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White Sox embrace intensity of Crosstown Cup

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 10, 2017

CHICAGO -- Championships change organizations.

Just ask the Cubs, who won a World Series title in 2016, and the White Sox, who claimed a title in '05, ending long droughts and changing expectations. But White Sox general manager Rick Hahn doesn't believe those championships really altered the intensity of the crosstown Chicago baseball rivalry, which will play out again with three afternoon games this weekend at Wrigley Field.

"Going back to the amount of time I've been here, I don't remember a year where you certainly didn't want to take all of those ballgames," Hahn said of facing the Cubs. "Even having a freshly minted World Series ring, it didn't really change that thing in '06 or '07.

"There is certainly an added energy in both of these ballparks when the two teams square off. It's cliché to say 'playoff atmosphere' or 'the rivalry increases the intensity,' but you do feel a little bit of a different vibe where you have a lot of fans from both clubs inside a sold-out ballpark, and there's that pitch-to-pitch excitement."

The White Sox are off to a 9-25 start, with a pitching staff ranked last in the Majors with a 5.25 ERA and an offense sitting third from the bottom with 136 runs scored. But the future is bright for the rebuilding South Siders.

Focus falls, for example, upon outfielder Eloy Jimenez, the team's No. 1 prospect per MLB Pipeline, and his nine straight multihit games for Double-A Birmingham.

White Sox fans don't want to see five losses in a row from the big league squad, but they also get the big picture. Without saying it out loud, the White Sox want to be where the Cubs reside after a rebuild -- perennial championship contenders.

"Ultimately, if we both get to our goals at the same time and there's October baseball between the two clubs, that's a different level of intensity that I don't think any of us could really imagine at this time, which would be awfully special," Hahn said. "In the meantime, this weekend will be a nice sort of starter course on what's possible down the road."

Rick Renteria began as a Major League manager with the Cubs in 2014 before he was replaced by Joe Maddon, and he moved on to manage the White Sox in '17. He has no ill will toward the Cubs, who gave him an opportunity that probably "led to this opportunity." He calls the intracity rivalry special, and he wants to win.

"We know the fans expect us to go out here and give it our best shot and come out with a victory," Renteria said.

"You have two teams in the same city. That adds a little extra to the game. You want to be the best in the city," White Sox reliever Nate Jones said. "I'm looking forward for the guys that it's their first time for this series, to see their reactions to what the crowd is like. They are always into it, that's for sure."

Cease making progress

Dylan Cease, the No. 5 White Sox prospect per MLB Pipeline, has dominated Carolina League hitters as part of Class A Advanced Winston-Salem, with a 1.95 ERA and 42 strikeouts against 14 walks over 32 1/3 innings in six starts. But the 22-year-old right-hander, acquired from the Cubs as part of the Jose Quintana deal last year, has fairly straightforward goals for 2018 success.

"Making every start is probably one of the most important things when it comes to being a starting pitcher," Cease said during a Thursday conference call. "My goals are more execution based. How am I executing my pitches? How are [pitches] coming out of my hand? Things like that."

"I'm getting ahead in counts. I'm attacking with my fastball, and then I'm doing a better job of throwing my offspeed early for a strike. And that's put me in good situations. Even my last game, they did a great job of getting baserunners on when I was executing pitches. So it's really just being consistent and being able to get ahead of batters and being in an advantage count."

Thursday's top prospect performers

By Manny Randhawa / MLB.com / May 11, 2018

Nationals No. 2 prospect Juan Soto, the No. 16 overall prospect in baseball, had a big night at the plate in his Double-A debut, lining a two-run double to right field in his first at-bat, and an inning later, hitting an opposite-field, two-run homer in Harrisburg's 9-8 victory over New Hampshire.

The 19-year-old outfielder has been red-hot all season, slashing .372/.476/.802 with 12 home runs in 31 games between Class A Hagerstown and Class A Advanced Potomac. His 12 homers rank third across all levels of the Minors.

