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White Sox rep city with celebratory fundraiser

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com/ April 11, 2018

CHICAGO -- White Sox players began Tuesday fighting for a victory against the Rays at Guaranteed Rate Field. They ended the day with some of them playing Family Feud in the Atrium at the United Center, as part of the organization's inaugural Beyond the Diamond fundraiser.

The "Delmonico family" -- featuring Nicky Delmonico, Matt Davidson, Lucas Giolito and Jose Abreu -- defeated the "Sanchez family" -- with Yolmer Sanchez, Tim Anderson, Tyler Saladino and Adam Engel -- in front of an entertained sold-out crowd.

Family Feud represented the ninth inning of the event, which raised close to \$300,000 for Chicago White Sox Charities.

"This is what it's all about," White Sox bench coach Joe McEwing said. "It's about the fan experience and giving back in any way we possibly can."

"We've been wanting to do an event like this for years," said Christine O'Reilly-Riordan, White Sox vice president community relations and executive director of Chicago White Sox Charities. "It was just a matter of waiting until we felt like we had the right timing."

Every member of the White Sox team and every member of manager Ricky Renteria's coaching staff was in attendance. It wasn't exactly a celebratory time, based on five straight home losses for the White Sox,

but in his eloquent speech to the crowd, an upbeat Renteria explained there are more important things in life than losing games.

Each table had a single player, coach, broadcaster or member of the front office, bringing the fans even closer to this young group as part of the much talked about rebuild. The event followed a rebranding of Chicago White Sox Charities, according to O'Reilly-Riordan.

"We were thinking about the team on the field, the youth and the promise and the hope and all the excitement, and we really felt that in considering our outreach initiatives, maybe we could use a rebranding, too," O'Reilly-Riordan said. "We really tried to simplify what is the essence of White Sox charities.

"It's really what we said tonight: make Chicago a great place to live, work and play. It's the whole focus on beyond the diamond."

O'Reilly-Riordan referenced Renteria's frequent comments about when you put on the jersey, it means so much more than your name on it.

"You carry a responsibility for this city," O'Reilly-Riordan said. "We really felt like we were thinking about White Sox Charities and coming up with messaging that matches what Ricky says."

Even the iconic statues of Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen were White Sox themed, with the Jordan statue wrapped in his No. 45 jersey from his time playing baseball in the organization and Pippen wearing a No. 33 White Sox jersey. In attendance were Hall of Famers Frank Thomas and Tim Lincecum, plus White Sox legends Bo Jackson, Harold Baines, Bill Melton and Ron Kittle.

During the live auction portion of the program -- or the eighth inning, hosted by television play-by-play announcer Jason Benetti -- Jackson and Renteria actually got into a "bidding war" for a specially designed White Sox guitar. Jackson eventually claimed the item. The event also featured a first-pitch reception, a silent auction, brief presentations about White Sox Charities and their Amateur City Elite youth baseball program, a sit-down dinner in the fifth inning and extra innings for dessert.

"I feel it's a way to bring everyone together to give them a really great opportunity to connect with our players and learn about the team and the guys," said O'Reilly-Riordan. "These people are so generous and so supportive of the team and of White Sox Charities.

"So it really is a win-win. It's a great night for our guests and a great fundraiser for White Sox Charities."

Wednesday's top prospect performers

By William Boor /MLB.com / April 11, 2018

Alex Kirilloff is officially back on track.

The Twins' No. 6 prospect got off to a slow start this season, going 1-for-12 over his first three games with Class A Cedar Rapids, but he collected two hits on Tuesday and then upped that to three hits -- including two homers and a career-high six RBIs -- in a 12-9 win over Peoria on Wednesday.

A slow start may have been somewhat expected as Kirilloff, who won Appalachian League Player of the Year honors in 2016, missed the 2017 season while recovering from Tommy John surgery. However, he showed no lingering effects on Wednesday as he accounted for half of the Kernels' offense in his first career two-homer game.

Kirilloff finished 3-for-5 as he drove in two with a homer in the first, hit a three-run homer in the third and finished with an RBI single in the sixth.

Other top prospect performances from Wednesday's action:

