



WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF August 5, 2018

Garcia's bunt, Rays' error lift White Sox

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / August 4, 2018

ST. PETERSBURG -- For four straight innings, from the third to the sixth, White Sox starting pitcher Carlos Rodon allowed the Rays' leadoff hitter to reach base Saturday night at Tropicana Field.

And for four straight innings, the Rays didn't score. It was one of those bend but don't break nights for the White Sox southpaw in a game eventually won by Chicago, 2-1. The South Siders matched their season-best winning streak, grabbing three straight wins for the third time this season.

Chicago scored the deciding run in the ninth when Tim Anderson opened the frame with a double down the left-field line, marking the first hit off of Yonny Chirinos in four-plus innings of relief. Anderson scored on Leury Garcia's perfect two-strike sacrifice bunt and third baseman Matt Duffy's less than perfect throw into right field. Garcia had been unable to execute on his first two bunt attempts.

"We practice that a lot in Spring Training," said Anderson of Garcia's bunt. "We stress that a lot and he was able to get it down."

"Still doing that on his own," said White Sox manager Rick Renteria of Garcia's bunt. "He was looking at the defense, hoping to split them even a little more. He gets down the line pretty good. If you hustle you give yourself a chance and put more pressure on the defense."

Rodon pitched six innings, yielding one unearned run on three hits. He struck out four but also walked five, including Mallex Smith to open the third and fifth and Jake Bauers to start the fourth. Rodon actually walked Bauers and C.J. Cron to begin the fourth, but the Rays finished 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position.

Only 57 of Rodon's 98 pitches went for strikes, with his fastball topping out at 96.3 mph, per Stacast. Rodon had a good mix of his pitches, throwing 23 changeups and 31 sliders to go with his fastball, and getting 16 swinging strikes in total. In his last five starts, covering 34 2/3 innings, Rodon has allowed six earned runs.

"Luckily I had the secondary pitches working because the fastball wasn't quite up to par. And some good defensive plays made," Rodon said. "You're gonna have those days and you have to see what you're made of. A little up and down but got through it and the bullpen shut it down."

"He sensed that he wasn't as good as he normally is," Renteria said. "[White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper] kept telling him, 'You can work with what you have.' That's what he did."

The only run scored by the White Sox in Blake Snell's return on the mound came via Jose Abreu's 416 foot home run leading off the fourth, with an exit velocity of 107.3 mph. Abreu has homered in three straight games and raised his season's total to 19.

"Both sides threw a heck of a game, every last one of them," Anderson said. "We were able to scratch out two runs. Big home run by Pito and Leroy with the great bunt."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Swipe left for out: The White Sox looked on their way to a 1-0 lead in the second when Matt Davidson walked and was headed home on a Yolmer Sanchez double into the left-field corner. But the throw from Smith to shortstop Willy Adames to

catcher Jesus Sucre nailed Davidson at the plate, with Sucre getting Davidson high on the body with a swipe tag seconds before Davidson could touch the plate. The White Sox did not score in the inning.

Can't beat fun at the old ballpark: Carlos Gomez stole the show in the sixth inning after Rodon hit him with a pitch with a runner on third and two outs. Gomez took one step out of the box and did a straight on pratfall, face-first to the ground. Rodon had to cover his mouth with his glove to hide the laughter, even when holding Gomez on first. Rodon escaped the inning unscathed and the two exchanged half-hugs and pats on the back on the third-base line as they left the field. Gomez explained to Rodon nothing was wrong with him physically.

"Yeah, because he thinks like something happen," Gomez said. "So I tell him, I'm just playing around with my manager and the training staff."

"It was pretty funny," Rodon said. "Gomez is a good character and ballplayer. Just liven it up a little."

Gomez has been hit by a pitch 17 times this season and was joking with his own dugout that they never come out to check on him.

"That was funny," Anderson said. "It's good to see some stuff like that every once in a while."

SOUND SMART

Abreu has homered in a career-high-tying three straight games, doing so previously from June 9-12, 2015, and Aug. 20-23, 2016.

HE SAID IT

"You see it. Heck of a ballclub, heck of teammates. We go out and bust our tails and we've been doing a great job at it the last two days and have been battling."-- Anderson, on the two wins over the Rays giving a little life to a poor season

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

Renteria challenged the call that Sanchez was out at second on an inning-ending double-play grounder hit by Omar Narvaez in the fifth. The call stood after video replay, with Renteria continuing to argue from the dugout. Home-plate umpire John Tumpane looked as if he warned Renteria to stop, before ejecting him. It was the fifth ejection of the season for Renteria and 18th of his career.