Other top prospect performances on Thursday:

- In the same game, Blue Jays No. 1 prospect (No. 3 overall) Vladimir Guerrero Jr. extended his hitting streak to 15 games by going 3-for-5 with two doubles and an RBI in New Hampshire's 9-8 loss. The 19-year-old third baseman is hitting .396 with five homers and a 1.113 OPS on the season.

- White Sox No. 1 prospect Eloy Jimenez, the No. 4 prospect overall, extended his own hitting streak to 14 games with a double in Double-A Birmingham's 6-2 loss to Pensacola. The 21-year-old outfielder was unable to collect multiple hits for the 10th straight game, but is slashing .341/.370/.694 with seven homers in 21 games this season.

- Brendan McKay, the Rays' No. 3 prospect (No. 25 overall) tossed six scoreless innings while giving up just one hit in Class A Bowling Green's 4-0 win over Cedar Rapids. The 22-year-old left-hander walked none and struck out seven, lowering his season ERA to 1.09 over six starts. The two-way player, also a first baseman, is slashing .262/.483/.344 with two doubles, a homer and 26 walks in 87 plate appearances on the season.
- Pirates No. 2 prospect Austin Meadows, No. 44 prospect overall, went 3-for-5 with a double and two RBIs during Triple-A Indianapolis' 7-1 victory over Louisville. The 23-year-old outfielder snapped out of a recent slump and is slashing .276/.324/.378 for the season.
- Orioles No. 1 prospect Austin Hays (No. 37 overall) went 2-for-4 with a two-run homer in Double-A Bowie's 7-6 victory over Hartford. It was the 22-year-old outfielder's sixth homer in 31 games this season. Meanwhile, Baltimore's No. 2 prospect (No. 93 overall) Ryan Mountcastle went 3-for-4 with an RBI in his season debut after returning from a fractured right hand.
- A pair of top Giants prospects starred in Class A Augusta's 15-1 rout of Rome, as No. 1 prospect Heliot Ramos (No. 60 overall) went 1-for-3 with a two-run homer, and No. 11 prospect Jacob Gonzalez turned in a 2-for-3 performance with a homer and four RBIs. Ramos, an 18 year-old center fielder, had been just 2 for his previous 29 entering the game, and Gonzalez, a 19-year-old third baseman, has hit safely in six of his last nine games.
- Nationals No. 3 prospect Carter Kieboom (No. 88 overall) went 3-for-4 with a homer and a tied a career-high with five RBIs in Class A Advanced Potomac's 14-3 victory over Frederick. The 20-year-old shortstop is slashing .243/.360/.412 with six home runs in 33 games this season.
- Cionel Perez, the Astros' No. 6 prospect, threw five scoreless innings, allowed three hits and walked one, while striking out seven in Double-A Corpus Christi's 9-2 win over Midland. That lowered the 22-year-old southpaw's season ERA to 1.85 in six appearances (five starts).
- Royals No. 3 prospect Seuly Matias belted two homers in Class A Lexington's 9-5 loss to Delmarva. It was the 19-year-old right fielder's second multi-homer game this season, and his 10 homers in 2018 are a career-high. Overall, he's slashing .276/.321/.663 in 26 games this season.
- Giants No. 8 prospect Shaun Anderson turned in five solid innings in Double-A Richmond's 3-1 victory over Trenton. The 23-year-old right-hander gave up a run on two hits, walking two and striking out eight. He's got a 2.31 ERA over seven starts this season.
- Left-hander Logan Allen, the Padres' No. 8 prospect, gave up a run on four hits, walking three and fanning nine over 6 2/3 innings for Double-A San Antonio in a 3-1 victory over Frisco. The outing lowered the 20-year-old's ERA to 2.55 over seven starts in 2018.
- Rockies No. 11 prospect Tom Murphy belted two homers as part of a 3-for-5, five-RBI performance in Triple-A Albuquerque's 7-4 win over Reno. The 27-year-old catcher is slashing .298/.368/.615 with eight homers in 27 games this season.
- Phillies No. 21 prospect Spencer Howard tossed six scoreless frames, surrendering just three hits, walking one and striking out seven in Class A Lakewood's 2-1 victory over Charleston. The 21-year-old right-hander lowered his season ERA to 2.89, and has struck out at least seven in four of his last six outings.