- No. 12 overall prospect Walker Buehler (Dodgers' No. 1) spun another strong start for Triple-A Oklahoma City. The right-hander gave up one run on four hits and struck out six in five innings. Buehler has struck out 11 and given up two runs in his two starts (nine innings) this season.
- No. 36 overall prospect Luis Urias (Padres' No. 3) hit his first homer of the season for Triple-A El Paso. Urias, who has a hit in five of six games this season, went 3-for-5 to boost his slash line to .381/.536/.571.
- No. 43 overall prospect Taylor Trammell (Reds' No. 3) didn't get a ton of pitches to hit, but he only needed one to make an impact for Class A Advanced Daytona. Trammell drew a trio of walks in Game 1 of a doubleheader, but in the sixth he hit a two-run homer, his first of the year, to finish 1-for-1. Tyler Stephenson (Reds' No. 9) also had a good day at the plate, going 3-for-4 with a double. In the second half of the doubleheader, Reds' No. 5 prospect Tony Santillan led the club to a win with six innings of one-hit ball. Santillan also struck out eight, bringing his total to 13 through two starts.
- No. 60 overall prospect Jesus Luzardo (Athletics' No. 2) set a career high with 10 strikeouts in his second start with Class A Stockton. The 20-year-old lefty cruised through four innings before giving up one run in the fifth. Luzardo finished the frame and left having allowed one run on two hits.
- No. 92 overall prospect Dane Dunning (White Sox No. 6) carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning for Class A Advanced Winston-Salem. Dunning, who struck out eight for the second time in as many starts, was unable to finish the seventh, but he still picked up the win in the quality start. The right-hander left after giving up two hits in 6 1/3 scoreless frames.
- Blue Jays' No. 27 prospect Jordan Romano led Double-A New Hampshire to a win as he carved his way through seven scoreless frames. Romano notched seven strikeouts and gave up three hits.
- Mets No. 3 prospect Justin Dunn was dominant for Class A Advanced St. Lucie. The 2016 first-round pick has yet to give up a run and has fanned 14 in 10 innings spanning two starts. On Wednesday, Dunn threw 46 of his 81 pitches for strikes, struck out seven and yielded just two hits in five innings.
- A quartet of Yankees prospects showed off the organization's pitching depth as Chance Adams (No. 7), Domingo Acevedo (No. 9), Trevor Stephan (No. 15) and Glenn Otto (No. 20) combined to give up one earned run over 22 innings. The four pitchers also tallied 22 strikeouts.
- D-backs prospects Daulton Varsho (No. 6) and Drew Ellis (No. 8) got the Class A Advanced Visalia offense off to a fast start as they hit back-to-back homers in the first inning. Varsho, who finished 1-for-2, hit a three-run blast for his second homer of the season, while Ellis followed up with his second homer as well. Pitching for Double-A Jackson, Arizona's No. 26 prospect Yoan Lopez put together a perfect performance as he struck out the side and picked up the save in his one inning on the mound. Lopez hasn't given up a run and has allowed just two hits in three appearances this season.
- Giants' prospects Chris Shaw (No. 2) and Austin Slater (No. 5) certainly did their part in Triple-A Sacramento's offensive explosion. The River Cats broke out for 18 runs on 19 hits with the Shaw and Slater duo accounting for seven of those hits. Shaw set a career-high with five hits and also notched his second homer of the season as part of his 5-for-6, three-RBI day. Slater also drove in three runs and finished 2-for-4.

Shaw homers for fifth hit

- Indians No. 10 prospect Aaron Civale led Double-A Akron to a win with a dominant performance on the mound. The 22-year-old was in complete command, firing 55 of his 85 pitches for strikes, as he fanned seven and yielded just three hits over six scoreless innings.
- Orioles prospects Alex Wells (No. 11) and Michael Baumann (No. 15) were lights-out for Class A Advanced Frederick and Class A Delmarva. Wells was stuck with a no-decision despite giving up just one

unearned run on two hits over six innings, and Baumann, who struck out nine over six innings, gave up one run on three hits and earned a win.

Reliever Infante optioned to Triple-A

By Max Gelman /MLB.com/ April 11, 2018

CHICAGO -- The White Sox optioned reliever Gregory Infante to Triple-A Charlotte following their 2-1 win over the Rays on Wednesday, the team announced.

Infante struggled in 4 1/3 innings over six appearances, allowing eight earned runs on nine hits, while walking five and striking out three, recording a 16.62 ERA.

It's a far cry from the 30-year-old righty's stellar 2017, when he posted a 3.13 ERA in 54 2/3 innings. He also walked 20 and struck out 49.

The White Sox will make a corresponding move before Thursday's series opener at Minnesota.

Castillo to have MRI on sore right knee

By Max Gelman /MLB.com / April 11, 2018

CHICAGO -- After Welington Castillo left Tuesday's 6-5 loss to the Rays with a right knee injury, manager Rick Renteria said he isn't worried about his veteran catcher. Renteria said Castillo had some soreness and is day to day.

But, being extra careful with their biggest free-agent acquisition of the winter, the White Sox on Wednesday sent Castillo for an MRI to confirm it's nothing serious.

"He's available to me today in an emergency," Renteria said. "I just figured, after we took him out yesterday, we'd give him a day today to take it easy, be available for me [Thursday] to start. I think it's just precautionary."

Castillo tweaked his knee on a throw down to second base on Tuesday, Renteria said, and was removed for pinch-hitter Omar Narvaez in the sixth inning. Renteria added Wednesday that Castillo had switched to metal cleats recently and one of his spikes got caught in the ground.

"To be honest, that was the first that I kind of heard of it," Renteria said. "Not sure why he switched to metal, but he's welcome to use the spikes that he needs to be able to feel comfortable out there on the field.

"We don't want to lose that guy. Big part of us."

Narvaez stepped in again for Wednesday's series finale, making his third start of the season. He went 1-for-4 in the White Sox 2-1 win.

After entering Tuesday's game, the 26-year-old Narvaez performed well -- despite going 0-for-2, he drew a walk and cranked a sharp line drive in the White Sox ninth-inning comeback attempt. Narvaez's exit velocity on that liner registered at 100.8 mph, per Statcast™, his hardest-hit ball of the young season. Narvaez also threw out Mallex Smith attempting to steal in the ninth.

As a role player, Narvaez said part of his preparation involves being ready for any situation. He added that he and Castillo have developed a good relationship and Castillo sharing his experiences has helped him improve his own game.