UP NEXT

Right-hander James Shields (4-13, 4.56 ERA) is scheduled to make his 24th start of the season, 10th on the road and second against the Rays with a 12:10 p.m. CT first pitch Sunday at Tropicana Field. Shields, who was one of the many honored pregame Saturday for his major role on the '08 AL championship Rays, is 0-7 with a 6.06 ERA in his last nine starts on the road. He earned his last road victory on Opening Day at Kansas City.

Anderson feeling soreness in left knee

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / August 4, 2018

ST. PETERSBURG -- Tim Anderson was thrown out at home on the back end of Yoan Moncada's game-winning double in the 10th inning of Friday night's 3-2 White Sox victory at Tropicana Field.

It's a play where Anderson and his elite speed figure to score from first probably 100 out of 100 times. But the White Sox shortstop has been slowed by left knee soreness, as revealed by manager Rick Renteria and Anderson prior to Saturday's game, costing him a step in that situation.

"A little tender, going through some soreness," Anderson said. "But I'm able to play through. I'd score easily if my knee wasn't bothering me. It is what it is."

"I'll just put that to bed for you. He's giving me what he's got right now," Renteria said. "He tried to turn it up and you could see he couldn't go any more. We know him. We watch him from the bench. We see what he's trying to do and that's it."

Anderson has been getting treatment for this soreness for about one week. He's feeling better and trying to stay in the lineup every day.

Renteria prefers not to let other teams know what's going on with his guys. But he heard the rumblings of Anderson not going all out on that final play and wanted to set the record straight, especially with Anderson being pulled Tuesday after not running out a line drive to third base in the sixth inning on a play Anderson believed was a catch.

"Again, I know my guys. I know everything that's going on with them," Renteria said. "There's no need for me to put a bunch of stuff out there. I really don't want the other team to know what's going on with our guys to be honest. But I have to defend my guy. That's it."

Moncada looking to connect and protect

Entering Saturday's contest, Moncada had been called for strike three on a Major League-high 38 pitches that Statcast™ classified on the edges or outside. Moncada has 53 total called strikeouts this season, among his total of 151, giving some credence to the White Sox belief of unluckiness for the second baseman in terms of not getting the benefit of borderline calls.

But even with that info in mind, Moncada knows adjustments need to be made especially in two-strike counts.

"I know that there have been very close calls, borderline pitches, but now I have to make the adjustment," said Moncada through interpreter Billy Russo. "I have to swing or I have to protect the strike zone a little bit more."

"At least try to make contact with those pitches, even for a foul ball or whatever. I need to be able to fight a little more in my at-bats and defend the strike zone a little bit better."

The White Sox want Moncada to be aggressive, but aggressive within the strike zone. He's not worried about losing his exceptional eye at the plate, although the 23-year-old understands the need for a cautious approach.

"There are sometimes pitches out of the zone and you are not going to swing at those pitches even though they can call it," Moncada said. "You have to keep your approach, keep believing in your strengths. But at the same time, you can expand a little bit more your awareness of the strike zone especially in the situation with two strikes."

Shields sees the future in the past

James Shields, Sunday's starter for the White Sox, was honored this weekend as part of the 2008 Rays team that went to the World Series. The veteran right-hander sees similarities between that historic team and the current White Sox rebuild.

"I see a lot of similarities," Shields said. "The talent's there in the Chicago White Sox organization, no doubt. They just have to come together. It's definitely going to happen; I believe it will. It's just a matter of putting it together."

Tampa Bay finished at 66-96 in '07, only to rise to 97 wins in '08. Shields posted a 14-8 record with a 3.56 ERA for an American League champion managed by Joe Maddon.

"That was pretty magical, man," Shields said. "The group of guys we had, the chemistry in the clubhouse, how much fun we had on a nightly basis."

Third to first

- Chicago White Sox Charities (CWSC) annual 25-hour fundraising campaign, \$25 for 25, raised \$32,000 on Thursday and Friday.

- Jose Abreu has joined Magglio Ordonez (1999-2003) as the only players in White Sox history to hit 30-plus doubles in five straight seasons.

Rick Renteria: Don't blame Tim Anderson for not scoring in White Sox win

By Teddy Greenstein/ MLB.com / August 4, 2018

Tim Anderson took flak on social media and the White Sox TV broadcast after not scoring from first base on Yoan Moncada's 10th-inning double Friday night.

Some felt Anderson was coasting around the bases; others noticed that he looked over his shoulder after crossing third.

"He's got to score there," analyst Steve Stone said during NBC Sports Chicago's coverage.

Manager Rick Renteria, who benched Anderson three days earlier over a hustling issue, came to his defense before Saturday's game.

"Timmy's giving me everything he's got," Renteria said. "He has a little bit of an issue with his (left) knee I would rather nobody knew about. But I kind of got a hint that people might be (critical of him), so I'll just put that to bed for you. He's giving me what he's got."

Anderson has been getting treatment on his knee, which he said “is kind of sore, a little tender.”

“I’d score easily if my knee wasn’t bothering me,” he said of Friday’s play.

Anderson said it has been bothering him for about a week, but “it’s getting better.”

“I’m trying my best to be in the lineup every day,” he said. “If I’m hurting a little bit, I can play through it, go out and compete.”

The 25-year-old shortstop and cornerstone of the franchise is having a respectable season, hitting .243 with 14 homers and career bests in walks (24) and steals (21) entering Saturday’s game against the Rays.

His WAR of 2.0 ranks 11th among AL shortstops, though only two (Francisco Lindor and Andrelton Simmons) have more than 2.9.

Renteria pulled Anderson from Tuesday’s game against the Royals after he lined a ball to third that he thought would be ruled a catch. Anderson remained at the plate while confusion reigned over the call, prompting displays of frustration from Renteria in the dugout.

Asked if that benching set him back, Anderson replied: “No, it didn’t bother me. He’s the manager. I’m even-keel. He felt like I didn’t hustle and he has the right to pull me. But I was ready to play the next day.”

In the first three games after the benching, Anderson went 3-for-10 with a walk and made two outstanding defensive plays, going deep in the hole and firing off balance to first.

Unprompted, Renteria called Friday’s effort a “fantastic play,” and starting pitcher Lucas Giolito said it was “amazing, (Derek) Jeter-like.”

Replied Anderson: “Nah, it was TA-like. I practice that all the time in (batting practice), and the more reps I do, the more accurate my throws are.”

Anderson has committed 14 errors in 104 games, an improvement from last season’s 28 miscues in 145 games.

Asked about his overall defense, he responded: “I’ve got to improve. Keep working. I want to be great.”

Carlos Rodon keeps dealing as White Sox top Rays 2-1 with run in ninth inning

By Teddy Greenstein / MLB.com / August 4, 2018

Carlos Rodon pitched beautifully again for the White Sox, but Rays right fielder Carlos Gomez turned in the night’s most memorable performance. After getting hit by a Rodon fastball, Gomez took a half-step toward first and then crashed to the ground as if being directed by Martin Scorsese.

He and Rodon laughed about it between innings Saturday.

“It was pretty funny,” Rodon said. “Gomez is a good character and ballplayer. Just liven it up a little.”

Gomez did it to joke about how the Rays trainers never attend to him when he gets plunked.

As for the game, the Sox improved to 40-70 with a little help from the Rays. After Tim Anderson led off the ninth inning of a tie game with a double, Leury Garcia twice tried to bunt him over. Both went foul. Garcia tried again with two strikes and pushed the ball in fair territory this time. Third baseman Matt Duffy grabbed the ball and fired wide of first base, allowing Anderson to score in the 2-1 victory.

Sox manager Rick Renteria said Garcia was bunting on his own and praised his hustle.

Thyago Vieira pitched the ninth for his first career save. Rodon gave up one run in six innings, and it was unearned.

Gomez lined a ball to right, which Avisail Garcia was a bit slow to corral in the second inning. Gomez advanced to third on a passed ball and scored on an infield single. That was it. Rodon allowed three hits and walked five with four strikeouts in his fifth straight quality start.

“I was a little up and down,” Rodon said. “You’re gonna have those days and you have to see what you’re made of.”

Rays starter Blake Snell also pitched very well. His mistake was a fourth-inning fastball to Jose Abreu, who obliterated it over the center-field wall for his 19th blast — his third in as many games.

Renteria got tossed an inning later after arguing the results of a replay review, believing Yolmer Sanchez beat a force play at second. It was Renteria's fifth ejection of the season and 18th of his managerial career.

"You're ejected automatically if you expose yourself to conversations with the umpires once the replay call is done," he said. "To (the umpires') credit, they kept trying to stop me. I just wanted to make sure my sentiments were understood."

White Sox pitcher James Shields honored by Rays at 10-year reunion of AL champs

By Teddy Greenstein / Chicago Tribune / August 4, 2018

Don't tell James Shields that Tropicana Field is a dump. Some of his greatest memories occurred inside the sterile dome.

"It's not the best stadium in the world," Shields said, "but I loved my time here. We embraced it and treated it as a home-field advantage because guys (on other teams) didn't like playing here. We brought energy every day and we had fun."