In Pirates, White Sox got reminder of what happens when rebuilds don't live up to expectations

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 10, 2018

The White Sox have a bright future. The ongoing rebuild has fans excited for years of planned contention with a legion of highly touted prospects developing in the minor leagues.

But with the Pittsburgh Pirates in town earlier this week — and the White Sox heading to the Steel City next week for two more with the Bucs — it served as a reminder that there's a dark alternate timeline that plenty of rebuilding teams have experienced: What if a rebuild doesn't work?

In the midst of this process, it seems as if Rick Hahn's front office is making all the right moves. The trades of Chris Sale, Adam Eaton and Jose Quintana brought back huge prospect hauls. Team those with promising draft choices and one big international signing, and it would seem that the depth of this system should provide plenty of depth and allow for what the general manager has said, that baseball has a cruel way of reminding you that not all prospects pan out.

But the Pirates were once given the tools to rise from the ashes and become a perennial contender, too. And while three straight postseason appearances in 2013, 2014 and 2015 certainly look a lot better than the two decades of bottom-feeding that preceded, are three National League wild card spots and three quick playoff exits enough to consider their rebuild a success?

It's hard to imagine there are many fans out there who would say yes.

Since 1990, the Pirates have made 22 picks in the top 15 of the draft and a large number of those picks had only brief big league careers or never even made the majors.

Chad Hermanson played 189 games, J.J. Davis played 67 games, Tony Sanchez played 52 games, Brad Lincoln played 53 games, Kurt Miller played 44 games, Daniel Moskos played 30 games, John Van Benschoten played 25 games, Bryan Bullington (a No. 1 overall pick) played six games. Bobby Bradley, Mark Farris and Clint Johnston never made the big leagues.

Not one of the Pirates' first-round picks since 2012 has reached the majors.

Pittsburgh certainly had its hits, most notably Andrew McCutchen and Gerrit Cole, a pair of first-rounders who broke that mold. And you don't need to be a first-round draft pick to be a top prospect or a good major league player. The Pirates have been a good team during the last half decade and are no slouches currently, second place in the NL Central and coming off a two-game sweep of the White Sox in which they scored 16 runs.

But again, what is the expectation when rebuilding?

Trading present-day wins at the major league level for what Hahn calls a long-term period of sustained success is a big trade to make. And does three brief playoff trips count as a long-term period of sustained success? If that's what the White Sox rebuild yields, that will surely come as a disappointment to many, even as the team's playoff drought figures to stretch to a full decade this season.

Not only that, but the Pirates — despite their current spot in the standings — have embarked on another rebuild of sorts. They traded away the aforementioned McCutchen and Cole this past offseason, and just three seasons after their most recent postseason appearance, made moves that at least seemed to signal a sacrifice of present-day wins for future success.

That's very much what Hahn & Co. are trying to avoid.

There's no sign that things will turn out that way, and there are important differences to point out. The White Sox have acquired a lot of their top talent through trades, while the data above shows the Pirates' unfortunate luck through the top of the draft alone. The two organizations have different player-development infrastructures. And the White Sox play in a larger market and wouldn't, you would assume, have the same trouble luring big-time free agents.

But in the event that things end up going more Pirates than Cubs (who the White Sox face off against this weekend on the North Side), will it have been worth it?

Rebuilding is hardly an exact science, and the White Sox most recent opponent is a perfect example of that.

Danny Farquhar shares first public photo since leaving hospital

By Chuck Garfien / NBC Sports Chicago / May 10, 2018

White Sox reliever Danny Farquhar continues to show incredible progress from the brain hemorrhage he suffered last month during a game.

Thursday, Farquhar posted a photo of himself and his wife, Lexie. In the caption he said he is "overwhelmed with the love and support that was shown to me and my family these past few weeks." He continued, "I am home and healing and can't wait to be back on the mound."

Farquhar was released from the hospital on Monday. He visited his White Sox teammates in the clubhouse on Tuesday. White Sox reliever Nate Jones called him "a miracle."