"We're pretty close," Narvaez said. "We help each other and whatever I see I tell him, whatever he sees he tells me. We're have a really great friendship going on right here, so if anything happens, we're gonna support each other."

Saladino healthy, hopes back issues behind him

Tyler Saladino's past two seasons have been abbreviated due to back injuries, but at the start of this season, he's feeling no problems.

Saladino received consecutive starts this week and went 2-for-3 with a double Tuesday, a good sign for the young infielder. Though Saladino said he'll need to keep an eye on the situation, he hasn't needed any extra exercises to stay loose.

"Just the same kind of stuff that we do in the offseason, stretching areas like core exercises and stuff like that," Saladino said. "I don't think back stuff ever really goes away, even if you do get it taken care of or whatever. In my experience, you still have to stay on top of it, so I feel good. Heck of a lot better than last year."

Saladino suffered a herniated disk in his back in 2016, cutting short a breakout year in which he hit .282/.315/.409 with eight home runs and 38 RBIs in 319 plate appearances. Last season, Saladino jammed a nerve in his back sliding into home and missed a month and a half.

Davidson's late HR sends White Sox past Rays

By Jeff Arnold/ MLB.com / April 11, 2018

CHICAGO -- Matt Davidson had already left runners stranded in scoring position twice on Wednesday by looking at called third strikes. But when he got a final chance -- with the White Sox facing the possibility of yet another one-run loss -- Davidson was determined to flip what had been a frustrating script for himself and his teammates.

Davidson came through in the eighth inning, hitting a go-ahead, two-run home run to deliver a 2-1 victory over the Tampa Bay Rays. The win snapped the White Sox five-game losing streak and helped them avoid their first 0-6 start at home since 1948. The homer, off Rays reliever Austin Pruitt, came after the White Sox had squandered a pair of prime scoring chances in the sixth and seventh innings.

"[I] came up in some big spots and didn't [produce]," said Davidson, who leads the American League with five homers. "I think that's kind of been the theme of the homestand. We got in positions to capitalize, and we just didn't do it. So I think we've all been pretty frustrated. And to come up like that and win the game, it's huge."

Added Pruitt: "Just left a changeup up over the plate and he hit it."

The White Sox won despite leaving nine runners on base, leaving them 17-for-104 with runners in scoring position this season. The White Sox have left 45 runners on base over their past five games, but still managed to improve to 3-3 in one-run games. Wednesday's win came at a good time, before the club heads off on a seven-game road trip beginning Thursday against the Twins.

"There's ups and downs, and the downs were definitely this home series," Davidson said. "But we'll move on. I'm excited to get to Minnesota and keep this thing going."

White Sox starter James Shields overcame two shaky innings early on against his former team, when he walked five but avoided allowing a run. Shields escaped a jam in the second inning when he got Malle Smith caught up in a rundown.

Shields settled in thereafter, allowing just one run on a C.J. Cron double in the fifth before departing after 6 1/3 innings. Shields gave up four hits and struck out six. Bruce Rondon picked up the win in relief and Nate Jones earned his first save.

"We definitely needed a win right there, no doubt," Shields said. "Especially going on the road. But we've been fighting. We've been fighting all the way until the end. We're going to string some wins together here soon and it's a good way to end the homestand."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Cron ends drought: After the Rays stranded six runners over the first three innings, Cron lined a two-out RBI double over the head of White Sox center fielder Adam Engel to snap a scoreless tie in the fifth inning.

Pickoff move: After White Sox catcher Omar Narvaez reached third on a pair of errors by Rays left fielder Smith in the seventh inning, catcher Jesus Sucre picked Narvaez off third base after he had wandered dangerously far off of the bag. The White Sox also failed to score a runner from third with less than two outs in the sixth inning.

Afterward, White Sox manager Rick Renteria said the White Sox had a play on in which Yoan Moncada was to lay down a bunt to score Narvaez from third, but "pulled back" when he saw Narvaez coming.

"Everybody has an assignment and his is to complete that," Renteria said. "If the runner from third isn't doing what he's supposed to we'll take care of that later. He still has to do his job. He understands, he knew."

QUOTABLE

Everybody that does anything -- from tiddlywinks to marbles or anything -- when you win, it feels good. It was nice, the way they came back and did what they did." -- Renteria

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Though he struggled with his command early, Shields ultimately induced 15 swinging strikes on his 100 pitches. Nine of those 15 came on the curveball. Shields' effort stood in stark contrast with his previous two starts, in which he notched only 12 swinging strikes combined.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

In the fourth inning, Tim Anderson reached base with two outs after singling to right field. With Narvaez batting, Rays pitcher Yonny Chirinos threw over to first to check on Anderson. First-base umpire Cory Blaser ruled Anderson safe, but the Rays challenged and the replay conclusively showed him out. After a review of 1 minute and 16 seconds, the call was overturned and the fourth inning ended.

WHAT'S NEXT

The White Sox kick off a seven-game road trip on Thursday against the Twins with first pitch coming at 7:10 CT at Target Field. Right-hander Lucas Giolito looks to get things on track after struggling with his command in surrendering eight runs and seven walks over 11 2/3 innings in his previous two starts.

Precautionary approach with Welington Castillo shows what he means to White Sox: 'We don't want to lose that guy, big part of us'

By Vinnie Duber/ Mlb.com / April 11, 2018

Welington Castillo's health status doesn't seem like something to be concerned about, according to Rick Renteria, which is a good thing, considering what the catcher means to this White Sox team.

