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Anderson's palpable energy making difference

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com/ April 7, 2018

CHICAGO -- Tim Anderson wasn't gauging the arm strength of Detroit center fielder Leonys Martin or the depth of Adam Engel's fly ball when he scored from third on a short sacrifice fly in the second inning of Thursday's home-opening loss.

The White Sox shortstop just knew he could make it safely.

"I feel like nobody can throw me out," a smiling Anderson said. "Just the confidence level, that level is way up.

"I'm having a bunch of fun. I knew instantly when that ball was hit, I was tagging. I'm going to keep running and see what happens."

According to Statcast™, based on Martin being in center, the shallowest edge of the "decision zone" for Anderson -- where he could consider running -- would be 255 feet. The fly ball was hit 250 feet. Anderson recorded a sprint speed of 31.0 feet per second (anything 30-plus is elite speed), going third to home in 3.61 seconds.

This run was set up by Anderson's single and his steal of second, giving him four stolen bases in four attempts. MLB.com columnist Joe Posnanski recently listed Anderson as one of five players who possibly could get to 80 stolen bases this season, but Anderson once again smiled when stating he doesn't have a total in mind.

"We'll see where we are at at the end of the year but I'm going to keep running, that's the plan," Anderson said. "Get good jumps and doing my homework on these pitchers and picking them apart."

"Just take the information that Cappy [third base coach Nick Capra] gives me. What alerts me to know [pitchers] are going to the plate and just breaking them down from bottom to the top and seeing what sticks out that's different to me to kind of get a good jump. That's kind of how I have been going about it and it's been working so far."

Anderson's energy and intensity have been palpable through the season's first week.

"Definitely when I step in between the lines it's a totally different person. I feel like I'm unstoppable out there when I'm playing," Anderson said. "It's fun to play at a high level and with so much energy."

"People feed off of that. It helps people in the dugout, helps my teammates to get going. For them to see that, it's exciting. It brings the fans into it. It starts something that keeps rolling and it's contagious. Hopefully it helps the team keep going, playing with a whole lot of energy."

Monday's time change

With inclement and cold weather forecast for Chicago on Monday, the game between the White Sox and Rays scheduled for 7:10 p.m. CT at Guaranteed Rate Field was moved to 1:10 p.m. CT.

"They let us know that they were gonna change it, that Tampa was OK with it," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "I'm assuming it's gonna be cold. Playing them in the day, there's a better chance that [we stay] warm."

Coyne with unique first pitch

Kendall Coyne, a 2018 Olympic gold medalist with the U.S. women's hockey team, found a unique way to "throw out" a first pitch Saturday. The native of Southwest Suburban Palos Heights, Ill., used a wrist shot with her stick to fire a perfect strike behind home plate to Miguel Gonzalez.

"It's a tremendous honor, especially on Opening Weekend," said Coyne, who grew up a White Sox fan and played softball at Sandburg High School in Orland Park, Ill. "There are so many surreal people that could be doing this and have done this, so just to be able to be here and be with my family and be a part of this Opening Weekend, especially for the White Sox, is truly incredible."

Familiar face: Ordonez throws out first pitch

By Max Gelman /MLB.com / April 7, 2018

CHICAGO -- Despite retiring from the Major Leagues in 2011, ex-All-Star outfielder Magglio Ordoñez has stayed close to baseball.

Ordoñez purchased a majority stake in Caribes de Anzoátegui, a Venezuelan League team, in 2013. His son, Magglio Ordoñez Jr., played in parts of two seasons in the Minor Leagues. And before Saturday's game between the White Sox and Tigers -- his two former teams -- Ordoñez threw out the first pitch at Guaranteed Rate Field.

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"I'm from this house. I grew up here," Ordoñez said. "This is the organization that gave me an opportunity to play in the big leagues and thanks to the White Sox, that's who I am right now."

Ordoñez debuted with the White Sox in 1997 and spent eight seasons in Chicago, but following the 2004 offseason signed with Detroit, where he won a batting title in '07 by hitting .363.

With both teams currently rebuilding, Ordoñez drew parallels between his playing career and the current rosters.

"When they did the rebuild with the White Sox, we weren't really close to winning the division," Ordoñez said. "Cleveland was too strong. Also, [when] they did it with the Tigers, they signed me. It took only three or four years.

"When you sign good players, you have a good system, it clicks like that," Ordoñez added, referring to the Tigers' mid-2000s rebuild and '06 American League championship.

As for his future in baseball, Ordoñez, 44, said he would consider coaching sometime down the road but doesn't have any immediate plans. Right now, he said, he's enjoying spending time with his four kids.

"I don't think I'm ready [to coach] right now," Ordoñez said. "You do this all your life, you always want to be involved in baseball. So now I'm looking for different options and we'll see what happens."

White Sox send Minaya to Triple-A after loss

By Scott Merkin /MLB.com/ April 7, 2018

CHICAGO -- Right-handed reliever Juan Minaya was optioned by the White Sox to Triple-A Charlotte following Saturday's 6-1 loss to the Tigers at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Minaya, 27, allowed three runs in one inning pitched over three appearances this season, walking five. Minaya, who closed effectively for the White Sox at the end of the 2017 season, walked all four Detroit hitters he faced in the ninth, throwing just seven of his 23 pitches for strikes. It forced the White Sox to go to Gregory Infante in a game where they started the inning down by four.

"I can tell you he just doesn't look as confident right now, obviously," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "I know he's trying to do his job, but he hasn't looked as confident. You've got to attack the strike zone. In that part of the game, we can still minimize a little bit of the damage.