This is the first public photo we've seen of Farquhar since the incident occurred on April 20.

White Sox pitching against the recent Cubs offense — what could go wrong?

By Steve Rosenbloom/ Chicago Tribune / May 11, 2018

The City Series begins this afternoon, but they say it doesn't really start until the White Sox bullpen gets involved. Or maybe the entire Sox pitching staff except for Reynaldo Lopez, and here's why that could matter in a big way this weekend:

In their last three games, all victories, the Cubs are hitting .382 with runners in scoring position. In their last three games, all losses, White Sox pitchers are allowing opposing teams to hit .423 with runners in scoring position. Quick, extend the protective netting.

I know that wins have become an outdated statistic for pitchers, but it's useful when dealing with the White Sox because that allows for describing Lopez as perhaps the best winless pitcher in the league.

We've seen this before from the NBA and NHL. In fact, it feels like we always see this. As we arrive at each league's conference championship series, they are what we thought they were.

In the NBA's Western Conference final, the Warriors meet the Rockets for the right to play for the title. In the East, it's Cavaliers-Celtics. I don't know if this is what everyone wanted, but this is what everyone expected. If you like predictable greatness, the NBA will serve it up regularly.

In the NHL, good luck counting on that. Nobody expected the Capitals to make it to the conference final because Alex Ovechkin teams just don't do that. But this one just did that. In the Western Conference, meanwhile, nobody expected Vegas to get there, and that includes Vegas, but there were the Golden Knights, waiting for the survivor of Jets-Predators.

I'm sure there's a psychological profile to be drawn by a fan's choice — the NBA's virtually guaranteeing the best teams in the game vs. the NHL's offering the best stories going — but that seems like too much reading when you really should be watching.

The Predators and Jets should've played Game 7 of their second-round series Wednesday if the NHL held to the usual schedule, but Justin Timberlake was in concert at Bridgestone Arena that night, so the hockey game was moved to Thursday, and nobody from Chicago was allowed to buy a ticket to either Nashville event, I believe.

Hockey Twitter fight! Upon the Bruins' elimination from the playoffs after a series in which Boston forward Brad Marchand was lectured about licking opponents, the rival Canadiens tweeted: "Without naming

names, just a reminder that licking is frowned upon on the golf course as well.” The tweet included a link to the headline: “Hidden hazard in licking golf balls.”

To which Marchand tweeted: “Funny...throwing shade when you were out of the playoff race since October.”

Bilal Nichols, the defensive lineman the Bears selected out of Delaware in the fifth round of the draft, is described by his college defensive line coach as “very explosive off the ball when asked to do so.” Quick, someone ask him to do so.

What’s up, Mike Caruso?

A Cubs-White Sox ‘fraternity’? That’s no way to stoke the flames of rivalry

By Steve Greenberg / Chicago Sun-Times / May 11, 2018

You can throw out the records when these bitter rivals face each other. Well, tell you what, go ahead and throw out the White Sox’ record. The Cubs might end up needing theirs this season.

Indeed, there is no love lost when the South Side and North Side nines clash. The history runs too deep. The animosity runs like blood in the streets.

“Actually, we’re all kind of in this together,” Cubs star Kris Bryant countered. “We’re all, like, one fraternity.”

Can we just pretend he didn’t say that? It’s more fun to think of Cubs vs. Sox as a cauldron of bile and fury — or at least as something less pleasant than a Boy Scouts jamboree.

Chicago Cubs’ Michael Barrett, right, scuffles Chicago White Sox’s A.J. Pierzynski during a brawl in the second inning of a baseball game Saturday, May 20, 2006 at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago. Both players were ejected and the White Sox when on to win the game, 7-0. | AP Photo/Daily Southtown, David Banks

A “One Through Nine” setting the table for the annual Crosstown Showdown, which resumes Friday with a three-game series at Wrigley Field:

1. Trade war: Can’t we just declare a winner already in the trade last July that sent starting pitcher Jose Quintana to the Cubs for Eloy Jimenez, Dylan Cease and a couple of less notable prospects? To let this thing play out, as Cubs manager Joe Maddon insists we must, seems so antithetical in the what-have-you-done-for-me-this-very-second world.

