

The Chicago Cubs Connection

Enjoy the 2015 Season, Cub Fans by Bobby Johnson



Jake Arrieta, 2015
NL Cy Young Winner

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So the Cubs didn't make it to the World Series this year after all. They didn't win the pennant. They didn't win a single game in the National League Championship Series. You'd think Cubs fans would be used to that by now. But this was the year they got used to winning. They clinched the division series at home, the first time that's happened in the 101-year history of Wrigley Field.

Let's take stock of all that before we start with the wait-till-next-year business. Let's celebrate this year. It was awesome. It was unexpected. It was thrilling. It was a gift to the city of Chicago from a team of overachievers, including four standout rookie starters. Ladies and gentlemen, we give you Cubs all-time post-season home run leader Kyle Schwarber, age 22. Rookie of the year Kris Bryant, 23. Cardinal-killer

Jorge Soler, 23. And who knows how the post-season might have ended if clutch-hitter Addison Russell hadn't been forced to sit out with a pulled hamstring? He's 21.

The Cubs are a homegrown team, young and hungry. Not a crew of grizzled veterans making their last stand. Not a collection of expensive talent purchased at the trade deadline to be offloaded in a fire sale the day after tomorrow. They'll be back. They'll have plenty of next years.

But this year was something special. Let's not forget it. There's so much to savor in the months before pitchers and catchers report to the desert.

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Jake Arrieta's no-hitter against the Dodgers. Heck, Arrieta's whole second half, with that impossible 0.75

ERA that won him a Cy Young. Four four-game sweeps. That Schwarber home run ball that landed atop the right field video board in that Game 4 win over the Cardinals in the division series. Six home runs by six different Cubs — a major league record — in Game 3 of the same series.

While we all were watching this postseason unfold, Chicago's other sports franchises were doing their thing. For the Bears, that thing is digging a hole early and spending the rest of the season trying to claw back out. For the Bulls, it's a new coach and another chance for Derrick Rose to live up to his MVP hype.

For the Blackhawks, it's a perfectly plausible shot at a fourth Stanley Cup in six years.

Baseball Needs Bryant to Succeed by Johnny B. Good

Top Chicago Cubs Hitters of 2015 (min. 100 AB)

Anthony Rizzo	.278
Kris Bryant	.275
Chris Denorfia	.269
Starlin Castro	.265
Jorge Soler	.262
Dexter Fowler	.250
Chris Coghlan	.250

Projecting baseball prospects is devilishly hard work and there are many examples of top players in the minors flaming out before reaching their potential. When expectations of these players are sky high, many times they can seem to fail to live up to them. I'm rooting for Kris Bryant to succeed.

He needs fulfill the potential that he is believed to have. Not because I'm a Cubs fan, but because I'm a Major League Baseball fan. Having good, young, superstar players that can transcend just the regional fan base is something the sport desperately needs. We've now gotten past the steroid era (for the most



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part) and enter into a new era with a new commissioner in search of new stars to latch on to. We've seen some of them already come up and draw us in. Mike Trout, Bryce Harper, Clayton Kershaw, Matt Harvey, Yasiel Puig. We need these players to excel. Why do we need that? Well, the demographics of the sport aren't good. The television viewership skews

older, and if it were to stay that way, in 20 years the viewership and audience would be gone altogether. The in park numbers are great with the league reporting that attendance for the first two weeks of the season set a new record. The sport isn't dying, but it isn't on the same level in national conversation as the NBA, or the NFL.

This is why I'm rooting for Kris Bryant to reach his massive potential. For him to join the ranks of the young superstars we've gotten to know the past couple of years and to usher in a new era of baseball that we can be unafraid to point to these stars and tell our kids.