"Just needed to make a move, see if we can get him back on track. We already saw what he did with us last season, how he improved significantly. In the spring, we just wanted to get him ready to break with us and then give him an opportunity to show us the same stuff he did last year. It just didn't work out. There was no argument with him right now."

The White Sox will make a corresponding roster move prior to Sunday afternoon's series finale against the Tigers. Veteran relievers Jeanmar Gomez and Bruce Rondon, who were non-roster invites to Spring Training, could be options with the 40-man roster at 39. Thyago Vieira, who is on the 40-man, also is a possibility. The White Sox bullpen as a whole has allowed 21 runs this season.

White Sox miss chances for key hits in loss

By Scott Merkin /MLB.com / April 7, 2018

CHICAGO -- There were numerous chances for the White Sox to score during Saturday's 6-1 loss to the Tigers at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Some were literally knocked down by the 9-mph wind and the 32-degree first-pitch temperature, such as Tim Anderson's long drive to right-center off of Alex Wilson with Wellington Castillo on second in the sixth, which had a 78 percent hit probability per Statcast™, and Yolmer Sanchez's ensuing drive to right to end the inning, which had a 69 percent hit probability.

But Detroit starter Michael Fulmer had only one perfect inning among the 5 1/3 he threw, stopping rallies in the second, third and fifth, as the White Sox finished 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position.

- Familiar face: Ordonez throws out first pitch

"He threw the ball pretty well," said Anderson of Fulmer. "We put together some good ABs and kind of fell a little short."

"I'm sure as we move forward we'll get those opportunities again," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "Hopefully we'll be able to capitalize. All in all, we just fell short today."

Miguel Cabrera singled home two runs off of White Sox starter Lucas Giolito in the third, while Dixon Machado doubled home two in the sixth. Both hits came with two outs. The only run scored by the White Sox came in the seventh, when Yoan Moncada doubled and came home on Avisail Garcia's line drive sacrifice fly to left.

Castillo's popup stranded two in the third, while Matt Davidson's double play took the White Sox out of a first-and-second, one-out situation in the fifth. The White Sox's best chance came when they loaded the bases with nobody out in the second, but Sanchez flew out to short center, Adam Engel struck out and Moncada hit a hard grounder to second.

"We couldn't get the timely hit," Renteria said. "Ended up having [a big opportunity] with the bases loaded and nobody out, and we weren't able to get a run in. We had a couple other opportunities and weren't able to cash in."

Giolito, who threw 49 of his 94 pitches for strikes, walked three and hit three with four of those baserunners scoring. Detroit has won the first two games of this three-game set. The White Sox have lost four of five since a 2-0 start.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Free passes, free runs: With two outs and Jose Iglesias on first in the third, Giolito issued consecutive walks to Leonys Martin and Jeimer Candelario to load the bases. Cabrera followed with a two-run single to right, giving the Tigers a 2-0 lead. The White Sox loaded the bases with nobody out in the second against Fulmer but did not score.

"It's difficult, but I mean, you have the rosin bag back there," said Giolito of pitching in the cold. "I didn't think I went to that enough today, but it's part of baseball. Early in the year you have some cold weather to deal with and that didn't really affect anything today. I just didn't pitch well."

Replay saves a run: A video replay challenge from Renteria saved a run during a two-run sixth. Iglesias reached safely on a grounder off Giolito's glove, beating his flip to Jose Abreu at first. But the challenge quickly overturned the safe call on Iglesias, giving the Tigers runners on second and third and two outs instead of the bases loaded and one out. Machado's ensuing double to left would have cleared the bases. Renteria has gone 3-for-3 in challenges against the Tigers and 4-for-4 in challenges this season.

QUOTABLE

"Every walk, D-Bo gets a hug." -- Anderson, who promises to hug first-base coach Daryl Boston on every walk, drawing his fourth in 27 plate appearances after walking 13 times in 606 plate appearances in 2017

IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

The 32-degree first pitch temperature marked the coldest game at Guaranteed Rate Field since April 9, 2016, when it also was 32 in a game against Cleveland. The White Sox played in 31-degree cold on April 4 against the Indians and April 7 against the Twins in 2007.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

JaCoby Jones originally was ruled out on a steal of second after drawing a walk with two outs in the fourth. A video replay challenge from manager Ron Gardenhire overturned the call, with Jones being awarded a stolen base.

WHAT'S NEXT

Reynaldo Lopez finishes off this three-game weekend set for the White Sox with a 1:10 p.m. CT first pitch on Sunday. Lopez posted a no-decision in his first start on Monday at Toronto despite allowing one run on two hits over six innings.

Daily White Sox prospects update: Three-hit day for Micker Adolfo

By Vinnie Duber/NBC Sports Chicago / April 7, 2018

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

Class A Winston-Salem

Micker Adolfo had three hits in Winston-Salem's win over Carolina, including a double. He also drove in a pair of runs, scored one and walked in a nice offensive performance. Gavin Sheets and Blake Rutherford also doubled.

Class A Kannapolis

Luis Gonzalez had an RBI double and scored a run in Kannapolis' loss to Lakewood.

Triple-A Charlotte

The Knights got roughed up in a blowout loss to Durham, with almost every pitcher who threw tagged for damage. Thyago Vieira threw a scoreless frame, though, and struck out two hitters. Charlie Tilson's double was one of two extra-base hits on the day for Charlotte.

Tim Anderson's status as baseball's early stolen-base leader emblematic of his 2018 outlook: 'I'm back, man'

By Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / April 7, 2018

Tim Anderson could use some updated business cards.

Ones that read: "major league leader in stolen bases."

