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White Sox pitchers can't contain Pirates

By Max Gelman / MLB.com / May 8, 2017

CHICAGO -- When the White Sox acquired Lucas Giolito two offseasons ago for outfielder Adam Eaton, they hoped that he'd be a cornerstone in their rotation for years to come. But so far this season, Giolito has struggled to find consistency from one start to another.

Tuesday night at Guaranteed Rate Field saw Giolito struggle through four innings, needing 98 pitches to navigate 21 batters in a 10-6 loss to the Pirates. Through seven starts, Giolito has tallied 36 combined innings and has completed the sixth only three times.

"I just think it's just more of a command [issue], making sure he commands the strike zone, gets ahead, executes," manager Rick Renteria said. "He's still in a situation where he's continuing to learn who he is, and these hiccups are gonna occur.

"For him it'll be something to learn from and build on, and we're very confident that what he will ultimately become will be something pretty good. But right now, he's still working through it."

Though Giolito had no problems in the first inning, tossing 12 of his 15 pitches for strikes, he immediately squandered the four-run lead his offense had staked him to off opposing starter Ivan Nova. The Pirates sent eight batters to the plate in the second, scoring four, and forced Giolito to throw 36 pitches.

"The fact that they gave me four runs in the first inning and I went out and gave up four is unacceptable," Giolito said. "To throw that many pitches in that few innings, it's just not getting the job done as a starting pitcher. I should be going five, at least."

Giolito then worked his way around trouble in the third. Four straight hitters reached base, but Giolito was able to keep any from crossing the plate. He worked efficiently again in the fourth, before he was removed for Chris Volstad with the White Sox leading, 5-4.

Volstad and Luis Avilan combined to give up five runs in 1 1/3 innings, putting the White Sox in rally mode for the remainder of the game.

Giolito's start Tuesday stood in stark contrast to his last outing at the Cardinals, when the righty had arguably his best start of the season in six innings of three-run ball. Giolito wasn't able to repeat his success against the Pirates, however, and said that he was "fighting myself" and struggling to adjust.

"That's something I need to get better at, not recognizing when it's happening, but making that adjustment as soon as it happens. Not an inning later or whatever, do it immediately. That's what really good pitchers do, be able to make adjustments on the fly and get right quick."

Offensively, Welington Castillo hit his fourth home run of the year in the White Sox four-run first, and his fifth off George Kontos in the eighth. Yolmer Sanchez also had three hits, but Chicago's bats largely went silent following Nova's departure after two innings.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

During the White Sox first-inning rally, Sanchez hit a sinking liner to left fielder Corey Dickerson. The ball sank so quickly that Dickerson lost it in the lights, allowing Sanchez to race all the way to third for a triple as Leury Garcia came around to score. That defensive mishap led to Chicago's first four-run inning since April 28 in Kansas City.

SOUND SMART

Sanchez's 3-for-5 effort Tuesday night extended his hitting streak to six games. Four of the six games have seen Sanchez record multiple hits. During this streak, Sanchez is hitting .462 (12-for-26) with three doubles and two triples.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Though the White Sox trailed in the ninth inning, Tim Anderson never quit hustling. With two outs in the top of the ninth, Jordy Mercer hit a high foul popup near the third-base tarp. Anderson and Sanchez both hustled over, but it was Anderson who made a nice grab falling into the stands.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

In the bottom of the first inning, Garcia led off by hitting a ball that was deflected by Nova and ricocheted to Colin Moran. Moran threw Garcia out at first, but the White Sox challenged the call. After a short review, the call on the field was overturned and Garcia's single ended up sparking the White Sox four-run first inning.

Then, in the top of the third with runners on first and second, Moran hit a sharp ground ball to Jose Abreu. Thinking of turning a double play, Abreu fired to second and retreated to first, but while the throw was in time, Abreu's foot was not on the bag. The White Sox challenged the call, and it stood after review. Giolito worked his way out of the inning by inducing a popout from Jose Osuna.

UP NEXT

The White Sox will wrap up this quick two-game Interleague set with the Pirates on Wednesday at 1:10 p.m. CT before getting Thursday off. Reynaldo Lopez (0-2, 2.43 ERA) will take the mound for Chicago seeking to build on his strong sophomore season. He will be opposed by Pirates right-hander Trevor Williams. The White Sox begin a three-game set with the Cubs at Wrigley Field on Friday.

Farquhar's return to Sox clubhouse 'a blessing'

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 8, 2018

CHICAGO -- The biggest victory and greatest moment for the Chicago White Sox on Tuesday came about seven hours before the first pitch was even thrown at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Danny Farquhar, the 31-year-old White Sox reliever, made his first visit to the White Sox clubhouse less than one month after suffering a brain hemorrhage caused by a ruptured aneurysm and undergoing the ensuing surgery. The tragedy befell the right-hander after he pitched against the Astros at home on April 20.

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Words such as "awesome," "exciting" and "a blessing" were used to describe Farquhar's amazing appearance. But right-hander Nate Jones, who visited Farquhar in the hospital Saturday, summed up the uplifting afternoon with the perfect heartfelt feeling.

"To see him where he is today is pretty much a miracle," Jones said with a broad smile.

Jones was wearing his "Pray for 43" T-shirt Tuesday, a shirt dedicated to Farquhar's recovery and worn by many White Sox players. That shirt became a topic of conversation with Farquhar, who was joined by his wife, Lexie, along with many other subjects, including baseball itself.

Although Farquhar was discharged from RUSH University Medical Center on Monday, he has been ruled out from playing the rest of the season.

"He's a fighter who wants to be back with us and wants to be back with the team," Jones said. "But we told him, 'Hey man, look how fresh your arm is going to be next year.' He was down a little bit, but he's excited he gets to return next year."

"You can't place a limit on the size of a man's heart, and he has a lot of drive," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "We're just glad that he's out of the hospital now and recovering well. He still has to take it easy for a couple more weeks, just monitor himself, but I wouldn't put anything past Danny in terms of what he may or may not be able to do."

When Jones visited Farquhar Saturday, he promised his friend the No. 43 jersey flying in the White Sox bullpen would stay there until Farquhar returned to the ballpark. Jones said there would be a talk among the team concerning keeping the jersey flying even after one of Farquhar's missions was accomplished.

"All the reports [say] he's doing well, but to see him in good spirits, smiling and laughing and having a good time, was great," White Sox starter James Shields said. "He's definitely the same guy, no doubt. To see him and to hear how positive he was, the guy wants to come back and play baseball already."