After departing Tuesday's loss to the Tampa Bay Rays with "knee soreness," Castillo will reportedly have an MRI on that right knee. But Renteria called everything precautionary.

"He's day-to-day. He's available to me today in an emergency. I just figured after we took him out yesterday we'd give him a day today to take it easy, be available for me tomorrow to start. I think it's just precautionary," Renteria said ahead of Wednesday's series finale with the Rays. "We're getting ready to

hit the road. I think (trainer Herm Schneider) just wanted to make sure that we got something done here before we left. But he's doing fine."

Omar Narvaez subbed in for Castillo on Tuesday and got the start Wednesday with Castillo getting a day to rest and heal up ahead of a seven-game road trip through Minneapolis and Oakland.

Castillo's day off doesn't seem like it will mean much in the grand scheme of things. But while on the topic of the White Sox catcher, who signed a two-year deal this offseason, Renteria was able to talk about what figured to be one of the biggest reasons Rick Hahn's front office brought Castillo aboard this rebuilding project: his work with the team's young pitchers.

Castillo had a career year defensively a season ago, just like he did at the plate. With the White Sox starting staff already featuring three potential members of the rotation of the future in Lucas Giolito, Reynaldo Lopez and Carson Fulmer — and expected to only get younger when highly touted pitching prospects make their way to the South Side — how Castillo helps those arms develop is a big part of what he brings to the table.

"I think the ability to kind of get them through even when they're having a little bit of a tough time," Renteria said when asked what he likes about how Castillo's worked with guys during the first two turns through the rotation. "He's got a presence about him. He knows where to take them, he knows what type of pitches to use to bring a guy back into a slot, things of that nature, and then the conversations he has with them. I think they're all very comfortable with him. And we're really happy with what he's doing with everybody that he's caught."

Giolito specifically praised Castillo's work with him during his first start of the season in Kansas City. Giolito has struggled with his stuff through his first two outings, but in that first one, he was able to go six innings and allow just three runs in a game the White Sox came back and won.

Per Renteria, Castillo got his spikes stuck in the ground during a throw to second base in Tuesday's game. Renteria hopes Castillo can start Thursday's series-opener in Minneapolis. Good thing, too.

"I think we took him out for tremendously precautionary reasons. We don't want to lose that guy," Renteria said. "Big part of us."

It's #MattyDDay all over again as White Sox continue to reap rewards of Matt Davidson's offseason transformation

By Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / April 11, 2018

To say that Matt Davidson's new patient approach is paying off would be a bit of an understatement.

The White Sox designated hitter looks like a different batter this season. He showed plenty of power potential with 26 homers in 2017, but in the earliest stages of his 2018 campaign, he's walking at a prodigious rate — nine in his first 10 games — and sending even more balls out of the yard.

He's up to five home runs on the season after Wednesday's dramatic eighth-inning slam, a two-run shot that turned a 1-0 deficit into a 2-1 win.

That one swing against the Tampa Bay Rays bullpen won't erase what was otherwise a miserable homestand for the White Sox, a 1-5 mark in their first six games at Guaranteed Rate Field this season that featured a lack of timely hitting, a glut of free passes issued and other goofs in the field and on the base paths. All that was again on display in the first home win of the season: James Shields walked five batters in the first two innings, the team was 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position, and Yoan Moncada's screwed-up squeeze attempt cost the White Sox the tying run in the seventh.

But after he struck out looking twice — including to end a bases-loaded chance in the third — Davidson said the home run was a nice palate cleanser for himself and the team.

"Came up in some big spots and didn't produce. I think that's kind of been the theme of the homestand. We got in positions to capitalize, and we just didn't do it," Davidson said. "So I think we've all been pretty frustrated. And to come up like that and win the game, it's huge. It was kind of a frustrating homestand, but it kind of gets rid of it."

But don't let those two strikeouts looking fool you, they're still signs of a positive change in Davidson's approach. The nine walks in 10 games speak volumes considering Davidson walked only 19 times in all of 2017. But these strikeouts looking show his improved selectivity at the plate, too. While batters head to the dish each time looking for their pitch, Davidson might have been forced to wait until that final at-bat for the best pitch to hit.

He finally got it. And he hit it.

"Teams are going to have scouting reports and stuff like that. Even yesterday, I had three walks. I didn't play the first game, but against Tampa I didn't get a ton to hit, necessarily," Davidson said. "Even some of those strike threes, it's a nasty two-seamer coming back, it's not necessarily a good pitch to hit anyway. ... Sometimes you might only get a couple pitches to hit, and you've got to be really disciplined. And when you get it, you've got to do that."

"One of the things we don't want him to do is to chase," manager Rick Renteria said. "As long as he continues to be patient and we know if he gets a pitch that he can manage, if he puts a good swing on it, he's going to be able to do some damage. We don't want him to go outside the zone. ... I think in this instance, he was still looking to try to get a pitch he could handle and drive. He put a nice swing on it, and fortunately for us, it went out of the ballpark."

Davidson's five homers on the season have been an obvious display of his power bat, though it's worth noting that he has just eight hits on the season, more than half of which have left the ballpark. He's walked nine times and his on-base percentage is a fantastic .409, but he's hitting just .235.