That's what Anderson was at the start of play Saturday, no one else in the game owning four swiped bags through the first nine days of the 2018 campaign.

His new-look base-running prowess was on particular display in the home opener Thursday, Anderson singling, stealing second base, moving to third on a groundout and then sliding in ahead of a throw home on a pretty shallow fly ball.

Anderson's fourth stolen base in six games has him nearly a third of the way to his 2017 total of 15 already. The goal? Steal a whole lot more bases than just 15.

"That's the goal, to steal as many bases as I can," Anderson said ahead of Saturday's game against the Detroit Tigers. "I don't want to put a number on it, but we'll see what happens at the end of the season, where I'm at.

"Every chance I get on, I'm definitely going to try to take a bag. Every time I get on, I'm definitely going to try to take a bag. And making things work, trying to steal as many runs as I can and make it easier on the guy at the plate. Hopefully I can just steal that base at second, he can move me over, and a sac fly can get me in, kind of how it happened the other night. It's been good. The legs have been feeling great, and I've been rolling.

"I've been getting good jumps. I've really been locking in and taking the information that (White Sox third-base coach Nick Capra) has been giving me and being able to pick these pitchers apart and not getting thrown out. Just letting my legs work for me.

"I've been feeling real good. I lost a little weight going into spring training. I think I dropped like 10 pounds. But it was good for me to lose that weight because I was too heavy. Right now, I feel like the wheels are working."

The wheels are working in more ways than one. Anderson's not just stealing bases, he's using his speed to create runs where there otherwise might not have been any. A week before he scored on the shallow fly in Thursday's home opener, Anderson scored from first base on a bases-clearing single up the middle off Yolmer Sanchez's bat. Anderson's jump was so good, he was practically already to second base when the ball went through the infield.

"This past offseason, I did a lot of speed work, and I've been carrying it into the season. In spring training I did a lot of speed work, and I've been doing a lot of speed work early on now. Really just getting the feet quicker, and it's been helping me out a lot on the base paths," Anderson said. "I feel like I've been getting good jumps, and everything's been sharp. For the most part I've been feeling real good, and I've been getting good jumps. It's been fun to see, it's exciting."

What's been exciting for the White Sox and White Sox fans has been seeing Anderson have early success at the plate. In 2017, he slashed .257/.276/.402 with just 13 walks compared to 162 strikeouts. In six games this season, Anderson has a .304/.385/.696 slash line with three homers and — most importantly — three walks, including two in Thursday's game.

On Opening Day, Matt Davidson said he was more excited about his walk in that game than his three home runs. Anderson feels a similar way about how things have gone in the early going.

"I'm definitely pumped about the walks. I don't care about the home runs, I'm more pumped about the walks," he said. "The other day I had two walks, and I went down and hugged (first-base coach Daryl Boston). It's fun to watch to see me grow as a hitter. And to see where I came from last year, it's impressive, the work that I did, and I'm trusting the work that I put in.

"Taking those walks, they just lead to another stolen bag. I'll just take the freebies now. It's the plan. I've got my approach better. I've been working on that hard, and to see that starting to pay off, it's exciting and it brings a lot more excitement to the game."

As good as Anderson's been through the first few games of the season, though, there's an even more important sign from the young shortstop. You saw it in his emotional reaction to scoring on that sac fly. You saw it in his hug of Boston after his second walk of the game.

Anderson's playing well and having fun, both sharp contrasts from the majority of the 2017 season, when the emotional effects of the death of his best friend understandably carried over to field.

"That's how I'm going about it, I'm having fun," he said. "Last year was a down year, a bad year. A lot of issues, a lot of problems. But I'm back, man. I'm having fun, and it's fun going out and playing with a lot of energy. It gets the fans excited and gets the players and coaches and everybody pumped up. I'm playing with a lot of energy and having fun, and I care about the results."

Obviously, these results that Anderson cares so much about — and ones that have been great so far — have only come in six games of a 162-game season. But what a great start for a guy trying to prove he's worthy of being crowned the White Sox shortstop of the future.

And if the stolen-base thing works out and those new business cards are as necessary in October as they are now, well Anderson would be pretty happy about that.

"That would be dope."

White Sox make first bullpen adjustment of 2018, sending Juan Minaya to Triple-A after he walked four guys Saturday

By Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / April 7, 2018

Juan Minaya walked four hitters in the ninth inning of Saturday's game. Not long after, he was on his way to Charlotte.

The White Sox made their first in-season adjustment to their bullpen of the 2018 campaign, optioning Minaya, who served as the team's closer at the end of last season, to Triple-A after Saturday's 6-1 loss on the South Side.

Minaya had an awful performance, walking all four batters he saw to start the top of the ninth, that final one, obviously, forcing home a run. This after he surrendered two runs in his first outing of the season last week in Kansas City. His line on the season: 10 batters faced, just three outs recorded, five walks, two hits and three runs allowed.

"We were hoping he was going to have a good one today," manager Rick Renteria said of Minaya after the game. "Just needed to make a move, see if we can get him back on track.

"I can tell you he just doesn't look as confident right now, obviously. I know he's trying to do his job but he hasn't looked as confident. You've got to attack the strike zone."

It's a noteworthy move considering what Minaya did at the end of the 2017 season, acting as the White Sox ninth-inning man and having success doing it after Rick Hahn's front office traded away much of the bullpen during the summer. He picked up nine saves from the middle of August on and didn't allow a run over his final eight outings. That performance made him a logical candidate for what looked like a wide-open battle for the closer's job at the outset of this season, but that's not how things played out.

