



WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF JUNE 3, 2018

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Shields deals, but Crew silences White Sox

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / June 2, 2018

CHICAGO -- The better James Shields pitches, the less likely the veteran right-hander is to stay with the White Sox through his 2018 campaign.

Shields put together his eighth straight start of at least six innings, his fourth straight of at least seven innings and his fourth consecutive quality start during Milwaukee's 5-0 victory before 29,281 fans on a nearly perfect Saturday at Guaranteed Rate Field. The reinvention of the right-hander, who has been effectively working from different arm angles, as well as his experience and competitive fire makes the 36-year-old a prime target to be moved from the rebuilding White Sox to a contender.

After falling to 1-6 on the season and watching the White Sox slip to 17-38, Shields acknowledged an understanding of his situation, but he wasn't really focused on hypothetical trade talks. And he definitely did not want to hear about the development stage permeating Year 2 of the rebuild as a reason behind the team's disappointing record.

"Frankly I don't really care about the rebuild right now. I care about winning," Shields said. "They keep talking about rebuild, and I'm trying to win ballgames right now, period.

"I don't like losing. We are losing ballgames right now. They can keep talking about rebuild, but at the end of the day, we have to win ballgames. I'm not worried about this rebuild. I'm worried about winning right now."

Anyone who watched Shields in action Saturday knows his words support his actions.

In the sixth inning, with Jesus Aguilar on third, one out and the Brewers leading by one, Ryan Braun hit a line drive to shortstop Tim Anderson, turning it into an inning-ending double play. Shields pointed to the sky as he walked off the field, pumped his fist and let out a few celebratory yells as he walked into the dugout.

Shields allowed solo homers to Erik Kratz, Jonathan Villar and Lorenzo Cain over seven-plus innings with six strikeouts. Cain's blast on a hanging curve marked Shields' last batter, as he punched his glove walking off the field. It came after Shields struck out Cain in the fifth with two sub-70 mph slow curves -- or eephus pitches, as characterized by Statcast™.

"We had to bear down. He's doing everything to keep hitters off-balance," Cain said. "That's what you have to do in this game, make adjustments, and that's what he's done. He pitched well today."

"The angle that he has now is obviously shown to be extremely effective against both lefties and righties," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "That's a tremendous outing. He kept us there, he gave us a chance."

Brewers starter Jhoulys Chacin matched Shields over 5 2/3 scoreless innings, striking out five and walking one. He eventually gave way to the immovable force that is Josh Hader, who fanned three over 1 1/3 innings.

Milwaukee scored three in the eighth to take control of the game. The final two runs came on an Aguilar home run against Jace Fry. A sixth shutout of the White Sox dropped them to a 9-19 home mark, an unacceptable record to Shields and his teammates, despite going 6-4 in their past 10 at Guaranteed Rate.

"Yeah, we have a great attitude in here. We want to win. We just aren't getting the job done right now, plain and simple," Shields said. "It's a good ballclub over there, no doubt about it. The Brewers are hot right now."

"Right now we have to focus on winning ballgames. We can't worry about what everyone is saying out there in the media. We have to worry about what we do in this clubhouse."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Just missed it: Omar Narvaez made a bid for his first home run of the season and what would have been a game-tying drive off of Chacin with two outs in the fourth. But he came up a bit short, with right fielder Christian Yelich hauling in the drive a step or two from the wall.

Swing and a miss: The White Sox had a chance to score off of Chacin in the third following a Trayce Thompson walk and Yolmer Sanchez's two-out single. But with runners on the corners, Chacin struck out Jose Abreu to end the rally.

"We had a few chances to produce, but Chacin was really good today," said Abreu through interpreter Billy Russo. "You have to tip your cap. He was outstanding."

SOUND SMART

Shields allowed a home run at Guaranteed Rate for the first time since April 25 against Seattle. He received one run or fewer of support for the sixth consecutive start.