This season started as a developmental one for players like Davidson, and it will continue to be one as the months roll on. But right off the bat, he's showing great signs of an offseason transformation, one that if it continues producing results like this all season long could be the turning point in his long-term future with this rebuilding team.

White Sox keep tinkering with bullpen, send Gregory Infante to Triple-A

By Vinnie Duber/ NBC Sports Chicago / April 11, 2018

This is a developmental season for the White Sox, but there's one area in which the leash might be shorter than the rest of the team.

For the second time in a week, the White Sox sent one of the members of their Opening Day bullpen to Triple-A Charlotte, this time Gregory Infante following in Juan Minaya's footsteps.

Both pitchers have undoubtedly struggled at the season's outset. Minaya got sent down after walking four straight batters in a loss to the Detroit Tigers. Infante was sent down after Wednesday's win over the Tampa Bay Rays, a game in which he didn't pitch (though he did pitch Tuesday and gave up a run). His season totals aren't pretty: a 16.62 ERA with five walks in 4.1 innings.

Both Minaya and Infante showed promise at the end of last season. Minaya ended the 2017 campaign as the White Sox closer and racked up nine saves, while Infante had a 3.13 ERA in his 54.2 relief innings.

But they're being replaced now while also given a chance to work through these struggles at the Triple-A level.

Bruce Rondon came up to replace Minaya and has been electric in his two appearances. He struck out all four batters he faced in his first outing against the Tigers, his old team, and he pushed the streak to five by retiring the first Rays hitter he saw on Wednesday before a flyout and groundout kept him perfect on the season.

Another potential sign-and-flip candidate could join Rondon when the corresponding move to replace Infante comes Thursday before the White Sox start their series with the Minnesota Twins. Veterans Jeanmar Gomez, Robbie Ross Jr. and Xavier Cedenro are all pitching at Charlotte. So, too, is Thyago Vieira, a young flamethrower on the 40-man roster.

After Wednesday's game, the White Sox bullpen ERA was at 5.59, and while that number is significantly smaller than it was as recently as the weekend, it's still one of the highest in baseball as of this writing.

Jose Abreu on White Sox stranding runners: 'Know what the game is asking us to do'

By Phil Thompson/ Chicago Tribune / April 11, 2018

The White Sox left 54 runners on base during their six-game homestand, but Jose Abreu believes he has the remedy: focus.

"For us, just get more focus in those situations, know what the game is asking us to do in those particular moments," the first baseman said through a translator before Wednesday's game.

Abreu hit a ninth-inning three-run homer off Rays closer Alex Colome on Tuesday and scored on Matt Davidson's game-winning blast in the eighth inning Wednesday of the 2-1 victory.

"It's just a matter of keeping up our focus, keeping up our approach, swing (at) the good pitches and not get too crazy or anxious or desperate for this moment," Abreu said

Manager Rick Renteria acknowledged players may be pressing.

"There is a fine line," he said. "Sometimes they want to do things in a moment, they see an opening, take advantage of it. It might not be conducive to the game situation at times. But then you talk about those things and you deal with those."

Abreu joined some in the clubhouse who said the cold weather — five straight losses played in 30- to-40-degree temperature — probably contributed to the slump.

"I know that the other team also is playing in this weather but for us it has been really rough these couple of days. ... We're trying to do our best and it's not an excuse."

Wednesday's victory came at a relatively balmy 59.

The Sox likely will be dealing with more cold weather when they head to Target Field for a four-game series against the Twins — the first two of them night games. The National Weather Service's forecast for Minneapolis projects a low of 37 degrees Thursday night and 29 degrees Friday night.

A Dash of NBA: As a former Winston-Salem Dash player, Tim Anderson thought it was "dope" that Rockets guard Chris Paul bought a minority share of the Sox's Class A Advanced minor-league affiliate.

"To see him get into baseball, something besides basketball, is pretty cool," Anderson said. "Hopefully he can build the fanbase up a little bit more there."

Any baseball advice?

"I mean, considering he's a basketball guy I would say (don't go) between the lines, man, it's a different game from the court," Anderson said. "But really, have fun with it and see as many games as you can and learn as much as you can."

Extra innings: Catcher Welington Castillo (day to day) had an MRI on his sore right knee, but Renteria said the team was simply taking precautions because the Sox are going on a seven-game trip. Castillo was trying out new metal spikes that got stuck in the ground as he threw to second base on Tuesday. "To be honest, that was the first that I kind of heard of it," Renteria said about the spikes. "Not sure why he switched to metal, but he's welcome to use the spikes that he needs to be able to feel comfortable out there on the field." ... Abreu tied for the major-league lead Wednesday in a category in which he probably would not care to be first: his fourth hit-by-pitch.

Matt Davidson's 2-run HR halts White Sox's 5-game skid

By Phil Thompson/ Chicago Tribune / April 11, 2018

It's nice for the White Sox to be on the right side of a one-run game for a change. It's even better to avoid the worst home start since 1948 — though not for the lack of trying.

Matt Davidson's two-run homer made up for what might have been a devastating mistake at the plate by Yoan Moncada and put the Sox in the victory column for the first time in six tries at Guaranteed Rate Field with Wednesday's 2-1 victory over the Rays. In the eighth inning, Jose Abreu's grounder to left deflected off shortstop Adeiny Hechavarria for a single and Davidson cashed in with his fifth home run of the season, the first Sox slugger to hit at least five in the first 11 games since Carlos Quentin (six) in 2009.