"Not many people can make it through that surgery," White Sox starter Miguel Gonzalez said. "And just to have him around here, he was loving life just to be around the guys."

"He was a little worried about the stress of being the center of attention. Nobody necessarily likes that at any point of your life," Jones said. "He was excited, and I think he was excited about how excited we were. It was just a blessing to see him walk in here. It lifted everybody's spirits."

Jimenez focused on becoming complete player

White Sox top prospect is off to a fast start at Double-A Birmingham

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 8, 2018

CHICAGO -- Eloy Jimenez has the look of a Major League-ready baseball player. Seven straight multi-hit games for the outfielder with Double-A Birmingham supports that hypothesis, even after he was sidelined at the season's outset by a mild left pectoral strain.

But the White Sox No. 1 prospect, and No. 4 overall per MLB Pipeline, isn't worried about that eventual call to the big leagues.

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"That's not something I can tell you, because I don't have control of it," said Jimenez through interpreter Billy Russo during a Tuesday conference call. "That's something the front office has to deal with, and in my case, I just try to handle the things I can control. Work hard every day and perform. That's the only things."

Jimenez, 21, entered Tuesday with a .324 average, a .999 OPS, six home runs, six doubles and 20 RBIs in 18 games. But he knows there are still boxes to check and improvements to be made as he climbs toward that ultimate destination.

"I know I can be better with strike zone recognition, and I know I can be better in the outfield, too," Jimenez said. "Those are aspects of my games I try to focus on."

"It's not just my offense. I always try to improve all around, because if you want to be a good baseball player, you have to be good in all the aspects of the game."

[Moncada on the mend](#)

Yoan Moncada plans to run Wednesday to truly gauge the condition of his tight left hamstring, which placed him on the disabled list this past Saturday.

"I'm going to run tomorrow just to see how I'm feeling," said Moncada through Russo. "It's just a test."

Moncada feels good doing pretty much anything else baseball-related. He said that his goal is to return to action in Pittsburgh when he's eligible to come off the disabled list next week.

"He's doing a lot of exercises," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "They're doing everything just to make sure that we minimize any aspect that might reoccur. Strengthen him. We'll have to put him through some speed work first, and when he gets through all that, I'm sure he'll be back and ready to go."

[Gonzalez making progress](#)

Miguel Gonzalez threw live batting practice before Tuesday's game with the Pirates, as he continues his rehab work in relation to right rotator cuff inflammation.

Gonzalez got up and down three times Tuesday in simulated action, per Renteria.

"We'll see how he feels tomorrow," Renteria said. "Then we can make a determination as to what we will or will not do or how we'll progress."

Outfielder Avisail Garcia, on the disabled list due to a right hamstring strain, was one of the guys standing in the box as Gonzalez pitched. He also took batting practice a few days ago.

"He's doing very, very well," Renteria said. "Looked good, felt good. Today, he hit off Miggy, tracking balls, his swing looked fine. Again, it's about building him up, his leg strength. As far as how he physically feels in general, he feels good. No discomfort."

While tearing things up at Double-A, Eloy Jimenez dreaming about the day he and fellow White Sox prospects reach the majors

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 8, 2018

When will Eloy Jimenez be ready to come play on the South Side?

“That’s not something I can tell you because I don’t have control of it,” Jimenez said on a Tuesday conference call.

Likely not the answer White Sox fans were hoping for.

Those fans have completely bought into the ongoing rebuilding effort, and that means an incredible eagerness to see the wealth of young talent currently developing in the minor leagues reach the majors and turn the White Sox into the perennial contender they’re planned to become.

And perhaps no player is generating as much excitement on a daily basis as Jimenez, the system’s top-ranked prospect, the No. 4 prospect in baseball and the guy acquired from the Cubs in last summer’s crosstown swap. That’s because Jimenez is killing it at Double-A Birmingham. He’s got an 11-game hitting streak, a seven-game multi-hit streak and a bonkers .400/.412/.760 slash line over his last 11 games. He’s already got six homers in just 18 games, only five off the total he hit after joining the White Sox organization last July.

So as he dominates Double-A pitching, it might seem like Jimenez is big league ready. But development doesn’t mean simply putting up numbers. There are plenty of areas players need to master before advancing to the next level that don’t necessarily show up in box scores.

“I know I can learn and improve my game,” Jimenez said. “I know I can be better with strike zone recognition, and I know I can be better in the outfield, too. Those are aspects of my game I try to focus on. It’s not just my offense. I always try to improve all around because if you want to be a good baseball player you have to be good in all the aspects of the game.”

The 2018 season has already seen one high-profile promotion in the White Sox farm system, when Dane Dunning got boosted from Class A Winston-Salem to Birmingham. And there’s constant speculation about when Michael Kopech, the organization’s top-ranked pitching prospect, will make his major league debut. While general manager Rick Hahn said during the offseason that a good developmental season for Jimenez could involve him spending a full year at Double-A, that would seem highly unlikely if he keeps hitting at his current pace. And so it’s possible that Jimenez could arrive at the major league level before time runs out on the 2018 season.

But the point is that he’ll be on the South Side eventually, and so will plenty of other stars of this rebuilding effort. Each day brings more news of big numbers being put up by Jimenez, Kopech, Dunning, Dylan Cease, Micker Adolfo, Zack Collins, Seby Zavala and Luis Alexander Basabe. Alec Hansen and Luis Robert, two of the organization’s highest-rated prospects have yet to even play this season.

Jimenez said that those guys all know and discuss the potential and bright future this team has.

“We all know we have a lot of talent in this organization, from the Dominican Academy through the minor league teams. What we talk about is how good it will be for us to be all together in the majors and to perform at the level we all know we can do it,” Jimenez said. “That’s like a dream for us. And one of the things I always remind the guys is, ‘You know what, if we want to accomplish that we have to work hard every day.’ That is my mindset, and that is the only thing I try to remind them of every day.”

So even if there’s a bit of a bummed-out feeling among fans that Jimenez isn’t here right this second, there should be a very positive feeling about the fact that once he gets here, he should be around for a long time.

"Right now I feel like at home," he said. "I like this team. I was with this organization at the end of last year, and this year has been just a continuation of that. I feel good and am really comfortable with this team."

Danny Farquhar returns to White Sox clubhouse: 'He's a walking miracle'

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 8, 2018

Incredibly, Danny Farquhar was back at work Tuesday.

He won't actually be working again this year — doctor's orders — but the fact that just 18 days after suffering a brain hemorrhage the White Sox pitcher was visiting his teammates in the home clubhouse at Guaranteed Rate Field is just plain amazing.

