

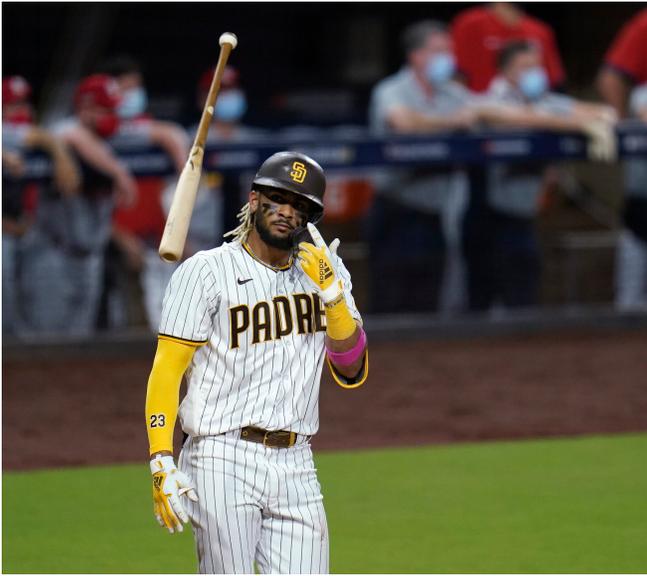
THE SPORTIER

Fernando Tatis, Jr.'s Megadeal

Baseball is making its return from hibernation with pitchers and catchers having reported to Spring Training sites as early as Wednesday of this past week and all players being ready for workouts starting today. On Wednesday night, ESPN's Jeff Passan officially reported that the up-and-coming superstar shortstop for the San Diego Padres, Fernando Tatis, Jr. (who has played in just 143 career games), inked a massive 14-year/\$340 million extension with San Diego. Proving further committal to the 22-year old phenom, Tatis' contract with the Padres includes no opt outs and a full-no trade clause, which means he will likely be spending the entirety of his prime seasons in San Diego. For San Diego, this contract is historic. The Padres, who hold one of the smallest media markets in all of the sport, have begun to prove that market size shouldn't determine spending power. In just the past 2 seasons, the Padres have signed premier third baseman Manny Machado to a \$300 million dollar contract and extended the future face of baseball in Tatis on an even larger deal. In 2018, before the signing of Machado, the Padres ranked 28th in payroll, yet now, they are projected to be only behind the Dodgers and Yankees with the third-highest payroll at \$183 million. Not even mentioning that the Padres are the first team in baseball history to sign two players starting at the \$300 million mark*, but they also now own a staggering \$812 million infield including the contracts of first baseman Eric Hosmer (totaling \$144 million) and newly-signed Japanese second baseman Ha-Seong Kim (totaling \$28 million). On top of trading for 2020 NL Cy Young Award runner up Yu Darvish and 2018 AL Cy Young Award Winner Blake Snell, this extension puts San Diego over the top as having the most successful offseason in baseball and proves that in a sport like baseball, which has no true salary cap, there can be significant upside to spending funds. Looking at Tatis' side of the deal, while there may be more nuances than meets the eye, this deal is great for him. Having only played 143 games as mentioned previously, which is less than even a full 162 game season, the Padres are betting on what they have seen so far as a sign of his future worth. Luckily for both sides, Tatis has shown that he is valuable and is worth securing long term. In his rookie season of 2019, which was shortened by injuries, Tatis hit a stellar .317 with 22 home runs in just 84 games, proving his excellence at the plate. Unfortunately, his defense held him back, as he had the second-most errors at shortstop in the National League with 18. Still, his offense was electric enough to get him the third-most votes in the NL Rookie of the Year Award voting. In 2020, even though a shortened 60-game season may not have shown all of the ups and downs of a traditional season, Tatis was great again. Even though his average took a step backwards to .277, his overall game impacted the Padres significantly. Ranking 7th in Wins Above Replacement (WAR) in all of the NL, Tatis ranked second in the National League with 17 home runs and tenth in slugging percentage at .577. Even though Tatis proved his emerging power this season, he also showed he has the potential to be great defensively. Tatis went from being a below-average defender the year prior to having the second-best fielding percentage at his position in the National League at .984. Tatis has shown that his future is bright, and with his flashy game style including bat flips and dancing in the dugout, Tatis is at the front of the movement to bring baseball back into the American media spotlight. Even though the deal is clearly a boon for Tatis, there are some elements that need further explanation. Assuming Tatis will reside in the state he plays in (California), he will take home around \$168.98 million after taxes. Even though this is still an incredible sum of money, it is significantly less than the \$340 million that he will make prior to taxes. Included in the reduced figure is a \$27.2 million deduction going to a sports group called Big League Advance. In 2018, Tatis signed a deal with the agency that would pay him upfront payments, with the agency eventually receiving a portion of his future contract. Looking back on this, it may have not been a fantastic decision, but then again, Tatis was not a highly touted prospect coming up, as he was actually traded from the Chicago White Sox farm system to San Diego in a deal where Chicago received pitcher James Shields (Shields, who retired from the MLB following the 2018 MLB season, posted a 5.31 ERA in 436 innings pitched with Chicago). Tatis, whose deal is the third-largest in MLB history only behind Mike Trout and Mookie Betts, helps the Padres settle into a great situation. The team's current roster is fully loaded with great talent that should push the squad to multiple playoff appearances for years to come.

*Even though the Yankees have Gerrit Cole (\$324 million total) and Giancarlo Stanton (\$325 million total), the Yankees only signed Cole, as they traded with the Miami Marlins to acquire Stanton.

Wentz to Indianapolis



The new \$340 million man, Fernando Tatis, Jr.



Carson Wentz (right) with his former offensive coordinator (and new head coach) Frank Reich

Even though the highly-coveted trade piece, quarterback Deshaun Watson, has yet to depart from Houston, former Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz has found a new home in the Indianapolis Colts. Wentz had a poor 2020 campaign where he was tied for the league-high with 15 interceptions, even though he played only 12 games. Even though Wentz's poor decision-making was a factor in his failure this past season, his often injured offensive line was a glaring weakness of the team, highlighted by Wentz being sacked a league-most 50 times in his 12 games. Wentz's weapons at the receiver position were also quite limited throughout the season, which hurt his ability to move the ball down the field efficiently. It is important to not forget that in 2017, Carson Wentz was on track to win the MVP Award before a torn ACL shut him down for the rest of the season. Even though he played 13 games that season, he ended with the second-most passing touchdowns with 33. Wentz has been on a decline since then, possibly due to lingering affects from injury, but also possibly from the loss of his former offensive coordinator Frank Reich. Reich, who was with Wentz in both the 2016 and 2017 seasons in Philadelphia, is now the Colts head coach. A reunion with both Wentz and Reich could possibly signal a revival of sorts for Wentz's career. In Indianapolis, Wentz will also be gifted with one of the premier offensive lines in the league with Indianapolis, which should help him drastically compared to last season. The Eagles, in return for dealing Wentz, received a third round draft pick in the upcoming 2021 NFL Draft and a conditional second round selection in 2022. The 2022 pick has the potential of becoming a first round pick, and it will do so if Wentz either plays 75% of the Colts' offensive snaps or if he plays 70% of the Colts' offensive snaps and reaches the playoffs in the 2021 season. It is clear that the Colts won this trade, as they needed a quarterback to fill the void that was left from the retirement of Phillip Rivers at the end of this past season. The Eagles, while losing this trade, likely were forced into making this deal as it would otherwise be impossible to move Wentz's enormous contract, one that pays him \$32 million a year and has him under team control until 2024.

Sources: