepared, I feel like I'm matured. If I get a couple more starts, I'll try to do my best so I can get a full-time gig next year."

Through 81 games, Cubs improved over last year

OAKLAND -- The Cubs have reached the halfway point in the season, posting a 35-46 record in the first 81 games, a slight improvement over last year's 31-50 record at the midpoint.

The Cubs have hit 20 more home runs at this point compared to last year (87 vs. 67) and have scored 39 more runs (337 to 298). The team ERA of 3.97 is nearly a half run lower than last year's 4.37 ERA through 81 games. Cubs starting pitchers have a 3.82 ERA through 81 games this season after posting a 4.32 ERA at this point last year, while the bullpen has a 4.32 ERA through 81 games this year, lower than the 4.47 ERA through 81 games last year.

How does manager Dale Sveum assess the team at the midway point?

"The two areas most glaring are obviously the bullpen and closing games out after having all these leads after the sixth, seventh, eighth innings," Sveum said. "We've got to clean that up somehow and win those ballgames that we put ourselves in a position to win."

"The offense is coming around a little bit and we're getting a little better with men in scoring position," he said. "Our two biggest problems have been men in scoring position and closing things with the bullpen."

The Cubs are tied for third-lowest batting average in the Major Leagues with runners in scoring position.

Extra bases

- The Cubs named Class A Daytona infielder Javier Baez and Triple-A Iowa pitcher Chris Rusin the organization's Minor League player and pitcher of the month for June, respectively.

Baez, 20, batted .300 with seven doubles and a league-leading nine home runs and 28 RBIs in 24 games. He became the second player in Florida State League history to hit four home runs in a game, doing so June 10 against Fort Myers.

For the season, Baez was batting .272 with 19 doubles, four triples, 17 home runs and 57 RBIs in 73 games. The Cubs' first-round Draft pick in 2011, Baez has a .283 career batting average with 34 doubles, 10 triples, 33 home runs and 104 RBIs in 158 Minor League games.

Rusin, 26, went 3-3 with a 2.86 ERA in six June starts, striking out 26 and issuing eight walks. He gave up three home runs over 44 innings, limiting the opposition to a .234 batting average. On Monday, he was named to the Pacific Coast League All-Star Team.

The lefty threw his first-career shutout in Iowa's 2-0 victory June 17 against Omaha as part of a career-high, 24-inning scoreless streak spanning four starts from June 7-22.

- The Stanley Cup is coming to Wrigley Field.

The Cubs will celebrate the Blackhawks' Stanley Cup championship Friday and Saturday. On Friday, Blackhawks players Bryan Bickell, Patrick Sharp and Brandon Bollig will be at Wrigley to sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," but they won't bring the actual Stanley Cup that day.

Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville will have the trophy with him on Saturday when he throws out the ceremonial first pitch.

- The first Anthony Rizzo Foundation "Cook-off for Cancer" will be held Aug. 14 in Chicago. The event will feature upscale versions of ballpark food prepared by notable Chicago chefs and served by Cubs players. A three-person panel of local celebrities will give their take on the meals. Guests will vote for their favorite chef by tipping the Cubs server.

All tips and event proceeds will benefit pediatric cancer research, care and support. The event will take place from 6-10 p.m. CT at Cafe Brauer, located in Lincoln Park. Tickets are \$1,000 for a table of four, or \$200 for a single ticket. For more info, go to [Cubs.com/cook](http://Cubs.com/cook).

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### **Cubs.com**

Straily fills in for Parker in finale with Cubs  
Chicago can take series from first-place A's behind Wood  
By AJ Cassavell

Dan Straily is back in Oakland, and this time the A's right-hander is hoping his stay in the big leagues will be for good.

Set for his fourth stint with the A's this year, Straily will get the ball Thursday afternoon against the Cubs in the rubber match of a three-game set. He is scheduled to be recalled from Triple-A Sacramento before the game, taking the place of Jarrod Parker, who had his start pushed back to Saturday due to tightness in his right hamstring.

"You don't ever want to promise a young pitcher when he goes down that he'll be back on 'X' date because you want to make sure he has an edge about him and goes out there and competes like he normally would," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "But he's done some good things for us this year."

Straily has dominated at Sacramento, going 3-1 with a 1.46 ERA. But at the big league level, he's struggled a bit, having allowed four runs or more in five of his 12 starts.

Opposite Straily will be Cubs left-hander Travis Wood, whose season has been far better than his record would indicate. Despite a 5-6 mark on the year, Wood has tossed 15 quality starts in 16 outings and has owns a 2.85 ERA.

At the plate, Wood has also been a force -- at least for a pitcher, posting a .258 batting average with a pair of home runs.

He'll have to contend with an A's squad in a dogfight for first place in the American League West. Entering play Thursday, Oakland holds a half-game edge on Texas, and the two clubs are tied in the loss column.

Cubs: Strop, Guerrier join Cubs

The Cubs acquired Pedro Strop and Matt Guerrier in separate trades Tuesday and the pair joined the ballclub on Wednesday. They took over the roster spots of Shawn Camp (designated for assignment) and Chris Rusin (optioned to Triple-A Iowa).

Both relievers have a history of success, but they've struggled mightily this season. Strop (7.25 ERA) and Guerrier (4.80 ERA) didn't get the chance to pitch Wednesday as Cubs starter Matt Garza pitched eight solid frames before handing it to Kevin Gregg in the ninth.

"Obviously, things weren't going exactly as I'd like in L.A. We'll see how it goes," Guerrier said.

A's: Jaso returns

A left palm abrasion kept John Jaso out of the starting lineup for 10 straight games, but the A's catcher returned on Wednesday night and went 0-for-3.

"He feels good," manager Bob Melvin said. "He hit quite a bit [Tuesday] and catching hasn't been the issue, so he feels good."

On the season, Jaso is hitting .271, including a .326 mark since June 1.

Worth noting

- Oakland shortstop Jed Lowrie has just one hit in 10 lifetime at-bats against Wood.
- The Cubs are 25-21 this season against teams outside of the NL Central, but they've gone just 11-25 against the clubs within their own division.
- The A's are 34-18 in night games, but they've gone just 15-18 in games played during the day.

