

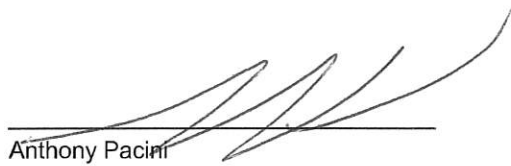
February 25, 2025

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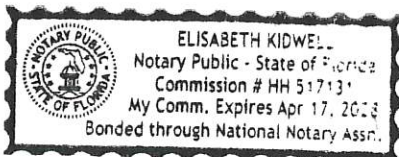


Anthony Pacini

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Notary



Top prospect’s future as Cubs’ 3B begins



Bob Nightengale
Columnist
USA TODAY

MESA, Ariz. – Chicago Cubs third baseman Matt Shaw was at his apartment Wednesday night when his phone buzzed. It was a text message from one of his best friends from Massachusetts, breathlessly telling him the breaking news.

Free agent third baseman Alex Bregman was signing a three-year, \$120 million contract with the Boston Red Sox.

While everyone in Chicago moaned and groaned, with everyone from the Cubs front office to the players to the peanut vendors at Wrigley Field expressing their frustration, there was whooping and hollering from a certain apartment in town.

Shaw, who is dealing with a minor strained oblique muscle, strolled into camp Friday for their first official workout as the happiest man in a Cubs uniform.

Bregman, the two-time All-Star third baseman and Gold Glove winner, was no longer going to be the Cubs’ starting third baseman for the next four years. That opportunity now belongs to Shaw, their top prospect in the entire organization, who will be given every chance to take the starting job and run with it for the rest of his career.

“Oh my gosh, yeah, what a roller coaster of emotions,” Shaw said quietly to USA TODAY Sports after speaking to the media. “I followed it closely. Me and my fiancée talked about it. It was kind of exciting and unique in a way that such a big decision also affected my career in such a particular way as a young guy.

“Now, you see yourself in these conversations and see yourself having the opportunity to hopefully play in the big leagues and have an impact on a team.”

Shaw was told all winter – and reiterated at the Cubs convention in January – that he would be given the first crack to earn the starting third base job. Then, February rolled around, and Bregman was still a free agent. Spring training started, and Bregman was still a free agent.

Suddenly, Jed Hoyer, the Cubs’ president of baseball operation, and agent Scott Boras were talking regularly, numbers were being exchanged, and the Cubs were making a four-year, \$115 million offer to sign him.

Shaw knew the ramifications.

If Bregman signed, he was out. Oh, he could have perhaps been asked to switch positions to second base, just as he switched from shortstop to third



Matt Shaw wants to prove the Cubs were right by not dealing for a player who could have blocked his path for the next four years. RICK SCUTERI/IMAGN IMAGES

base last year. Most likely, he would be sent back to the minors. He could even be traded.

“Now,” Shaw said, “there is clarity moving forward. For the team, the media, it’s nice to figure out that piece for all of us. There’s less questions about it, you can move forward together. This is our team.”

Certainly, there’s no hard feelings Shaw said. He has played in only 35 games in Triple-A, so he wasn’t about to tell management they’re making a mistake for not believing he can handle the job right now at a whole lot cheaper rate than Bregman.

“I mean, at the end of the day, you understand it’s a business,” Shaw said. “You want to have a team that’s going to be able to win a championship. You had a great player player like Bregman, it’s always a good thing for your team. And obviously they kind of reflected that in their sadness for not being able to sign him.”

Cubs players spent the past week saying how much they wanted Bregman, not necessarily recruiting him, but telling him how badly they’d love to have him. Two of his former teammates from the Houston Astros, Ryan Pressly and Kyle Tucker, didn’t hide their enthusiasm for the possibility of joining him in Chicago.

“Breggy, first and foremost,” Tucker

said Friday, “is one of the best guys that you can have on a team, and one of the best players in the league. So, any team would be lucky to have a person like that. Obviously sad that I’m not going to be able to play with him this year, but you never know what the future holds.

“He’s such a phenomenal person and player. I wasn’t trying to sway him one way or the other. It’s a personal decision. But I would have loved to have him.”

Shaw understands. He didn’t take it personal. He appreciated it, but certainly wasn’t expecting Hoyer, general manager Carter Hawkins and manager Craig Counsell to talk to him two days ago, keeping him apprised of what’s going on.