No more fun than in 2008, when the Rays won the AL pennant. They lost to the Phillies in five games in the World Series, with Shields winning his Game 2 start.

The Sox right-hander was among the former Rays honored before Saturday night's game in a 10-year reunion celebration. Wearing his ballcap backward, Shields emerged from the Rays dugout and bro-hugged his former teammates.

Shields, who will start Sunday for the Sox, said the Rays' rise from repeated 90-loss seasons to the AL pennant reflects what could transpire with the Sox.

"I see a lot of similarities," he said. "The talent's there in the Chicago White Sox organization, no doubt. It's definitely going to happen; I believe it will."

White Sox reliever Tyler Danish excited to play where he grew up watching Rays

By Teddy Greenstein / Chicago Tribune / August 4, 2018

White Sox reliever Tyler Danish grew up 45 minutes from Tropicana Field, dreaming of becoming the next James Shields.

Now Shields, who was with the Rays then, is a Sox teammate and Danish is hoping he will be summoned to pitch in his "home" ballpark.

"It's an amazing feeling," he said. "I was watching these games as a kid at the stadium, wishing that was going to be me one day."

Danish, a 23-year-old right-handed reliever who entered Friday having appeared in seven career games for the Sox, expects to have about 200 friends and family members in the crowd Saturday.

On Friday, he earned the win — the second of his career — in the 3-2, 10-inning victory by striking out Jesus Sucre with runners on second and third and two outs in the ninth inning.

"This is my dad's dream since I was a kid," he said of Michael Danish, who died when Tyler was in high school. "I wish he could be here to see it, but I know he's with me at all times."

Welcome back: Former Sox bullpen coach Art "Cave" Kusnyer visited the team before Friday's game, praising manager Rick Renteria and saying: "I'm 99 percent retired."

Situational hitting will always be in with White Sox manager Rick Renteria

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun Times / August 4, 2018

Paul Konerko made it clear that he doesn't want to be one of those former baseball players knocking the current state of the game.

"Anytime an ex-player starts talking about the game today, you're treading on thin ice of sounding bitter, and that's not me at all," Konerko said during a visit this week to Guaranteed Rate Field. "The game to me is always right, whatever it is at that moment."

Konerko said he doesn't want to sound "like an old cranky guy" complaining about the music the kids are listening to nowadays.

Home runs are in, strikeouts are up and the ball is being put in play less and less. Situational hitting exists, but sometimes you need to look hard to find it.

Rick Renteria leads Yoan Moncada back to the dugout after Moncada was called out on strikes by umpire CB Bucknor against the Minnesota Twins on June 6 in Minneapolis. (Getty Images)

Konerko, a six-time All-Star who hit 432 of his 439 career homers as a member of the White Sox, didn't see much of it watching a recent Dodgers-Brewers game on TV.

"There were guys up there [hitting], and there is no downshifting gears," he said. "The way the count goes, what the score is, it doesn't matter, it's just all out, unleashing your hardest, best home-run swing on all three strikes on every at-bat. There were always selective guys who did that, but even those guys, 10 years back or beyond, played the scoreboard a little more. 'OK, we need a baserunner here.' Now it's, 'We're going to have this attitude and do this every time and over the course of the season it will bear out.'"

Which brings us to the White Sox, who, if Rick Renteria has his way, will always know what the score is and how to approach at-bats accordingly as long as he's the manager.

Renteria says situational hitting is talked about all the time, which means in the dugout, in the clubhouse and during hitters meetings. During certain segments of batting practice, hitting coach Todd Steverson makes Sox hitters practice situational scenarios (runner on second, no outs or runner on third, one out, for example).

"The reality is that very talented players have a way of being able to make those types of things look simple, and it's never a one-word explanation to a player," Renteria said. "I know there's this thinking that strikeouts don't matter. Strikeouts do matter."

Renteria alluded to Yoan Moncada — whose 152 strikeouts this season (including three Saturday) is threatening Mark Reynolds' record of 223 — getting rung up Wednesday with a runner on third and the infield back, a situation that demands contact.

"He thought the pitch was down," Renteria said. "As you continue to develop understanding what you want to try to do, there's probably a chance you maybe put the ball in play and get a run across the board. That's a situational at-bat."

Renteria has some old-school leanings as a manager, including use of the sacrifice bunt when it flies in the face of more current "never give away an out" managing. He sees the game changing, too, but doesn't believe all of it is necessarily for the better.