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**ESPNChicago.com**

Garza's performance the perfect audition

By Joe Stiglich

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Take Matt Garza at his word and he swears he isn't thinking about possibly being traded.

Judging by his performance Wednesday, it sure seemed like he was auditioning for contending teams looking to add a pitcher.



Garza was in top form in silencing the Oakland A's during a 3-1 Chicago Cubs victory before a sellout crowd at O.co Coliseum. He gave up just four hits over eight innings. He pumped his fastball into the mid-90s early in the game.

And just when it seemed he was losing some zip, he dug deeper in the eighth, getting Oakland cleanup hitter Yoenis Cespedes to pop out to strand a runner at third.

"That's as good as I've seen him in two years," Cubs manager Dale Sveum said. "He had command of his fastball down and away. He didn't use a whole lot of breaking balls, but he had the extra velocity when he needed it.

"That's as impressive as you're gonna get with seven left-handers in the [opposing] lineup."

Surely, pitching-hungry teams took notice. The Boston Red Sox were among the teams who had a scout on hand to watch Garza.

The Cubs, at 36-46 and 15½ games out of first in the National League Central, have already dealt veteran starter Scott Feldman, and there's no reason to think they won't dump other front-line players before the July 31 trade deadline.

Garza (4-1), sounding much like outfielder Alfonso Soriano on Tuesday night, said he isn't consumed by the trade chatter.

"For six, seven years my name has gone around" in trade rumors, Garza said. "[Until] my phone rings, I'm gonna plan on being a Cub and I'm gonna stay a Cub. We'll see."

After missing the first month and a half with a lat injury, Garza went through a rough patch. But he has allowed just three earned runs over his past four starts (30 IP). He carries a 3.45 ERA in nine starts overall.

Most pitchers enjoy night games at the Coliseum because the ball doesn't carry well, but Garza has another reason to enjoy throwing here. The Fresno, Calif., native is a huge Oakland Raiders fan and usually attends two or three football games at the Coliseum every season.

But the big question surrounding Garza is where he'll be spending August, September and possibly October. Based on how he looked Wednesday, lots of general managers might be dialing Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein in the coming days.

### Strop gets loose

Newly acquired reliever Pedro Strop was warming up in the eighth along with lefty James Russell, but Sveum let Garza work his way through the inning despite his rising pitch count.

That allowed Sveum to go directly to closer Kevin Gregg for the ninth. Sveum lamented his bullpen's recent inability to protect leads after Tuesday's game, and he was going to give Garza an extra-long leash.

"It was his game basically," Sveum said. "He knew it. He got through it."

But Sveum also pointed out how important it was to get an insurance run in the top of the eighth.

Dioner Navarro and Brian Bogusevic doubled in back-to-back plate appearances against Sean Doolittle to push Chicago's lead from 2-1 to 3-1.

"It probably kept Garza in the game, adding the run there," Sveum said.

### Strong effort for Valbuena

Luis Valbuena went 2-for-5, and his home run in the third off Bartolo Colon was his first since May 30.

First day on the job

It's always interesting to see the interaction when new players arrive via trade. The scene is very much like someone arriving in the office for their first day of work, with lots of handshakes as people introduce themselves.

That's how it was for Strop and fellow reliever Matt Guerrier, who arrived Wednesday after trades from the Baltimore Orioles and the Los Angeles Dodgers, respectively.

Strop did see one familiar face.

He had a hearty embrace for Gregg. The two were Orioles teammates from 2011 to 2012.

But from now until the July 31 trade deadline, the real story will be which players the Cubs say goodbye to.

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### **ESPNChicago.com**

Long day-and-a-half for Scott Feldman

By Bruce Levine

CHICAGO -- It had been a whirlwind 36 hours for former Chicago Cubs pitcher Scott Feldman. The veteran RHP left the Cubs in Oakland on Tuesday and pitched for the Baltimore Orioles on Wednesday night against the White Sox in Chicago.

Feldman received a no-decision, going six innings while allowing two runs in his first appearance with the Orioles.

"I left a lot of good people over there," Feldman said off his Cubs experience. "From the staff to the players and front office. I made a lot of good friends there on the team, and everyone treated me really well."

Feldman knew he might end up on the trading block at some point with a rebuilding team like the Cubs when he signed a one-year deal during the offseason.

He said he felt the opportunity to prove he was still a quality big league starter was worth the risk. Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein assured Feldman he would be one of his five starters before he inked the deal.

"I just wanted to go somewhere where I could get an opportunity to [start]," he said. "I just felt I had a better opportunity to succeed if I could go out and make 30 starts. I don't think it was a gamble; I was just looking for the right situation."

Feldman more than proved he was still an efficient big league starter. He put up a 7-6 record with respectable 3.46 ERA for a club that was 10 games under .500 when he was shipped to the Orioles.

The 30-year-old pitcher enjoyed his time with the Cubs and believes the front office is moving forward properly with their rebuilding of the Chicago franchise.

"I am sure it is frustrating at times, but at the end of the day they should just keep focusing on what they are doing," he said. "A lot of people would not have expected us to win, but I think the staff and the players did every time we took the field."

Feldman not only believes in the Cubs' game plan for winning, he also wouldn't rule out a return to the team in the future.

"They have won before," he said. "I trust that they are going to do it again. They did it over in Boston, and I think they are taking the same approach in Chicago. They are trying to get that good farm system and some good young arms."

"I loved it there, and I don't carry any hard feelings. They did what they thought was best."

The chance to pitch for a contender in the Orioles is what excites Feldman now.

"This is an excellent team and I am lucky to be here," he said after Wednesday's 4-2 win against the Sox. "I don't feel like a stranger here. I played against these players for a long time and played with a few of the guys in Texas."

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#### **ESPNChicago.com**

Rapid Reaction: Cubs 3, Athletics 1

By Joe Stiglich

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Here's a quick glance at the Chicago Cubs' 3-1 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Wednesday night at O.co Coliseum.