"We already saw what he did with us last season, how he improved significantly," Renteria said. "In the spring we just wanted to get him ready to break with us and then give him an opportunity to show us the same stuff he did last year. It just didn't work out. There was no argument with him right now.

"Hopefully we can get him back on track, just get him out there and back pitching without having to concern yourself too much about how it's affecting you at the major league level."

The White Sox bullpen in general has faltered in the season's first seven games. The relief corps' ERA actually dropped Saturday, falling from 8.55 after Thursday's bullpen meltdown to 7.71, still one of the higher marks in the game.

The team will make a corresponding move before Sunday afternoon's series finale with the Detroit Tigers, and it would figure to be an addition to the bullpen. It could be any of a whole host of names currently pitching at Charlotte. Thyago Vieira is on the White Sox 40-man roster, but there are plenty of other options, including veterans Chris Beck, Xavier Cedeno, Jeanmar Gomez, Bruce Rondon and Robbie Ross Jr.

Second verse, same as the first: Lucas Giolito shaky again in second go-round of 2018

By Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / April 7, 2018

If Saturday's performance by Lucas Giolito looked familiar, it's because it happened just a week ago.

Last Saturday in Kansas City, Giolito was shaky, even though he allowed just three runs in a six-inning effort. A quality start, by definition.

This Saturday, Giolito was shaky again. Shakier, perhaps. This time he surrendered five runs in 5.2 innings, walked three batters, hit three more and wasn't at all pleased with himself after the White Sox dropped a 5-1 decision to the Detroit Tigers. A quality start it was not, no matter what meaning of the word "quality" you were using.

"It was similar, very similar, in that whereas last outing I was able to make the adjustment later in the game, this outing I was battling myself the entire time. Too many pitches getting away from me," Giolito said. "Three walks, three hit batters, unacceptable.

"So yeah, it didn't work out."

It's easy to make grand statements with these small sample sizes early on in a 162-game season, but that doesn't mean anyone should do it with nearly six months of season remaining. Still, Giolito's undoubtedly been searching for himself in these first two outings of 2018. After a dynamite end to last season and a stellar spring, it seemed like full steam ahead for one of the organization's most promising young pitchers.

Instead, we've gotten a perfect example of how there's still development to be done at the major league level, of how 2018 will be a learning season for players throughout the minors and here on the South Side as the future of this team continues to grow.

"Just not commanding much of anything today," Giolito said. "To be a starting pitcher, I feel like you've got to command more than one pitch, and I didn't really command any today, just kinda battling through it."

Much like what happened after Giolito's first start a week ago, manager Rick Renteria talked about the learning process, saying that days like this can be helpful for young players, even if the results aren't where they want them to be.

"Very similar," manager Rick Renteria said. "He was trying to find it. He said he came out of the bullpen feeling very good in terms of his delivery. He said he felt like he was a little out of sync on the hill during the ballgame, but he kept working through it.

"You want to get him an opportunity to work through those things and gain experience and knowledge of that and know that even on days like this when he's probably not feeling his best he's still grinding and trying to work through and keep you in the ballgame. That's what we were looking for from him today."

But obviously as the tough days get strung together, they become struggles. Giolito's not there yet after only two starts in 2018. And he's looking forward to making sure this isn't a trend that goes past two.

"I'm looking forward to my next start in five days," Giolito said, "and I'm sure I'll give a better effort."

White Sox starter Lucas Giolito still searching for consistency

By Paul Sullivan/ Chicago Tribune / April 7, 2018

After a strong spring performance when he looked as if he could have been named the opening-day starter, Lucas Giolito has struggled with control issues in his first two outings of the regular season.

Giolito walked three and hit three batters Saturday while suffering his first defeat in the White Sox's 6-1 loss to the Tigers. He said it was similar to his first outing against the Royals.

"Whereas last outing I was able to make the adjustment later in the game, this outing I was kind of battling myself the entire time," Giolito said. "Too many pitches (were) getting away from me. Three walks, three hit batters. ... (that's) unacceptable. It just didn't work out."

Giolito should be able to make a mechanical adjustment, as he conceded his front side was flying open during his delivery.

"I just didn't compete through it as best I could today," he said.

Giolito refused to blame the cold weather, but manager Rick Renteria said it changes the "feel on the ball" for pitchers.

"It's one of those things where experience and time (helps) because you're going to have to live through this," Renteria said. "Whether it's early in the season or you go deep into (the) postseason, it gets cold out there. You want to be able to learn how to deal with those things, and he did."

Down time: After walking four straight hitters in the ninth inning Saturday, Juan Minaya was optioned to Triple-A Charlotte. Minaya, who was the Sox closer at the end of 2017, had a 27.00 ERA in three outings.

"He just doesn't look as confident right now," Renteria said.

The Sox will bring up a reliever in time for Sunday's series finale.

Hugs R Us: Tim Anderson walked in the first inning, giving him four in the first seven games. He had only 13 walks in 146 games last year, but Anderson is showing more patience with maturity.

"I'm excited about the walks," he said. "I'm seeing the ball pretty well. I have to keep putting together some good ABs and some of those (hit) balls will fall."

Anderson said every time he walks he has to give first-base coach Daryl Boston a hug.

Extra Innings: Former Sox and Tigers star Magglio Ordonez returned to the South Side for the first time since his career ended and threw out a ceremonial first pitch. ... Ken "Hawk" Harrelson will be in the TV booth Sunday as he continues his final season, albeit on a partial schedule, broadcasting Sox games.

White Sox's play as cold as the weather in 6-1 loss to Tigers

By Paul Sullivan/ Chicago Tribune / April 7, 2018

Growing up near Cincinnati, White Sox center fielder Adam Engel knows what it's like to play in subarctic conditions.