Or as Nate Jones described it:

"Where he's at, he's a walking miracle."

Farquhar was discharged from the hospital a day earlier, tremendous news considering the mystery that surrounded every aspect of his future after he collapsed in the third-base dugout during the sixth inning of that April 20 game against the Houston Astros. But his doctor believes he will be able to pitch in a major league game again someday, even if it's not this season.

For Farquhar's teammates, it was a joy to see him again, considering the last time he was in that clubhouse he was being wheeled out of it after suffering a ruptured aneurysm.

"He was just happy to be here," Miguel Gonzalez said. "He was like, 'Man, I'm so excited to come back and see you guys and be around you guys.' It's something special for him to be here. And to go through all of what he did, we're very happy to see him.

"He's like, 'I don't know how long I'll be out, but I'll be throwing some live BP soon.' That's what he told us. We're happy to see him, and it was fun to be around him. He came to his locker and saw his locker. There's really not many words that we can say having him around."

The tributes have been numerous while Farquhar has recovered. Teammates have written salutes on their caps, worn "Pray for 43" shirts around the clubhouse and hung his jersey in the bullpen. But now the jersey, at least, might need to come down, that is if Jones feels like honoring the promise he made.

"I said we would keep it flying until he walked in here," Jones said, "and sure enough he walked in here."

Teammates didn't want to put too much on Farquhar, who supposedly only visited for about an hour. But they were happy to report that he was acting like the same guy he was before, joking around, talking baseball and looking for something to eat.

That normalcy is what's so astonishing. And relieving.

"You just never know. Going through (what) he did, that he's walking and being like a normal person now, it's crazy," Gonzalez said. "It's fun to have him back. We're excited that he's doing well now, and hopefully he'll be able to come and play baseball again."

That's a long road, obviously. But the confidence of his doctor and from his teammates makes you think that it's nowhere near an impossible one.

"I wouldn't limit Danny to anything," Rick Renteria said. "You can't place a limit on the size of a man's heart, and he has a lot of drive and we're just glad that he's out of the hospital now and recovering well. He still has to take it easy for a couple more weeks, just monitor himself, but I wouldn't put anything past Danny in terms of what he may or may not be able to do."

Another tough outing for Lucas Giolito: 'It was just not a good night'

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 8, 2018

Lucas Giolito knows when things are going wrong. It's fixing the problems that are the next step in the development of one of the White Sox most promising young pitchers.

After showing signs of improvement in his last outing against the St. Louis Cardinals, things again went poorly Tuesday night against the Pittsburgh Pirates. He left with a lead, but that was about the only silver lining, as he lasted just four innings after watching his pitch count soar to 98. The most revolting development: After the White Sox spotted him four runs in the bottom of the first, he immediately coughed up four in the top of the second.

Giolito wasn't sugarcoating anything or trying to find the positive needle in a negative haystack after the game.

"The fact that they gave me four runs in the first inning and I went out and gave up four is unacceptable," he said. "To throw that many pitches in that few innings, it's just not getting the job done as a starting pitcher. I should be going five, at least. We're big on shutdown innings here. If we put up some runs on the board, especially more than one or two, you go out there, you shut down. I didn't do that. It was just not a good night."

It was obviously a disappointing outcome after a quality start in his last outing. And Giolito might actually want to consider himself lucky he made it as far as he did. That nightmarish top of the second went like this: double, hit batter, strikeout, single, fielder's choice, walk, double, single, only ending when Nicky Delmonico threw a runner out at the plate.

"Once things start to happen during an inning, I'll start to speed up," Giolito said. "That's when I don't allow myself to make that adjustment that I'm always working on. I don't know, just missing a ton of spots, deep counts, walking guys. None of that's good. That's stuff I need to clean up."

Obviously no one is expecting Giolito to be a finished product yet. Tuesday's start was the seventh of the 2018 season, matching the total he had at the major league level in 2017. But the two seasons have been completely different to this point. In those seven starts at the end of last year, he dazzled, turning in a 2.38 ERA. Through his first seven starts of 2018, he's got a 7.25 ERA and 25 walks (the most in the American League) compared to just 21 strikeouts.

Manager Rick Renteria was right when he said that Giolito is still going through the developmental process, and it's quite possible that these will be the learning moments that turn Giolito into a very good major league pitcher. But certainly Giolito is getting drastically different results now than they did at the end of last summer and during a dominant spring.

"He's still in a situation where he's continuing to learn who he is, and these hiccups are going to occur," Renteria said. "For him, it'll be something to learn from and build on, and we're very confident that what he will ultimately become will be something pretty good. But right now he's still working through it."

Column: Can White Sox be lovable losers as they drop games at franchise-record pace?

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / May 8, 2018

The White Sox finished Tuesday night's 10-6 loss to the Pirates on pace for a franchise-record 118 losses.

The future face of the organization, Yoan Moncada, was on the disabled list. Top prospects Michael Kopech and Eloy Jimenez still are toiling in the minors. Shortstop Tim Anderson was the only position player in the starting lineup who figures to be around when the rebuild finally turns the corner in the early 2020s.

Year 2 is off to a miserable start, and unless they're in your DNA, it'll be easy to tune out the Sox the rest of the season.

But somehow, some way, the team kind of grows on you, bad baseball or not. The more they lose, the more you appreciate their resolve. It's not out of the realm of possibility to think the 2018 White Sox have replaced the Cubs as Chicago's lovable losers.

It's not a designation they want, of course. No one wants to be loved for losing, and the Sox don't plan on making it a habit, as the Cubs did for so many decades.

The Cubs didn't like it so much, either, but somehow the term was attached to them many years ago and it seemingly took forever to shed it.

"I hate that," Mark Grace told Tribune columnist Jerome Holtzman during spring training in 1998. "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser. I'd rather be a poor-sport loser."

The Cubs earned the label because their fans came out to watch so many bad teams over the years. Even in the first year of their rebuild in 2012, they drew nearly 2.9 million fans to Wrigley Field to watch a 101-loss team.

This Sox team has the losing part down so far. They had a 5.08 earned-run average as of Tuesday, which was worse than every team in the major leagues except the Reds. They were third from the bottom in runs scored with 125 and also had the third-worst fielding. Add it all up, and you just might have the worst team in Sox history, beating out the 1970 Sox team that finished 56-106 for that dubious honor.

Can the Sox still be lovable while losing so much?