How it happened: If Wednesday happens to be Matt Garza's last start as a Cub, he made it a good one. The right-hander held the A's to four hits over eight innings, minimizing the work for his beleaguered bullpen and helping Chicago even this three-game series at one game apiece. Garza (4-1) is one of the hottest names on the trade market, and considering the Cubs are in full sell mode it's highly probable that he will be dealt before the July 31 trade deadline. He threw a season-high 114 pitches and clearly had lost some zip on his fastball by the eighth. But it was no surprise to see manager Dale Sveum stick with him so long, considering how many games the bullpen has blown. The only damage off Garza came when Brandon Moss hit a hanging breaking ball over the right-field wall in the fourth. The Cubs took the early lead when Alfonso Soriano singled home Starlin Castro in the first. They extended the lead to 2-0 in the third on Luis Valbuena's seventh homer of the season. Kevin Gregg handled the ninth for his 14th save.

What it means: It's the kind of victory the Cubs have failed to salt away on so many occasions. But they managed to nail down a much-deserved win for Garza. Chicago fans should savor the pitching formula used: Garza mowing down hitters for eight innings before handing the ball to Gregg to finish it. Both players are heavily rumored to be on the trade market, so who knows how much longer they'll see this combination?

Outside the box: Garza continues to pitch better away from Wrigley Field. He carries a 2.41 ERA in six road starts, compared to a 5.40 ERA in three starts at home. But those home numbers are a bit deceiving, as Garza gave up nine runs in one of those outings to throw his ERA out of whack. ... The Cubs achieved a mighty feat Wednesday night in defeating A's starter Bartolo Colon (11-3). The portly right-hander had won eight starts in a row, one off the Oakland record held by Barry Zito. Colon held the Cubs to two runs over seven innings -- good, but not good enough on this night.

Up next: Lefty Travis Wood (5-6, 2.85) is winless in his past five outings despite posting quality starts in all of them. He'll try to break back into the victory column in Thursday's 3:05 p.m. CT holiday matchup. Dan Straily (4-2, 5.00) takes the mound for the A's.

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#### **ESPNChicago.com**

Limited roles for relievers Guerrier, Strop

By Joe Stiglich

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Relievers Matt Guerrier and Pedro Strop joined the Chicago Cubs on Wednesday, with both expected to bolster a struggling bullpen after they were acquired Tuesday in separate trades.

However, Cubs manager Dale Sveum said he doesn't plan to slip either into the eighth-inning setup role in front of closer Kevin Gregg.

"I think [Blake] Parker pretty much put himself in that role right now," Sveum said. "It's pretty much going to be Parker and Gregg in those last two innings."

But roles could shift quickly, as Gregg is seen as a prime trade candidate, along with tonight's starting pitcher against the Oakland Athletics, Matt Garza.

Chicago could use some stabilizing outings from Guerrier and Strop, that's for sure. The Cubs' bullpen ERA of 4.32 is tied for 12th out of 15 National League teams, and they've converted just 18-of-35 save opportunities.

To make room for Strop and Guerrier, reliever Shawn Camp was designated for assignment and left-hander Chris Rusin, who made a spot start Tuesday, was optioned to Triple-A Iowa.

Strop, 28, acquired from the Baltimore Orioles along with Jake Arrieta for Scott Feldman, is an intriguing player, having pitched so effectively as a late-inning reliever for Baltimore last season, posting a 2.44 ERA in 70 games. His ERA has swelled to 7.25 this season. The right-hander has walked 15 in just 225 innings, and he became a target for Camden Yards boo birds.

Strop said he tried changing his mechanics too quickly when things started going south, which got him out of rhythm. But he's ready to begin anew.

"I come here with a clear mind," he said. "I'm going to forget whatever happened and start over. I'm a Cub, not an Oriole anymore. I've turned the page."

Guerrier, 34, is hoping a change of scenery can change his fortunes, too, after he was acquired from the Dodgers for fellow reliever Carlos Marmol. Guerrier was designated for assignment Sunday after posting a 4.80 ERA in 34 games. He last pitched Friday, and both he and Strop are available tonight.

"Obviously things weren't going exactly as I'd liked them in L.A.," Guerrier said.

#### Team notes

With Rusin being sent down, the Cubs haven't announced a starter for Sunday, which would have been Feldman's turn before he was traded Tuesday to Baltimore.

Sveum confirmed that Sunday's starter would be a minor league call-up. One option is Guillermo Moscoso, who threw 65 innings Tuesday for Iowa and got the win over Memphis. Moscoso has seen big league time with the Texas Rangers, Colorado Rockies and Oakland. He would be on his regular four days' rest were he to go Sunday. But it's worth noting he has a 4.63 ERA in Triple-A and walked four Tuesday.

The Cubs also figure to give a starting shot at some point to Arrieta, who was acquired from Baltimore along with Strop and was assigned to Iowa.

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#### **ESPNChicago.com**

Cubs midseason awards

By Jesse Rogers

The Chicago Cubs' 35-46 record at the halfway mark of the season probably comes as no surprise to anyone. How they achieved that record has, at times, been a shock to the system.

Seventeen blown saves, including Game No. 81 on Tuesday night in Oakland, is the key statistic to remember about the first half. It leads the major leagues and has held the Cubs back as much as anything in their game.

So it's selling season, again, for the Cubs, as they've already started what is quickly becoming an annual rite of July. Before too many more players are moved, let's hand out midseason awards. After all, the winners might not be around much longer to collect their trophies:

#### MVP: Kevin Gregg

As much as Travis Wood might deserve an All-Star bid, he's just one part of a surprisingly good starting staff. In other words, Wood could split the MVP vote with a couple of other starters, including the departed Scott Feldman. There's no denying one thing: What the Cubs had to start the game, they lacked in finishing it.

They desperately needed someone to bolster the back end of the bullpen after Carlos Marmol faltered and Kyuji Fujikawa went down with an arm injury. Gregg has done just that since being picked up in April. His 13 saves in 14 opportunities -- and 1.65 ERA -- have kept manager Dale Sveum sane after a rough season's start in finishing games. Even now, the Cubs continue to blow late leads, but Gregg has mostly nothing to do with it.

