Putnam among Sox non-tender possibilities
Recovering from Tommy John surgery, rightly getting married Saturday
By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | Nov. 30, 2017

CHICAGO -- Pardon Zach Putnam if his contractual status doesn't stand first and foremost in his mind over the next few days, with the White Sox reliever and his fiancée, Natasha, getting married Saturday in Hawaii.

But with a 7 p.m. CT deadline Friday for teams to offer a contract to players on their 40-man roster, including arbitration-eligible players such as Putnam, the situation has to cross his mind. The right-hander with the devastating split-finger fastball has averaged 9.6 strikeouts per nine innings and has a 2.71 ERA over 131 games with the White Sox, but he became a non-tender candidate after having Tommy John surgery June 22 and being unavailable until at least the second half of the 2018 season.

Putnam, 30, understands the dynamics of the decision.

"I'm no stranger to this," said Putnam by phone from Hawaii. "I've been traded. I've been non-tendered. I've been released. I know how it works.

"Nothing is guaranteed in this game until it's guaranteed. Right now I'm in a position with being in the middle of arbitration [earning $1,117,500 in 2017], where the club knowing that I'm not going to be healthy enough to pitch for the first three months of the year, I'm sure it's going to be a huge deciding factor."

The White Sox have nine arbitration-eligible players. Jose Abreu, Avisail Garcia, Danny Farquhar, Yolmer Sanchez, Carlos Rodon and Leury Garcia all figure to be tendered contracts, while relievers Al Alburquerque and Jake Petricka are potential non-tender candidates, along with with Putnam.

Alburquerque, 31, impressed during his brief September stint with a White Sox bullpen depleted via trade and injury. Petricka, 29, has a 3.84 ERA over five seasons with the White Sox, but has been limited by injury to 36 games over the past two years. The right-hander underwent a nerve transposition in his right elbow Oct. 20, along with debridement of the flexor tendon, and will resume throwing in three to four months from the day of the procedure.

Even if a non-tender is involved, the White Sox could bring back players via a Minor League deal. Of course, the Majors remain the goal for experienced relievers such as Putnam, Petricka or Alburquerque, especially with Putnam feeling so good that he has to remember he's coming off of a major surgery.

"I would like to believe that we have a mutual respect," said Putnam of the White Sox, whose 40-man roster sits at 39. "I have the utmost respect for the club and they have been nothing but fair with me over the last four years. I don't have a bad word to say about anybody there.

"They are going to make their decision based on the needs of the roster and the needs of the team. It's a dynamic movement right now, with kind of the youth influx of young guys coming in, and they are full speed ahead and I love it. If they decide they want to go in a different direction, there will be no hard feelings. I'm going to hope for the best. "Getting healthy is priority No. 1," Putnam added. "Whether I do it through the White Sox or on my own or through another club, it's like everything is hinging on me being healthy."
Knock your Sox off? Abreu deal could make splash
South Siders discussing trade with Boston, but package would need to impress
By Phil Rogers / MLB.com | Nov. 30, 2017

CHICAGO -- Jose Abreu didn't appear in the original script for this offseason, but he could wind up being involved in a trade almost as big as the two the White Sox pulled off at the Winter Meetings a year ago, when they sent Chris Sale to the Red Sox and Adam Eaton to the Nationals.

If the White Sox can make arguably their toughest decision yet, that is.

By my count, nine teams looking to contend in 2018 need either a first baseman or a designated hitter, and Abreu would be an upgrade for at least three others.

The Red Sox are exploring Rick Hahn's willingness to deal Abreu as an alternative to the super-sized commitments needed to acquire Giancarlo Stanton or J.D. Martinez, and you wonder if that will get the attention of the Yankees -- like it would have in the old days. The Rangers, Rockies and Cardinals are also strong fits.

But let's stick with the Red Sox. They were last in the American League in home runs in 2017. Their .749 OPS from Mitch Moreland, Hanley Ramirez, Sam Travis and three other first basemen last year ranked 13th in the AL, ahead of only the Angels and Mariners.

Abreu meanwhile did what he has done in all four seasons since he arrived in Chicago, remaining arguably the most consistent run producer in the game. Despite the young, unproven cast around him, he hit .304 with 33 home runs and 102 RBIs, joining Joe DiMaggio and Albert Pujols as the only players with 25/100 in each of their first four seasons.