But before Saturday's 6-1 loss to the Tigers on a 32-degree afternoon on the South Side, Engel admitted he really has no advantage over teammates from warm-weather states or countries.

“Cold is cold,” Engel said. “People say, ‘You’re from here, so you’re used to it.’ I don’t know if you ever get used to it. You definitely learn how to play through it. I think a lot of the guys who have played in Chicago have a pretty good idea of how.”

If they don’t, they’re going to be in trouble for the next few days.

Frigid temperatures are here to stay awhile, and everyone is going to have to deal with it.

Baseball doesn’t have to play games in weather more conducive to penguins than pitchers. It chose to do so, ignoring the calendar to add more off days to the season. That change, combined with teams’ aversion to playing doubleheaders, leads to games like Saturday’s that should be postponed if only to save the fans from having to suffer through them.

Saturday’s game was the coldest at Sox Park since another 32-degree afternoon on April 9, 2016. The Sox played a couple of games in 31 degrees in 2007. They have postponed games in warmer temperatures and once were accused of doing so to avoid competition from a Bulls playoff game during the Michael Jordan era.

At least it was sunny Saturday, and the temperature was five degrees warmer than the Twins-Mariners game at Target Field, where it was 27 degrees.

Head groundskeeper Roger “the Sodfather” Bossard arrived at the ballpark at 6 a.m. to begin working on the field.

“The first thing I did was go see (manager) Rick Renteria,” Bossard said. “And I told him, ‘Hey, my field is frozen,’ and I canceled batting practice. There aren’t too many times I’ve told the manager I can’t get the field ready because it’s frozen.”

“I turned my water on around 7:15 a.m. City water comes out at about 48 or 50 degrees, so it actually warms up some of the grass. My whole grass, and the top inch of my sand roots, were completely frozen. We were 21 degrees here (Friday) night.”

The field didn’t start to thaw until 10 a.m., after which the players were at least able to warm up outside. Still, starter Lucas Giolito never seemed to get loose in his second start, walking three and hitting three more in 5 2/3 innings. Four of those six runners came around to score, including two hit batters in the sixth that made it 5-0 and led to Giolito’s exit.

“It’s difficult, but you have the rosin bag back there,” Giolito said. “I don’t think I went to that enough today. It’s part of baseball early in the year. You have some cold weather to deal with. That really didn’t affect anything today. I just didn’t pitch well.”

After winning their first two games against the Royals in Kansas City, the Sox have lost four of five and gotten off to a rough start on the first homestand. Before Saturday’s snoozefest, they blew a four-run lead in the home opener Thursday, giving up three runs with two outs in the ninth in a 10-inning loss.

But no snow was good news for the Sox fielders.

“It was coming down hard enough where the flakes would hit you in the eyes and you’d have to blink your way through it,” Engel said of the home opener. “Fortunately I didn’t get any fly balls hit to me when it was coming down that hard.”

In deference to a miserable forecast for Monday, the Sox moved up their game time from 7:10 p.m. to 1:10 p.m. for that series opener against the Rays. They'll be going up against the Cubs' home opener at Wrigley Field, which will be a sellout no matter the weather.

But at least the Sox fans who do come out will be a little less frozen, like a partly thawed pizza.

Everyone will just have to muddle through this cold snap, just like the "Sodfather" and his grounds crew have been doing every day, trying to get the field in playing shape.

"It has been a challenge this year," Bossard said. "When you play eight innings through snow, and the next day it gets down to 17 or 19 (degrees) ... but we're going to be ready."

White Sox fall to Tigers, but Magglio Ordonez likes where they're headed

By David Just/ Chicago Sun Times / April 7, 2018

Former outfielder Magglio Ordonez strolled to the mound Saturday looking as fit and ready for a major-league game as he did in 2000, when he was a rising star with "The Kids Can Play" White Sox.

"I do CrossFit," Ordonez, 44, said with his familiar, beaming smile.

Ordonez has jumped into — and left — Venezuelan politics and purchased a Venezuelan baseball team during his time away from the game.

He was back in Chicago to throw out a ceremonial first pitch before the Sox' 6-1 loss to the Tigers on a cold day at Guaranteed Rate Field.

It was Ordonez's first trip to Chicago since he retired after the 2011 season. He spent eight seasons with the Sox (1997-2004) and finished his career as a six-time All-Star and three-time Silver Slugger. He was the runner-up in voting for American League most valuable player in 2007 with the Tigers.

"I'm from this house," said Ordonez, who lives in Miami and Venezuela. "I grew up here. This is the organization that gave me an opportunity to play in the big leagues. I always love this city and people."

Ordonez was a fitting guest for the rebuilding Sox, having gone through his own version of a rebuild in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Those teams featured future World Series heroes Mark Buehrle, Jon Garland and Paul Konerko.

Ordonez left the offseason before the Sox reached the World Series in 2005, but he knows a thing or two about enduring losing seasons to get there.

"When you sign good players, you have a good system," he said. "It clicks like that. When you have a good foundation, it happens quick."

The Sox are hoping for a similar "click" in the next couple of years. But there have been and will be growing pains along the way, as evidenced by their loss Saturday.

Right-hander Lucas Giolito (0-1) was an out away from a quality start before allowing a two-run double to Dixon Machado that gave the Tigers a 5-0 lead in the sixth. He yielded five runs, four hits and three walks and hit three batters in 5 2/3 innings.

Giolito didn't blame the 32-degree weather for his poor outing.

“Early in the year, you have some cold weather to deal with,” he said. “That didn’t really affect anything today. I just didn’t pitch well.”