That's subjective, but they're at least likable, as evidenced by the way they've rallied around reliever Danny Farquhar after his brain hemorrhage. And when Yolmer Sanchez dumped a cooler of water on his own head to celebrate Trayce Thompson's walk-off home run, it was as enjoyable a moment as anything we've seen on the South Side in years.

The players are a good bunch. Manager Rick Renteria is a nice guy with a penchant for looking at the bright side of everything. And no one is more cuddly than pitching coach Don Cooper.

What's not to love?

At least Tuesday was a perfect atmosphere for baseball at Sox Park. The smell of grilled sausages wafted over the ballpark as Kanye West's song, "Can't Tell Me Nothing," blared over the PA system:

"Wait till I get my money, right/ If I had a billion dollars, yeah! Then you can't tell me nothing, right?"

Not really sure what West can tell me about the Sox's intricate pregame handshake rituals in the dugout, but they looked like they were having a good time and you could hear them shouting all the way up in the location-challenged press box down the first-base line.

The crowd 12,871 got into the game in the first inning when Sanchez hit a soft fly to left field that Corey Dickerson treated like a stink bomb, letting it drop in and roll to the warning track as Sanchez chugged around the bases with an RBI triple.

The Sox wound up scoring four runs in the 34-minute inning. Then Lucas Giolito gave up the lead in the top of the second before everyone watched the Kiss Cam on the video board. Giolito was gone by the fifth, when Thompson misjudged a fly and the Pirates took the lead.

Eventually the Sox rebuild will kick into a higher gear, and all this losing will be forgotten, just like the 2012 Cubs were by the time they made the playoffs in 2015.

Bringing up Eloy this summer will make this thing much easier to watch, but for now Sox fans will have to make do with the Moncada-free lineup and up-and-down performances from the young starters.

It's going to be a long summer, but love is in the air.

White Sox's struggles continue with 10-6 loss to Pirates

By Teddy Greenstein / Chicago Tribune / May 8, 2018

The last time White Sox players received positive news about Danny Farquhar before a game, they came out blazing. They scored five runs in the first inning against the Mariners on April 23.

So their early surge against the Pirates on Tuesday made sense. Following a clubhouse visit by Farquhar, who is recovering from a brain hemorrhage and was released from the hospital Monday, the Sox banged out four hits in a four-run first inning.

If only Lucas Giolito could have sustained it. The Sox's erratic right-hander gave it right back in the second inning of the team's 10-6 loss.

He allowed a leadoff double and then plunked catcher Francisco Cervelli. After a single and a walk, Gregory Polanco hammered a chest-high offering into right for a ground-rule double.

Giolito got bailed out of more trouble by a combination of Pirates third-base coach Joey Cora and Sox catcher Welington Castillo. Cora sent Polanco on Starling Marte's single to left that scored Adam Frazier with the tying run, and Castillo made a terrific scoop and tag after collecting Nicky Delmonico's one-hopper for out No. 3.

Giolito lasted just four innings in a game MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred can use as evidence for his assault on slow play. The Sox were batting in the fourth inning at the game's two-hour mark.

Giolito called his performance "unacceptable. To throw that many pitches in that few of innings is not getting the job done."

Twice as nice: Castillo also had a superb game at the plate, blasting an opposite-field homer in the first and a massive homer to left in the eighth. It was the seventh multi-homer game of his career.

The Sox were sloppy on defense, with misplays all around the outfield and on relay throws. But one clear defensive highlight: Shortstop Tim Anderson went into the seats, unbothered by the rolled-up tarp, to snag a popup.

New year, new problem: Staked to that four-run lead, Giolito couldn't even go deep enough to give himself a shot for his second win of the season. He allowed seven hits, four runs, two walks and the hit batsman, throwing 60 strikes in 98 pitches.

The 23-year-old right-hander was superb in his seven starts last season with the Sox, posting a 2.38 ERA and 0.95 WHIP. His seven starts this year have produced a 7.25 ERA and 1.64 WHIP.

Next up: A Sunday afternoon start at Wrigley Field.

Second look: First-base umpire John Tumpane got three tough chances in the first three innings. All three bang-bang calls went against the Sox.

A replay review flipped Tumpane's call after Leury Garcia legged one out. The Sox challenged another call and lost it, with Jose Abreu's foot coming off the bag after what would have been a double play in the

third. That review lasted more than two minutes, and the decision initiated boos from the modest home crowd.

Back in the saddle: The Sox did some simulated work Tuesday afternoon, getting a look at two of their injured players during batting practice. Right-hander Miguel Gonzalez, placed on the disabled list with shoulder inflammation after a rough start (0-3, 12.41 ERA), faced off against Avisail Garcia, who was batting .233 when he was lost to a hamstring strain.

Manager Rick Renteria said both looked good, adding of Avisail Garcia: "His swing looked fine (but) it's about building up his leg strength. He feels good. No discomfort."

Gonzalez said he threw 35 pitches and expects the team to send him out to the minors for a rehab start: "I think it's important and safe for me to go out at least once. They want me to come back 100 percent."

As for Yoan Moncada, the Sox hope his hamstring will heal by late next week.

White Sox and Cubs Q&A: Tim Anderson vs. the Fun Police, Joe Maddon's unpredictable lineups and more

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / May 8, 2018

The latest edition of Ask Paul includes questions on the Fun Police, Hawk and Wimpy, Joe Maddon's lineups, the Cubs-Cards rivalry and Yosh Kawano's ring:

Paul, I read your column on Tim Anderson, and I thought you took a one-sided look at it. I know you're used to covering the Cubs, so maybe that's why. But I have no idea why Verlander was upset. That game I missed. But with the Sal Perez incident, he was totally in the wrong. Not Tim. All he did was point to the sky and be enthusiastic. I don't get what the big deal was about. But if you just went on your column, or maybe the national stuff, you would think Tim Anderson was a punk. However, if you were watching the game you would know that Perez did it to get the Royals going. They went on to win the next two games. So I guess it worked. — Michael M.

Actually the Royals are 6-3 (going into Tuesday night's game) since Sal's Fun Police crackdown on Anderson in K.C., so maybe you're right. But I had no problem with Anderson's celebration, so I'm not sure what you are talking about. I did write they should capitalize on wearing the black hat, perhaps create some "Timmy vs. the World" T-shirts, and play "Police on My Back" by The Clash before opening pitch at home games. Just have fun with their newfound reputation as excessive celebrators.