The victory was a relief for Sox manager Rick Renteria.

"Everybody that does anything, from tiddlywinks to marbles, when you win it feels good," he said. "It was nice the way they came back and did what they did. We had a few miscues out there in the last couple of innings but the at-bats that those two guys, quite a few guys, put together toward the end is probably something we're more (used) to seeing. ... It was nice to get that game, absolutely."

Davidson had struck out looking twice with men in scoring position, once in the third inning with the bases loaded and again with a man on third in the sixth.

"Came up in some big spots and didn't produce," he said. "That's kind of been the theme of the homestand."

The Sox had lost the previous three games by a run.

"We got in positions to capitalize, and we just didn't do it," Davidson said. "So I think we've all been pretty frustrated. And to come up like that and win the game, it's huge."

In his next at-bat in the eighth inning, Davidson drove a 1-1 changeup from reliever Austin Pruitt 405 feet to left-center field.

"Honestly I've kind of been late (on my swing) this whole home series, and I was just trying to get on time," he said. "When I'm on time, I make better decisions. I got on time there. He just hung (it) ... and I got the ball and hit it good."

Renteria was happy Davidson didn't chase a bad pitch.

"As long as he continues to be patient and we know if he gets a pitch that he can manage, if he puts a good swing on it, he's going to be able to do some damage," Renteria said.

Pruitt wasted Yonny Chirinos' solid outing in which he fanned five Sox in 5 1/3 innings. Chirinos has yet to give up a run in three appearances (two starts) over 14 1/3 innings.

Sox starter James Shields did what he could, too, to stop the bleeding. He struck out six and walked five in 6 1/3 innings. He loaded the bases on walks in the first inning but escaped when he struck out Matt Duffy to end the threat. His one big mistake cost him when C.J. Cron drove an 89 mph fastball to center for a double that scored Kevin Kiermaier in the fifth inning.

"I didn't have any control in the first inning, or the first two innings," said Shields who walked five batters in those frames. "Just couldn't find my two-seam fastball. It was running off the plate, but I had to find a way."

It was Moncada who botched one of the Sox's best opportunities.

In the seventh, Rays left fielder Mallex Smith committed two errors on one play, misplaying Omar Narvaez's fly ball off his glove then throwing wide toward the infield as Narvaez advanced to third base. With the Sox trying to tie the game 1-1, Narvaez started for home on a suicide squeeze, but Moncada laid off the bunt. That left Narvaez exposed and he was caught in a rundown.

"We had a play on and (Moncada) pulled back," Renteria said. "He thought he didn't see the runner coming from third so he pulled back. As everyone knows, everybody has an assignment and his is to complete that. If the runner from third isn't doing what he's supposed to we'll take care of that later. He still has to do his job. He understands, he knew. I just wanted to make sure I was clear and that he understood the sign and he knew. It's just experience, knowing that everybody has an assignment."

Missed assignments are part of what has led to the Sox going 3-for-44 with runners in scoring position and stranding 45 runners in the last five games.

"I think we just look at what are the things that we're failing at doing," Renteria said.

Cubs' estimated value rises to \$2.9 billion, White Sox to \$1.5 billion

By Satchel Price/ Chicago Sun Times / April 11, 2018

It remains a good time to own an MLB franchise as estimated valuations for all 30 clubs increased year-to-year, according to the latest report from Forbes. The Cubs' estimated value increased to \$2.9 billion, third in baseball, while the White Sox' rose to \$1.5 billion, 14th in baseball.

The Cubs and other big-market MLB teams have seen their values skyrocket in recent years. The Yankees, one of the most valuable sports franchises in the world, lead baseball at an estimated \$4 billion. The Dodgers are second at \$3 billion, followed closely by the Cubs, Giants (\$2.85 billion) and Red Sox (\$2.8 billion).

The Ricketts family purchased the Cubs in 2009 for \$700 million. The club was going through a down stretch on the field but turned into the envy of baseball after hiring Theo Epstein, Jed Hoyer, Joe Maddon and others to head its brain trust. The Cubs snapped their World Series title drought in 2016 and entered this season expected to make the playoffs for the fourth year in a row.

In 2017, the Cubs' value was estimated at \$2.68 billion, so it's a year-to-year increase of roughly 8 percent.

The Sox, who posted the seventh-highest year-to-year increase in value at 11 percent, were purchased by Jerry Reinsdorf in 1981 for only \$20 million. They're in the early stages of a rebuilding process on the South Side.

Six MLB teams posted negative operating incomes over the last year: the Marlins, Tigers, Orioles, Royals, Mariners and Blue Jays.

The Rays have the lowest estimated value of any MLB team at \$900 million, which is still a nice return for Stuart Sternberg, who bought the club for \$200 million in 2004.

Thanks to Matt Davidson's long ball, White Sox actually win a game at home

By Steve Greenberg/ Chicago Sun Times / April 11, 2018

Every last member of the announced crowd of 10,431 will say he or she was there to see it. That includes the 8,000 or so ticket holders who didn't bother — on a 60 degree day, no less — to show up. Years from now, many thousands more will claim to have been on hand to witness the unimaginable feat.

Yes, we're talking about an actual victory by the White Sox in their home ballpark.