“You want to evaluate things quickly,” Maddon said. “You can do that, but the game really needs time to really indicate exactly what did go on.”

But Jimenez — the No. 4-ranked prospect in baseball, according to MLB Pipeline — entered Thursday on a 13-game hitting streak at Class AA Birmingham, with five home runs, eight doubles and 18 RBI in that span. Cease is 4-1 with a 1.95 ERA and 42 strikeouts at Class A Winston-Salem. The rebuilding Sox appear to have crushed it on this deal.

Then again, Quintana leads the Cubs with four victories and is 11-5 since arriving on the North Side. If the lefty plays a key role in a return to the World Series — this season, next, whenever — won’t that pretty much speak for itself?

Fine, then, we’ll wait. But we don’t have to like it.

2. Something’s got to give: The Cubs and Sox are 28-28 head-to-head at Wrigley, so somebody’s going to have an edge by the end of the weekend. The Sox — 58-54 overall against the Cubs since interleague

play began in 1997 — will maintain bragging rights no matter how the series shakes out. (Look, we saw a rare chance to put “Sox” and “bragging” in the same sentence and took it.)

3. Streaking: The rivalry was more one-sided than ever during a stretch from 2008 to 2012, when the Sox won 18 of 24 games. Five of the last six games have gone the Cubs’ way, though.

Can the reeling Sox, who were 6-18 in April and are 1-7 in May, scratch out a victory or two in the series this season? The teams play three more times at Guaranteed Rate Field in September.

4. Cubs meltdowns: The worst of them happened at the park then known as the Cell. During a 2010 loss to the Sox, pitcher Carlos Zambrano pulled a Carlos Zambrano in the dugout, losing his mind on teammate Derrek Lee and getting sent home early by manager Lou Piniella. This was one year after Piniella gave Milton Bradley the boot in similar fashion for pulling a Milton Bradley.

5. Speaking of Cubs meltdowns: Before all that was, of course, the time in 2006 at the Cell when Cubs catcher Michael Barrett punched Sox instigator A.J. Pierzynski. If there was a “high” point in the rivalry, this was it.

“I saw that,” Bryant said. “I don’t feel like there’s any of that toward one another [anymore].”

One can always hope.

6. Great Orators, Part I: Piniella didn’t take kindly to criticism from Sox broadcaster Steve Stone in 2010.

“I’m not a dummy, that I can tell you,” he said. “I guess I think I know what the hell I’m doing.”

Two months later, he resigned.

7. Great Orators, Part II: What did then-Sox manager Ozzie Guillen have to say in 2009 about Wrigley Field?

“I puke every time I go there.”

Two months later, he was still Ozzie Guillen.

8. Interleague players: The Sox are 0-4 in interleague play this season. They were 6-14 a year ago and haven’t had a winning interleague record since 2014. Yet while the Cubs are a handful of games under .500 against American League opponents since it all started in 1997, the Sox are a relatively robust 206-181 (.532) against the National League. That’s the fifth-best interleague mark in baseball — nothing to sneeze at.

9. Who’s right? “We shouldn’t be taking any of it that seriously,” Bryant said of all this Cubs-Sox business.

Then again, would it be the worst thing in the world if someone grabbed the bad-blood flag from longtime Sox broadcaster Ken “Hawk” Harrelson and carried it up the next hill? It was Harrelson who, just last summer, called then-Cubs pitcher John Lackey “full of [expletive]” and vowed never to set foot in Wrigley Field again.

Some would say good, clean disdain is what makes a true rivalry go ’round.

White Sox host annual garage sale for charity Saturday

By Madeline Kenney / Chicago Sun-Times / May 10, 2018

White Sox fans can add more team memorabilia and knick knacks to their collection for a good cause this weekend.