The Sox’ offense, which previously had no trouble hitting or scoring in the cold, struggled to produce. The Sox loaded the bases with no outs in the second and didn’t score. They put two more runners on in the third and didn’t score.

“We put together some good at-bats and kind of fell a little short,” shortstop Tim Anderson said.

Avisail Garcia drove in the Sox’ lone run on a sacrifice fly in the seventh.

While the Sox’ first series at home hasn’t been pretty, Ordonez said he is optimistic about the rebuild.

“You have to give a chance to the young players,” Ordonez said. “I know the White Sox have good players and a lot of talent. Hopefully they do good. They did it when I got here.”

White Sox demote reliever Juan Minaya to Class AAA after four-walk outing

By David Just/ Chicago Sun Times / April 7, 2018

The White Sox optioned reliever Juan Minaya to Class AAA Charlotte after their 6-1 loss Saturday to the Tigers at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Minaya walked four batters and allowed a run without getting an out in the ninth inning. He has appeared in three games this season, allowing three runs and five walks in one inning.

“We were hoping he was going to have a good one today,” manager Rick Renteria said. “We just needed to make a move, see if we can get him back on track.”

Renteria said Minaya, who was 3-2 with a 4.53 ERA in 43¹/₃ innings last season, hasn’t looked confident and isn’t attacking the strike zone.

“In the spring, we just wanted to get him ready to break with us and then give him an opportunity to show us the same stuff he did last year,” Renteria said. “It just didn’t work out. There was no argument with him right now.”

Gold medalist comes home

U.S. women’s hockey gold medalist Kendall Coyne shot a ceremonial first pitch with her stick before the game.

Coyne set the ball on the mound and flicked it with her stick to Sox right-hander Miguel Gonzalez behind home plate, eliciting cheers from fans who braved the cold weather to attend.

Coyne won a gold medal at the 2018 Winter Olympics, but she said the first pitch was a thrill.

“It’s a tremendous honor,” said Coyne, who grew up in Orland Park and attended Sandburg High School. “Diehard Sox fan, born and raised. I just saw [former outfielder Magglio Ordonez], and I was like, ‘O-E-O!’ when I bumped into him.”

Coyne, 25, played softball as a kid and said she fondly remembers the Sox’ 2005 World Series title. She said she is taking a break from hockey for now and planning her wedding this summer to Michael Schofield, an offensive lineman for the Chargers.

Almost a record

The 32-degree temperature at game time was tied for the third-coldest for a Sox home game since at least 1990.

The coldest Sox home game since 1990 was 31 degrees, which happened twice during the 2007 season.

Jones feeling good

Renteria said reliever Nate Jones feels good after three relief appearances, including back-to-back games Wednesday and Thursday. Jones, who recovered from nerve-repositioning surgery in his right elbow in the offseason, has allowed one run in 3, innings.

Renteria said the Sox will continue to monitor Jones' health.

"He's had no issues so far," Renteria said. "His body tells him what he's capable of doing. We're going to continue to ask plenty of questions and make sure he's OK."

Lucas Giolito struggles in coldest Guaranteed Rate game in two years

By James Fegan/ The Athletic / April 7, 2018

After a snowy home opener, Yolmer Sánchez was trying to convince reporters that would seek to downplay his appliance of vaseline over his entire body to keep himself warm.

"Just on the exposed parts?"

"No, I try to do it all over," Sánchez insisted. "My whole body. It helps."

"I've never heard of that before."

"It's good. You can try it," Sánchez offered.

On Saturday, it was even colder. The 32-degree temperature at Lucas Giolito's first pitch was the coldest game-time mark at Guaranteed Rate Field in two years. The last time it was actually colder than this during a White Sox home game was 11 years ago.

A tinfoil hat might be a good idea for warmth, but it wouldn't be necessary to note that Giolito's early sharpness (retiring the first seven batters of the game with strikeouts of Miguel Cabrera and Victor Martinez peppered in) waned as the Santa Monica, California native continued to stand out in a 6-1 loss to the rebuilding Tigers as temperatures peaked at 36 degrees.

"It's difficult," Giolito said, before slamming the door on any hint of using the weather as an excuse. "But I mean, you have the rosin bag back there. I didn't think I went to that enough today, but it's part of baseball. Early in the year you have some cold weather to deal with and that didn't really affect anything today, I just didn't pitch well."

Though a sixth-inning inside slider to Dixon Machado that was ripped down the left-field line for a two-out, two-run double — the Tigers' only extra-base hit off him — wrapped Giolito's day and sent him off with a 5-0 deficit, the problem was not that he was hit hard. Between back-to-back walks and plunking Jose Iglesias in the third, or nailing the first two hitters in the sixth, it was everything Giolito could do to just find some consistency in the zone. He ended up throwing 49 of his 94 pitches for strikes, but his ball-strike

balance swung into the red for much of the day, and he wound up adding six extra runners combined with free passes and painful ones, which made his final line (5 2/3 IP, 4 H, 5 ER, 3 BB, 4 K, 3 HBP) look like one of a man who was hit much harder.

"I think your feel on the ball, it changes," manager Rick Renteria said. "You're going to have to live through this. Whether it's early in the season or you go deep into the postseason, it gets cold out there and you want to be able to learn how to deal with those things, and he did. He's dealing with it, he's experiencing it and we'll take as much positive as we can out of that outing in terms of his experience."