Maybe the 2018 Sox aren't going anywhere, but their 2-1 victory Wednesday against the Rays was no small deal. Without it, they'd have been buried under a bunch of unpleasant "firsts."

Matt Davidson watches Wednesday's game-winning long ball fly. (Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images)

A loss would've given the Sox their first winless homestand of at least six games since 1989. It would've meant being swept by the Rays in Chicago for the first time in a series of any length. (It was the 23rd series here between the teams.)

Worse still, a loss would've stuck the Sox with an 0-6 record at home for the first time in 70 years. How well did things turn out for that 1948 team? Try 51-101, the second-worst season by winning percentage (.336) in club history.

Heading into a seven-game trip to Minnesota and Oakland, another loss would've left a black cloud overhead. Instead, the Sox (4-7) got to bask in the sunshine after designated hitter Matt Davidson's two-run homer to center in the eighth inning held up.

"It was huge," manager Rick Renteria said. "We've been trying to get that tying or potential winning run across the plate here for quite a few days."

It was especially big for Davidson, who had struck out looking in his previous two at-bats, stranding four runners. Davidson is making a strong effort to be more selective with his swings, which perhaps makes this a fine time for a quick review: Not chasing balls out of the zone is very good. Not clubbing balls over the heart of the plate is very bad.

Makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?

"I came up in some big spots and didn't produce," Davidson said. "I think that kind of [was] the theme of the homestand. We got in positions to capitalize, but we just didn't do it. So I think we've all been pretty frustrated. And to come up like that and win the game, it's huge. It was kind of a frustrating homestand, but it kind of gets rid of it — move on to the next road series."

After three consecutive one-run losses, it was nice for the Sox to turn the tables. Yet they still left a heck of a mess on the field that needs cleaning up. Example 1: Tim Anderson getting picked off first base. Example 2: Yoan Moncada failing to even attempt to bunt on a called squeeze play and getting teammate Omar Narvaez picked off third base.

"He thought he didn't see the runner coming from third, and so he pulled [the bat] back," Renteria said. "But, as everyone knows, everybody has an assignment and his is to complete that. If the runner from third isn't doing what he's supposed to do, we'll take care of that later."

Messiest of all for the Sox is their disastrous performance with runners in scoring position. They were 0-for-9 in such situations and are 3-for-44 (.068) in their last five games.

"There's ups and downs, and the downs were definitely this home series," said Davidson, whose homer off Austin Pruitt came with Jose Abreu, who singled, on first. "But we'll move on. I'm excited to get to Minnesota and keep this thing going."

James Shields gives White Sox what they need by beating up — again — on the Rays

By Steve Greenberg/ Chicago Sun Times / April 11, 2018

Half his lifetime ago — that's 18 years, to be precise — James Shields was drafted by the Rays. He was a 16th-round pick in 2000 who managed to work his way to the big leagues slowly and win 87 games for the Rays from 2006 to 2012.

Since then, the right-hander has made a habit of silencing the Rays' bats. He did that again Wednesday in the White Sox' 2-1 victory at Guaranteed Rate Field, allowing only four hits and a run in 6½ innings.

"I've had some very, very good outings against them," he said.

It's an understatement. Shields, who didn't factor in the decision, is 3-0 with a 1.36 ERA in 26⅓ innings against his old team.

But this was anything but a smooth start. Put another way: Shields heard boos from the sparse home crowd as early as the first inning. He walked Kevin Kiermaier, Carlos Gomez and Joey Wendle to load the bases before escaping the inning unscathed with a strikeout of Matt Duffy.

The second inning was another walk atop the high wire. The Rays put together two more bases on balls, a successful sacrifice bunt and a base hit — all without scoring. The key play was Shields' successful pickoff at third of Mallex Smith, who'd led off the inning.

"I didn't have any control in the first two innings," Shields said.

His two-seam fastball was running off the plate to his arm side. His changeup wasn't working, either. The curveball and slider got Shields through, and his two-seamer came around later when he moved over a bit on the rubber.

No pitcher, it seems, talks more than Shields does about the constant need to make adjustments. It's a message the whole team, struggling at 4-7, might as well buy into.

"We've been fighting all the way to the end," Shields said. "We're going to string some wins together here soon."

Jonesing for a save

Nate Jones pitched the ninth inning for the Sox and earned his first save since 2016. He opened the inning by walking Duffy and falling behind 3-1 in the count to Smith, but he responded with strikeouts of Smith and Adeiny Hechavarria and induced a game-ending groundout from Jesus Sucre.

Ahead, behind or tied, according to manager Rick Renteria, Jones was going to pitch the ninth. That clearly indicates Joakim Soria hasn't locked up the closer's role.

Infante terrible

The Sox optioned reliever Gregory Infante (16.62 ERA, five walks in 4½ innings) to Class AAA Charlotte. He follows Juan Minaya, who was jettisoned over the weekend. The team will announce a corresponding roster move before Thursday's game at the Twins.

By the Numbers: Matt Davidson's big blast pushes aside frustrations of an ugly home stand

By James Fegan / The Athletic / April 11, 2018

It's hard to say a rebuilding team on its 11th game of the season needed a win, so James Shields went ahead and said it for us after the White Sox' 2-1 triumph over the Rays Wednesday afternoon.

"We definitely needed a win right there, no doubt," Shields said. "Especially going on the road."