The White Sox are hosting their annual garage sale at Guaranteed Rate Field on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The garage sale, which is free admission, gives fans the chance to buy game-worn and team-issued items, which include jerseys and equipment. Some of the items will be autographed by current and former players and the White Sox are also selling an oversized collectible piggy bank.

The event coincides with Family Field Day, which still has tickets available for purchase. Family Field Day gives attendees the opportunity to participate in clinics, play catch on the field and warm up in the bullpens along with other family-friendly activities.

Proceeds from both events will benefit Chicago White Sox Charities.

Last year, the two events combined raised more than \$66,000 for Chicago White Sox Charities. Since the charity's inception in 1990, the White Sox have donated nearly \$29 million — not including this year's grants which will be distributed later this month.

Why the Cubs should expect the summer of prospect love for Eloy Jiménez and Gleyber Torres

By Patrick Mooney/ The Athletic/ May 10, 2018

The Cubs sold “The Plan” to their fans and the Chicago media with such conviction that the assumptions are inevitable: Eloy Jiménez and Gleyber Torres are about to become superstars and the White Sox rebuild will eventually work.

Even almost 700 miles away at Double-A Birmingham, Jiménez looms over the weekend crosstown series that begins Friday afternoon at Wrigley Field. Jiménez is the headliner from last summer's José Quintana trade, the gift that keeps on giving for SEO, Chicago talk radio and Cubs/Sox Twitter.

Torres is already making it in New York, getting a “GLEY HEY KID” Daily News back page this week after becoming the youngest Yankee in franchise history to hit a walk-off homer. This is how an Evil Empire rebuilds: Since trading rental closer Aroldis Chapman to the Cubs in the 4-for-1 deal centered around Torres, the Yankees finished the 2016 season with a winning record, made it to last year's ALCS Game 7 and are now the hottest team in baseball.

The Cubs are calculating when it comes to prospects and savvy in dealing with the media. They could see this coming from the time they signed Torres (\$1.7 million) and Jiménez (\$2.8 million) in the summer of 2013 and prepared to make those win-now deals for Chapman and Quintana.

“It's going to get loud with those two,” Cubs executive Jason McLeod said, “especially once Eloy starts his push up here.”

McLeod, the senior vice president of scouting and player development, also thought about Dylan Cease, the other key piece in the Quintana trade and perhaps the future White Sox closer. McLeod notices what Cease is doing as a starter at advanced Class-A Winston Salem (4-1, 1.95 ERA) and remembers how Kyle Schwarber should get the assist.

By doing Schwarber's below-slot deal with the fourth overall pick in the 2014 draft, the Cubs had extra money to buy out Cease's commitment to Vanderbilt University with a \$1.5 million bonus and convince the sixth-round pick to do his recovery from Tommy John surgery under their supervision.

This is also good marketing for when president of baseball operations Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer are making phone calls and sending text messages before the July 31 trade deadline: Detroit Tigers third baseman Jeimer Candelario running with his chance after last summer's Justin Wilson/Alex

Avila deal. Candelario — who didn't have a place to play at Wrigley Field — is hitting .286 with five homers and an .889 OPS through 35 games this season.

"You're so happy for the kid," McLeod said. "I'd be lying if I [said] that there wasn't some sense of — not bitterness — but you always want to see them do it in your uniform. You remember a lot of those conversations you had to take the player. You remember the area scout talking about the player. You remember a Jeimer Candelario in Boise and all the sit-downs with him.

"So to see Jeimer getting the opportunity to do what he's doing and Dylan [pitching like that] and Eloy — you knew he was going to be a monster — and Gleyber making his major-league debut, I know everyone in the organization's incredibly happy for those guys.

"There also is the little bit of, 'Wow, that would have been awesome in the Cubs uniform.' But we're always reminded of looking at those World Series rings we have. We know that was the price for that."

The Chapman trade would always be judged on whether or not the Cubs won the 2016 World Series. For all their talk about character and makeup, the Cubs made an exception and acquired the first player suspended under Major League Baseball's domestic violence policy.

The Cubs had zero interest in re-signing Chapman as a free agent and needed him to throw 273 pitches in 13 playoff games. Trading Torres would be a much different story if the Cubs hadn't recovered from Chapman giving up that home run to Rajai Davis and wound up losing Game 7 in Cleveland.