After fixing some mechanical issues, his fastball has become the key for Gregg. Plus, there isn't an offensive player who could qualify for the award (Nate Schierholtz comes the closest); it goes to Gregg.

#### Most Improved: Travis Wood

Wood might win this by a landslide. And that's not necessarily a good thing, considering the Cubs have young, core players littered throughout the lineup. His 2.85 ERA is good for 13th among regular starters in the National League, while his .195 batting average against places him for fourth.

He began the season with nine consecutive quality starts and has pitched 15, overall, in the first half. He threw 14 all of last year in compiling an ERA of 4.27. His ability to work both sides of the plate -- up and down -- has been the simple, critical difference in Wood.

#### Most Disappointing: Starlin Castro

There certainly are a host of candidates for this award, starting with the departed Carlos Marmol. But giving it to him would be too easy. In fact, who outside the Cubs really thought he would have a full season of competence, even with his decent second half last year? No, this award goes directly to the Cubs' two-time All-Star, Castro.

After saying all the right things in spring training about finally taking the next step in his career, Castro has regressed. There are no sabermetric tricks to build up his year. His .232/.265/.326 splits tell the whole story.

His 15 errors are six more than any other shortstop in the NL, including Ian Desmond, who has played in all of Washington's games to date. And, yes, fielding percentage isn't everything, but Castro's range factor is near the bottom of the league and his brain cramps haven't disappeared, either.

After signing a huge contract, he claimed his problems were behind him. So far, he's been wrong.

#### Biggest Surprise: Scott Feldman

Obviously, any of the above winners would qualify in both the positive and negative category of being a surprise, but there can be no duplicate winners for midseason awards. Surprise. It goes to Feldman.

While watching him in spring training, it would have been hard to imagine he would perform the way he did before being traded. He was leaving balls up all over Arizona and getting hit because of it. When he started the regular season with the same trend, it became alarming. He seemed one pitch short of getting out jams, then eventually gave in to a big hit.

However, he turned things around once he started locating his off-speed stuff. His ERA (3.46) and WAR (wins above replacement) were the best of his career. Feldman came out of nowhere and had a very good first half, all while netting the Cubs a couple of prospects along the way.

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## **CSNChicago.com**

Garza puts on show as Cubs see seller's market developing

By Bruce Miles

OAKLAND, Calif. – “The Matt Garza Show” only has a few episodes left.

You will still be able to catch it somewhere else this summer, maybe even on national television in October. But his days in a Cubs uniform are numbered.

Garza's stock can't soar much higher after beating the Oakland A's and former Cy Young winner Bartolo Colon on Wednesday night at O.co Coliseum. This 3-1 victory in front of a sellout crowd (35,067) again showed why he needs a bigger stage.

“That was as good as I've seen him in two years,” manager Dale Sveum said. “That's as impressive as you're going to get.”

Unless the Philadelphia Phillies make Cliff Lee available and decide to go into full sell mode, Garza should be the No. 1 starter on the market. The Texas Rangers, Boston Red Sox and San Francisco Giants were said to be among several teams with representatives at O.co Coliseum on Wednesday night.

“I've said it before, I'll say it again: For six, seven years, my name's been thrown around there,” Garza said. “So until my phone rings, I'm going to be a Cub. We'll see.”

The day Garza pitches is the closest thing this team has to an event, and his postgame press conference are always must-see. Remember his declaration last year when the trade rumors started heating up again: “I'll pitch on the freaking moon.”

Across his last four starts, Garza has given up three runs in 30 innings, with 28 strikeouts against eight walks.

“Just got to keep it up,” Garza said. “My job right now is to try to get my team to October and we're scratching and clawing our way back in one of the toughest divisions right now. We're just gonna keep playing and keep going and see where it ends up.”

Would you like another shot at October this year, wherever that may be?

“I just love pitching in October and I'd love to take this team to October,” Garza said. “It would be one hell of a ride, I'll tell you that. So right now, October sounds like a lot of fun, but I got to get past the next five days.”

The Cubs (36-46) are looking at the next five years. The day before, they began their summer sell-off by trading Scott Feldman to the Baltimore Orioles, four weeks before the July 31 non-waiver deadline.

“If you're asking why so early,” Sveum said, “you want those starting pitchers to pitch for you more than the two months when you wait until the deadline.”

“When you think you have a chance at the playoffs and all that, you just want them for more than eight starts or nine starts, whatever it might be. You don't want to give up prospects for (that).”

Garza will be a free agent at season's end, and there will be medical concerns about a rental player after elbow injuries forced him onto the disabled list at different points in 2011 and 2012. But team president Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer know this will be a seller's market.

“The fact that you’ve got some tight races in the American League East and the National League West will lend itself to deals,” Hoyer said. “You’ve also got divisions – the NL Central in particular and also the AL West – where the difference between winning your division and not winning your division is the difference between having a five-game playoff series and a one-game playoff.”

The Arizona Diamondbacks (43-41) are in first, but only four games ahead of the last-place, defending-champion Giants. The battle between the A’s and Rangers could again go down to the last day of the regular season.

“There will be some jockeying, even with those teams that feel like they have a really strong chance of going to the playoffs,” Hoyer said. “If you have the chance to win the division with this new system, you’ve got to be aggressive to do that. The fact that races are jumbled up always probably favors the sellers.”

Garza showed a finishing kick, putting two runners on in the sixth inning before blowing away Brandon Moss with three straight 93 mph fastballs and getting a flyball to end the threat. With a runner on third and two outs in the eighth, Garza pointed to the sky and punched his glove as Yoenis Cespedes popped out to second.

Garza, who once pitched close to home at Fresno State University, is a huge Raiders fan and comes to a few games here every year. He blew a kiss into the stands before the game started and dominated the A’s (49-36) in front of his family.

Pretty soon, Garza will become the hired gun for a pennant race. He won’t have to hear about “The Core” or “The Foundation for Sustained Success.” It will be all about three simple words from the late Al Davis, the maverick owner of the Silver and Black: “Just win, baby!”