As is often the case for the White Sox these days, the tools for success flashed enough times amid the ugliness to provide some hope for brighter, ideally warmer days. Even while the offense blew a bases-loaded, no-one-out opportunity against Michael Fulmer in the second, and failed to capitalize on Fulmer's equally challenging control problems by going 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position, Yoán Moncada reached base three times, and capped his first multi-hit game of 2018 with an opposite-field double to left that probably would have left the yard if it was even 50 degrees outside. Tim Anderson had a sixth-inning flyout to the warning track that he could similarly boast about, and he and Davidson both continued their personally unprecedented barrage of walks to fan hopes that their plate approaches are a cut above what they showed last season.

"It's kind of tough on everybody, it's cold on both ends so you can't really say," Anderson said when asked if the weather affects pitchers or hitters more. "I'm excited about the walks. I feel like I'm seeing the ball pretty well. I have to keep putting together some good ABs and some of those balls will fall."

Even Giolito, for the second-straight start, reduced to working just with four-seam fastballs for two-thirds of his pitches, which sat at 91-93 mph in the freezing temperatures, got nine swinging strikes in 62 deliveries of the pitch, evidence of its natural carry even at average velocities. His changeup didn't get many outs for him, the trust he's developed with his slider is promising even if it wasn't quite located consistently enough to be dominant, and memories of his dominant curve showing up in spring will fade quickly if it doesn't show up in regular-season games soon (Baseball Savant said he threw it just twice).

Even with all that, even without ever looking like he was in rhythm again after the second inning, he was a few pitches away from a quality start, and never looked anything close to overmatched.

"My slider felt pretty good today, but curveball pretty much nonexistent," Giolito said. "Changeup was kinda up in the zone, and just not commanding much of anything today. To be a starting pitcher I feel like you gotta command more than one pitch and I didn't really command any today, just kinda battling through it."

Maybe a morning conversation with pitching coach Don Cooper about the importance of patience with young pitchers, and his allusions to Jon Garland's development path is still ringing in my ears, or maybe my ears are just still really cold. But this game doesn't seem quite like enough reason to lose all excitement in the 2018 White Sox, even if there was next to nothing exciting about it.

"Just work on my tempo, making sure I'm keeping the front side closed," Giolito said. "I'm looking forward to my next start in five days and I'm sure I'll give a better effort."

Reynaldo López has a new arsenal and is looking better for it

By James Fegan/ The Athletic / April 8, 2018

After an up-and-down first season with the White Sox and a choppy spring training, Reynaldo López's season debut in Toronto on Monday gave a quick and easy summation of why the team is committed to him as a member of their starting rotation going forward.

Facing three hitters over the minimum, he turned in six strong innings of one-run ball, striking out six and walking one. He utilized a four-pitch mix with a fastball that averaged over 96 mph, a slider that ran away from righties glove-side, a changeup that he threw for strikes and a few cameo appearances from a curveball. All four pitches got swings-and-misses as he meted them out across two trips and more through the batting order. On display were all the tools to inspire excitement about a 24-year-old starter, which probably distracted from the fact that this nothing at all like the scouting report for López when he came over.

Take this snippet from his Baseball Prospectus capsule before last season: "His plus arm speed generates a plus-plus fastball, an upper-70s to low-80s curveball that flashes plus, and feel for a potentially average cambio. The fastball tends to stay straight. The curveball, its shape and use in the zone, is quite volatile. The changeup can get hard and lose effectiveness."

The changeup is clearly referred to as a third pitch and there's no mention of a slider at all. The report isn't wrong — they certainly have the part about López throwing hard right — it's just that he's matured as a pitcher.

"When I first met him, he came to spring training and the breaking ball was ahead of the changeup," White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper said. "When he came up here last year, the changeup was ahead of the breaking ball. And it's a good changeup, it's a swing-and-miss changeup, so certainly we're employing that a lot more and we're trying to improve his breaking stuff. We gave him a slider. He didn't have one before and the other night he whipped out a bunch of them, 20, I think, if I'm not right, in the outing against Toronto."

White Sox starting pitcher Reynaldo López threw 20 sliders against the Toronto Blue Jays at Rogers Centre in his first start of the season. (Nick Turchiaro/USA TODAY Sports)

It was indeed 20 sliders, but the changeup might have grabbed more attention, and from the day López was called up from Triple-A Charlotte last August, it's been the more constant presence. Given the way he switched between burying it for a swing-and-miss finishing pitch, and pitching backward and dropping his changeup for an early strike as if it was an overhand curveball, you could be forgiven for thinking the changeup has always been López's bread and butter. Yet he says that's the result of a process that started with Cooper last spring training.

"I've been throwing that pitch since I started playing but it wasn't a pitch that I really, truly had confidence in," López said through team interpreter Billy Russo. "It was something last year when I came here and Coop said, 'You know what, I think that you have a pretty good changeup. I think we can work to make it better.' And I think that he gave me that confidence and the freedom to use the pitch. We worked hard to get it to the level we have it right now and I feel very comfortable with that pitch."

Last May, López told me in the bowels of BB&T Ballpark in Charlotte he was developing a slider, a pitch he didn't use in the Nationals organization, it felt like a miscommunication. The pitch was still mostly just a rumor while watching him pitch in the minors, and looked fringy the few times he tested it out in the majors last year. While there are plenty of "new pitch" stories every year, it's a little hard to project something to go from "nonexistent" to "not good," to becoming a reliable major league offering in a matter of months.

Flash forward to Monday, and not only did he throw that slider 20 times, he did it with purpose and trust. Facing a 2-2 count to Randal Grichuk, López uncorked a slider that tailed sharply out of the zone. Grichuk didn't offer at it, and López missed with a 3-2 challenge fastball to walk him, but it was the type of scenario that stands out. It's one thing to bury an experimental breaking ball on an 0-2 count and hope something good happens, it's another to trust it at a moment that essentially will swing the at-bat one way or the other.