"I can't speak for the rest of the league," Renteria said. "Do I kind of agree [with Konerko] that everybody's just swinging for the fences? Yeah, I do. I think that there's a mentality right now that the fly ball is the greatest producer of runs because if the ball gets out of the ballpark — you have to have guys on base — you can create a lot of runs. I get all of that, but what happens when a team isn't swinging the bat very well as a whole and they're not hitting the ball out of the ballpark and you have to transition to a little hit-and-run or sac bunt? Or whatever the case might be where the situation calls for a ground ball to get the run in? You have to be able to do those things.

"As we continue to evolve as a team, as an organization, those are things that we're not going to cease talking about."

White Sox prospect Luis González proving more than qualified during breakout season

By James Fegan/ The Athletic / August 4, 2018

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — White Sox prospect Luis González had the same observation about the Winston-Salem Dash lineup as a league scout in attendance for one of their games last month.

"This team is unbelievable," González said. "Everyone is hitting above .280 it feels like, so it's a fun time to be with a fun group of guys."

To be fair, the scout said everyone was hitting .300, which, 35 games into his term in High-A Winston-Salem, is a bar González is also clearing going into Saturday night (.311/.363/.497). Finally at the level that player development director

Chris Getz said he could have started the year at, González is more or less producing the exact same offensive line he had at Kannapolis (.300/.358/.491), just with fewer strikeouts (just 16.3 percent since his promotion).

“He uses the whole field,” Getz said when González first was promoted. “He’s got some naturalness in the box. He gets on base. He has some sneaky pop. And then defensively he continues to improve. He’s better than he was last year. He’s throwing better.”

The sneaky pop is the sneaky difference in González’s 2018 breakout season as a 22-year-old. He slugged .361 at Low-A Kannapolis last season after being drafted in the third round out of the University of New Mexico, but showed enough on-base ability to provide optimism about his speedy, left-handed center fielder profile. This year he’s clubbed 11 home runs combined across both levels of Single-A, and collected 46 extra-base hits in all. González said the primary difference since being promoted to the Carolina League is getting pitched backwards with off-speed stuff, and apparently it’s agreeing just fine with his approach.

“I’ve always had some power in me,” González said. “I didn’t display that in my first professional year but now that I have a little more confidence and am getting myself in a nice groove, the power numbers have come up. It’s just my swing, just have a compact swing. Just having quick hands. I’ve been working more on trying to drive the ball to left-center, but the pull side power has always been there. Just trying to generate more power to left, left-center and right-center gaps.”

González spent most, if not all of instructional league this past fall working with Aaron Rowand on his outfield defense. With Luis Robert and Blake Rutherford on the Dash roster, he has spent plenty of time rotating into the corners, and serving as the DH — where just a handful of games made him wonder how Micker Adolfo was handling being sidelined so easily there. González is increasingly showing the bat to provide optimism that he can have a career in the corner, but the best hope for his long-term prospects obviously involves him sticking up the middle in center.

He certainly has the arm for it. The 6-foot-1 left-hander is not a physically imposing presence, but he was recruited as both a pitcher and a hitter coming out of high school and covered 126 2/3 innings over his three years in New Mexico. A collegiate ERA of a 6.13 suggests there were limitations to his “challenge the hitter” approach and that he’s found the right niche for his career, but he’d be more than willing to give a Matt Davidson impersonation if provided the chance.

“It’s something I thought would be pretty fun,” González said. “I saw Anthony Rizzo do it the other day and he had so much fun doing it. Pitching is always fun. You’re into the game, you’re into the pitch. Every single pitch, you’re in it.”

Originally born in Hermosillo, Mexico, the bilingual González moved to Arizona — where many wondered whether he was named after the other Luis Gonzalez — with his family when he was 10 years old. Shortly after his arrival he was playing travel ball, and has been moving around the country playing baseball ever since. He first got the inkling that the sport would be his career when he noticed that he was constantly playing in leagues where he was the youngest player on the team.

Now, with the White Sox outfield prospect crunch, González is in a bit of a flipped position, where he’s arguably a step above the competition that he’s currently playing against. With Luis Basabe, Alex Call, Joel Booker and Jameson Fisher manning the outfield in Birmingham, Winston-Salem is the best place for González to get playing time, even if he now has competition for the leadoff slot with Nick Madrigal in town. Getz has praised him for not complaining about a conservative assignment, and at the very least, González will take the gaudy numbers and the confidence that comes with them.

“Being up here in High-A has put good thoughts in my head,” González said. “I’m able to compete here as well. So I’m just trying to make my way up the ladder and hopefully I’m able to prove myself at every level.”

“Overall I think I could be a more consistent hitter. It’s always what I’ve worked on and having good at-bats every single time. But it’s a funny sport. It’s a game of failure so you’ve got to take failure well. I feel like I can do better than what I have been doing. Just trying to keep hitting the ball hard, keep working and keep winning.”