HE SAID IT

"Here was a guy who when he first started with us was having a little bit of a tough time. Rightly so, people weren't really happy with the way he was performing, but he has a lot of heart, a lot of guts. He found a way to make it work and he's extremely effective against some pretty good big league hitters."-- Renteria, on Shields

UP NEXT

Dylan Covey will make his fourth start of the season and his first career outing vs. Milwaukee on Sunday afternoon. First pitch is scheduled for 1:10 p.m. CT at Guaranteed Rate Field. The White Sox right-hander originally was drafted by the Brewers 14th overall in the 2010 Draft, but after being diagnosed with Type 1

diabetes, Covey elected to stay near home, attend the University of San Diego and not sign.

Moncada maturing, seeing 'big difference' in '18

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / June 2, 2018

CHICAGO -- Yoan Moncada has posted a .236/.330/.420 slash line over his first 100 games as part of the White Sox, a milestone he reached via Friday's contest against the Brewers. The switch-hitter also has 15 home runs, 19 doubles and 42 RBIs to go with 51 walks and 145 strikeouts.

But beyond those overall numbers, the 23-year-old feels like a different player compared to his White Sox debut on July 19 of last season.

"I see a big difference," said Moncada through interpreter Billy Russo. "I feel that I've improved a lot. My comfort level right now is higher than it was last year.

"The way that I know the game, my knowledge of the game is higher than last year. Now I feel like I belong here. It's a continuation of the work and the process that I'm passing through. I'm still a young guy trying to learn new things, and that's part of it, too."

Moncada has a .242 average and .751 OPS over 206 plate appearances in 2018. He has seven homers, 20 RBIs and 11 doubles, but there's a decided difference between his left-handed and right-handed production.

From the left side, Moncada has a .269/.351/.500 split, vs. .167/.241/.229 from the right side. All seven of his homers have come left-handed, but Moncada believes experience and repetition play the biggest role in the difference.

"I face a right-handed pitcher probably 7 of 10 times, and in a series, I face a left-handed pitcher twice at most or even twice a week," said Moncada, who is a natural right-handed hitter. "You don't have that repetition of consistency facing a left-handed guy. I always try to do my best and try to check things I can do better. But at the end of the day for me, it's about more consistency facing those guys."

Uecker will join Hawk

Iconic Brewers broadcaster Bob Uecker, one of the great entertainers ever associated with baseball, will join Ken "Hawk" Harrelson for an inning or two during Sunday's White Sox broadcast. Harrelson broadcasts primarily home Sunday games during his 33rd and final season in the White Sox television booth, and he has been friends with Uecker dating back to their playing days.

"As a matter of fact, he's the first guy who told me I should be a broadcaster when he saw me play," Uecker said. "But he's been doing it here a long, long time. He's a favorite of a lot of fans. He's a baseball guy."

"I think it's hard for Kenny to walk away too, to leave this, and to leave [White Sox chairman] Jerry [Reinsdorf] and the White Sox organization. But I think he's doing the right thing to spend time with his family and his kids and grandkids. He's done enough. He's done a lot of great work. I've been on his bandwagon for the Hall of Fame for the last couple of votings."

Uecker believes Harrelson will eventually get that deserved Hall of Fame call, and he plans to vote for Hawk again this year.

Injury updates

- Third baseman Matt Davidson, on the disabled list retroactive to May 25 with back spasms, took grounders pregame for a second straight day.

"Yesterday was the first day he got on the ground, took ground balls, hit and ran, took some swings," said White Sox manager Rick Renteria of Davidson, who also is hitting in the cage. "Usually, today is the day you feel a little soreness after the activity that he had. We'll see how he feels today after today's workout. He's out there right now, so that's a good sign that he's feeling good enough to continue his work."

- Carlos Rodon is scheduled to make his fourth injury rehab start and third with Triple-A Charlotte on Sunday. Rodon, who is working his way back from arthroscopic shoulder surgery last September, has fanned 20 and walked two while allowing one run over 12 2/3 innings. Renteria would not guarantee that Rodon's next start after Sunday would be with the big league club.