That's impressive.

MLB Network insider Jon Heyman reports that talks are active between the White Sox and Red Sox on Abreu. The guess is the White Sox are probably asking the Red Sox for Andrew Benintendi, whom they had coveted coming out of the University of Arkansas in the 2015 Draft.

It's unlikely they'll get Benintendi without making this a package of Abreu that includes Avisail Garcia and maybe infielder Yolmer Sanchez (a breakout player last season who is blocked by Yoan Moncada), but Boston could part with a nice package outside of Benintendi.

They're reportedly dangling center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr., but with three years' service time, he's not a fit for the rebuilding White Sox. Boston's inventory does include other players who could make an Abreu deal work.

Start with 22-year-old third baseman Michael Chavis, who hit 31 homers between Class A Advanced and Double-A last year but is blocked by Rafael Devers. Chavis was a standout in the Arizona Fall League, where he also played some first base.

Travis, the polished first baseman who joined Kyle Schwarber in helping Indiana reach the College World Series, is another interesting player, as is the late-blooming Bryce Brentz (.271/.334/.529 with 31 home runs at Pawtucket). Infielder Tzu-Wei Lin and any number of pitching prospects (Jalen Beeks, Mike Shawaryn and Tanner Houck among them) also command attention.

The White Sox are thrilled with the return they got from Boston for Sale -- Moncada, right-hander Michael Kopech, outfielder Luis Alexander Basabe and power reliever Victor Diaz -- but there's still enough talent left to make an Abreu deal work.

If the White Sox decide to trade Abreu, that is.

For Hahn, the Sale trade was a virtual no-brainer given Sale's status in the game, his frustration with the team's lack of success and the team's decision to rebuild. This one is trickier.

Among the factors working against a trade:

• Like Garcia, Abreu is under control for two more seasons. As a four-time arbitration-eligible player, he'll be by far the most highly paid player on the White Sox roster. But even with him, the Sox could have a payroll around $75 million. Financial strain is not a consideration.
- Abreu is a consummate professional who prides himself on representing his Cuban mother, as well as his organization. He has provided a steady presence through the early stages of the White Sox rebuild. He's also a mentor to Moncada, who played very well as a rookie last season. It would be difficult for Moncada to get to Arizona next spring and not have Abreu at the locker beside him.

- Abreu believes he can still be a contributor in 2020 and beyond, by which time the White Sox hope to be beginning a run of trips to the postseason. He is in the best shape of his life and makes no secret of his desire to spend his entire career on the South Side.

Hahn, however, believes it is too early to consider an extension. He points out that Abreu "is not on the doorstep of free agency," so why not let the plot line play out a little longer?

"Frankly, on both [Abreu and Garcia], the decision [about a possible extension] doesn't have to be made this offseason," Hahn said. "We have the luxury if we want to play it out another year, play it out another half year -- see if the performance continues, see if the trade market changes. That was the case when we sat here with [Jose] Quintana a year ago. Yes, he was a trade candidate, but the market didn't respond, so we had to wait."

As far as Abreu goes, the question seems likely to be called sooner, not later.

**Eat it up: White Sox again to feature $1 Hot Dog Wednesdays**

By Chris Kuc / Chicago Tribune | Nov. 30, 2017

The White Sox are hoping a hard-working team featuring some of baseball’s top prospects will be a big draw during the 2018 season.

But just in case, the team will try to lure fans to Guaranteed Rate Field with $1 hot dogs and free T-shirts.

The Sox announced their initial promotional schedule for the ‘18 season Thursday and it showed that the popular $1 Hot Dog Wednesdays and Free T-shirt Thursdays will return to The Rate.

The schedule also includes Dog Day on April 23 against the Mariners, Italian Heritage Night and fireworks on May 18 vs. the Rangers, Mother-Son Day on May 20 against the Rangers, Weather Day on May 24 when they take on the Orioles, Father-Daughter Day on June 17 against the Tigers, Polish Heritage Night on June 27 against the Twins, Greek Heritage Night on July 11 vs. the Cardinals, Christmas in July on July 29 against the Blue Jays, Halfway to Mardi Gras on Aug. 7 vs. the Yankees and Hispanic Heritage Night and fireworks on Sept. 27 when the Sox face the Angels.