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#### **CSNChicago.com**

Looking ahead to trade deadline, Cubs continue roster makeover

By Patrick Mooney

OAKLAND, Calif. – Pedro Strop walked over to Kevin Gregg at his locker, gave him a bro hug and playfully grabbed his biceps muscle.

That kind of scene on Wednesday inside O.co Coliseum’s visiting clubhouse – a room flooded with sewage last month – will be played out again soon. For the Cubs, this will be a month of packing and unpacking bags and “Hello, my name is...” introductions.

The Baltimore Orioles released Gregg last September, and by then Strop had emerged as a very good setup guy for a surprising 93-win team. Now Gregg is one of the top relievers on the trade market, while Strop gets a change of scenery after posting a 7.25 ERA and hearing the boos at Camden Yards.

Four weeks from the July 31 trade deadline, the Cubs continued their organizational cleanup and roster makeover, designating reliever Shawn Camp for assignment and optioning left-hander Chris Rusin back to Triple-A Iowa.

A battered bullpen (17 blown saves) added two reinforcements in Strop and Matt Guerrier, who were acquired on Tuesday in the Scott Feldman and Carlos Marmol trades.

The Cubs passed the midpoint and headed into Game 82 knowing they’re already sellers. Gregg (1.59 ERA, 14 saves) and former ALCS MVP Matt Garza could be the next ones to go.

“I don’t brace for anything, because I don’t have control over that until all these things happen,” manager Dale Sveum said. “But, obviously, it’s part of the business and that’s where we are at this part of the season right now.”

Sveum didn’t enjoy breaking the news to Camp. Sveum felt a sense of loyalty to Camp, who had pitched for him at Double-A Altoona years ago in the Pittsburgh Pirates system.

Camp had been one of Sveum's team MVPs last year, tying the major-league lead with 80 relief appearances. But at the age of 37, Camp's rubber arm wasn't the same this season and his slider flattened out. He had lost velocity and spent almost a month on the disabled list with a toe injury. He posted a 7.04 ERA and gave up seven homers in 23 innings.

"Unfortunately, we had to outright Camp, which obviously wasn't my finest day as a manager," Sveum said. "It was tough because Camp did so much for me as a first-year manager and God knows where we would have been last year without him."

The Cubs still lost 101 games in 2012, a race to the bottom that accelerated with another fire sale in July. Angry Cubs fans on Twitter would probably debate Sveum's finest days as manager and love to second-guess the bullpen decisions.

But as team president Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer have repeatedly said: The front office has given Sveum an imperfect roster. There's not enough talent here.

It could look dramatically different by Aug. 1. Carlos Villanueva is being stretched out again to take Feldman's spot in the rotation, though at this point it's unclear who will start Sunday at Wrigley Field against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Cubs can hope Guerrier morphs back into the effective reliever who helped the Minnesota Twins win division titles, and doesn't stay the same guy who was recently designated for assignment by the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Cubs will take a chance on Strop, to see if he can recapture what made him successful in the American League East, the stuff that helped the Dominican Republic win the World Baseball Classic.

"I'm just going to come here with a clear mind," Strop said. "I'm going to forget about whatever happened last year, whatever happened the beginning of this year. I'm just going to start over. I'm a Cub. I'm not an Oriole anymore."

Pretty soon, everyone will be talking about certain Cubs in the past tense.

"There's nothing to really say," Sveum said. "Players are professionals. They know. They've been here before. They know the situation at hand and they just do their best."

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## **Tribune**

Garza dominates in Cubs' 3-1 win over A's

By Paul Sullivan

OAKLAND -- The Cubs began the second half of the schedule on Wednesday with a long ways to go to reach respectability.

They had a 35-46 record, trailing first-place Pittsburgh by 15 1/2 games.

"Our two biggest problems obviously are (lack of hitting with) men in scoring position and closing out games with the bullpen," manager Dale Sveum said. "Those are things we've got to get better at."

The Cubs bullpen led the majors with 17 blown saves, while their .230 average with runners in scoring position was third worst in the majors.

Matt Garza made the start for the Cubs with plenty of scouts watching intently. He threw eight strong innings, allowing one run on four hits before turning it over to closer Kevin Gregg after 114 pitches.



"Six, seven years my name has been thrown around," Garza said. "Until my phone rings, I'm going to be a Cub and stay a Cub."

Garza (4-1) now is 3-0 over his last four starts with an 0.90 earned-run average.

"I'm just worried about the next five days," he said, repeating his 2013 mantra.

Gregg closed it out with a scoreless ninth for his 14th save in 15 opportunities. He walked John Jaso with two outs in the inning and watched him steal second before Josh Reddick struck out to end it.

The Cubs clinched a winning road trip and can make it four straight series wins with a victory on Thursday.

The Cubs jumped out to a quick lead off Bartolo Colon on Alfonso Soriano's RBI single in the first, before Luis Valbuena homered in the third.

Garza was nicked in the fourth on Brandon Moss' solo home run.

Colon lasted seven innings, giving up two runs on nine hits. The Cubs added a run in the eighth off Sean Doolittle on two-out doubles by Dioner Navarro and Brian Bogusevic.

Garza said it's his job to get the Cubs "to October."

"We're scratching and clawing our way back," he said. "I think we're in one of the toughest divisions now. Going to keep playing and keep going and see where it ends up."

Garza insisted the Cubs have a chance at playing in October, adding "it would be a hell of a ride."

It definitely would be, though the fact they are so far back means Garza is likely on his way out of town.

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### **Tribune**

Return on Garza crucial as Cubs restock system

Veteran pitcher dominant again in 3-1 win over A's as team tries to stoke bidding war

By Paul Sullivan

OAKLAND, Calif. — Every start Matt Garza makes could be his last for the Cubs, including Wednesday night's outing against the Athletics.

The Cubs are actively shopping Garza in hopes of trading him for two or three top prospects, believing he'll be one of the best available starting pitchers on the market.

"Obviously it hasn't affected him," manager Dale Sveum said. "He's been pitching really, really well."