In all the "second-guessing" about the Cubs' problems I haven't noticed any second-guessing of Joe Maddon's frequent and difficult-to-understand lineup manipulations. He won a World Series doing it, although he nearly lost a World Series doing it, and he obviously believes his moves are genius-inspired. He has, on paper, the best talent in the NL, maybe in baseball, and he makes moves that have to make players wonder what the hell is going on. It's somewhat like Quenneville, whose players don't know from one game to the next what the lineup will be. — Phil M.

I'm not sure how he "nearly lost a World Series" with his lineups, but I get your point. You want him to write down the same players in the same spot every game. This is not a novel complaint about Maddon. In fact, it's the most frequent complaint about Maddon, other than maybe his dye job. Sure, I'd like to see Bryant-Rizzo in the Nos. 3 and 4 holes every day and Almora leading off against lefties, but the rest are interchangeable. No, I don't think Willson Contreras should be in the middle of the lineup with a .125 average with runners in scoring position, at least until he improves. But overall I don't think the lineups are to blame. A major-league player should be able to adjust to playing at any time and in any spot. If they can't handle not knowing when they're playing or where they're batting, it's on them.

Paul, I understand that it's only Year 2 of the Sox rebuild, however it is disconcerting to see young kids coming up making the same mistakes as when Robin Ventura was here. — SoxBob

Well, SoxBob, you certainly do write a lot of emails. It is disconcerting in the short term, but you'd like to think they'll figure it out in the long term. It is a rebuild after all. If they're still doing it in Year 3, write me again.

Mr. Sullivan: Even an old pair of shoes wears out after years of wear. So, too, for Paciorek and, especially, Hawk Harrelson. Listening to them Sunday was painful (as it's been painful trying to listen to Hawk the past several seasons). Shields is pitching a no-hitter and these guys are talking about baseball as it was 50 years ago. Instead of cultivating a new, younger fan base, the Sox are presenting nostalgia baseball on TV that is off the radar for 90 percent of the fans tuning in. These days, it seems like the baseball clock stopped for Hawk when Yastrzemski retired. Look, I'm 68 and I remember MLB 50 years ago. But for fans like my son and other would-be fans, this is like talking about the Civil War. — Michael P.

Certainly the Hawk and Wimpy pairing doesn't appeal to everyone, and Hawk is still an acquired taste for many Sox fans. But I enjoyed listening to them again Sunday and seeing the old clips. Everyone watching knew there was a no-hitter going on. I don't think anyone was worried they would be talking about the 1968 RBI race between Hawk and Frank Howard if there were only a few outs left in a Shields no-hitter. Sports is entertainment. Hawk is an entertainer. I don't always agree with him, but I always find him entertaining.

Paul, I'm sure you know that for decades the Cub/Cardinal rivalry, which always seemed to be a part of the baseball landscape, was essentially a joke. The Cubs for so very long couldn't even achieve a winning season, while the Cardinals were consistent contenders, and many times in the postseason, sometimes winning the World Series. Yet now, because of some very recent reversal, you question the rivalry's status? — Bob W.

Not really. I just believed it was in a lull based on the lack of hostility since the Cubs won it all. I even know some Cardinals fans who were happy the Cubs finally ended their drought. I know, I know. This is a mad, mad, mad world. Nothing makes sense. Hopefully it reverts to the norm down the road.

Mr. Sullivan, I saw your article in today's Trib re the two gentlemen, Tony and Carl Ruzicka, who purchased a replica Cubs championship ring for the Cubs' longtime former clubhouse man, Yosh Kawano. Full disclosure, I am a diehard Sox fan with a "White Sox Room" in my home (I think it's pretty impressive but not big enough), but I have a question: Wouldn't you think the Cubs would have given him a real championship ring when they won two years ago, given the amount of time he worked for them? Again, I am biased, but I think Jerry Reinsdorf would have taken great care of such a person. — John H.

Yes, Yosh Kawano probably should've gotten a real ring from the Cubs, especially when they handed them out like Tic Tacs. But they were the Rickettses' rings to give out, and they are free to dispense them to whomever they want. Ownership has its privileges. I was just happy his friends took care of it, and they didn't do it for any other reason than friendship.

Thanks for all the relevant questions.

White Sox thrilled to reunite with pitcher Danny Farquhar, their 'walking miracle'

By Teddy Greenstein / Chicago Tribune / May 8, 2018

It was easy to tell Danny Farquhar is back to being the wisecracking guy his White Sox teammates love.

He joked with them Tuesday during a clubhouse visit about raiding their meal ("I need to get some spread or something"), and they joked with him about using the 2018 season to build his strength.

"We told him, 'Hey, man, look how fresh your arm is going to be next year,' " fellow relief pitcher Nate Jones said.

Jones called Farquhar a "walking miracle."

Just 18 days ago, Farquhar suffered what was believed to be a life-threatening brain hemorrhage following a ruptured aneurysm. He collapsed in the dugout after pitching against the Astros, leading to multiple surgeries for him and prayer sessions from a stunned group of players.

Days later they cheered upon hearing that he could converse with wife Lexie and their three kids. Then came reports that he was able to do some light walking. On Monday, neurosurgeon Demetrius Lopes approved his release from Rush University Medical Center.

Rather than resting at home, Farquhar came to Guaranteed Rate Field on Tuesday for an hourlong reunion with teammates.

“He looks great, man,” pitcher James Shields said. “He’s definitely the same guy, no doubt. To see him and to hear how positive he was, the guy wants to come back and play baseball already.”

Farquhar, a 31-year-old veteran of four big-league teams, joked about throwing batting practice, but Lopes has determined that he will not be cleared to return to the mound until 2019.

That decision was praised by Dr. Michael Lawton, president and CEO of the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix.

“It generally takes a good six months at the minimum to recover from an intracranial hemorrhage,” Lawton said by telephone. “People may look fine when you see them at home, but sometimes the subtle cognitive things can be off. And at his level of the profession, he has to have all of his faculties.”

Lawton said the cognitive functions include “memory (and) decision-making ability. Things that go into being high-functioning humans.”

Lawton, who has performed more than 7,000 surgical cases and written five textbooks, said the severity of the hemorrhaging depends on “the rupture. If it’s a little leak, it could be a bad headache with no damage. If it’s a full-blown tear in the wall of the artery, it can be life-ending.”

Sox manager Rick Renteria said Farquhar’s visit gave his players an emotional lift: “You saw everybody smiling; they were very, very happy to see him.”

And as for Farquhar’s plans to return to the bigs as soon as possible, Renteria said: “I wouldn’t limit Danny to anything. I think every human body and mind desire to do certain things, and you can’t place a limit on the size of a man’s heart. He still has to take it easy for a couple more weeks, just monitor himself, but I wouldn’t put anything past Danny.”