"It's a process," Cooper said. "We work with it. Every sideline. Every pregame. Every game. That's the only time guys have to get better at the craft. It's a learned skill, and the only time you get to learn that is on sidelines and game days. You can get some done playing catch but until you throw it to a catcher, throw it in a game, get swings and misses, ground balls, get outs, then they realize it is a pitch. Not unlike what we're doing with Carson [Fulmer] with his changeup."

That trust was rewarded. López got three swings-and-misses with the slider on the night, and just going off exit velocity, no one hit it remotely hard all game, in a park where any hard contact was a near-home run.

"I was pleasantly surprised in Toronto because not only was it a good slider, it was a better speed," Cooper said of the pitch that averaged 86 mph. "The speed difference between the fastball and slider, the fastball and changeup, that's what makes it tough for hitters, or tougher. The slider was good."

López admitted in spring training that he's still searching for the feel on his curveball that made it a standout pitch in 2016 and before. But for the most part, he is an endless well of optimism about the new things he's working on. Even while walking 11 in 18 2/3 innings in spring training, he lauded the progress of his arsenal, and says that the Toronto start was the product of that work.

That openness has been critical, because despite getting a pair of guys in López and Lucas Giolito that had already made their major league debuts, the White Sox approach has not been hands-off in the slightest.

"With Lopey, with Gio and with Fulmer, the three younger guys," Cooper said. "We're trying to see what they have, what they do best and then trying to put the whole picture together and giving them as many pitches as they can handle, because then there's more pitches for the hitters to have to deal with and more changes of speeds for the hitters to deal with."

Spring training results are meaningless and one start is one start. So Cooper is preaching patience. He recalled the five up-and-down years that passed between Jon Garland getting called up as a 20-year-old, being labeled a disappointment, and performing in a World Series rotation. But for now at least, López is showing some signs of that the Sox's plan is working for him.

"The changeup was very good." López said through Russo. "The slider, that's kind of my new pitch and it was working really, really good that day. I'm just happy. It was a really good outing for me and I'm ready for the next one."

Williams, Chicago White Sox in a great spot

By Barry Rozner/ Daily Herald / April 5, 2018

The executive vice president of the Chicago White Sox sat in the dugout Thursday afternoon and watched from 30 feet away as Rick Hahn and Ricky Renteria were interrogated by the media before the home opener.

A subdued Kenny Williams was quite happy to be away from the throng, to be in the shadows -- and sleeping more than he has in decades.

He's not even bothered by the unending -- and frequently unfair -- criticism of his time as GM, which produced the first World Series title for the franchise in 88 years.

"The ironic part of that is for a number of years I had to fight for -- when I became general manager -- respectability and confidence from our fan base that we would go for it," Williams said. "People didn't believe that we would go after it. Then, we're criticized for going after it too much.

"The interesting thing is the direction of the ballclub -- any ballclub -- is typically a group decision, and it has been around here.

"We were on the cusp a lot of those years. We were picked a number of those years to be on top, and ultimately on the back end of things we were criticized."

Williams stopped and smiled a knowing smile.

"I can't do anything about the way people perceive me and my tenure from the past or my role in the present," Williams said. "All I can do is keep my head down and do what's best for this baseball team."

The reality, says Williams, is that the current plan is one they talked about many times during the years they eventually chose to take another shot at winning, and he's excited that the Sox have chosen this path.

"This is something that I feared I would never have an opportunity to be a part of in my career, a rebuild from the ground up," Williams said. "So while at times you look and you go, 'Man, I wish we were thought of and talked about like the rest of the teams that are expected to win,' you understand this is part of the process.

"The process demands patience and discipline. It's one thing that Rick and I talk about all the time when we're looking at our boards and debating things, having the discipline to allow certain guys who maybe weren't necessarily thought of as being part of a championship club in the future, but having the discipline to allow them to play their way into the picture."

Guys, perhaps, like Matt Davidson, Adam Engel or Yolmer Sanchez, to name a few.

"Understand that, yes, we could have maybe gone out and gotten a veteran, free-agent stopgap," Williams explained. "But every championship team has their surprises, guys who weren't highly thought about, but ended up being a key component of a championship club.

"So you allow them to play and you allow yourself the exhale of knowing that you're doing right by the process, also knowing it can be difficult at times in the win-loss column."

There is daily conversation in White Sox Nation about when this will come together. The Sox are ahead of schedule given what they've been able to do through the trades of Chris Sale, Adam Eaton and Jose Quintana, but as for whether it's 2019 or 2020, Williams believes the young guys will make that call. "What I try to counsel Rick and the coaching staff on is let's prepare them and not put any limitations on them," Williams said. "We won't be the ones to tell them when it's time to win. They'll tell us.

"I hear a lot that not all of these guys will make it, but I can't think like that. When we acquire that player, I think -- based on our evaluations -- that the player will be what I thought that player would be when we got him.

"I know logically that not each one works out, but that's for other teams' guys to not work out."

Williams laughed when he said it. Obviously, he knows they can't possibly hit at 100 percent, but with the sheer number of top prospects they've acquired, the percentages are in their favor.

"It's about getting back to that level for the fans and being able to sustain it. When you build something like this, you have a chance to sustain it," Williams said. "The way we had to do it before -- and that was just our circumstance -- we had to patch it together.

"That's not an easy thing to do. It may have seemed like it from the outside, but it wasn't."

And with that, Williams smiled again and moved on without anyone interrupting his quiet Opening Day on the South Side.

He couldn't be happier about it.