

It happened.

The Dodgers' relationship with Mookie Betts has been one helluva ride. We traded assets like Alex Verdugo and Kenta Maeda (and his amazing contract), then dealt with the possibility that he might leave into free agency without playing a single game, and now we have Betts as a certified Dodger for the next 12 years.

According to reports, Betts inked a huge 12 year, \$365 million deal (with a huge \$65 million signing bonus) on top of this year's arbitration contract, meaning he's signed in LA until 2032. This was a great move from Friedman for many reasons. After flubbing to capture perennial All-Stars Anthony Rendon and Gerrit Cole, securing Betts, a top 5 outfielder in the league, was a no brainer. He's an elite hitter and defender, and while his defense might regress down the line, his bat (hopefully) won't. This is also the first max contract signed since Matt Kemp back in 2011 (8 years, \$160 million). Us fans have been waiting for a big player signing ever since Friedman took over. His low cost, short term contracts was what led the Dodgers to back to back world series appearances, but that also meant he passed on countless free agents while staying well under the salary tax. Here's to many great years with Mookie Betts.

Now Mookie's contract also poses a few problems in the immediate future. With this new signing, the Dodgers are only \$15 million under the luxury tax and next year several key players are out of arbitration and in need of new contracts. Joc Pederson, Enrique Hernandez, and Pedro Baez will be unrestricted free agents next season if an extension is not offered. The 35 year old Justin Turner will be a free agent as well. The year after that will have Corey Seager, Kenley Jansen, and Clayton Kershaw as free agents. I don't envy the front office for these future decisions.

From my point of view, the Dodgers have two options moving forward.

1. Friedman completely ignores the luxury tax and goes gungho to resign everybody. This is the mentality that the Yankees have adopted since forever. They have unreal income and therefore can afford to pay the luxury tax every season, and I mean EVERY season. I don't remember a season when they were under the tax. Knowing Friedman and his stubbornness to stay under the luxury tax, this probably won't happen, and I agree. Some of the guys that will be free agents would be too expensive and would probably be overpaid with another team.

2. Friedman would have to shed several players' payrolls and rely on short, cheap contracts. Pretty much, nothing would change. The front office splurged a bit last offseason, throwing contracts at Joe Kelly and AJ Pollock while also extending Chris Taylor and Max Muncy. I have a theoretical future payroll plan in the works (for a later article), but in short beloved Dodgers like Kike, Turner, and Kersh would need to take a paycut to play with each other or we have to pick and choose who we like more.

Regardless, this is a time to celebrate. Why stress out later when we can have fun now right? Welcome to LA Mookie Betts.