“I think he knows it’s come fast for him,” Hoyer said. “He’s in the 2023 draft (selected 13th overall) and has moved really quickly. Ultimately, spots on the team are earned. He knows that. He’s got a great head on his shoulders, so I don’t think any of that stuff bothered him. He’s here to play well, and we’ll see what happens.”

The Cubs veterans also say there’s no need to personally say anything to Shaw. He’s just a 23-year-old kid who has never played a day in the big leagues. It’s not as if Shaw was a seasoned veteran and the Cubs were trying to dump him to improve the club.

“I think he understands that,” veteran shortstop Dansby Swanson said. “It’s hard to explain, but I think that he knows and understands how valuable he is, and I think he’s smart enough to figure all of those things out on his own.

“It’s not as harsh as it sounds, but I think so often we can kind of over-coach or over-help, and he’s such a gifted player, he can figure things out himself and be just fine.”

Said veteran reliever Ryan Brasier: “I’m sure he’s like, ‘I’m supposed to be the guy. I want the job.’ But when you can get a guy like Bregman, that’s just part of it. It is what it is. There’s really nothing you can do about it, except now that we didn’t get him, go out and show them they made the right move by sticking with you.”

Shaw knows that he’s the top prospect in the organization but still is unproven. There are plenty of instances a rookie has a great spring and still is sent to the minors whether it’s for more experience or even for service-time manipulation.

“There’s situations as a younger player where you could have an incredible spring and there’s no opportunity,” second baseman Nico Hoerner said. “You could do nothing impactful in spring training games and have an opportunity. There’s so much out of your control.

“I think he’s got a good sense of that. He strikes me as somebody who has a very strong sense of who he is as a player. There’s always going to be a new challenge, the next thing, and he seems just very, very adept at handling whatever that is coming his way.

“I’m just excited to see the kind of player he is.”

Shaw, who had a slash line of .298/.395/.534 at Triple-A Iowa, wants to prove the Cubs right by not dealing for a player who could have blocked his path for the next four years. He wants to show his teammates there’s no reason to be disappointed they’re not playing with Bregman.

He doesn’t have a chip on his shoulder, or carry a grudge, but certainly has confidence that one day folks could be talking about him as an All-Star like Bregman.

“I don’t think anybody said anything that necessarily would have been hurtful in any way,” Shaw said. “They’re just being honest, and the honesty about the situation is that Bregman is a great player. So, I don’t think anybody at all needs to say anything to me.

“At the end of the day, it’s a business, and you’re trying to put together a great team that wins. I’m hoping to have a similar impact, have a successful season, and help win the division.

“Really, that’s all I can ask for.”

NLRB rescinds college athletes as employees memo

Steve Berkowitz
USA TODAY

The National Labor Relations Board’s acting general counsel on Friday rescinded a memorandum issued by his Biden-administration predecessor that said she viewed college athletes as employees of their schools under the National Labor Relations Act.

Friday’s memorandum from the Trump administration’s William B. Cowen rescinded an array of memoranda that had been issued by Jennifer Abruzzo, including the one from September 2021 that was accompanied by a statement from Abruzzo in which she wrote: College athletes “perform services for institutions in return for compensation and (are) subject to their control.

“Thus, the broad language of ... the Act, the policies underlying the NLRA, Board law, and the common law fully support the conclusion that certain (college athletes) are statutory employees, who have the right to act collective-

ly to improve their terms and conditions of employment.”

Friday’s memorandum comes against the backdrop of long-standing efforts by the NCAA, conferences and universities to pursue federal legislation that would prevent college athletes from becoming employees of their schools. A bill to that effect passed a U.S. House committee in June 2024, but went no further.

The new memo comes two days after the new Trump administration’s Education Department rescinded guidance issued in the final days of the Biden administration’s Education Department that stated that compensation paid by colleges to their athletes for use of their name, image and likeness (NIL) is subject to Title IX gender-equity policies.

Cowen wrote in Friday’s memorandum: “Over the past few years, our dedicated and talented staff have worked diligently to process an ever-increasing workload. Notwithstanding these efforts, we have seen our backlog of cases

grow to the point where it is no longer sustainable. The unfortunate truth is that if we attempt to accomplish everything, we risk accomplishing nothing.

“Since assuming the role of Acting General Counsel, working with experienced field and headquarters professionals, I have conducted a comprehensive review of active General Counsel Memoranda and determined that the following actions are warranted,” including the rescission of the college-athlete memo.

Abruzzo’s memorandum helped set the foundation for unionization efforts by Dartmouth men’s basketball players and a complaint by NLRB’s Los Angeles office against the NCAA, the Pac-12 Conference and the University of Southern California that alleged they had unlawfully misclassified college athletes as “student-athletes” rather than employees.

Both of those efforts were abandoned in December and January, respectively, primarily because of concerns that an

adverse decision by the full NLRB, as it was likely to be constituted under the then-incoming Trump administration, would carry the weight of precedent in the future.

The complaint against the NCAA, Pac-12 and USC specifically revolved around athletes in football, men’s basketball and women’s basketball at USC. However, it carried the potential for much broader implications across college sports.

The National Labor Relations Act applies to private employers. The complaint sought to interconnect the NCAA and a major college sports conference – both of which are private, nonprofit organizations – to athletes’ alleged employment at a private school in a way that would have allowed the NLRB to take the position that every college athlete has a private employer: the NCAA and/or a conference. That, in turn, could have opened the door to the possibility of unionization efforts by athletes at public schools.

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Campbell gets ‘the bounce of a career’

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

Brian Campbell’s journey to his first victory on the PGA Tour took so many twists and turns that it was only fitting that he finally caught a good break.

Playing the par-5 18th hole at Vidanta Vallarta on Sunday for the third time in an hour, Campbell benefited from a fortuitous bounce off his tee shot, which peeled right and was headed out of bounds.

“That was the bounce of a career,” NBC’s Notah Begay III said.

Campbell’s ball spit out of the trees and bounced off the cart path and he took advantage.

The 31-year-old journeyman sank a 4-foot birdie putt on the second playoff hole to beat Aldrich Potgieter and win the Mexico Open at VidantaWorld. Asked how he finally made it to the winner’s circle, Campbell needed just one word: “Grit.”

That and a little bit of luck.

Campbell had never recorded a top-10 finish in 27 starts on the PGA Tour and was winless in 186 combined starts on the Tour and Korn Ferry Tour. With his tee shot in the playoff in the right rough, he set up a wedge in his wheelhouse and planted it 4 feet from the hole. After Potgieter’s birdie effort slid by on the left, Campbell converted for the win.

Campbell shot a final-round 1-under 70 in Puerto Vallarta to post 20-under par 264 on a day when no one seemed to want to take home the trophy and winner’s check for \$1.26 million.



Brian Campbell reacts after his birdie putt on the 18th hole during the second playoff hole during the final round of the Mexico Open in Puerto Vallarta on Sunday.
ORLANDO RAMIREZ/GETTY IMAGES

“I thought I was going to throw up at multiple times during the day,” he said.

The playoff set up as a matchup of opposites. It was The Prodigy vs. The Journeyman, Power vs. Grit and ended as one of those weeks where the snail hit the tape before the hare.

Campbell, a 31-year-old Illini product, had been the Big Ten Player of the Year in

2014 and low amateur at the 2015 U.S. Amateur but had flamed out in his one trip to the PGA Tour in 2017. It took him eight years to get back and he admitted he had nearly given up.

“I almost stopped golfing about two years ago,” said Campbell, who was in danger of flunking out of the second stage of PGA Tour Qualifying School after making a quadruple-bogey at a par 3. “Then somehow managed to fight back the next day and shoot a really nice number, got myself back in it enough to get to final stage. That led to last year and I had a really strong last year. It’s crazy how quickly things can change.”

In 2024 he notched three runner-up finishes on the Korn Ferry Tour to finish seventh on the money list and graduate back to the PGA Tour for the first time since the 2017-18 season. Of the chance to do battle with Potgieter in the final threesome, Campbell said, “It’s what dreams are made of; this is why I’ve worked so hard to get back there.”

Potgieter is raw and full of promise, which he showed with a course-record 61 on Friday. At age 20 years, 5 months, the South African was attempting to become the sixth-youngest to win on the PGA Tour since the start of the 1983 season. He already holds the distinction of being the youngest winner in the history of the Korn Ferry Tour at 19 years, 4 months and 11 days for his victory at the 2024 Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club. When he won the 2022 British Amateur at Royal Lytham and St Annes, he became the second-youngest winner in the event’s 127-year history at the age of

17. Potgieter is the longest driver on the PGA Tour this season while Campbell ranked No. 182. This week, Potgieter *only* averaged 40 yards longer off the tee.

“It’s hard to look at a guy next to you hitting it 60 to 80 yards past you, but you’ve really just got to stay focused on what you’re there to do and do the best you can,” Campbell said.