Giolito can’t hold four-run lead; White Sox fall to 9-24

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / May 8, 2018

Right-hander Lucas Giolito failed in his quest for consistency Tuesday in an uneven four-inning outing against the Pirates that required 98 pitches.

Staked to a four-run lead in the first inning, Giolito couldn’t hold it, and the White Sox (9-24) went on to suffer a 10-6 loss, their fourth consecutive defeat and eighth in the last nine games.

The trouble spot for Giolito, who was coming off consecutive good starts, was the second inning. After the Sox worked over Pirates right-hander Ivan Nova through a 51-pitch, four-run first inning, Giolito struggled with his command and handed the four runs back in the second.

“That they gave me four runs in the first inning, and I went out and gave up four is unacceptable,” Giolito said. “To throw that many pitches in that few innings, it’s just not getting the job done as a starting pitcher.”

Giolito said he was “flying open” in his delivery, which has been a bugaboo.

“That’s something I need to get better at, not recognizing when it’s happening but making that adjustment as soon as it happens,” Giolito said. “Not an inning later or whatever, do it immediately. That’s what really good pitchers do, be able to make adjustments on the fly and get right quick. So that’s what I need to get better at.”

He worked through two scoreless innings after the second and was leading 5-4 on Jose Abreu’s RBI double in the second, but his high pitch count left manager Rick Renteria little choice but to turn the game over to his bullpen. Chris Volstad (0-2) was tagged for three runs in the fifth inning, and the Pirates tacked on two more in the sixth against left-hander Luis Avilan.

Wellington Castillo homered twice for the Sox, who are 3-14 at Guaranteed Rate Field, the worst home record in baseball. The last time the Sox started 9-24 or worse was 1948, when they were 8-25.

Giolito (7.25 ERA), who entered the season on a high note coming off a 2.38 ERA in seven starts in 2017 and an excellent spring, allowed seven hits and two walks. He hit a batter and struck out three.

“He’s still in a situation where he’s continuing to learn who he is, and these hiccups are gonna occur,” Renteria said. “For him, it’ll be something to learn from and build on, and we’re very confident that what he will ultimately become will be something pretty good, but right now he’s still working through it.”

Danny Farquhar visits White Sox teammates

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / May 8, 2018

Danny Farquhar continues to take important steps in his recovery from a brain hemorrhage. Farquhar, who was released from the hospital on Monday, was a visitor in the White Sox’ clubhouse Tuesday afternoon.

“Not many people can make it through that surgery,” Sox pitcher Miguel Gonzalez said. “And just to have him around here ... he was loving life just being around the guys.”

Gonzalez said Farquhar, who was accompanied by his wife, Lexie, was in excellent spirits.

“He was like, ‘Man, I’m so excited to come back and see you guys and be around you guys,’ ” Gonzalez said. “It’s something special for him to be here. And to go through all of what he did, we’re very happy to see him.

“Hopefully he’ll be able to come and play baseball again.”

Farquhar, a 31-year-old right-hander, suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm during a home game April 20 against the Astros.

Here’s manager Rick Renteria talking about Farquhar on Tuesday before the Sox opened a two-game set against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Guaranteed Rate Field.

His neurologist, Demetrius Lopes, said Farquhar, who collapsed in the dugout at Guaranteed Rate Field after pitching two-thirds of an inning against the Astros, will be able to pitch again, but he isn’t clearing him to throw this season to allow Farquhar to fully recover.

Gonzalez said Farquhar talked about “throwing some live BP soon. That’s what he told us.”

“We’re happy to see him, and it was fun to be around him. He came to his locker and saw his locker. There’s really not many words that we can say [about what it’s like] having him around.”

"He looks great, man," Sox right-hander James Shields said. "He looks amazing. To go through what he did and to see him look how he does was an amazing feeling for us in the clubhouse, and I'm sure it was for him."

Farquhar's health has afforded plenty of perspective for the Sox, who are off to a 9-24 start in a rebuilding season.

"Anything like that sure does give you a lot of perspective on everything," Renteria said. "Everything is relative in terms of its importance. Everything has its place of importance, and in this particular instance, just watching him, I'm sure these guys were very happy that they saw him and to listen to him speak to them. You saw everybody smiling. They're very, very happy to see him."

Aches and pains

Yoan Moncada, who went on the disabled list Saturday, will run to test his hamstring Wednesday. He hopes to return next Tuesday, when the Sox play in Pittsburgh.

"They're doing everything just to make sure that we minimize any aspect that might reoccur," Renteria said.

* With general manager Rick Hahn, Renteria and Don Cooper watching, Gonzalez (right rotator-cuff inflammation) threw live batting practice, getting up and down three times. A minor-league rehab outing is possible.

"We'll see how he feels [Wednesday], then we can make a determination as to what we will or will not do or how we'll progress," Renteria said.

*Outfielder Avisail Garcia (hamstring strain) has been taking batting practice and was in the box against Gonzalez.

"As far as how he physically feels in general, he feels good," Renteria said. "No discomfort."

Crosstown probables

Starting pitchers for the weekend series at Wrigley Field: Friday, Carson Fulmer vs. Tyler Chatwood; Saturday, Shields vs. Jon Lester; Sunday, Lucas Giolito vs. Kyle Hendricks. All games start at 1:20 p.m.

White Sox outfield prospect Eloy Jimenez heating up at Class AA Birmingham

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / May 8, 2018

White Sox outfield prospect Eloy Jimenez is healthy again after a pectoral strain delayed his start to the 2018 season at Class AA Birmingham, and he's having the usual Jimenez-like results at the plate.

In other words, he's tearing up Southern League pitching like he doesn't belong there.

Baseball's No. 4-ranked prospect, according to MLB Pipeline, Jimenez, who was acquired in the Jose Quintana trade last July, took an 11-game hitting streak into the Barons' game Tuesday night against the Pensacola Blue Wahoos, including multiple hits in his previous seven games. Before hitting an opposite-field homer his first time up Tuesday, Jimenez was batting .324/.350/.659 with six homers, six doubles and 20 RBI in 18 games and 80 plate appearances after going hitless in his first three games.

While Michael Kopech, now pitching at Class AAA Charlotte, sits as the centerpiece of the Sox' rebuild on the pitching side, Jimenez is that golden nugget on the offensive side. They are the brightest rays of sun shining through the clouds of the major-league club's 9-23 start, and the sooner they get fitted for Sox uniforms, the better as far as an eager fan base is concerned.