Garza posted his fourth straight dominant start in a 3-1 victory over the A's, allowing one run on four hits in eight innings with five strikeouts and three walks. He's 3-0 with an 0.90 ERA in those starts.

And the better Garza pitches, the more heated the bidding war becomes.

While some fans might be upset with the idea of trading Garza, restocking the farm system is management's stated priority, and the die has been cast. Getting a good return is crucial, and the Cubs are quickly turning up the heat on the international market.

They reportedly have signed 16-year-old Dominican outfielder Eloy Jimenez for \$2.8 million, after netting 16-year-old Venezuelan shortstop Gleyber Torres on Tuesday for \$1.7 million. MLB.com, which reported the signings, ranked them first and third, respectively.

Along with the international prospects, the Cubs need a better haul than the one they got from last summer's sell-off. Paul Maholm, Reed Johnson, Ryan Dempster and Geovany Soto netted pitching prospects Arodys Vizcaino, Jaye Chapman, Jake Brigham and Kyle Hendricks and infielder Christian Villanueva.

Here's how they had fared through Tuesday:

- Vizcaino, who was rehabbing from Tommy John surgery at the time of the trade, was ranked as the No. 5 prospect in the Cubs system this spring after coming over from the Braves. But he suffered more elbow soreness in late May and will not pitch for the Cubs in 2013.
- Hendricks was 8-2 at Double-A Tennessee with a 2.06 ERA and is considered a potential major leaguer. He was 7-0 with a 1.52 ERA over his last 10 starts.
- Chapman was non-tendered last winter and re-signed. He went on the disabled list at Triple-A Iowa in April with a left hip strain after compiling a 17.05 ERA in four games and hasn't pitched since.
- Villanueva was hitting .248 at Tennessee with a .306 on-base percentage and nine home runs. The selection of third baseman Kris Bryant with the No. 2 draft pick doesn't bode well for Villanueva's chances of making it to the Cubs.
- Brigham was sent back to the Rangers after two appearances and a 19.64 ERA at Tennessee when he was deemed to have had an elbow injury. The Cubs received Barret Loux, the sixth pick of the 2010 draft, as compensation. Loux was 4-2 with a 4.56 ERA at Iowa, including 3-2 with a 4.94 ERA in 11 starts.

The first two pickups from the 2013 sell-off, Pedro Strop and Jake Arrieta, are in their late 20s and no longer considered top prospects.

Whether Garza can bring back a better return remains to be seen, but everyone is bracing for the end of his Cubs career.

Well, almost everyone.

"I don't brace for anything because I don't have control over that until all these things happen," Sveum said. "It's part of the business, and that's where we are at that part of the season right now."

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### **Tribune**

Cubs designate Camp for assignment

By Paul Sullivan

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Cubs on Wednesday designated for assignment veteran reliever Shawn Camp, whom manager Dale Sveum called his co-MVP in the first half of 2012.

Camp tied for the major league lead with 80 appearances last year but had struggled through 2013 with a 7.04 ERA and seven home runs allowed in 23 innings. He also spent three weeks on the disabled list with a big toe injury.

The Cubs added bullpen acquisitions Pedro Strop and Matt Guerrier to the roster, necessitating the move. Rookie Chris Rusin, who started Tuesday, was sent back to Triple-A Iowa.

"Unfortunately we had to (part with) Camp, which obviously wasn't my finest day as a manager." Sveum said. "It was tough because Camp did so much for me as a first-year manager, and God knows where we would've been last year without him."

“Obviously things haven’t worked out. Those days are tough, when a guy is a great guy and did a lot for you. He did a lot for me managing in Double A, so we go way back.”

Sveum said Camp could go to Iowa if he’s not traded and clears waivers, though that scenario seems unlikely.

Bullpen roulette: Carlos Villanueva is a candidate to start Sunday at Wrigley Field against the Pirates, though he was stretched out only to 2 2/3 innings Tuesday. It likely would be a bullpen day, with Villanueva shooting for 60 to 70 pitches.

Sveum said Blake Parker will be the setup man for Kevin Gregg, with Strop and Guerrier used in the sixth or seventh innings.

“Parker has pretty much put himself in that role and proved it again (Tuesday) night,” Sveum said.

Strop conceded he “didn’t do a good job” in Baltimore this season and some “crazy things happened” at the beginning of the season. He believes he changed his mechanics too quickly.

“I wasn’t getting the opportunity to pitch a lot, “ he said. “I’m just going to put that aside. I’m a Cub now. I just want to help.”

Guerrier, designated for assignment by the Dodgers, was asked if a change of scenery will help.

“We’ll see,” he said. “Things weren’t going exactly as I’d have liked in LA, so we’ll see how it goes.”

Extra innings: The starting times for Saturday home games against the Cardinals on Aug. 17 and the Brewers on Sept. 7 have changed from noon to 3:05 p.m. ... Cubs pitchers have 50 quality starts, fourth in the National League.

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## **Tribune**

Sveum at halfway point of three-year deal

By Paul Sullivan

OAKLAND – As the Cubs reached their midpoint of the season Tuesday night in Oakland with another eighth-inning implosion, Theo Epstein’s preseason warning of a summer sell-off is worth repeating.

“What I want to avoid is the middle ground,” Epstein told the Tribune’s David Haugh in February. “It’d be nice to make the playoffs or get a protected draft pick. We’re not hiding that. There’s no glory in 78 wins instead of 73. Who cares?”

The Cubs are on pace for 70 wins, and the summer sell-off already has begun.

So does anyone care?

Jeff Samardzija, for one, questioned the trade of Scott Feldman, who is only 30 and professed a desire to stay in the organization. Samardzija wants to win and believes the team needs players like Feldman, and Steve Clevenger, to get to the next level.

But the Cubs have been open about the need to add depth, particularly pitching depth, so it’s no surprise that Feldman, Matt Garza and Kevin Gregg eventually will be dealt.

One more thing about the halfway point of the season: It’s also the halfway point of Dale Sveum’s three-year deal to manage the Cubs.