Mired in an opening homestand that turned aggravating in the eighth inning of their home opener last Thursday and stayed that way all the way until the eighth inning Wednesday, the White Sox were finally rescued by the same thing that inspired all their Opening Day optimism: a big, booming Matt Davidson home run. Following a one-out José Abreu single, facing the last remnants of a tired Tampa bullpen in the bottom of the eighth, Davidson blasted a two-run, go-ahead homer to dead center, temporarily giving the Sox a respite from an entire week of situational-hitting breakdowns, pitching control problems and young-player struggles.

"Came up in some big spots and didn't produce," Davidson said. "I think that's kind of been the theme of the homestand. We got in positions to capitalize, and we just didn't do it. So I think we've all been pretty frustrated. And to come up like that and win the game, it's huge. It was kind of a frustrating homestand, but it kind of gets rid of it, move on to the next road series here."

A briefly rocky, but scoreless ninth from Nate Jones sealed it, and made use of the 6 1/3 innings of one-run ball Shields spun.

108.3 mph: The speed at which a full week of pent-up frustration escaped the park on Davidson's decisive two-run home run. After a pair of strikeouts looking on what he described as pitcher's pitches, Davidson's newly patient approach was finally rewarded with a hanging slider from Austin Pruitt. His five home runs lead the team, and his nine walks are 47 percent of the way to last year's total.

"Some of those strike-threes, it's a nasty two-seamer coming back, it's not necessarily a good pitch to hit anyway," Davidson said. "Sometimes you might only get a couple pitches to hit, and you've got to be really disciplined. And when you get it, you've got to do that."

4: Career saves for Jones after he locked down his first since 2016 despite a leadoff walk. Jones was standing in the bullpen and preparing to go in for the top of the ninth before Davidson's blast cleared the wall and gave him a one-run lead to protect, so there's no scandalous closer switch to read into here.

"We were going to use him if we tied, stayed the same, went ahead," manager Rick Renteria said. "He was going to be the guy."

15: Swinging strikes for Shields, mostly powered by the tricky knuckle curve he's turned to with increasing reliance as his once-signature straight changeup has faded in its effectiveness. Six strikeouts in 6 1/3 innings isn't remarkable nastiness by Shields' standards, but the 15 swinging strikes tie the most he's had in any start since joining the team. Nine of those swings-and-misses came off a high-70s knuckle curve, and one more came from a high-60s offering that was registered as an eephus. It's not exactly power stuff, but it resulted in Shields' most compelling outing through three starts.

"My changeup wasn't very good today so I went to the curveball more times than the changeup," Shields said. "There's going to be days like that for sure, but I feel good with my curveball and my slider right now."

37-to-32: The strikeout-to-walk balance for White Sox starting pitching this season after Shields' struggles to spot his fastball resulted in five free passes in the first two innings. This is easily the worst mark in baseball, both by raw totals and percentage, which is probably discouraging considering starting pitching was the highlight of the game for the home team Wednesday until the last inning.

Shields did discover a fix, for his part. After two innings of watching his two-seam fastball tail out of the zone to the arm side, he moved his position on the pitching rubber to make sure it stayed over the plate, along with turning to his various breaking balls more.

3: Number of times Rays outfielder Mallex Smith was thrown out between third base and home plate over the course of this series after Shields and Yolmer Sánchez nailed him on a pick play in the third inning.

It's also the number of bases he handed the Sox with his two errors on one Omar Narváez bloop to left field in the seventh, which he dropped, and then compounded by missing the cutoff man wildly and allowing Narváez to scoot all the way over to third base. In line with the way the White Sox's run manufacturing has gone, Narváez was promptly stranded in peculiar fashion.

39.6 percent: Yoán Moncada's strikeout rate after an 0-for-4, three-strikeout game, the last of which came after an attempt to suicide squeeze Narváez in from third. But then the fact that Moncada was behind in the count afterward and later struck out, rather than collecting high-fives for an RBI, would also appear to be on him. Moncada pulled back his bunt right as Narváez took off from third, resulting in Narváez getting caught up in a rundown, and while Leury García wisely advanced from first to put a runner back in scoring position, Moncada promptly whiffed to end the scoring threat. Afterward, he was on the receiving end of a long instructional session from Renteria in the dugout about maintaining assignments.

"We had a play on and he pulled back," Renteria said. "He thought he didn't see the runner coming from third so he pulled back. As everyone knows, everybody has an assignment and his is to complete that. If the runner from third isn't doing what he's supposed to we'll take care of that later. He still has to do his job. He understands, he knew. I just wanted to make sure I was clear and that he understood the sign and he knew. I think it's just more of experience, knowing that everybody has an assignment. You complete your assignment and we'll take care of everybody else if they fail to do theirs."

3-for-35: The White Sox's performance with runners in scoring position during a mostly maddening series with the Rays. Moncada's bungling of the suicide squeeze probably achieved the peak level of booing from a crowd of just over 10,000 paid, and less attended. Davidson's homer amended the mood of most on hand, though it actually did nothing for their RISP numbers, as Abreu was standing on first base when he connected. Alas.

2: Relievers optioned to Triple-A Charlotte through two weeks of play, as Gregory Infante was sent down after the game, with a corresponding move to come. The White Sox's 40-man roster is full, so someone like Thyago Vieira would not be a surprise.