Just exactly when Jimenez, who made a brief but big splash in major-league camp during spring training, gets called up is what everyone wants to know. A promotion to Charlotte likely would precede a move to the big club but not before August or September in all likelihood.

"That's not something I can tell you because I don't have control of it," he said during a conference call Tuesday.

Jimenez, 21, has scaled back his spoken confidence since declaring in Class A last season that he was ready for the majors.

"That's something the front office has to deal with, and in my case, I just try to handle the things I can control," he said. "Work hard every day and perform."

The Sox aren't expected to rush Jimenez in the second year of a rebuild. There are parts of his game that still need polish, as impressive as he is.

Jimenez says he knows it.

"I know I can learn and improve my game," he said. "I know I can be better with strike-zone recognition, and I know I can be better in the outfield, too. Those are aspects of my game I try to focus on. It's not just my offense. I always try to improve all around because if you want to be a good baseball player, you have to be good in all the aspects of the game."

Few doubt that Jimenez, a bundle of hitting for power and average who also has a sound approach at the plate, could step into the Sox' lineup today and provide more production than any of the outfielders in Tuesday's lineup. And while financial reasons are at play — there is money to be saved by delaying his service-time clock — it's not hurting Jimenez or the Sox to have him patiently progress level by level.

"We haven't talked about [Charlotte]," manager Rick Renteria said. "I mean, he's only been back 3½, four weeks. But right now it's good to see him settling in and having a nice little run."

"He got in there and seemingly didn't skip a beat. Still settling into his approaches down there, but he's putting the bat on the ball pretty well and driving it. Holding his own."

Outfielders Micker Adolfo, Luis Basabe and Blake Rutherford and right-hander Dylan Cease (part of the Quintana trade, as well) also are holding their own to strong reviews at Class A Winston-Salem, as are catchers Zack Collins and Seby Zavala and right-hander Dane Dunning at Birmingham. So there appears to be more where Jimenez and Kopech are coming from.

"What we talk about is how good it will be for us to be all together in the majors and to perform at the level we all know we can," Jimenez said. "That's like a dream for us."

Top Chicago White Sox prospect Jimenez tearing up Southern League

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / May 8, 2018

Sorry to intentionally mangle a Three Dog Night song, but Eloy's coming.

Not Eli, Eloy Jimenez.

After missing the first half of April with a strained pectoral muscle, Jimenez is making up for the lost time with Class AA Birmingham.

"He's doing very, very well," manager Rick Renteria said of the Chicago White Sox's top hitting prospect. "Being down to start the season, he gets in there and seemingly doesn't skip a beat."

Jimenez has been red hot for Birmingham and he continued making a fast push to the major leagues Tuesday.

The 21-year-old outfielder homered in his first at-bat against Pensacola, and a 2-for-4 night raised his batting average to .333.

In only 19 games, Jimenez ranks second in the Southern League with 7 home runs. Teammate Seby Zavala (8) is first.

Look for Jimenez to be promoted to Class AAA Charlotte in the near future, and the Sox are a likely destination later this summer. Just don't ask the 6-foot-4, 220-pounder when he expects to arrive.

"That's not something I can tell you because I don't have control of it," Jimenez said. "That's something the front office has to deal with. I just try to handle the things I can control. Work hard every day and perform."

Sox fall to Pirates:

Looking to improve the worst home record (3-13) in baseball, the White Sox got off to a promising start in Tuesday night's interleague game against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Guaranteed Rate Field.

With Wellington Castillo hitting the first of his 2 home in the game, a 2-run shot, and Yolmer Sanchez adding an RBI triple, the Sox staked starting pitcher Lucas Giolito to a 4-0 lead in the first inning.

Giolito wasn't able to hold the lead, and the young right-hander had another forgettable outing in the Sox's 10-6 loss to Pittsburgh. At 3-14, the White Sox are off to their worst start at home since 1971.

Giolito was tagged for 4 runs on 7 hits and 2 walks in 4 innings, raising his ERA to 7.25.

"They gave me a 4-run lead," Giolito said. "To throw that many pitches (98) in that few innings, that's not doing my job. Not a good night."

Trainer's room:

Injured starter Miguel Gonzalez (inflamed rotator cuff) threw a simulated game Tuesday and is hoping head out on a rehabilitation assignment in the coming days.

"I know he wants to," manager Rick Renteria said. "We'll see how he feels tomorrow and then we can make a determination as to how we'll progress."

Gonzalez has been on the DL since April 19.

'He's a walking miracle:' Farquhar visits White Sox

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / May 8, 2018

Danny Farquhar's No. 43 uniform has been prominently displayed in the Chicago White Sox's home dugout since April 21, the day after the reliever collapsed while suffering a brain hemorrhage from a ruptured aneurysm shortly after pitching against the Houston Astros.

The uniform was taken down before Tuesday night's interleague game against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Guaranteed Rate Field.

"We told him in the hospital that we were going to fly his jersey until he walked in here, and sure enough he did today," Sox reliever Nate Jones said. "It was exciting for everyone."

When Farquhar was rushed to the hospital on April 20, one White Sox official was told his odds for survival were 30 percent.

Not only did he pull through, Farquhar was released from Rush University Medical Center on Monday and he visited the Sox Tuesday afternoon before batting practice.

"He looks great, man," White Sox starting pitcher James Shields said. "He looks amazing. To go through what he did and to see him look how he does was an amazing feeling for us in the clubhouse, and I'm sure it was for him."

Farquhar was accompanied by his wife Lexi, who was also at the game when he vomited and then collapsed in the Sox's dugout.

"He was upbeat," Jones said. "He was a little worried about the stress of being the center of attention. Nobody necessarily likes that at any point of your life. He was excited and I think he's excited about how excited we were. It was just a blessing to see him walk in here."

"A lot of people in that situation, from what we hear, usually had to learn how to talk again and write again and do their big motor movements and stuff like that. So where he's at, he's a walking miracle."

Dr. Demetrius Lopes, Farquhar's neurosurgeon, said returning to the mound is an option beginning next season. Dr. Lopes will not medically release Farquhar to pitch in a competitive game this year so he can fully recover.

According to his teammates, Farquhar is disappointed he won't be able to pitch again this season.

"He's like, 'I don't know how I long I'll be out, but I'll be throwing some live (batting practice) soon,'" White Sox starter Miguel Gonzalez said. "We're happy to see him, and it was fun to be around him. He came to his locker and saw his locker. There's really not many words that we can say having him around."