Sveum beat out Rangers pitching coach Mike Maddux, Phillies bench coach Pete Mackanin, Indians bench coach Sandy Alomar Jr., Red Sox bench coach DeMarlo Hale and former Red Sox manager Terry Francona, who pulled himself out of contention.

The only one currently managing is Francona, who is with the Indians.

Sveum has a .395 winning percentage (96-147) at the halfway mark of his contract, the second-worst of any Cubs manager with more than 162 games under his belt. Joey Amalfitano had a .363 mark (61-116) in parts of three seasons, replacing Herman Franks in the final week of 1979 and then replacing Preston Gomez in 1980 and continuing in 1981.

Sveum has the full support of Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer, who've repeatedly blamed themselves for the team's record. Sveum's players like him, though many fans seem to be mixed after this year's ongoing bullpen nightmares, particularly regarding his use of the now-departed Carlos Marmol.

Sveum is good with the media, becoming much more open about the team's problems as he's grown more comfortable with his environment. He's not as blunt as Lou Piniella, but he's never tried to cover up the blemishes or pretend the Cubs are in contention when obviously they're not.

Will the Cubs pick up Sveum's 2015 option year? Will he get a new contract and be able to stick around to manage Javier Baez, Jorge Soler and Albert Almora?

Plenty of time remains for the Cubs to address that decision, but it probably will be difficult to rationalize keeping Sveum if the team doesn't show improvement.

Selling off pitchers like Garza and Feldman likely won't help Sveum get past the career .400 mark in winning percentage.

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### **Sun-Times**

Cubs closer Kevin Gregg suddenly a top trade prize  
BY GORDON WITTENMYER

OAKLAND, Calif. — The White Sox' loss during the July trading season could be the Cubs' gain after the South Siders were forced to put coveted reliever Jesse Crain on the disabled list Wednesday.

One day after the Cubs started off the month with three quick trades, they suddenly have the top bullpen guy known to be on the market in Kevin Gregg, according to officials from other clubs.

And unless the Philadelphia Phillies put Cliff Lee on the block, the top starting pitcher available, Matt Garza, took the mound for the Cubs on Wednesday in Oakland.

How fast could the next Cubs trade come?

"Have you checked to see if [Garza's] still warming up?" said one of a dozen or so major-league evaluators attending Wednesday's game.

The Cubs added two relievers to their beleaguered bullpen Wednesday with the arrivals of Matt Guerrier and Pedro Strop, who were acquired in Tuesday's deals. With the departure of Shawn Camp, who was designated for assignment to help make roster room, only James Russell and Rule 5 kid Hector Rondon remain from the Cubs' opening bullpen.

So many guys have come and gone — and failed in late innings — in the Cubs' pen this year that manager Dale Sveum said Wednesday that rookie Blake Parker is now his primary eighth-inning guy to set up for Gregg.

“Parker has put himself in that role,” Sveum said. “It’s pretty much going to be Parker and Gregg in that last two innings.”

At least until Gregg (13-for-14 in saves, 1.65 ERA) is traded — a move that looks like it could happen as quickly as a team with bullpen needs decides to get aggressive.

“I don’t brace for anything because I don’t have control over it until all these things happen,” said Sveum, who’s having enough trouble closing games with the players he still has. “It’s part of the business and that’s where we are. We’re at that part of the season right now.”

Gregg didn’t have to be told about the Crain move Wednesday afternoon, though he didn’t know it was because of a shoulder.

“That’s unfortunate. He’s got a great arm,” said Gregg, who as recently as last week suggested there was no use thinking about trades until the time things usually heat up, after the All-Star break. That was before the Cubs got busy Tuesday and before Crain.

“We all knew April 1 — every team knows — that trades are going to happen in July,” Gregg said, “whether that’s at the beginning of July or the end of July. But from a players’ aspect, we can’t think that way. We can’t.

“That’s why those guys work the front office, because they think about those things. They’re thinking about the future. Players have got to think about now, each day at a time. . . . If you start thinking, ‘Oh, what’s going to happen here? What’s going to happen there?’, all of a sudden things fall apart.”

Short of things falling apart, the Cubs’ top starter and top reliever will be gone before the end of the month, along with perhaps two or three other players.

The only thing Gregg knows for sure is that any trade will come with a substantial rise in the standings and a raise in the September stakes.

“If that does come,” he said, “that’ll be exciting.”

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### **Sun-Times**

Wednesday’s result: Cubs 3, A’s 1

BY GORDON WITTENMYER

OAKLAND — Matt Garza did everything he could Wednesday night in Oakland to make the Cubs’ 3-1 victory at Oakland Coliseum his final start in a Cubs uniform.

Another strong eight innings by the team’s best pitcher gave a dozen scouts watching him another powerful reason to consider him a difference maker for a playoff contender, if not the best available pitcher on the trading block in early July.

“That was as good as I’ve seen him in two years, especially against seven lefthanders in that lineup,” manager Dale Sveum said. “Had command of his fastball down and away and didn’t use too many curve balls. Had extra velocity when he needed it.”

How aggressive any of their teams get in pursuing him will determine whether Garza is traded before the All-Star break — if not before his next scheduled start, Monday against the White Sox.

The Cubs already have proven they’re open to dealing fast this July after getting left with a bucketful of Plan Bs — and worse — last year as they navigated no-trade clauses (Ryan Dempster) and injuries (Garza’s elbow) into final days before the July 31 non-waiver deadline.

The Cubs were the first team to pull off a significant trade this year, dealing Scott Feldman to Baltimore on Tuesday for a pair of past-their-prospect-years power pitchers with upside – albeit, some of the urgency involving a desire to acquire cap space within their international-signing limits.

But there's at least two sets of numbers that suggest Garza (4-1, 3.45) could draw a strong pursuit from a team with October plans and a need for starting pitching:

-- He's 3-0 with a 0.90 ERA in his last four starts – striking out 28 with eight walks in those 30 innings.

-- In nine starts since returning from a lat injury, he has proven his health and strength, consistently reaching mid- and upper-90s velocity. And at the halfway point in the season, he has 16 potential starts left to make this season.