Daily White Sox prospects update: Eloy Jimenez and Zack Collins pick up extra-base hits

Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / June 2, 2018

Here's your daily update on what the White Sox highly touted prospects are doing in the minor leagues.

Double-A Birmingham

Eloy Jimenez tripled and Zack Collins doubled in a 6-4 win. Jimenez had a two-hit day, and Collins picked up three RBIs. Jordan Guerrero pitched five innings of one-run ball.

Class A Kannapolis

Lincoln Henzman allowed zero earned runs over five innings in a 5-3 win. Henzman has a 2.96 ERA in nine starts this season. Luis Gonzalez had a hit, and Evan Skoug walked.

Triple-A Charlotte

Recently acquired Alex Presley homered and drove in three runs in the Knights' 10-4 win.

James Shields not content to brush aside losses as growing pains of White Sox rebuild: 'I don't really care about the rebuild right now'

By Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / June 2, 2018

James Shields doesn't figure to be a part of the White Sox long-term plans. So he shouldn't be expected to be looking past the present and focusing solely on the bright future on the South Side.

The veteran pitcher said as much after Saturday's loss to the visiting Milwaukee Brewers.

While fans and observers and the front office and even plenty of the guys on the current major league roster have their sights set on what this team will look like in 2020, 2021 and beyond — when highly touted prospects are planned to arrive and turn the White Sox into a perennial contender — there's no reason for Shields to have that same view of things.

So it makes plenty of sense why rapidly accumulating losses and constant talk of, 'Oh well, this is how things go in a rebuild,' don't sit too well with the 36-year-old.

"Frankly, I don't really care about the rebuild right now," Shields said. "I care about winning. They keep talking about rebuild, and I'm trying to win ballgames right now, period."

"I don't like losing. We are losing ballgames right now. They can keep talking about rebuild, but at the end of the day, we have to win ballgames right now. I'm not worried about this rebuild. I'm worried about winning right now."

At first blush, that reaction might sound like the opposite of the entire discussion surrounding this team right now. But Shields vocalizing a dislike for talk of the rebuild isn't much different from his manager, who has gone as far as saying he doesn't like the word.

Shields was acquired before this rebuilding effort began, back when the White Sox were in win-now mode. Two years later, Shields is sitting in the same clubhouse, but his team has a much different plan.

But it doesn't mean he's without his value, both on and off the field, where he's serving as an example to the young players who are expected to be a part of the long-term future. This young team, even if it isn't shocking to see it lose so many games in 2018, is going to have to learn how to win at some point. Shields is trying to teach that right now, and the lack of results is understandably frustrating.

"He's always talking with the young guys, trying to give them advice about what to do at this level to have success and how they need to behave and perform and handle their business. And that's a really good influence," first baseman Jose Abreu said. "With me, we always talk about games and what things we need to do as a team to win more games or to get better. It's good. He's a veteran, he has a lot of experience."

On the field, Shields has been terrific of late. He's lasted at least six innings in eight straight outings, he's lasted at least seven innings in four straight outings, and he's got a 2.86 ERA in his last four games. It's a consistent string of performances that could make him an attractive trade candidate as summer wears on. That could help this rebuilding effort by bringing another prospect or two into the mix.

"I would not be shocked," manager Rick Renteria said when asked if he'd be surprised if teams came calling for Shields. "The adjustments he's made are showing to be extremely conducive to him being able to pitch and eat up innings and keep a big league ball club in a game. It's been fantastic to watch him evolve and reinvent himself. I know I use that word a lot with him, but he has. Here was a guy who when he first started with us was having a little bit of a tough time. Rightly so, people weren't really happy with the way he was performing. But he has a lot of heart, a lot of guts. He found a way to make it work, and he's extremely effective against some pretty good big league hitters."