Premium giveaways include:
- Los White Sox Soccer Jersey on May 5 vs. the Twins
- White Sox Winter Hat on April 7 against the Tigers
- Fireworks and MLB Network Tote Bag on April 20 vs. the Astros
- White Sox Quarter-Zip Pullover on April 21 against the Astros
- White Sox Floppy Hat on June 16 vs. the Tigers

Additional events, theme nights and giveaways will be added at later dates.

**MLB trade rumors: Jose Abreu, Avisail Garcia present dilemmas for White Sox**

By Staff / Yahoo Sports | Nov. 30, 2017

CHICAGO — White Sox general manager Rick Hahn has made it clear that the team is willing to listen to offers on star first baseman Jose Abreu as well as outfielder Avisail Garcia. But Hahn has also said that there’s no urgency to move either player.

"They're both special cases," GM Rick Hahn said of Abreu and Garcia. "And there are very strong arguments for them playing roles in 2020 and beyond."

The recent rumblings of the Red Sox’s interest in Abreu seem to be less transparent than the rumors that became deals between these two teams last offseason. One team was looking for major-league ready talent, while the other was harvesting new young prospects.
But dealing Abreu isn’t that simple, for several reasons. Abreu is coming off an incredible campaign in which he hit 30-plus home runs and had 100-plus RBIs for the third season, and ended the season with a batting line of .304/.354/.552. But Abreu’s value doesn’t end there. A native Cuban, Abreu has spent much of his life growing up with former Red Sox hitter Yoan Moncada, and holds a unique bond with the young up and comer.

“It’s an honor, to be playing with someone who is from my same country,” Abreu said of Moncada when he arrived on the South Side. “And from my same town and that’s why I take a lot of pride in helping him to get better.”

The team will consider all of his value points when contemplating a trade.

“From the strong numbers to the impact he has on Moncada, are we better off in terms of our window, is that the best use of our resources?” Hahn told WLS-AM in September. “A mid-30s right-handed first basemen who may be on the decline, or that stalwart in the middle of the lineup who is a great team leader.”

Names that have been mentioned in a possible deal with Boston have included everyone from Jackie Bradley Jr. to Andrew Benintendi to Michael Chavis — none of whom don’t feel like the perfect fit for in terms of value.

Abreu is entering is age 31 season in 2018, and though he’s coming off a stellar year on the South Side, he’s still hitting a crucial point on the aging curve for a right-handed first basemen. However, Abreu is under team control until 2020. Should he be on the decline, whichever team he ends up likely won’t be forced to eat a large sum of money.

These kinds of trades are intricate in that can’t simply be made based on the stat sheet. There are other intangibles such as clubhouse contributions and contract type that are to be translated into trade value as well. Each team values such things differently. Abreu may be an important aspect of the Chicago clubhouse landscape, but that value may not transfer to other clubhouses as strongly. Other teams may not see the value in bringing aboard a 31-year-old first baseman for three more seasons while giving up what will likely be prospect depth.

Should a deal for Abreu not materialize, the Sox have another interesting trade chip in Garcia, who could be easier to move. Garcia is just 26 years old and has already become a well-rounded star.

He had a rough go in the majors for much of his first four seasons, and many lost faith in his ability to become a valuable MLB player. But he finally broke out in 2017 to become the star that he was always projected to be. Garcia made his first trip to the All-Star Game and hit for an impressive .330/.380/.506 while holding down his position in the outfield with much more authority than he had in past years. All this makes him the perfect player for the White Sox to put on the block now and see what type of return they can net.

“We have to make an assessment: Does it make sense to commit whatever amount of money keeps Avi Garcia off free agency?” Hahn told reporters last season. “Or do we explore perhaps moving him in exchange for continuing this accumulation of prospects?”

Whether or not last season was a fluke for Garcia, it could be in the best interest of the White Sox to try to deal him while he has strong appeal, lest he goes back to his former ways in 2018 and loses his peak value.

The offseason is just getting started, and though the White Sox may not come to a deal for either of these players before opening day, folks can still watch to see how the rest of the baseball world values them.