"When you're dealing with starting pitchers, [early deals] are going to happen a little more than other pieces," Sveum said. "When you're giving up prospects and things like that, you want those starting pitchers to pitch for you for more than the two months if you wait till the deadline. If you think you have a chance at the playoffs, you want them for more than eight starts or nine starts or whatever it might be."

Milwaukee got 17 starts out of CC Sabathia when they traded on July 7 with Cleveland in 2008. Texas got 15 out of Cliff Lee when they traded July 9 to get him from Seattle in 2009.

The imminence of a trade is something that obviously has not had a negative impact on the performance of Garza, who allowed just four hits in eight innings Wednesday, including a two-out solo home run by Brandon Moss in the fourth.

"Until my phone rings, I'm a Cub, and I'm going to stay a Cub," said Garza, a pending free agent, who was asked if he'd like another shot at pitching in October this year, regardless of the team.

"I just love pitching in October," he said. "I'd love to take this team to October. It'd be one hell of a ride, I tell you that. October sounds like a lot of fun, but I've got to get past the next five days."

Closer Kevin Gregg, another top trade candidate, got the final three outs to earn his 14th save in 15 chances this season.

Sveum, whose bullpen has been a mess all season and who's already facing a starter deficit with the Feldman trade, knows it's not going to get any easier.

"I don't brace for anything," he said, "because I don't have control over it until all these things happen. It's part of the business, and that's where we are at this part of the season right now."

The Cubs scored in first on a run-scoring single by Alfonso Soriano with two out and added a one-out solo homer by Luis Valbuena for an early 2-0 lead.

They got a two-out insurance run in the eighth when Dioner Navarro and Brian Bogusevic delivered back-to-back doubles.

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### **Sun-Times**

Report: Cubs agree to terms with 16-year-old Eloy Jimenez

By GORDON WITTENMYER

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Cubs made quick use of the added international bonus-cap space they acquired in trades Tuesday – and then some – striking an agreement in principal with the top-rated Dominican outfield prospect, 16-year-old Eloy Jimenez, for \$2.8 million.

A few details remain to be worked out, which might explain an ESPN Deportes report Wednesday night that said Jimenez' agent denied a deal was done.

The Cubs already had deals with one of the top Venezuelan prospects, shortstop Gleyber Torres (\$1.7 million), and Dominican right-hander Jefferson Mejia (\$850,000).

A report Wednesday also said the Cubs also had agreed to an \$800,000 deal with 16-year-old Columbian right-hander Erling Moreno.

The total of the four deals would exceed the roughly \$5.5 million MLB limit the Cubs appeared to have available for international bonuses after acquiring the additional space.

The Cubs could try to add more space through another trade before making all of the deals official but seemed likely to overshoot MLB's limit regardless – which carries less penalties than apply in the draft (when future draft picks are at risk).

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### **Sun-Times**

Reliever James Russell refuses to blame injury for blown save  
By GORDON WITTENMYER

OAKLAND – James Russell doesn't like to talk about it, and refuses to use it as an excuse. But the recent struggles of a guy who could be the key to the Cubs' bullpen stability over the final two months began about the time he hurt his left ankle away from the field two weeks ago.

"It's nothing big. It was definitely nothing that was going to keep me off the field," said Russell, who described the cause as "something stupid, just running around.

"I didn't twist it or anything. It was just maybe like tendonitis or something. But it's gone now, no problems."

If anything, the discomfort that lasted only a few days might have led to "out of whack" mechanics" he's been fighting to correct since.

In his last eight outings, dating to June 14, he's given up seven earned runs on 15 hits and two walks in 6 2/3 innings (9.45 ERA). He had allowed 15 hits total in 32 previous outings with a 1.40 ERA.

"His changeup's either short or hung, and he can't spot a fastball down and away," manager Dale Sveum said after Russell gave up Derek Norris' game-winning homer in the eighth. "Basically, just no location."

Russell, who could be the Cubs' top reliever in a weak-link pen when closer Kevin Gregg is traded this month, just sees it as a mechanics issue he has to fight through – especially now that the ankle's back to normal.

"I'm not blaming it on my ankle by any means," he said. "Throughout the year, whether it's your body getting tired or you just fall off mechanically, period, it happens.

"It's one of those things you have to work through. It sucks having to do that. But when you figure it out, that's when you get on a nice little run again."

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## **Sun-Times**

Cubs dump Shawn Camp  
BY GORDON WITTENMYER

OAKLAND – The Cubs finally cut ties with reliever Shawn Camp – a guy manager Dale Sveum repeatedly called on of his team MVPs last year but who had struggled all season this year.

Camp was designated for assignment Wednesday as the Cubs made room for the additions of newly acquired relievers Pedro Strop and Matt Guerrier. The Cubs have 10 days to trade or waive Camp.

That leaves only two members left from the Cubs' Opening Day bullpen: left-hander James Russell and Rule 5 player Hector Rondon.

Left-hander Chris Rusin, who was brought up from Iowa to make a spot start Tuesday, was optioned back to Iowa in the other move the club needed.

Camp, originally signed to a minor-league deal last year after being released by Seattle, had a 3.59 ERA and tied for the major-league lead in appearances (80) last year, earning him a \$1.35-million contract for another year in the Cubs pen.

He had a 7.04 ERA and seven homers allowed in 23 appearances this year.

A sprained big toe was considered a factor in his struggles in May, but his performance did not improve much when he returned from the DL, with just one strikeout against three walks, three home runs and four earned runs in 6 1/3 innings over six appearances.

Rusin pitched 3 1/3 innings in a no-decision Tuesday, taking the vacated rotation spot of Scott Feldman, who had been traded to Baltimore earlier in the day in the deal that netted the Cubs Strop and starter Jake Arrieta.

The Cubs haven't named a starter for the next time that spot comes up in the rotation, Sunday, but it won't be anyone on the major-league roster, the team said.

Rusin would only be eligible to return that soon if somebody else goes on the DL, and Arrieta is not considered an option for that spot.

Guerrier was acquired from the Los Angeles Dodgers in Tuesday's trade of Carlos Marmol.

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