"I've been around the game a long time and I understand that process," Shields said. "But I can't control that. What I can control is what I do out there every five days. My job is to go out there and throw as many innings as I possibly can and do my job. I'm going to focus on that and focus on trying to get some 'Ws' for this team."

Shields' opinion is nothing new, nor is it something uncommon in the White Sox clubhouse. Players have been dismissing talk of the future and preaching focus on the present all season long. Renteria has made similar "no one likes losing" speeches during his media sessions since the early stages of the campaign.

No team in baseball has fewer wins than the White Sox. But while it's easy for those invested in this long-term plan to think about waiting until next year and the year after that and the year after that, those who aren't part of that picture are still trying to do their jobs in the present. It's a lesson that Renteria has been trying to teach, a complete focus on the here and now on a daily basis. It seems he has a fellow teacher in Shields.

"We have a great attitude in here. We want to win," Shields said. "We just aren't getting the job done right now, plain and simple. ... Right now we have to focus on winning ballgames. We can't worry about what everyone is saying out there in the media. We have to worry about what we do in this clubhouse."

Carlos Rodon appears close to returning to White Sox rotation

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune / June 2, 2018

Carlos Rodon is close to getting back into the White Sox rotation, and he's looking more like the prospect who was expected to pitch at the front of the rotation than he did the last two seasons.

Rodon is due to make his fourth rehab start Sunday, pitching for Triple-A Charlotte against Buffalo. It could be his last one if he remains effective and pitches at least five innings, as he has in two of his three starts. He left after 2 2/3 innings on May 24 after he was hit in the head by a line drive but has shown no ill effects.

“He’s looking very good,” White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. “He’s sound, healthy, thank goodness. Hopefully (his next start) is a good one. We’ll evaluate where he is, then continue to move forward to see what the program will be for him.”

Rodon, who is 20-21 with a 3.95 ERA in his three-season career, had arthroscopic surgery on his shoulder last September. The White Sox have managed his recovery carefully and are excited by how he is responding, as his slider is once again looking like the devastating pitch it was at North Carolina State. He’s struck out 20 against two walks in 12 2/3 innings during the three rehab starts, two of which have been in Triple-A.

Rodon could start in Boston next weekend. If he needs another rehab start, his return would likely come in the upcoming series against the Indians at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Hey, buddy: Matt Skole was in the designated hitter slot Saturday, replacing Daniel Palka, who had an RBI single and two walks Friday. Skole and Palka were teammates at Georgia Tech in 2011, with Skole’s junior season overlapping with Palka’s freshman year. Tech went 42-21 that season, finishing one win short of the College World Series.

Back to work: Matt Davidson (back spasms) has taken grounders at third base the last couple of days and is hitting in the cage. He’s eligible to be activated from the disabled list Friday.

James Shields solid again, but White Sox offense is silent in 5-0 loss to Brewers

By Phil Rogers/ Chicago Tribune / June 2, 2018

James Shields isn’t like the White Sox front office and many of the team’s fans. He doesn’t have time on his side.

So days like Saturday aren’t very easy to take for the veteran pitcher. His frustration was evident after a 5-0 loss to the Brewers, especially when a reporter’s question touched on the team’s rebuilding mode.

“Frankly I don’t really care about the rebuild right now,” Shields said. “I care about winning. They keep talking about rebuild. I’m trying to win ballgames right now. Period. I don’t like losing. We’re losing ballgames right now. They can keep talking about rebuild but at the end of the day we have to win ballgames right now.”

Shields battled Jhoulys Chacin all afternoon but couldn’t escape the damage done by solo home runs from Erik Kratz, Jonathan Villar and Lorenzo Cain. He was left with a 1-6 record and 4.48 ERA after 12 starts and an emergency relief appearance.

This was the eighth consecutive start in which Shields has pitched at least six innings. His fastball tops out in the low 90s these days, but he has figured out a way to compete with a new arm angle, slow curveball and pitch sequencing — and some scouts have noticed.