"I remember watching him [in spring training]," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. "He'd come over and I'd say, 'Who the hell is this?' They'd say, 'Gleyber Torres.' I said, 'What?' Because the first name is so unusual. 'Write it down for me, OK?'"

"And then you talk to him, he's a really sharp kid who handled himself well and knew he was a big-leaguer. He had all that stuff going on. That kid's going to be really good for a long time, because he can hit and hit.

"He can play defense, but he can really hit. He's got a great knack. He knows where the head of the bat is. He knows how to manipulate the head of the bat. I'm happy for him. I think he's a great kid. It's awesome. Good for them."

Torres grew up as a shortstop in Venezuela and now plays second base next to Didi Gregorius. Since Torres made his big-league debut April 22, the Yankees are 16-1 (with Chapman saving six of those games). At the age of 21, Torres is hitting .333 with an .872 OPS for a World Series favorite.

"He's a great dude," said just-promoted Cubs infielder David Bote, who roomed with Torres for a few weeks during that 2016 season when they both played for advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach. "His work ethic is off the charts. His baseball knowledge is really good, too. I'm super excited for him. Am I surprised? No, he's a young guy that knows the game and plays it hard."

The reality is that outside of Kris Bryant living up to the hype, essentially every prospect goes through adversity and takes steps backward. Anthony Rizzo failed during his 2011 audition with the San Diego Padres (one homer and 46 strikeouts in 153 plate appearances) and needed more seasoning at Triple-A Iowa. Schwarber got demoted to Des Moines within eight months of the World Series parade. Javier Báez got almost 1,700 plate appearances in the minors and is now seeing results but still trying to figure it out.

Except, uh, McLeod once dropped a "KB" comparison on Jiménez, remembering what Bryant looked like coming out of high school and as a freshman at the University of San Diego and in the Cape Cod League that summer: Could Bryant have handled Class-A South Bend at the age of 19?

Jiménez is now 21 and not long for Birmingham. Standing 6-foot-4 with a powerful right-handed swing, Jiménez reminded Maddon of Edgar Martínez and Miguel Cabrera while watching him in spring training last year.

Just Maddon Being Maddon? Well, Louie Eljaua helped sign Cabrera out of Venezuela for the Florida Marlins in 1999 and helped close the Jiménez deal for the Cubs in the Dominican Republic 14 years later. Eljaua — the Cubs' director of international operations and one of Epstein's special assistants — sees the similarities. Eljaua didn't break the news to Jiménez and Torres, but he was asked to call both prospects and spoke to them as they were processing the trades. Remember, this is a relationship business.

"They were both heartbroken," Eljaua said. "But [they] understood. I think Eloy took it a little better than Gleyber did, but it's not like he was happy. They wanted to be Cubs. They wanted to be here a long time, which is natural. But you never know. It could happen at some point."

Seventeen years after his own brain hemorrhage, Royals broadcaster Rex Hudler is rooting for White Sox pitcher Danny Farquhar

By Rustin Dodd / The Athletic / May 10, 2018

BALTIMORE — The doors to the ambulance were closing when Rex Hudler caught his first glimpse of the little boy. For a moment, he thought it was a ghost. Hudler was on his back, lying on a gurney in the parking lot of a Hilton hotel in Oakland, Calif. His head was pounding. His mouth tasted like vomit. He was looking at the paramedics when the boy poked his head into the back of the ambulance.

"He's going to be all right!" Hudler remembers hearing.

The boy had Down Syndrome, which caught Hudler's attention. His young son, Cade, then 4, was diagnosed with the genetic disorder in the days after he was born. As he sped off toward the hospital in Oakland, Hudler had one thought: It was a sign. He wasn't going to die.

"I thought it was an angel," Hudler said.