"It's awesome. It's a blessing in disguise that he's around. Not many people can make it through that surgery. And just to have him around here, he was loving life just to be around the guys."

How Dane Dunning is proving he belongs in Birmingham

By James Fegan / The Athletic / May 8, 2018

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — "Dunning sucks at Fortnite!"

Jameson Fisher yelling out jokes from the weight room during Dane Dunning's postgame interview is one way to measure the level of team acceptance for Dunning, who flatly denied Fisher's allegations, and is the newest member of a prospect-laden Birmingham Barons rotation that's still missing the injured Alec Hansen and A.J. Puckett.

Another could just be the results. After three starts in Double-A, the tall and lanky 23-year-old right-hander and former first-round pick has a 3.06 ERA, with 15 strikeouts over five walks, and is holding the opposition to a .275/.333/.303 batting line. The Pensacola Blue Wahoos bled him for 10 hits over 5 2/3 innings Monday night, but Shed Long's fifth-inning double was just the second extra-base hit he's allowed since getting promoted, and only came after he struck out the fastball-hunting Long on curveballs in the dirt his first two times up.

"Honestly to me the competition isn't that much of a difference," said Dunning, who for the second straight year was promoted after four starts. "There's one or two hitters that just like stay on you. If you hang a slider or something like that, they'll stay on a little bit longer. They'll battle a little bit longer in the at-bat, other than that I didn't really see a big difference in the jump."

Dunning was told in spring training to not expect his stay in Winston-Salem to be very long, "just to get my feet wet a little bit." It's not for him to determine whether he actually needed some time in Winston-Salem or whether it was just a function of determining whether Hansen and Puckett would be out long enough to

create a permanent spot in the rotation. But with four dominant starts in High-A in the rearview mirror, he's not sure if the experience was really beneficial.

"Yes and no," Dunning said. "I would have liked to start off in Double-A. Me personally, I feel like I belong in this competition. It was nice to go out there and play with those guys and keep things moving. I would have liked to start in Double-A but I'm happy to be part of the process."

Strange coaching machinations have wound up benefitting Dunning before, though. On Monday night, he prominently featured both a slider and curveball, both of which he showed the ability to throw early in the count for strikes, and bury in the dirt for swings-and-misses. Most pitchers wouldn't bother or have time to develop two separate breaking balls, but Dunning was forced to.

"I threw a curveball my whole entire life, until I got to college," Dunning said. "As soon as I got to college, my college coach told me to punt the curveball and focus on the slider. He worked with me a little bit in throwing the slider. I never threw a single curveball in college, only slider. As soon as I got to pro ball with the Nationals, they wanted me back to curveball, so that's what I did. Last year I worked, I threw it and it was alright. This year [James] Shields helped me out a lot and I feel like it's been really good."

Dunning isn't throwing a 68 mph "Slow Boy" like Shields, but the veteran showed him a grip that he feels frees his hand up to generate more spin on the pitch. As a result, he now has a pretty firm template for handling hitters of either hand.

"I think he can do either one depending on what the lineup is," Barons pitching coach Richard Dotson said. "He's done well, he gets ahead and he's got good stuff too and he locates pretty well. He's had one game where he was predominantly curveball because he's got a really good curveball and they were more left-handed hitters in the lineup. Last time he pitched it was more of a right-handed hitting lineup, he uses the slider effectively and he's real good with that."

The dueling breaking pitches take pressure off Dunning to use his changeup, a pitch he still vigorously endorses, but Dotson said could probably stand to be slower and create more separation with his fastball. And they're the most eye-popping elements of a prospect profile that is more about stability than electricity. On a Barons pitching staff that is noticeably more informed about their spin rates, spin efficiency and fastball carry this year, Dunning is an old school sinkerballer. He was thoroughly unconcerned to hear he topped out at 92 mph on a scout's radar gun Monday because he threw almost entirely two-seamers.

"I actually don't really throw many four-seams," Dunning said. "It's one or two per game, I feel like. Usually when I try to go up, to do something to get a little carry with it. But other than that, it's just two-seams."

"Just going out there, trying to sink the ball, get ground contact. I usually sit around 92. I've been up to 96 before but as a starter, I'm not going to try to gas myself out, I'm going to go out there and compete. If it's 92 mph with sink, it's harder than that. It felt good out there."

Given how easily Dunning spun sliders and curves in for strikes, and how rare it is to see a minor league arm do that, his two early walks Monday almost felt like flukes, and for the most part they were. The fluidity and athleticism in his delivery, which provides optimism for his chances to stick as a major league starter, even if it's not at the very top of The Next Great White Sox rotation, is plain to see for everyone.

"I like the way Dane throws the ball," Ian Clarkin said in between sneezes, as half the roster and coaching staff still had their allergies inflamed by a road trip to Knoxville. "He stays in rhythm. I haven't seen Dane — knocking on wood — but I haven't seen Dane get out of rhythm yet since I've known him. Even if he's a little bit more flat some days than others, he's trying to stay in the same rhythm because he's trying to dominate a baseball game. That's always fun to have a teammate that wants to dominate every time out."

Dotson said, like everyone, Dunning has occasional mechanical ruts he can fall into when he dives forward in his delivery, or "gets too quick," that result in him getting under pitches and elevating them. But

given his dedication to nicking the bottom of the zone, it's usually a pretty clear warning sign, and a simple fix away. If you're normally as consistent as a metronome, it becomes easier from a coaching standpoint to know when to intervene.

"You see the body of work and it's got angle and it's down in the zone," Dotson said. "So when he's up in the zone consistently, I know the catcher's not calling it every time. That was something where I went out and talked to him because I had talked to [Winston-Salem Dash pitching coach] Matt Zaleski who had him last year and this year, and that was just a matter of making sure you're staying back, you're not diving toward the plate, especially when you've got guys on base.

"I told him especially when you're going out for the next inning, throw more out of the stretch where you're duplicating there's a guy at first base and you sync back up. It was like a pretty quick adjustment where he got it and didn't have a problem the rest of the game."

The whiffs from breaking balls dissipated a bit as Dunning's night wore on Monday. While few of his 10 hits allowed were struck particularly hard, as it's always said, bloopers and bleeders can't hurt you if you're missing bats instead. On the other hand, while analyzing Double-A infield defense is a long, murky road, Dunning was probably a couple of great plays away from a more sparkling evening.

It wasn't a perfect, jaw-dropping night, but I came away from it thoroughly unconcerned, which from all previous scouting reports, is actually the quintessential Dane Dunning experience. He's in Birmingham, and it's very clear that he belongs.