But is that really be enough to make himself a trade target?

While Shields has “reinvented himself,” to use the phrase Sox manager Rick Renteria did Saturday, his three-year stay on the South Side has been a test of everyone’s patience. He hasn’t really been able to dig out of the hole he fell into in 2016, as he’s still saddled with a 5.62 ERA in his 56 starts with the Sox.

Shields has been traded twice in his career, from the Rays to the Royals and the Padres to the White Sox. He isn't likely to get sidetracked by rumors, even if there's a part of him that would love to go to a more competitive team.

"I've been around the game a long time," said Shields, who struck out six with one walk. "I understand that process. But I can't control that. What I can control is what I do every five days. My job is to go out there and post, throw as many (innings) as I possibly can and do my job. I'm just going to focus on that, and focus on trying to get some (wins) for the team. It hasn't come my way over the last month or so but we just have to keep grinding."

When the White Sox do compete, they would do well to find a relief pitcher like the Brewers' Josh Hader.

Set-up men are playing a growing role in the modern game, and the 24-year-old Hader has become one of the best.

Acquired from the Astros in 2015 as part of a deal for Carlos Gomez and Mike Fiers, Hader was a minor-league starter but has evolved into a bullpen assassin. He's been so good in that role that the Brewers have resisted the temptation to move him into the rotation, and he put his left arm and cross-fire delivery on display to protect a lead for Chacin.

Hader entered with the Brewers leading 1-0 in the sixth inning, with two outs and the tying run on second, and struck out pinch hitter Jose Rondon on three fastballs. He went on to strike out two with a walk in a hitless seventh inning before sitting down after the lead was pushed to 5-0 in the eighth inning.

The Brewers are 20-0 when Hader pitches — one of the reasons they're leading the Cubs and everyone else in the National League Central. He's compiled a 1.67 career ERA and this season has 69 strikeouts in 34 1/3 innings.

"He's pretty good," Renteria said. "We watched a lot of the video (but) watching him up close and personal, that's a pretty explosive arm. Tough angle. He's pretty good. I think he's a piece they're going to surely benefit from."

White Sox look to add another piece to their core with No. 4 pick in draft

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / June 2, 2018

The White Sox have placed a premium on acquiring and developing young starting pitching.

They selected Carlos Rodon with the third overall pick in the 2014 draft, and he should return from a rehab stint in the next week. Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez were acquired from the Nationals in 2016 and inserted into the rotation last season.

Michael Kopech, Alec Hansen, Dane Dunning, Dylan Cease and a few others are in the pipeline, while recently demoted Carson Fulmer, the eighth overall pick in the 2015 draft, is hoping to turn things around at Triple-A Charlotte.

With so many pitching prospects in the system, it would make sense to use the No. 4 overall pick in Monday's draft on a hitter, especially since outfielder Eloy Jimenez, currently at Double-A Birmingham, is the only position player prospect anywhere close to being ready.

But whatever direction the Sox take, they should be able to cash in with a top-level talent who immediately will become part of the core of the rebuild.

Most mock drafts have the Sox choosing between Brady Singer, a hard-throwing, 6-foot-5 right-hander from Florida, or Nick Madrigal, a 5-8 second baseman from Oregon State with great plate discipline and a reputation as a spark plug.

"I have a pretty good handle on who I'd like to get," Sox scouting director Nick Hostetler said. "If he's there, it's a whole other game. ... I have a pretty good feel of who is going to go in front of us."

The Sox will follow the Tigers, Giants and Phillies before making perhaps their most important pick since selecting Rodon out of North Carolina State.

Simply put, they can't blow a pick this high without it coming back to haunt them. During the Cubs' rebuild, they hit on first-round picks Albert Almora Jr., Kris Bryant and Kyle Schwarber from 2012-14, and all three contributed to their 2016 championship.