Trusting his strengths, Campbell ranked first in strokes gained: tee to green, second in SG: around the green and fourth in SG: approach.

Both Campbell and Potgieter, who shot a final-round even-par 71, made short birdies at 18 in regulation to edge Isaiah Salinda, who had been the leader in the clubhouse at 19 under after a bogey-free 65.

“To at least give myself a chance was all I wanted to do today. I thought honestly being however many back I was, like seven, I knew it was a long shot,” Salinda said.

Potgieter struggled with his short game, making three of his four bogeys on the front nine. He tugged his second shot on the first playoff hole left and was lucky that Campbell missed his first chance for the win.

“I guess I just wanted to keep the party going a little longer, but not by design,” Campbell said.

Potgieter still said he was proud of his effort.

“Pressure’s a big thing. You can’t really beat it, you just have to learn and adjust to it next time you’re in this position again,” he said. “Hopefully my time will come soon.”

Christopher Bell wins wild Cup Series race

Ellen J. Horrow
USA TODAY

Christopher Bell rallied for an overtime win Sunday at Atlanta Motor Speedway, capturing the Ambetter Health 400 for his 10th career NASCAR Cup Series victory.

The Joe Gibbs Racing driver had started the race in 32nd place but found himself up front when the race restarted for a green-white-checkered finish. After dueling with Kyle Larson and then Carson Hocevar, who tried to make it three-wide up front, Bell won under caution after a multiple-car crash on the final lap.

“That right there is what you dream of,” said Bell after he climbed out of his car on the track and received a kiss from his wife. “Throughout the beginning of the day, we were just stuck way in the back. But that last half of the race we were at our best.”

After a review by NASCAR officials, Hocevar finished second, Larson third, pole winner Ryan Blaney fourth and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. fifth. Blaney had roared back up to the front after spinning with 27 laps remaining. The 2023 Cup Series champion avoided damage and remained on the lead lap after taking four fresh tires while most of the rest of the field remained on the track.

The race featured 50 lead changes,



Bell

but Bell was never a part of that until overtime.

“This place is just bonkers,” Bell said. “Every time we come here, it gets wilder and wilder, and I never in my wildest dreams would have thought I would have won a superspeedway race.”

Sunday marked Hocevar’s best finish in the NASCAR Cup Series, though the 22-year-old Spire Motorsports driver left some competitors incensed at his aggressive driving.

“There is some stuff I have to learn and clean up a little bit, but I feel like we put ourselves in the perfect opportunity to win the race,” Hocevar said. “I have never had that opportunity really before, especially on a big superspeedway.”

The race went to overtime after two of the day’s dominant cars crashed while racing in the top 3.

On lap 258, Austin Cindric got forced into the outside wall by Larson, who was trying to squeeze in front as the two battled for the lead. Cindric bounced off the wall and into Daytona 500 winner William Byron, who was following in third place. Both cars spun down the track and into the inside wall, bringing out a caution.

Contributing: Field Level Media

NASCAR CUP SERIES SUNDAY’S WINNERS AND LOSERS

Carson Hocevar makes few friends yet finishes 2nd

Nick Gray

The Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK

Winner: Carson Hocevar

Carson Hocevar was The Show on Sunday, for better and for worse.

His daring moves and aggressiveness didn’t make him a lot of friends, including Ryan Blaney, whose chance to win the Ambetter Health 400 NASCAR Cup Series race ended with a spin off of Hocevar’s bumper with less than 20 laps to go. Hocevar also drew the ire of Kyle Busch at the end of stage 1 for a move that cost Busch spots.

But Hocevar, who drives for Spire Motorsports, did have a chance to win, showing Christopher Bell to the lead into turn 3 on the final lap and wedging himself in between Bell and Kyle Larson before a caution ended the race.

Enemies made? Probably. Runner-up finish, the best of his Cup Series career? Also yes. Pack racing rewards the aggressive. (Until they crash.)

Winner: Michael McDowell

Michael McDowell’s issues were under the radar near the end of the first stage. McDowell ended up six laps down after his Spire Motorsports team had to repair a power steering issue

during the stage caution after falling to last by lap 60. From there, he received the free pass six times, a mark NASCAR says is tied for the most. The best part of McDowell’s day? He finished 13th after surging on the OT restart.

Loser: Brad Keselowski

Keselowski has started the season with a 26th-place finish at Daytona and Sunday’s last-place finish. The driver-owner of the No. 6 RFK Racing Ford was an innocent bystander caught up in an accident involving Chase Elliott and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. Stenhouse shot up the race track off of turn 4 after contact with Chase Briscoe, shoving Elliott into the wall. Elliott’s suspension broke, and he spun down the tri-oval before collecting a slowing Keselowski.