Seventeen years later, Hudler is in his seventh season as a Royals television analyst on Fox Sports Kansas City. He is a former major leaguer, known for his exuberant personality, charming Hud-isms and bright red hair. In his playing days, he was known as the "Wonder Dog." But in the days after White Sox reliever Danny Farquhar suffered a brain hemorrhage on April 20 in Chicago, Hudler sought another role: He wanted the pitcher to know he was not alone.

"Any time somebody has blood on the brain and lives, it's a minor miracle," Hudler said.

Hudler is speaking from personal experience. In the summer of 2001, he endured a brain hemorrhage while working as a broadcaster for the Anaheim Angels. His ruptured aneurysm did not require surgery, like Farquhar, nor did he spend days in intensive care, fighting for his life. Yet he says the frightening incident changed his life.

"The flowers, the fragrances, the little things I took for granted," Hudler said. "Everything has more clarity."

For Hudler, the story began in his Oakland hotel room on April 7, 2001. He was in town to call a series between the Angels and A's. He was preparing to head out for dinner when the headaches began.

As a former big-league ballplayer, he marveled at his tolerance for pain. But as he threw up inside his room, the pain overwhelmed. He called his wife, Jennifer, who was at home in southern California. Call an ambulance immediately, she said.

It was inside the ambulance, Hudler says, that he locked eyes with the mysterious boy. Moments later, he pocket-dialed his wife from his cell phone. She heard the sirens and rushed to the airport to hop a plane to Oakland.

“By the time I got to the Oakland hospital, they put a needle in my spine,” Hudler said. “They drew out blood. I heard the doctor say, ‘Oh, no.’ I never lost consciousness.”

The doctors ran a battery tests and found blood on his brain. They recommended emergency surgery. Hudler wanted to wait for his wife.

“Every time my heart beat, it felt like my head was going to fall off,” he said.

Jennifer Hudler arrived in Oakland a few hours later. At the airport, she met up with Steve Physioc, Hudler’s broadcast partner who now serves a similar role for the Royals. They rushed to the hospital and met with the doctors. Hudler was already on pain medication.

“Rex was in horrible pain,” Physioc said. “It was pretty scary.”

Instead of surgery, they opted for a transfer to Stanford Hospital, a short helicopter ride away. As they cruised above the Bay Area, Hudler asked for a look at the Oakland Coliseum.

“Tip me over, I want to see the ballpark,” Hudler told the medical staff, “I didn’t know if I was going to die or not.”

Once at Stanford, Hudler received more pain meds. He waited on further tests. Miraculously, the brain bleed disappeared. The doctor could not explain it. Hudler thought of his angel.

He took six weeks off from work. The letters from fans and well-wishers piled up inside his home. He received a Baseball Encyclopedia from agent Scott Boras and a letter from Mariners rookie Ichiro Suzuki, who had once watch Hudler win a Nippon Professional Baseball championship with the Yakult Swallows in Japan.

“It was an unbelievable moment in my life,” Hudler said. “It was a miracle.”

Farquhar was released from the hospital earlier this week. He faces a long, arduous road to full recovery. Yet doctors are hopeful he will pitch again. So is Hudler.

In the years after his brain hemorrhage, after he nearly died in a hotel in Oakland, Hudler pondered the meaning of his life. He had always been one of the loudest personalities in the room, of course. That wouldn’t change. But he wanted to live with purpose, he said.

He dedicated himself to ramping up efforts to work with children with Down Syndrome. He raised his kids. For the longest time, he wondered about the boy in the back of the ambulance.

For years, Hudler figured that he had imagined the whole thing. He was in serious pain. But then about seven years later, the Angels returned to the same Hilton hotel — “The Hemorrhage Hotel,” as Hudler calls it — and he found himself sitting on the team bus. As he looked out the window, he saw an older child with Down Syndrome walking outside the property. He hopped off the bus and followed him inside.

The boy was the son of somebody who worked there, Hudler says.

The father said his son had always been enamored with ambulances and sirens. He had indeed run out and climbed in the back. The man remembered the story. Hudler was in awe.

“Seven years later, I find out the boy was real,” Hudler said. “It’s changed the way I look at things.

“I have a bit of perspective of nature ... I’m in awe of that more. I love flowers. They just look so beautiful