Though anything can happen, the Tigers are expected to pick Auburn right-hander Casey Mize first, and the Giants appear to be set on Georgia State catcher Joey Bart. Depending on whom the Phillies select, the Sox likely will choose between Singer, Madrigal and Wichita State third baseman Alex Bohm.

The Sox have narrowed their list to seven players, and naturally, the financial aspect — a player's signability — also must be considered. The Sox have a bonus pool of \$10,589,900, sixth-highest among MLB teams. Their No. 4 pick has an assigned value of \$6,411,400, and their 46th pick is valued at \$1,556,100.

Singer, who throws a 95 mph fastball with a slider and changeup, was named Baseball America's College Player of the Year. He was projected before the season as the No. 1 pick, but Mize is now the consensus choice.

"He's a guy that's going to have to be more consistent with the breaking ball, but at the same time he's got all the raw tools to become a legit guy," Hostetler said of Singer.

Madrigal is probably an inch or so smaller than his listed height of 5-8, but his size hasn't damaged his reputation with scouts. He's been compared to Dustin Pedroia and Jose Altuve, two smaller second basemen who went on to win Most Valuable Player awards.

"Maybe if you asked 10 years ago, 15 years ago, maybe some people might shy away from my style of play," Madrigal told the Oregon Statesman-Journal. "I'm extremely grateful for those kind of guys."

Hostetler said Madrigal's "makeup is off the charts" and called him "a leader type of guy" who can play either second or short in the majors. "He's definitely going to be an up-the-middle guy with high bat-to-ball skills," Hostetler said.

While Hostetler said it's too simplistic to lump Madrigal in with more diminutive major leaguers, he admitted Madrigal shares Pedroia's "personality" as a player who doesn't mind getting his uniform dirty. Sox fans always have loved their grinders, dating back to Nellie Fox and Luis Aparicio.

Bohm is a power-hitting third baseman for Wichita State who hit 16 home runs in 2018, including a club record three grand slams.

"He's got big power, looks a lot physically like Kris Bryant," Hostetler said. "Will flash you that power and also at the same time shows solid athleticism at third base with an above average arm."

Third baseman Jake Burger, the Sox's top pick last year, is out for the year with an Achilles tendon injury suffered in spring training.

It seems doubtful Bart would fall to the Sox, who picked catcher Zach Collins No. 10 overall in 2016. If he does, the Sox will have to seriously consider him, as Collins has not developed quickly.

"Bart is a plus catch-and-throw guy with premium, raw power," Hostetler said. "To find an everyday catcher in the draft is really difficult to do, so he's going to be highly sought after."

Of course the Sox could go outside-the-box, as the Cubs did with Schwarber, and choose someone none of the experts predicted.

The only thing we know for sure is they can't afford to miss.

White Sox know there's no sure thing in MLB Draft

By David Just / Chicago Sun Times / June 2, 2018

Bears first-round draft pick Roquan Smith threw out the ceremonial first pitch to much applause before the Brewers-White Sox game Saturday at Guaranteed Rate Field. Time will tell whether crowds still are applauding the young linebacker a few years down the road.

Pro sports drafts are part science, part art form. Luck is often the difference between a Hall of Famer and a flameout.

The Sox will have their chance to find a future star with the No. 4 overall pick when the Major League Baseball draft begins Monday. Some good luck might mean a future World Series; some bad luck might mean more rebuilding.

When it comes to the draft, all teams get it wrong far more often than they get it right.

In this June 26, 2017, file photo, Chicago White Sox 2017 first-round draft pick Jake Burger watches during batting practice before the team's baseball game against the New York Yankees in Chicago. Burger has torn his left Achilles tendon again and will be sidelined for an additional year. Burger first tore the tendon Feb. 26 while running out a ground ball during an exhibition game against Oakland.

"Michael Jordan went third," said Sox director of amateur scouting Nick Hostetler, a reference to the 1984 NBA Draft that saw Akeem Olajuwon and Sam Bowie drafted ahead of Jordan.

Going back to 2000, only Chris Sale stands out from a crowd of first-round picks that includes Kris Honek, Royce Ring, Brian Anderson, Josh Fields, Lance Broadway, Kyle McCulloch and Aaron Poreda.

The jury is still out on the Sox' most recent first-round selections, but some bad luck already has started creeping in.

Third baseman Jake Burger, taken 11th overall in 2017, tore his left Achilles tendon twice this year. Pitcher Zack Burdi, one of the Sox' two first-round picks in 2016, had Tommy John surgery last July and might not pitch this season. Catcher Zack Collins, the 10th overall pick in 2016, has a load of potential but struggled offensively in his first two pro seasons, batting .229 with 175 strikeouts in 506 at-bats.

"Burger, Burdi — there isn't anybody who can predict," Hostetler said. "Even Carlos Rodon was set back with injuries. You can't predict the injuries, and that's one thing you chalk up as part of the game. You don't beat yourself up much."

Sox fans are familiar with the 2015 and 2014 first-round picks, pitchers Carson Fulmer and Rodon. Rodon hasn't played yet in 2018 after offseason shoulder surgery, and the Sox demoted Fulmer last month with an 8.07 ERA.

Other first-round picks of the last decade include Tim Anderson, Keon Barnum, Courtney Hawkins and Keenyn Walker.

"The misses frustrate us, too," Hostetler said. "But I can promise everyone involved that nobody in this game, of all the 30 teams, is going to be perfect in their drafts."

Hostetler's right, of course, and drafting is easy in hindsight. Every major-league team has a laundry list of first-round draft picks they wish they could have back.

In 1985, the Sox took catcher Kurt Brown at No. 5 and watched the Pirates select Barry Bonds at No. 6. They took Scott Christman over Torii Hunter in 1993, Jason Dellaero over Lance Berkman in 1997, Joe Borchard over Chase Utley in 2000 and Jared Mitchell over Mike Trout in 2009.

“We’re trying to predict the future here in what a kid is going to be in five, six, seven years,” Hostetler said. “We just don’t have that crystal ball. That crystal ball is not magically going to appear where you can stare into it and say: ‘That is who we should have taken.’”

The draft Monday will mark the fourth time in five years the Sox will have a top-10 pick.

To offer some perspective, the Cubs had top-10 picks four years in a row (2011-14) and took Javy Baez, Albert Almora Jr., Kris Bryant and Kyle Schwarber — all major-leaguers and World Series champions.

Five observations: James Shields valiant but unaided in defeat

James Fegan/ The Athletic/ June 2, 2018

Just because we didn’t anticipate the White Sox offense missing Daniel Palka and Matt Davidson at the beginning of the season, doesn’t make it not a true part of their 5-0 loss to Milwaukee on Saturday, spurning the continued return to reliability from James Shields.

With Yoán Moncada still searching for his pre-injury form, Yolmer Sánchez in a slight skid, Tim Anderson not hitting home runs and José Abreu completely baffled by Jhoulys Chacin, viable paths to scoring dried up swiftly less than 16 hours after one of the best wins of the season. As the Brewers incrementally added their four homers through the day, Shields’ efforts to keep his team in it slowly morphed from noble to doomed to irrelevant. To this day, no starter has earned the win while his team was shut out.

Fittingly, Palka finally got in to pinch hit with two outs in the ninth and struck out.

“Frankly I don’t really care about the rebuild right now,” Shields said. “I care about winning. They keep talking about rebuild and I’m trying to win ballgames right now, period. I don’t like losing. We are losing ballgames right now. They can keep talking about rebuild, but at the end of the day, we have to win ballgames right now. I’m not worried about this rebuild. I’m worried about winning right now.”

1. Still an encouraging return to form.

Based on all the yelling he did at himself after giving up a Jonathan Villar solo shot in the seventh, Shields probably didn’t view Saturday’s seven innings as an unqualified success. But all the NL-best Brewers could do against his kitchen sink mix of six pitches was scrape a pair of solo shots from role players that barely snuck over the fence, before Lorenzo Cain ended his day by pounding a curve out to left to start the eighth. It continued a run that has seen Shields record six quality starts in his last seven outings, and put together a 3.45 ERA over that time. He’s not topping 90 mph pretty much ever, and his out pitch choices involve a slow knuckle curve and a slower, knucklier curve, but this is a results business, and he has them of late. Except for the wins part, which is not his fault.

“We all know that he still has full in the tank,” said José Abreu through team interpreter Billy Russo. “I think that we have seen that. He has been pitching good, and for whatever reason the offense hasn’t been able to provide him with support. But he has been great.”

2. Trusting a veteran to a fault.

Manager mound visits and votes of confidence had a rough Saturday, as Villar golfed a slow curve out to right to give the Brewers a 2-0 lead in the seventh right after Rick Renteria went out to check on his 36-year-old veteran. Even after that, at 97 pitches after seven innings, Shields huddled close to Renteria

again in the dugout, before heading out for the eighth and immediately allowing a third solo shot of the day, off a curve that Cain had seemed to have timed up since Shields had struck him out to escape the fifth. There aren't many starters in the rotation with whom Renteria can extend the leash even a little, and now he was burned with Shields.

"We were just looking at a couple of matchups," said Renteira. "He had a plan of attack he was expecting to get through. Sent him back out, thought it was still a good matchup to finally get Cain. He had him at 3-2 and I think he hung a breaking ball.

3. The stuff isn't hard, but it's legit.

For someone who went over 10 innings into the 2018 season before he recorded so much as a single strikeout, Shields certainly has shown the stuff to miss bats of late. Recording 36 strikeouts over his last 47 innings certainly isn't a scintillating rate, but he had 18 swinging strikes in 103 pitches, and handcuffed Cain with slow curveballs before sneaking a down-and-in two-seamer past Christian Yelich to escape a fifth-inning jam that began with runners on first and third and no one out. It was the sort of stuff that might make a scout or two wonder whether he's tricky enough to be an improvement over what some contenders are sending out every fifth day, at least by August.

"I've been around the game a long time and I understand that process," Shields said about possibly being traded. "But I can't control that. What I can control is what I do out there every five days. My job is to go out there and throw as many innings as I possibly can and do my job. I'm going to focus on that and focus on trying to get some Ws for this team. It hasn't come my way over the last month or so."

4. Someone made contact off Josh Hader.

Credit to Tim Anderson for turning two tough double plays — including a nice snag of a Ryan Braun liner and flip to third to rescue Shields from the sixth — but mostly for being the one guy to put a ball in play amid Brewers reliever Josh Hader's murderous run through Sox hitters. Hader, who The Athletic confirms enjoyed a donut Saturday morning in the Brewers clubhouse, first came on and extinguished José Rondón on three pitches in the sixth to strand Yoán Moncada at third, and struck out Adam Engel and Charlie Tilson after Anderson's heroic soft liner in the seventh. Omar Narváez actually drew a walk, but that did not serve to lower Hader's 18.09 K/9 for the year. Anderson did, and for that, he gets this section devoted to him. In all seriousness, Anderson played very nice defense on Saturday.

"He's pretty good," Renteria said of Hader. "We watched a lot of the video, watching him up close and personal, that's a pretty explosive arm. Tough angle. He's pretty good. I think he's a piece they're going to surely benefit from."

5. Omar did good, too.

To Narváez's credit, he was the only White Sox hitter to reach base multiple times, and his fourth-inning fly out to the right field warning track was the closest the team came to scoring until the ninth inning. For him to flash some of his trademark patience amid the worst start of his career is a small bit of encouragement on a day that was mostly about a vintage Shields effort going unused, and eventually spoiling on the vine.