Loser: Daniel Suarez

Last year’s three-wide Atlanta race winner had a sterling track record on the Atlanta drafting configuration, but Sunday’s race result stands out as a negative outlier. Suarez was involved in the lap 184 crash, getting the worst of a three-wide sandwich between Todd Gilliland, Ty Gibbs and himself. After three straight Atlanta finishes in the top two, Suarez finished 33rd on Sunday.

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(“PDVSA”) in connection with the above-captioned proceeding. PDVH is the sole shareholder and direct parent of CITGO Holding, Inc., which in turn is the sole shareholder and direct parent of CITGO Petroleum Corporation. In furtherance of the Court’s order, the Court appointed Robert B. Pincus as special master (the “Special Master”) on April 13, 2021 to assist the Court with the sale of the PDVH Shares. The Special Master is advised by Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP as transaction counsel, and Evercore Group L.L.C. as investment banker. On October 11, 2022, the Court entered an order (Docket No. 481) (the “Sale Procedures Order”) that (i) approved bidding procedures, substantially in the form attached to the Sale Procedures Order as Exhibit 1 (the “Bidding Procedures”); (ii) authorized and approved the Notice Procedures for the Sale Hearing; and (iii) granted related relief. On December 31, 2024, the Court entered an order (Docket No. 1517) (the “Scheduling Order”) that set a revised timeline and procedures for the sale of the PDVH Shares, including (i) setting forth the procedures for approval of (a) Bidder Protections that will be made available to any Stalking Horse approved by the Court, (b) material terms of a Stock Purchase Agreement and, subsequently, a long-form Stock Purchase Agreement, and (c) Evaluation Criteria for Stalking Horse Bids, Base Bids, and Successful Bids; (ii) setting forth procedures for amendments to the Sale Procedures Order and Bidding Procedures; (iii) setting deadlines for the submission of bids, the Special Master’s recommendations, and objections thereto; (iv) scheduling a Sale Hearing; and (v) granting related relief. On January 27, 2025, the Court entered an order (Docket No. 1554) which adopted certain bidder protections and material terms to be included in the Stock Purchase Agreement. Assets to be Sold: PDVH Shares Interested parties may submit bids for the purchase and sale of some or all of the PDVH Shares in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the Bidding Procedures as may be amended pursuant to the Scheduling Order. To avoid any ambiguity, parties may submit bids for less than 100% of the PDVH Shares so long as such bids satisfy the Attached Judgments. Important Dates and Deadlines • March 7, 2025. Deadline for bidders to submit Stalking Horse Bids. • March 14, 2025. Deadline for the Special Master to file selection of Stalking Horse Bid or Base Bid with the Court. • Topping Period. A 30-day Topping Period will begin after the Court rules on any objections to the Special Master’s selection of a Stalking Horse Bid or Base Bid, or earlier if no objections are filed. • May 16, 2025. Deadline for the Special Master to submit its Final Recommendation. • July 22, 23, and 24, 2025. Sale Hearing to be held in Wilmington, Delaware on all or some of these dates. Additional Information Any party interested in submitting a bid should contact the Special Master’s investment banker, Evercore at Project-Horizon@evercore.com, as soon as possible. The modified Sale Procedures Order, modified Bidding Procedures, including Bidder Protections and Evaluation Criteria, and a Stock Purchase Agreement will be made available as soon as they are finalized and may be requested free of charge by email to the Special Master’s counsel, Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP at Project.Horizon.Weil@weil.com. FAILURE TO ABIDE BY THE BIDDING PROCEDURES, THE SALE PROCEDURES ORDER, THE SCHEDULING ORDER, OR ANY OTHER ORDER OF THE COURT MAY RESULT IN THE REJECTION OF YOUR BID.</p><p>Dated: February 25, 2025 ¹ Capitalized terms used but not defined herein shall have the respective meanings ascribed to such terms in the Sale Procedures Order, the Bidding Procedures, and the Scheduling Order (each, as defined herein), as applicable. Any summary of the Sale Procedures Order, the Bidding Procedures, or the Scheduling Order contained herein is qualified in its entirety by the actual terms and conditions thereof. To the extent that there is any conflict between any such summary and such actual terms and conditions, the actual terms and conditions shall control.</p></div></div>
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