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### **White Sox young pitching showing promise**

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 3, 2018

CHICAGO -- White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper makes a quick correction in relation to young hurlers such as Lucas Giolito, Reynaldo Lopez and Carson Fulmer when talk arises of the organization being in Year 2 of its rebuild.

"Listen, we are two months into it," Cooper said. "Last month of September and this month here. Who the hell would want to be judged on two months?"

Cooper's strident and colorful defense of his staff has become a trademark of his highly successful tenure in Chicago. His ire gets especially raised when focus falls upon the early season shortcomings for Giolito and Fulmer.

Giolito, 23, made his 13th start as part of the White Sox on Wednesday in St. Louis. Fulmer, 24, has made 10 starts over his 21 career appearances covering parts of three seasons.

Both Giolito and Fulmer struggled somewhat at the outset of 2018 but have shown promise in each of their last two trips to the mound. And it's that development that is exciting Cooper about the team's future. He's also buoyed by the pitchers not beating themselves as much with walks and getting into too many hitters' counts.

"It's looking better right now, but not taking anything for granted," Cooper said. "We are putting the work in the bullpen, the game and any conversation I'm having with these guys. That's the meat and potatoes, always has been.

"We're afforded the opportunity to give these young guys a chance and go out there every five days, learn the craft, gain experience, find out who's going to be able to be with us when we get to where we really want to be. And we're headed in that direction.

"I personally think when you guys write stuff about their outings, it takes some people to the dark side," said Cooper, who considers himself a highly positive person. "It's quite a tall task, quite a big job, quite a challenge to go from where they were in Triple-A to establishing themselves as a Major League starter. If it was that easy ..."

After a brief pause, Cooper mentioned Randy Johnson, Roger Clemens and Nolan Ryan not grabbing the brass ring the first time around. He also talked about Jon Garland coming to the White Sox as a raw 19-year-old and not being ready for success, but through tireless hard work, helped the White Sox win a World Series title in 2005.

Moncada out of action

A sore right foot caused by a foul ball, a strained left hamstring and a sore left thumb took Yoan Moncada out of Thursday's lineup against the Twins after he left early from Wednesday's game against the Cardinals.

"I took him out in the middle of a ballgame and I told him, 'I can't take you out in the middle of a ballgame and start you the next day. C'mon. Not a good idea,'" said manager Rick Renteria with a smile, adding Moncada shouldn't be absent more than one game. "What we're going to try to do is let him go through his routine today, do his work."

Castillo scratched

Catcher Welington Castillo was scratched from Thursday's starting lineup about two hours prior to scheduled first pitch against the Twins with lower abdominal pain. Omar Narvaez replaced Castillo, finishing 1-for-3 with one run scored and two passed balls, during the 6-5 victory for the White Sox.

Renteria explained the injury a little more postgame.

"He took a ball to the personal region of his body in Kansas City. He reagravated it a little bit," Renteria said. "He was feeling uncomfortable when he came to the ballpark today.

"They checked him out and thankfully everything is good. He'll be able to [play] if he can manage the discomfort, he should be able to participate. Right now it's just day to day, and we'll see how he's doing."

He said it

"The most surprising part for me has been how similar everything was. When you look at the superstars on TV, you don't realize that you're playing the same game, so it's fun." -- rookie outfielder Daniel Palka

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### **White Sox walk off on Thompson's homer**

Win vs. Twins ends Chicago's four-game losing streak

By Max Gelman / MLB.com / May 3, 2018

CHICAGO -- Having lost six straight one-run games, including each of their last three contests, the White Sox finally broke through Thursday night.

With two outs and nobody on base in the bottom of the ninth, Trayce Thompson hit a walk-off homer for a 6-5 win over the Twins as Chicago stole the opener of a four-game weekend series and snapped that ignominious streak. Thirteen of the White Sox first 29 games have now been decided by one run, with Chicago owning a 4-9 record.

"I've been tinkering with some stuff with [hitting coach Todd Steverson and assistant hitting coach Greg Sparks], and I think just not overthinking, having an attainable goal," Thompson said. "That last at-bat, just looking for a fastball to hit, not trying to do too much with it. I feel like even that 1-0 pitch, I feel like I took a good swing, I feel like I just missed it."

The homer was Thompson's third of the season and third career walk-off home run.

The White Sox fell behind early. Reynaldo Lopez started, and after breezing through two perfect innings on 17 pitches, he labored through the third and fourth, allowing five runs (three earned) and putting Chicago in a 5-1 hole in the middle of the fourth.

"I think that today none of my pitches were working as they were supposed to work," Lopez said through team interpreter Billy Russo. "It was a constant battle for me. I have to battle, I have to grind through it and I'm finding ways to just get an out. It was with all my pitches. Today it wasn't my best stuff and it was a battle."

Lopez induced just two swinging strikes despite averaging 9.4 whiffs per start coming into the game. He threw 83 pitches in 6 2/3 innings, though, by far his most efficient outing of the year.

"They're not always gonna have everything go for them," manager Rick Renteria said, "but even if things aren't going well for them, they've gotta continue to pitch and execute. And I think that's what he ultimately ended up doing the last two, two-and-a-half innings, three innings of work."

But in a rare occurrence, Lopez was backed by his offense Thursday after entering the night averaging 2.08 runs of support per start. The White Sox immediately responded after Lopez's rough fourth inning when Daniel Palka hit his second homer of the season. Chicago tacked on runs in the fifth and sixth to tie the game at 5.

The bullpen then shut the door. Four relievers finished the final 2 1/3 innings without allowing a run.

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

In the fourth inning, Lopez issued a four-pitch walk to Eduardo Escobar, and Renteria immediately came out to talk to his young starter. Later, in the seventh, Renteria took a little more time to talk to Lopez on the mound before taking him out of the game. Renteria said those mound visits were spirited, but in a positive manner, so as to promote Lopez's growth as a pitcher.

"He needed to continue to work," Renteria said. "No matter what had happened previous, keep working. You've got a tremendous opportunity to continue to pitch. The game's not over, just keep working."

#### SOUND SMART

For the season, Thompson has five hits with the White Sox in 36 at-bats. Three of the five have been home runs.

#### HE SAID IT

"I'm going to just say it made the end a little bit more exciting." -- Renteria, on Nicky Delmonico getting caught stealing at second base to end the bottom of the eighth inning with Matt Davidson, the team leader in home runs, at the plate

#### UP NEXT

The White Sox continue their series against the division-rival Twins on Friday night at 7:10 CT. Carson Fulmer (2-1, 4.32 ERA) toes the rubber for Chicago, making his second career start against Minnesota. His only other start against the Twins was his first MLB start, last Aug. 21, when he gave up six runs in 1 1/3 innings. Jose Berrios will start for the Twins.

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### **Yolmer Sanchez gave himself a postgame water cooler shower instead of walk-off hero Trayce Thompson**

By Andrew Mearns and Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 3, 2018

The White Sox battled back from a 5-1 deficit against the Twins on Thursday night to bring the two teams even as they entered the bottom of the ninth. The South Side was looking for a hero, and newcomer Trayce Thompson delivered with a mighty blow:

Thompson's blast sailed out for his third homer of the season, and the White Sox won, 6-5.

As Thompson rounded third, his teammates prepared to empty the water coolers on him. Yolmer Sanchez, however, took a different approach:

"I thought it was something fun," said Sanchez to MLB.com's Scott Merkin after the game. "So I just decided to do it."

Why not? Sanchez went 1-for-4 with a pair of RBIs -- the victory was not Thompson's alone, so we say go ahead with that water cooler shower!

Sanchez had already concocted this plan based on a suspicion he had prior to the bottom of the ninth. "I was thinking about that at the beginning of the inning, I knew someone was going to hit a homer, [Matt] Davidson, [Daniel] Palka or Thompson," he said. "So I was ready."

Thompson thought it was hilarious. "That's the first time I've ever seen that in the game," he said. "And I wouldn't expect it to come from anybody else. It was really funny."

Shortstop Tim Anderson agreed:

So, does this mean that if Sanchez ever walks a game off, someone else can dump water on themselves?

"No, no. It's all me," joked Sanchez. "Throw it on me. That's my move."

Fair enough, Yolmer. Fair enough.

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### **These are the AL Central's best pitches**

By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com / May 3, 2018

There is not even an argument. Corey Kluber's curveball is the best pitch among the elite offerings featured by the Indians' talented rotation. There is a case to be made as well that his breaking ball is the best pitch in baseball today.

The running joke in Cleveland's clubhouse is that no one even knows what to call it.

"It's a slider, curve and cutter all in one," Josh Tomlin said with a laugh late last season. "I don't know, man. I just know it's nasty."

Heading into Kluber's start on Wednesday, though, his curveball -- or Klurve, if we want to assign the unique weapon its own moniker -- had company. Twins starter Jose Berrios' breaking ball was tied with Kluber's for the best pitch value (5.4) among curves, per Fangraphs. Berrios has a way to go, though, considering Kluber's pitch has a 104.1 pitch value dating back to 2014, with the runner-up coming in at 54.7 (Lance McCullers Jr.).

Kluber's pitch has been well-documented, so let's take a trip around the American League Central and look at some of the other top offerings for each club.

#### Indians

The pitch: Carlos Carrasco's split-change

What it does: While the pitch is classified as a changeup -- given the 6 mph difference from his fastball -- Carrasco holds the ball with a grip similar to a split-finger fastball. This season, the pitch has featured horizontal movement of minus 7.2 inches on average. It tails away from lefties and in on righties, with a late drop.

What they say about it: "I started throwing it out of the bullpen in 2014. I had a different grip -- like a normal circle-change -- but then I did more of a splitter. It's made a big difference. It's one of the best pitches that I have. I can use it in any count." -- Carrasco

Statcast™ fact: With an average speed of 87.7 mph, Carrasco's changeup is not only swifter than some pitchers' fastballs, but the eighth-hardest changeup in baseball.

#### Royals

The pitch: Kelvin Herrera's two-seam fastball

What it does: Herrera can throw this with basically the same velocity as his four-seamer (97-98 mph range), which is a rarity. Like most two-seamers, there is some sink to it, but Herrera prefers more horizontal movement so it runs away from left-handers ("Eventually, I want them to run out of bat," Herrera says) and in on the hands of right-handers.

What they say about it: "It's definitely my go-to pitch. If it's all on the line, I go with that." -- Herrera

"If it's Game 7 of the World Series and the bottom of the ninth and bases loaded and a 3-2 count, you want Kel's two-seamer. You'll get the weak contact or a strikeout. It's 96-97 and either just drops down really late or moves [horizontally] at the last moment." -- Royals catcher Drew Butera

Statcast™ fact: Entering Wednesday, Herrera had used his sinker 28 times so far this season and had not allowed a hit with it.

#### Tigers

The pitch: Francisco Liriano's slider

How he uses it: Liriano goes with it more often with two strikes or when ahead in the count for swing-and-misses, though he's willing to use it earlier if he's trying for quick innings.

What it does: Liriano's slider has late dive, down and in to left-handed hitters, away to right-handed hitters. But what accentuates it, according to teammates and opponents, is that it's difficult to pick up the spin, because he hides the ball well.

What they say about it: "His slider disappears on you. It kind of comes out of nowhere, and then once it gets out, it's gone again. I think the deception's really big. He comes at you and then he kinda ducks, and then his arm's kind of behind him, and it just appears. I don't know how he does it, but it works for him." -- Tigers catcher John Hicks

Statcast™ fact: Liriano had allowed a .149 opposing batting average against his slider in 2018 through May 1.

#### Twins

The pitch: Berrios' curveball

How he uses it: Berrios throws his curveball roughly 29 percent of the time and uses it as his put-away pitch, throwing it down and away to right-handers. Entering Wednesday, he had registered 26 swings and misses on his curveball, which ranked as the fifth most in the Majors behind Zack Godley, Joey Lucchesi, Charlie Morton and Kluber.

What it does: Berrios' curveball has so much movement it almost looks like a frisbee, as it's more of a sweeping curveball to the glove side instead of a traditional 12-6 curve. It averages 82.4 mph and he gets whiffs on it roughly 14 percent of the time he throws it.

Statcast™ fact: The average exit velocity on Berrios' curveball is just 81.9 mph, which is the ninth-best mark in the Majors among starters. He's also second in the Majors on average exit velocity against on all his pitches.

White Sox

The pitch: Nate Jones' changeup

How he uses it: Jones, who possesses a fastball reaching 100 mph, used the change a handful of times last season. He used it a handful of times this past weekend alone against the Royals and liked the results.

How he throws it: The right-hander throws a two-seamer and doesn't do anything too out of the ordinary with the change, gripping the pitch like a normal circle change on two of the seams. With Jones' high-velocity fastball, he has the strikeout capability, but he's just as satisfied using the change early in the count and getting a quick groundout.

What they say about it: "It's just another weapon in the toolbox. We want to continue with that and see where it takes us." -- Jones

Statcast™ fact: While the sample size is small, Jones has only allowed a .250 slugging percentage against his changeup over 2017-18.

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## **Trayce Thompson plays walk-off hero but has a ways to go in quest to be part of White Sox future**

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 3, 2018

Not every at-bat Trayce Thompson has had since rejoining the White Sox has ended in a walk-off homer.

Even after the celebration-triggering blast that sent everyone home on Thursday night, Thompson is batting just .139 in his second stint on the South Side. But the most recent roundtripper was his third this season — which is half the home-run total of the White Sox outfield — showing he at least has the ability to turn this opportunity into a shot at a place in this team's bright future.

In a rebuilding season that is currently on pace for 100 losses, the White Sox figured why not give a chance to a guy who impressed the organization once upon a time. They traded for him after the Oakland Athletics designated him for assignment, and because offensive production hasn't exactly been abundant from the Opening Day outfield trio of Avisail Garcia, Nicky Delmonico and Adam Engel — plus Garcia's current stay on the disabled list — Thompson has been getting plenty of playing time.

But as he'll readily admit, Thompson hasn't been doing much producing either. His third homer in a White Sox uniform this season was just his fifth hit.

“I feel like I haven’t been taking advantage of it, honestly,” Thompson said, not exactly in the way you’d expect a player to after hitting a walk-off homer. “I feel like the quality of my at-bats isn’t there right now. Obviously that last at-bat was good, but I’ve had too many inconsistent days and I’ve got to be better.

“I witnessed that with the (Los Angeles Dodgers) last year, being with a National League champion team, witnessing the quality of at-bat each day and what it takes to be a Division-I player. At one point in my career, I feel like I did that, and I know I can get back to that. I have to take it one at-bat at a time and try not to do too much.”

One of the silver linings of the White Sox being in rebuilding mode is the opportunity to give players a chance at the major league level and to see what they have in certain guys. It’s what has players like Delmonico, Garcia, Matt Davidson and Yolmer Sanchez — who stole Thompson’s thunder with his post-homer celebration — in prove-it seasons, to show whether they are a part of this rebuild’s ultimate goal while the wealth of highly touted talent continues to develop in the minor leagues.

Thompson can certainly fall into that category. He impressed the last time he played for this team, slashing .295/.363/.533 with five homers and 16 RBIs in 44 games at the end of the 2015 season. That performance allowed the White Sox to turn him into Todd Frazier in a three-team trade, back when they were in win-now mode. But in the meantime, he batted just .207 in more than 100 big league games in 2016 and 2017 and Rick Hahn’s front office stocked the farm system with a fleet of big-time prospects. So now Thompson has to capitalize of this unique opportunity if he’s going to work his way into the long-term future of this club.

For what it’s worth, even with the slow start at the plate, he’s made an impression on his manager.

“It’s very tough for an athletic guy not to impress anybody in the game of baseball,” Rick Renteria said after Thursday’s game. “He moves around very well. You see the power that he has. He’s very graceful in the outfield, has a decent arm, runs well. All those factors play into the opportunity for him to hopefully to continue to develop at the major league level.

“Even though he’s been in the big leagues he’s still chipping away at who he is, he’s still trying to find out who he is and I think he’s got enough confidence to know that he’s got to work through some things and continue to maintain a little bit more consistent approach at the plate and try to get the results that he needs in order to solidify who he is as a Major League Baseball player.”

Will this be the at-bat that turns things around for Thompson? Will he be able to take advantage of this opportunity and become a part of the White Sox plans down the line? That all remains to be seen. But the point is that it will be seen and be seen at the major league level. That’s a big deal for a guy who was DFA’d just a few games into the season.

Thompson obviously wants to be a part of this team, of this organization. He’s got a chance that could play out over the remainder of the season. Thursday was a great highlight, but he’s still got a way to go.

“I know his work ethic and the routines that he’s structured are very very good. He gets playing time. I know we mix him in with a lot of the other guys, but we’ll see if it just continues to come together for him.



"I know he was always well liked within the organization prior to getting moved, and hopefully just getting a little bit more playing time will get him settled in and a little more confident and comfortable. ... It's a confidence builder and it was a very good at-bat."

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**In latest edition of Ricky's Boys Don't Quit, Trayce Thompson completes White Sox comeback with walk-off homer**

By NBC Sports Chicago / May 3, 2018

Have you guys ever heard that Ricky's Boys Don't Quit?

There was yet another edition of that on Thursday night at Guaranteed Rate Field. The White Sox came back from a four-run deficit to beat the Minnesota Twins 6-5 in walk-off fashion.

Acquired by the White Sox on April 19, Trayce Thompson crushed the game-winning homer to send White Sox fans home happy.

It was the 27-year-old's third career walk-off homer, and what a bomb it was.

Yolmer Sanchez was so excited, he gave himself a Gatorade bath. Sure!  
Gatorade for everyone!

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**More important than a win: Moments like this are what the 2018 season is all about for the rebuilding White Sox**

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 3, 2018

If you were watching Wednesday's game against the St. Louis Cardinals, you might have wondered why White Sox skipper Rick Renteria left Lucas Giolito in to serve up a two-run homer to Dexter Fowler.

Giolito struggled mightily through his first four starts of the season but looked a lot better in two road starts over the past week. Giolito was sensational through the first five innings Wednesday, allowing just one hit before coughing up a tie-breaking homer to opposing pitcher Carlos Martinez in the sixth. Still in a 1-0 game, Giolito gave up a one-out single before facing Fowler, a seemingly perfect opportunity for Renteria to bring in a reliever. Instead, Giolito gave up the two-run homer, and the White Sox lost 3-2. It's very possible that the lack of a pitching change cost the White Sox a chance at a comeback win.

But this season is about development, and that includes for current major leaguers like Giolito, Reynaldo Lopez and Yoan Moncada. And for a guy whose terrific performances last season and during spring training had plenty thinking he could be an ace on a White Sox staff of the future, this exact moment of development was far more important than winning one game in May.

In other words, exactly what this season is all about.

"Two different situations that you're using those moments for," Renteria explained a day later, before the White Sox started their four-game set with the Minnesota Twins on the South Side. "I think that we're observing what they're going through in those particular times.

"The other thing is, I had an opportunity in a one-run ballgame to allow him to experience and work through and try to get us in without any more damage. It didn't work out. But he was able

to have that experience to put in his back pocket to understand what it was that he did or didn't do in that moment to give him the best chance to have success.

"You don't have a lot of moments like that. The best place to allow them to experience that is now in the big leagues because there's going to be times ... as we continue to play better, and we're going to want them to be able to get through those and offer them opportunities. And unless I give them a chance to experience it, how are they supposed to learn?"

Renteria's been talking about "learning experiences" all season long, the most important thing for young players at the major league level in a season where the losses are piling up quickly for this team. But the losses were to be expected, as general manager Rick Hahn stated early in the season that this is "the hardest part of the rebuild." At the same time, development at all levels of the organization was expected, too, and this is development in action.

It's moments like these that will give players the experience they need down the line, when the rebuild reaches its apex and is planned to yield a perennial contender.

"I think it's invaluable because you're doing it at the major league level," Renteria said. "As much as everybody goes through the process as you're coming up through the minor leagues, the one place where you need to be able to perform at ... is the major league level. Right now we had an opportunity for him to go out and try to work himself out of that particular situation.

"He gained an experience that he's only going to be able to have in that particular moment, by the way against a pretty good ball club, in an arena in which there was a lot of energy and he tried to do the best he could. I know he walked away from it understanding a little bit more of himself, what he's going to have to do the next time, and I don't think we could have done that in any other capacity, in any other way."

There aren't likely to be a great many fans who look back fondly on a 3-2 loss in May of a season that at its current pace could end with 100 losses. But it's these moments that could end up being some of the most valuable during the rebuild. That way when that contention window opens, these players are ready to compete for championships.

And that is far more important than a single win in a rebuilding season would've been.

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### **Column: Lamenting the decline of the vanishing breed of portly pitchers**

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / May 3, 2018

There are two things everyone loves to watch in a baseball game — position players pitching in blowouts and heavy pitchers in general.

The Giants treated their fans to a combo platter last week, using portly third baseman Pablo Sandoval, aka "Kung Fu Panda," in relief during a blowout loss to the Dodgers.

Sandoval threw five curveballs in a 1-2-3 inning and his "fastball" was clocked as high as 88 mph.

When someone asked where he learned to throw a curve, Sandoval replied: "You don't learn that. You're born with it."

Few organizations are as rigid as the Giants when it comes to using pitchers exclusively to pitch. The last position player to pitch for them was Greg Litton in 1991. Dave Kingman pitched in two games in 1973 and Matty Alou did it once in 1965.

But manager Bruce Bochy decided the time was right, and picked the right man.

"He's always having fun on the mound," Bochy said. "I knew he had a pretty good delivery. I didn't know it was quite this clean and he had a breaking ball like that. It was legit. I think without question, he wanted to do it. He was the perfect guy for today."

Thanks to strength training and better diets, fat pitchers are an endangered species. The days of fat guys on the mound like Rick Reuschel, Gaylord Perry, Mickey Lolich and David Wells are long gone. Only a few obese pitchers remain, including C.C. Sabathia and Bartolo Colon.

Watching the "Panda" was refreshing, and brought to mind the famous quote from lovable closer Rod Beck, who never was bothered by criticism over his weight.

"I've never heard of anyone going on the disabled list because of pulled fat," Beck said.

Sticky business: After some Astros players chided Trevor Bauer for implying on Twitter their pitchers were using illegal substances to increase their spin rate, the Indians pitcher backtracked.

But Bauer continued to suggest that pitchers using substances on the ball is an issue baseball needs to address.

"There is a problem that has to do with sticky substances and spin rates," Bauer said. "We might not have had the technology before to measure how sticky stuff affects the ball, how it spins, how it moves. But, all that research is clear now. We know how it affects spin rate and we know how spin rate affects outcomes and pitches and movements that have a big difference in a game, a season and each individual player's career."

"And it's my opinion that it is the same argument that was used when steroids were going on in the game. If you just look the other way and you let some people do it, the people who chose not to do it are at a competitive disadvantage. And that's what's going on right now."

Whether or not Bauer is right, it certainly makes the upcoming Astros-Indians series that much more interesting.

Crossing the line: According to a New York Times report, Mets general manager Sandy Alderson called baseball writers for their suggestions about his last managerial hire.

If a GM called to ask me who he should hire — an unlikely occurrence to be sure — I first would ask him how much he was paying me to be a consultant. Then I would hang up.

Alderson should be embarrassed to admit he would resort to asking writers whom to hire when he's supposed to have enough expertise to make the decision on his own. Perhaps he was just buttering them up.

And any writer that cooperated with Alderson — assuming any did — should have his head examined. What if the candidate you suggested actually got the job? How could you be objective when analyzing his job performance?

Moreover, how could you be objective analyzing Alderson's job performance when you helped him make such an important decision?

If any baseball writers think someone should be hired or fired, they should write it ... or forever hold their peace.

Freedom of speech: A couple of years ago the Cardinals organization embarrassed itself by making Cubs fans take off or turn inside-out the popular "Try Not to Suck" T-shirts when entering Busch Stadium. The policy later was changed after some bad publicity.

According to the blog Piratesprospects.com, the Pirates organization made a similarly stupid decision recently when it told a fan either to leave, take off or turn inside-out his custom-made T-shirt that said "Spend Nutting Win Nutting."

The play on words referred to Pirates Chairman Bob Nutting, who refused to up his budget during the club's ' window to compete. The fan took off the "offensive" T-shirt, and the Pirates later admitted the security official was out of line for forcing him to remove it.

Amazing how little common sense exists when it comes to ballpark "security."

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### **Trayce Thompson's walk-off homer in 9th gives White Sox 6-5 victory over Twins**

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune / May 3, 2018

Trayce Thompson doesn't think he has seized his second shot with the White Sox yet.

He has had too many inconsistent games, too much trouble putting together quality at-bats.

But when Addison Reed's low 92 mph fastball came his way with two outs in the ninth inning Thursday night at Guaranteed Rate Field he made the most of the opportunity.

The Sox outfielder homered to left field for a 6-5 walk-off victory over the Twins, his third career game-ending home run and first with the Sox. He rounded the bases to a Gatorade shower from his teammates — and the sight of infielder Yolmer Sanchez dumping a tub of liquid on himself.

"That's the first time I've ever seen that in the game," Thompson said. "And I wouldn't expect it to come from anybody else. It was really funny."

Thompson entered the night 4-for-32 with a double and two homers in 11 games since the Sox reacquired him from the Athletics in April. \

Thompson made his major-league debut with the Sox in 2015 before they traded him to the Dodgers in the three-team Todd Frazier deal. His return is a new opportunity with the team that drafted him in the second round in 2009.

"I feel like I haven't been taking advantage of it, honestly," Thompson said. "Obviously that last at-bat was good, but I've had too many inconsistent days and I have to be better. I witnessed

that with the (the Dodgers) last year, being with a National League champion team, witnessing the quality of at-bats each day and what it takes to be a (major-league) player.”

Thompson’s homer completed a Sox comeback from a four-run deficit to help pick up right-hander Reynaldo Lopez, who gave up a season-high five runs — four earned — over 6<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings.

Lopez hasn’t been in the majors long enough to have many hitters who might be classified as thorns in his side. But Logan Morrison, the only Twins hitter he had faced previously, took a step in that direction.

Morrison was 2-for-3 with a home run and three RBIs against Lopez last year while with the Rays.

He added to that tally Thursday with a double, homer and single off Lopez as the Twins took a 5-1 lead against the Sox in the fourth inning.

But Lopez finished his outing by allowing just a single in the fifth, sixth and seventh innings. He gave up six hits with two walks and no strikeouts overall.

“You’re going to have bad days,” Lopez said through a Sox interpreter. “I was feeling good physically and mentally. But I couldn’t find my stuff. It’s just another day and you have to learn and you have to grind through it.”

The Sox totaled 10 runs during their four-game losing streak against the Royals and Cardinals.

They were down three starters Thursday with second baseman Yoan Moncada out healing a number of minor ailments and right fielder Avisail Garcia still rehabilitating from a right hamstring strain. Sox catcher Welington Castillo was scratched before the game with lower abdominal pain.

But they managed to stack up runs against Twins right-hander Jake Odorizzi.

Daniel Palka, facing his former organization, hit his second homer in a Sox uniform to cut the Twins’ lead to 5-3 in the fourth. Sanchez added an RBI single to make it a one-run game in the fifth.

Matt Davidson doubled and Jose Abreu scored on right fielder Robbie Grossman’s fielding error to tie it in the sixth.

Sox relievers Luis Avilan, Juan Minaya, Aaron Bummer and Nate Jones held the Twins scoreless over the final 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings to set up Thompson’s big ending. Sox manager Rick Renteria said he believes Thompson still is trying to find himself at the plate, but he hopes Thursday was a start.

“I know he was always well-liked within the organization before getting moved, and hopefully just getting a little bit more playing time will get him settled in and a little more confident and comfortable,” Renteria said. “He’s still a guy who will mix and match and we’ll platoon with. That was a pretty good righty reliever he hit that ball off of, so good for him. It’s a confidence builder and it was a very good at-bat.”

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**Column: What being called a homer means to Hawk Harrelson and other nuggets from his new book**

By Phil Rosenthal / Chicago Tribune / May 3, 2018

After so many years of listening to Hawk Harrelson, one might well wonder what's left to be said.

But have you heard the story about minor-league manager Granny Hamner, the rubber glove and Vaseline? Or walking out of a theater showing "Debbie Does Dallas"?

Harrelson has a new memoir, "Hawk: I Did It My Way," out from Triumph Books, chock full of stories, old scores and other remembrances from the former ballplayer, pro golfer and baseball executive who's wrapping up his run as a White Sox announcer this season.

(One question: Why not a title such as "Put It on the Shelf — Yesss!" "It's Not Ovah" or "You Can Book It"?)

You can skim the pages to find who was a mean drunk and who could fight, which players knew the game and respected it.

You also find out which media members irked Harrelson over the years, starting with the late Cleveland columnist Hal Lebovitz, who Hawk says was the first to burn him back in 1969.

Never mind the now-dead Chicago "old-time writer" he accuses of anti-Semitic criticisms of White Sox and Bulls Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf.

But just to see how much you know about Kenneth Smith Harrelson without picking up his new book, here's a little quiz compiled from details in it. Good luck. (Answers at the end.)

1. What is Harrelson's response to being labeled by critics "the biggest homer in broadcasting"?
  - a. A compliment.
  - b. An insult.
  - c. A misunderstanding of what an announcer does.
  - d. The sort of thing one expects from a "hineybird."
2. As Harrelson tells it, why did Dick Howser first dub him "Hawk" in 1959?
  - a. Harrelson's profile, especially his nose, resembled that of a bird.
  - b. Harrelson swooped in on defense like a predator.
  - c. Harrelson's swing made Howser think of a cartoon character named "Henrietta Hawk."
  - d. Harrelson reminded him of another player who was often in hock.
3. Which of these did Harrelson not experience?

- a. He was shot at least three times.
  - b. He broke his nose five times.
  - c. He nearly drowned skinny-dipping as a teen.
  - d. He tried drinking Old Spice.
4. Why does Harrelson write of College Football Hall of Fame coach Pat Dye, "I owe him one."
- a. Dye, an All-American at Georgia, convinced him to choose baseball over a football scholarship with the Bulldogs.
  - b. Dye and his brother beat up two of Harrelson's high school football teammates after losing a game to them.
  - c. Dye loaned him meal money after his wallet was stolen during a visit to Augusta, Ga.
  - d. Dye introduced him to cigarettes.
5. To what is Harrelson referring when he writes: "Sometimes it taught me a lesson or kept me grounded ... and I never let it interfere with my work"?
- a. Betting on golf.
  - b. Betting on pool.
  - c. Drinking.
  - d. Getting beaten up.
6. Not all alcohol has the same effect on Harrelson, it turns out. Some makes him sick. Some makes him crazy. What eventually became his adult beverage of choice?
- a. Gin.
  - b. Bourbon.
  - c. Vodka.
  - d. None of the above.
7. Harrelson skipped school at age 9 to see the Yankees play an exhibition against the Reds in his home town. What lasting memory did Mickey Mantle give the youngster?
- a. Mantle reeked of booze and gave him no mind as he talked up an attractive young woman.
  - b. Mantle went 0-for-4 and committed an error but kept his head held high.
  - c. Mantle told him to beat it when he asked for an autograph, then spit without breaking stride.

- d. Mantle gave him a baseball that for many years was his most prized possession.
8. Georgia coach Wally Butts recruited Harrelson, a high school quarterback. A year earlier he had recruited Fran Tarkenton. What did Butts tell Harrelson and his mother?
- a. Harrelson could expect to start as a sophomore.
  - b. Harrelson would need to become a tight end.
  - c. Harrelson should go with baseball if the bonus money was right.
  - d. Harrelson's arm would make him ideal to complement Tarkenton's mobility.
9. Which of these now-deceased people did Harrelson never meet?
- a. John Wayne.
  - b. Dean Martin.
  - c. Payne Stewart.
  - d. Ben Hogan.
10. How did Harrelson save the life of teammate Lew Krausse Jr.?
- a. Pulling Krausse back onto a seventh-floor hotel balcony from which he had been hanging.
  - b. Making sure the gun Krausse traveled with wasn't loaded.
  - c. Suggesting Krausse sleep in and book a later flight, avoiding a plane that crashed.
  - d. Steering him away from a would-be girlfriend who wound up as one of Charles Manson's followers.
11. What happened in 1967 when Harrelson criticized A's owner Charlie Finley for firing Alvin Dark?
- a. Finley fined him.
  - b. Finley traded him.
  - c. Finley released him.
  - d. Finley admired his moxie.
12. Of whom did Harrelson write, "Not only would I learn how smart he was — only the most intelligent man I would ever know — he was fair"?
- a. George Steinbrenner.
  - b. Jerry Reinsdorf.



c. Joe Torre.

d. President Donald Trump.

13. Who does Harrelson call “ ‘New York’ smart, and that’s meant as a compliment?”

a. George Steinbrenner.

b. Jerry Reinsdorf.

c. Joe Torre.

d. President Donald Trump.

14. Which White Sox manager did Harrelson write that he “really liked,” although “a couple of times he walked out to the mound to make a pitching change but forgot to have any relievers up in the bullpen”?

a. Terry Bevington.

b. Gene Lamont.

c. Robin Ventura.

d. Jerry Manuel.

15. Harrelson said he “sort of loved stirring the pot between White Sox and Cubs fans because I believed it has been a healthy rivalry that heightens the city’s general interest in baseball.” Whom did Harrelson write he wanted to tell this to in order to ensure he understood this dynamic and criticism it engenders?

a. Jason Benetti.

b. Tom Ricketts.

c. Rick Renteria.

d. Ron Santo.

Answers: 1. a — “I love to win,” Harrelson writes. “I love to see the people I am close to win”; 2. c — Howser actually may have been referring to Henery Hawk, an aggressive but naive upstart taking cues from Foghorn Leghorn in Looney Tunes cartoons; 3. c; 4. b; 5. d; 6. c; 7. c; 8. a; 9. b — Among living people he is sorry he never has met is Neil Diamond; 10. c — Krausse avoided the crash of Continental Flight 11 in 1962, but he once was held over the side of a balcony by a teammate and later came back at him with a gun with which he traveled; 11. c — By placing him on irrevocable waivers, Finley enabled Hawk — then making \$12,000 on a last-place team — to accept a \$150,000 offer from the Red Sox, who were en route to the American League pennant; 12. b; 13. d; 14. a; 15. a.

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**White Sox's Joakim Soria says he won't let blown save have negative effect on him**

By Andy Martinez / Chicago Tribune / May 3, 2018

Despite blowing the save in his last outing Tuesday against the Cardinals, White Sox closer Joakim Soria's faith in his ability remains sky-high.

"The confidence in all my pitches is there," Soria said. "I keep working hard, working to make the hitters work, trying to not allow walks because that's something that damages pitchers, and force hitters to put the ball in play."

After Matt Carpenter hit a home run off Soria in the ninth inning Tuesday, Yadier Molina singled in Marcell Ozuna in a 3-2 Sox loss. It was Soria's second blown save of the season and his first loss. It also snapped his scoreless inning streak at seven.

Keeping his closer's mindset, Soria isn't worried about Tuesday's result.

"That's part of the experience that you learn from playing so long," the 12th-year veteran said. "There always are going to be bad days and good days. The baseball season is too long to dwell on one single day and base the whole season on one game."

"One has to learn from the bad outings and try to stay ahead."

That's something he tries to impart on the younger players.

"The one thing you can teach is to be yourself and work hard and to be a leader by example," Soria said. "You just have to do your work and be a leader by what you do behind the scenes, by your preparation, your mental preparation."

On the mend: Yoan Moncada was pulled in the eighth inning of Wednesday's 3-2 loss to the Cardinals with left hamstring tightness and also mentioned a sore right foot and left thumb after the game.

Manager Rick Renteria held the second baseman out of Thursday's starting lineup as a precaution.

"Monky's doing fine," Renteria said. "He was tested. Everything looked fine. We're trying to get these guys to continue to stay hydrated. It might have been more of a cramp than anything."

Moncada was available to pinch hit Thursday if necessary.

"What we're trying to do is let him go through his routine today, do his work," Renteria said. "I told him to be ready for, potentially, maybe an at-bat. Otherwise we'll try to give him the day and see where he's at. I expect to see him (play) tomorrow."

Avi improving: Outfielder Avisail Garcia still is working toward a return.

Garcia, who was placed on the 10-day disabled list April 24, has been out with a Grade 2 hamstring strain and general manager Rick Hahn told reporters Tuesday it would take a few weeks before he could be active in the majors.

“He's doing very well, pain free, stretching very well,” Renteria said. “He's still a bit limited in the weight bearing aspect of it. He still has to go through the process of continuing his active work, sprints, things of that nature, and then we'll see where we're at.”

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## **White Sox coach Daryl Boston and brother D.J. both plying their trade in Chicago**

By Andy Martinez / Chicago Tribune / May 3, 2018

Daryl Boston had to do a double take.

When the White Sox first base coach answered a phone call from younger brother D.J., he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

“He was like, ‘Hey man they have a (new baseball) team in Rosemont, I have a shot at getting a job,’” Daryl recalled. “I was like, ‘Oh, Lord, here we go.’”

D.J. Boston, who was named the hitting coach of the American Association expansion Chicago Dogs on April 25, was taking another step in his brother's footsteps.

“He knows I want to be involved with coaching and he knows my passion,” D.J., 46, said. “He was happy. Then came the afterthought of ‘in Chicago?’ so we kind of put two and two together and started laughing.”

Baseball runs deep in the Boston family.

Henry Boston Sr., Daryl and D.J.'s father, grew up in Cincinnati and played for a regional Negro leagues team, the Cincinnati Tigers in the 1960s. He also coached Little League in Cincinnati.

“They were more of a local team,” Daryl, 55, said. “When the barnstormers would come to town, they would play the Cincinnati Tigers. They played in the tri-states in Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio.”

The eldest Boston brother, Henry “Hank” Boston Jr., played baseball and was scouted by the Cubs, but an injury derailed his career.

Daryl's twin brother, David, went to Triton College in suburban River Grove and played center field alongside future big-leaguers Kirby Puckett and Lance Johnson. The Reds drafted him in the fourth round of the 1983 draft by the Cincinnati Reds, but he returned to Triton, where an injury ended his pro aspirations.

The Sox drafted Daryl Boston was drafted in the first round in 1981 and he eventually played 11 years in the major leagues with the Sox, Mets, Rockies and Yankees.

“Somewhere along the line, we just seemed to excel in baseball,” Daryl said. “We're a baseball family. Baseball is just a rich tradition growing up in Cincinnati.”

For D.J., the youngest Boston brother, his strongest sport in high school was basketball.

D.J. was a Division I All-Ohio second-team player.

“I was more known in the city for playing basketball,” D.J. said. “(I was) just trying to build a path for myself. Not always being known as the younger brother of Daryl.”

But his talent on the diamond wasn't overlooked.

During his senior year in 1989, the Mariners drafted D.J. Boston in the 62nd round. He didn't sign and went to San Jacinto College, a community college near Houston, to play basketball and baseball.

That's where he worked his way back to the family roots.

"I ended up finding my own path in baseball because that was a first passion of mine," D.J. said. "That was my first love. I was able to continue my career playing baseball."

In 1990, the Blue Jays drafted him in the 39th round and subsequently signed him.

"An area scout took a flyer on me and somehow I got drafted," D.J. said. "It was an opportunity."

D.J. worked his way through the minors, reaching Triple-A in the Blue Jays' and Rockies' organizations.

He played 16 seasons in the minors, nine of them in independent ball.

When his career ended in 2006, D.J. knew exactly what he wanted to do next.

"I still wanted to be involved with the game and giving back to something that I was passionate for," he said.

D.J. coached in the minor-league systems of the Astros and Braves from 2008-2012 and coached in the Atlantic League as well.

When D.J. heard about the opportunity to coach for Chicago Dogs manager Butch Hobson, whom he played for in the Atlantic League, he knew he couldn't pass it up.

"I found a perfect fit with my brother being in Chicago and working with a guy, Butch Hobson, who I've worked with and played for," D.J. said. "The relationship made sense, the opportunity made sense, but also just wanting to still be a part of baseball and hopefully use it as a springboard just as the players do to make it with an organization."

D.J. hopes to make it out to Guaranteed Rate Field for a Sox game soon and hopes Daryl can make it out to Impact Field in Rosemont for a Dogs game.

"He may say that's too far to drive," D.J. said with a laugh.

Daryl won't mind making the trek to Rosemont.

"Oh yeah, he's (only) 30 minutes out," Daryl said. "If they have a game and we have all day off, I'm sure I'll find my way out there sooner or later."

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**Trayce Thompson's walk-off homer lifts White Sox past Twins**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / May 3, 2018

The White Sox haven't had much to celebrate this season, so they did it up right after Trayce Thompson homered against Addison Reed with two outs in the ninth inning for a 6-5 victory over the Twins, halting a four-game losing streak Thursday at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Thompson got the customary bucket of Gatorade poured over him at home plate. And for good measure, teammate Yolmer Sanchez poured a bucket over himself.

"I knew someone was going to hit a homer, and I was thinking about doing that at the beginning of the inning," said Sanchez, the Sox' clubhouse clown who also drove in two runs. "So I was ready. It was fun."

"That's the first time I've ever seen that in the game," said Thompson, who was hitless with two strikeouts in three at-bats before the game-winner and is hitting .140. "And I wouldn't expect it to come from anybody else. It was really funny."

Thompson has five hits for the Sox (9-20), three of them homers. This was his third walk-off, the first two with the Dodgers in 2016. The homer, on a 3-1 pitch, carried 403 feet.

Right-hander Reynaldo Lopez pitched without his best fastball and slider but got through 6 2/3 innings without a strikeout, holding firm after falling behind 5-1 in the fourth inning and retiring nine of the last 10 batters he faced.

Lopez induced only two swinging strikes from the 83 pitches he threw and gave up three of the six hits he allowed to Logan Morrison, whose homer in the fourth gave the Twins the 5-1 lead.

The Sox came back against right-hander Jake Odorizzi with Sanchez's 16th and 17th RBI via a ground-ball out and single, designated hitter Daniel Palka's second homer and Matt Davidson's double off the wall that led to a run after right fielder Robbie Grossman's error allowed Jose Abreu to score from first.

"You're going to have bad days," said Lopez, who was also hurt by a pair of passed balls by Omar Narvaez and some soft contact that seemed to frustrate him, prompting a visit from manager Rick Renteria. "I was feeling good physically and mentally. But I couldn't find my stuff. You have to learn, and you have to grind through it."

"He was flustered for many reasons, of which I didn't necessarily have a conversation with him about," Renteria said. "The point is, it doesn't really matter what happens around you. You have to keep working. So for me that's a moot point. It was more whatever you think is occurring around you, stay focused on your job. That's what we were trying to impart."

Moncada doesn't start

Second baseman Yoan Moncada did not play but was available to pinch-hit a day after exiting the game in St. Louis with a sore hamstring, foot and thumb.

"Moncada is doing fine," Renteria said. "I expect he should be back in there [Friday]."

Renteria said Moncada's hamstring issue "might have been more of a cramp than anything" and that he talked to the team about proper hydration. Renteria gave Moncada a chance to tough it out and stay in the game Wednesday.

"I took him out in the middle of a game, and I told him, 'I can't take you out in the middle of a ballgame and start you the next day. Come on, not a good idea,'" Renteria said.

Castillo scratched

Catcher Welington Castillo was scratched from the lineup before the game with lower abdominal pain and replaced by Narvaez. Renteria said after the game that the pain stemmed from taking a pitch off the groin and that he is day-to-day.

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### **Yoan Moncada out of White Sox lineup, Castillo scratched**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / May 3, 2018

Second baseman Yoan Moncada was available to pinch hit Thursday night, a day after leaving the Sox' 3-2 loss in St. Louis with a sore left hamstring, right foot and left thumb.

Yolmer Sanchez was in the starting lineup leading off at second base as the Sox opened a four-game series against the Twins at Guaranteed Rate Field.

"Moncy's doing fine," manager Rick Renteria said Thursday. "I expect he should be back in there tomorrow. He was tested, everything looked fine. He's continuing to do all of his routines."

Renteria said Moncada's hamstring issue "might have been more of a cramp than anything" and that he talked with him at length about proper hydration.

"I think he'll be fine," Renteria said.

Renteria gave Moncada a chance to tough it out and stay in the game Wednesday.

"I took him out in the middle of a ballgame and I told him 'I can't take you out in the middle of a ballgame and start you the next day. C'mon, not a good idea,'" Renteria said.

Castillo scratched

Catcher Welington Castillo was scratched from the lineup before the game with low abdominal pain and replaced by Omar Narvaez.

\*Right fielder Avisail Garcia's Grade 2 right hamstring is considerably more serious than Moncada's issue — he's on the disabled list — and while Renteria said Garcia "is doing very well, pain free and stretching very well" it will likely be a few weeks before he's back, the Sox are saying.

Fulmer's small fix

Right-hander Carson Fulmer (2-1, 4.32 ERA), scheduled to start Friday, believes he made "a small mechanical adjustment" that paid off in his last two starts — seven scoreless innings against the Royals on Saturday and six innings of two-run ball against the Mariners on April 23 — that bodes well for future outings.

"Aligning my shoulders [properly]," Fulmer said. "Being a small-statured guy [6 feet] I was trying to create angle driving down the mound when I didn't need to.

"I'm really feeling comfortable with where I am right now."

Part of the battle is mental for Fulmer, who has struggled to consistently command his good stuff ever since the Sox drafted him eighth overall in the 2015 draft.

“I think I’m over the hump of making the game too big sometimes,” he said. “Keep things simple, stay competitive and trust my ability to throw strikes with everything I have. I’m settling in and grasping things more now.”

Fulmer has allowed four walks and seven hits in his last two starts covering 13 innings. Those outings have contributed to a White Sox ERA of 2.95 ERA in 10 games since April 23, the the second-lowest mark in the American League and fifth-lowest in the major leagues.

Broadcast news

Tom Paciorek is filling in as TV analyst during the Twins series, which means a reunion of the Ken Harrelson and Paciorek team Sunday. Harrelson is working home Sundays in this his final season.

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### **Sports media: White Sox-WGN Radio marriage drips with irony but is perfect match**

By Jeff Agrest / Sun-Times / May 3, 2018

John McDonough’s biggest coup after he became Blackhawks president in 2007 wasn’t putting home games on TV or bringing back Pat Foley or re-establishing ties with team legends.

It was getting Hawks games on WGN Radio.

Keenly aware of the station’s reach with its powerful signal and promotional abilities, McDonough gave the Hawks a radio platform they had never had.

So when the White Sox were let out of their deal with WLS-AM (890) in January because the station’s owner, Cumulus Media, sought to cancel broadcasting contracts as part of its bankruptcy filing, they knew where to look first.

“WGN was at the top of our list of places we wanted to be,” said Brooks Boyer, the Sox’ senior vice president of sales and marketing. “What was great about WGN is they wanted baseball back on their air and saw this as a great opportunity. WGN in this market is synonymous with baseball, and they know how to do it.”

The move dripped with irony. WGN-AM (720) had carried Cubs games since seemingly the beginning of time. The station aired its first regular-season Cubs game in 1925, and it carried the team through 2014. So forgive Sox fans if they shuddered at the thought of setting their car radio to the frequency.

Boyer said the Sox never batted an eye.

“It did not bother us, and we did not have a second thought of, ‘Oh, that’s the Cubs’ old station,’” Boyer said. “The reality is, the Cubs are on our old station. What’s the big deal?”

True enough, the Sox called WSCR-AM (670) home for 10 years before heading to WLS. They also called WGN home from 1927 to ’43, but they were on a number of stations back then, before the advent of exclusive radio deals.

There also was the way the Cubs-WGN relationship ended. The station cited financial losses and poor ratings when the rebuilding Cubs left for WBBM-AM (780) after the 2014 season. They moved to The Score, a sister station of WBBM, after the 2015 season. We all know what has happened since their departure.

Now, WGN is in a multiyear deal with another rebuilding team, and one that doesn't have the local fan base or national following of the Cubs.

But the station and the Sox are perfect for each other.

In fact, station manager Todd Manley said WGN had been thinking about the Sox "for the last few years."

"In many ways, it gets back to our roots of telling great Chicago stories, and there's a great story there brewing," he said.

When the Sox became "free agents," as Boyer put it, they had only weeks to finalize a contract, and there was a season's worth of programming to negotiate.

"The reality is, these things usually take about six months, and we did this in less than two weeks," Boyer said of the deal, which was announced Feb. 14, the day pitchers and catchers reported. "It was quite remarkable. You have to start from that fundamental base of trust."

There were plenty of overlapping relationships to ease the stress of the situation, thanks to the Sox' deal with WGN-TV. Plus, both sides wanted it to happen.

"I think it probably started with the notion that we wanted to figure out a way," Manley said. "So it immediately got to the point of, we've got some games to produce, and let's figure this out as quickly as we can."

The Sox, with Ed Farmer and Darrin Jackson on the call, join the Hawks and Northwestern football and basketball in WGN Radio's sports stable. When conflicts arise, the Hawks have priority contractually, but Manley said the station and teams involved would decide where to air those games as they occur.

Remote patrol

The Cubs have their fifth scheduled appearance this season on ESPN and first on "Sunday Night Baseball" on Sunday against the Cardinals (who else?). That means Cubs fans will learn what Alex Rodriguez thinks of their team.

Matt Vasgersian is the new play-by-play voice, and analyst Jessica Mendoza returns, but viewers learn quickly that A-Rod is the star of the show. Granted, he was very good in the studio for Fox — you might remember the playful banter he, Frank Thomas and Pete Rose shared during the Cubs' World Series run — but he's still finding his footing in the booth.

- Retired Cowboys tight end Jason Witten was hired to replace Jon Gruden on ESPN's "Monday Night Football." The Dallas Morning News reported that Witten was offered between \$4 million and \$4.5 million per year.



That's a tidy sum for someone with zero broadcast experience (Gruden made \$6.5 million per year). ESPN must be hoping Witten will be the next Tony Romo, who was a revelation last season for CBS. Witten joins new play-by-play voice Joe Tessitore on "MNF."

- Peter King is leaving Sports Illustrated after 29 years to work for NBC Sports full-time. King's longtime "Monday Morning QB" column will appear on NBCSports.com, and he'll play a role on all of the network's sports platforms. SI, which new owner Meredith has up for sale, will maintain King's website, TheMMQB.com.

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### **Getz on White Sox player development: 'We still have a lot of work to do'**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / May 3, 2018

Chris Getz knows the White Sox' rebuild is in his hands now.

As director of player development, Getz, 34, the ex-Sox infielder who cut his teeth in the Royals' player-development department before the Sox pried him away in December 2016, runs the franchise's most fascinating and arguably most important operation.

The pieces for a bright Sox future were laid when Chris Sale, Adam Eaton and Jose Quintana — to name three — were traded for a bevy of premium prospect talent that vaulted the Sox' farm system from bottom-feeder to one ranked fourth by Baseball America.

"We have a pool of high-ceiling talent," Getz said. "We still have a lot of work to do. There's no question about it. That's where our role on the PD side comes in, to teach these guys how to play the game properly and give them a strong understanding of who they are as players.

"But we need to be relentless in this pursuit because the reality of this game is we're going to have players who do not reach their potential. And there are going to be injuries along the way, so we can't let up."

Injuries to prospects Eloy Jimenez, Luis Robert, Alec Hansen, Micker Adolfo, Jake Burger and Zack Burdi underscore that reality. The progress of those staying out of the trainer's room — Michael Kopech, Dylan Cease, Luis Basabe and Dane Dunning — has softened the blow.

By and large, there's nothing unique about the instruction and coaching they're getting in the Sox' system.

"But there are different ways to go about this whole thing," Getz said. "The ultimate goal is to maximize the skill sets of players. Ours is unique in the sense that we incorporate the player in the process with our staff so the player knows what he needs to work on. We'll meet at certain points to see where we are at. I really like when the players are a part of it; there's more buy-in and a better commitment."

From a "positive" experience with the Royals, whose rebuild culminated with a World Series title in 2015, Getz said he has incorporated some elements into his plan.

Those plans "are detailed to the point where we clearly define objectives that are attainable in the near future," Getz said. "Once we tackle those, then we focus on a different area. You have your initial assessment — the ceiling of the player — and how do we get him there. Through that there is Step 1, 2 and 3 and hopefully a finished product being the player we think he can be."

A year and a half into the job, Getz now knows the system inside out. He emphasized patience when he was hired, and he's sticking to that virtue now, a note to fans clamoring to see a Kopech promotion from Class AAA Charlotte right now.

"You can learn so much through the failures of the game," Getz said. "The key is, what positive can I take from this? It's just really important to let these players experience success and struggles, so ultimately they know how to handle both."

When the outcome is success, well, that's what it's all about for a player-development boss.

"It can be so rewarding when you have those moments where the player gets it," Getz said. "We can be working on driving the fastball the other way or learning how to pull the ball or turning the double play . . . sometimes you need to tell a player a hundred times, sometimes you need to tell him twice, but when they finally get it and it clicks, there is no more rewarding feeling in the world because you know how it's going to impact his career. And then when these guys bring their game to a higher level, hopefully to the major leagues, it's a pretty good feeling."

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### **Thompson's walk-off home run lifts Chicago White Sox to win**

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / May 3, 2018

It's just more than a month into the season and Trayce Thompson already is playing for his fourth team.

Accurately describing the dizzying stretch that has taken him from the Dodgers to the Yankees to the Athletics to the White Sox as "crazy," Thompson regained some of his sanity in Thursday night's 6-5 victory over the Twins at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Trailing 5-1 early and with a fifth straight loss looking very likely, the Sox rallied back to tie Minnesota while setting the stage for Thompson.

On a 3-1 pitch from former minor-league teammate Addison Reed with two outs in the ninth inning, Thompson launched a 403-foot home run to left field to give the White Sox the win.

A standup player with the Sox before he was traded to the Dodgers following the 2015 season, Thompson is still the same and not blaming anyone but himself for his tumultuous recent ride.

"I feel like the quality of my at-bats isn't there right now," he said. "Obviously, that last at-bat was good, but I've had too many inconsistent days and I've got to be better. I witnessed that with the (Dodgers) last year, being with a National League champion team, witnessing the quality of at-bat each day and what it takes to be a Division I player."

Still only 27 and seemingly recovered from a two-year run of back injuries, Thompson is trying to apply what he learned in Los Angeles.

"Even though he's been in the big leagues, he's still trying to find out who he is," said White Sox manager Rick Renteria.

Making his sixth start of the season for the Sox, Reynaldo Lopez came in with a 1.78 ERA, the fifth lowest in the American League. The 24-year-old rigthy also was averaging just 2.08 runs per start, the fourth-lowest offensive backing in baseball.

Lopez had a rough start against Minnesota, giving up 5 runs (4 earned) on 6 hits and 2 walks in 6 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings, but at least he got some run support.

"I think I learned today that you're going to have your bad days," Lopez said through a translator. "I couldn't find my stuff. In those bad days you can get frustrated, but you have to keep grinding and learning because those days serve like a learning experiences."

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### **Why the White Sox are the right team for Bruce Rondón's bid at redemption**

By James Fegan / The Athletic / May 3, 2018

Bruce Rondón has the type of stuff that all he needs to do is just throw strikes.

It's such an obvious conclusion from one look at his weaponry — a four-seamer that easily touches 96 mph and piles up swings-and-misses, and an effective, if fly-ball-prone slider — that when asked about it at his locker in Kansas City, he didn't bother using team interpreter Billy Russo, or saying anything at all. He just nodded.

At still just 27 years old despite spending 10 years in the Tigers organization, Rondón is sporting the best swinging-strike rate (16.3 percent) of his entire career so far this season. The whiff rate on his fastball alone (12 percent), which diminished in performance after Tommy John surgery in 2014, has more than doubled in the scant 10  $\frac{2}{3}$  major league innings he's logged this year compared to last season. All the reasons former Tigers general manager Dave Dombrowski anointed Rondón a "closer of the future" before the 2013 season, and the reasons he was such a tantalizing signing this offseason, are readily apparent every time he reaches back for his best heater.

He's also still not in the zone enough. He's walked six batters and hit another in his nine appearances, and a high-and-wild fastball that Omar Narváez couldn't glove wound up putting the go-ahead run in scoring position Sunday in Kansas City.

During the offseason, Rondón was issued a laundry list of mechanical tweaks to incorporate as part of the quest to try to squeeze out just enough command to allow his late-inning-caliber stuff to play like it should.

"The staff here have always been all over me," Rondón said through Russo. "Just little things in my mechanics. Don't try to turn my body too fast when I pitch. Try to stay tall on the mound instead of going forward too fast, just stay tall. All those things have been very helpful for me."

Of course, most who watched or coached him in Detroit wouldn't point to mechanical issues as the primary fix needed for Rondón. He was famously sent home for "effort issues," at the end of the 2015 season, which was nowhere near the first complaint aired or reported about his makeup and commitment during his long run with the Tigers organization. Listed at 275 pounds, Rondón has long faced questions about whether he could repeat his mechanics more if he were leaner, and the Tigers' public criticism of his effort only heightened the suspicion that he was holding back his own career in that regard.

"In Detroit, I had a lot of ups and downs," Rondón said. "I had some disagreements with the management there. I just thought for me it was the right time to try something new. I wanted to start from scratch in another place and right here has been the perfect place for me to be."

For their part, the White Sox are just going to stick to mechanical adjustments for the time being. Their management style involves not addressing makeup concerns until Rondón forces them to.

“I don’t take into account anything that’s happened to him in his previous organization,” manager Rick Renteria said. “I’ve got to see him with new eyes, and I’ve got to treat him just the way I treat everybody else, which is with respect and dignity, and he’s got to show me the opposite for that to be lost. And I have to tell you, though, it takes a lot to lose that from me.”

In the wide-open, or still-developing, or simply struggling White Sox bullpen, there’s at least a very clear opportunity for Rondón to vault himself back into the high-leverage opportunities he stopped getting in Detroit. Despite pushing back on questions about Rondón’s chances to swiftly move up the relief hierarchy when the pitcher was first called up, Renteria has given Rondón chances to be the seventh-inning guy in close games, which affirmed the right-hander’s belief that he’s in the right organization to reclaim the trajectory his career once followed.

To be fair, it’s been pretty shaky so far. Rondón was nailed during three scoreless innings during the marathon 14-inning loss in Oakland, and shelled by Houston his next time out. He struck out the side in his White Sox debut and retired the first seven hitters he faced this year, but there have been enough times when he’s jogged out of the bullpen with no command to give him a 5.06 ERA despite superior peripheral stats and stuff. With Zack Burdi still rehabbing from Tommy John surgery, Ryan Burr and Ian Hamilton still in Double-A Birmingham and maybe half of the White Sox’s bullpen of the future still trying to develop as starters, Rondón has as much potential as anyone the Sox can turn to right now, even if they’re not the first ones to try to unlock it.

“As far as I’m concerned, with us he’s been great,” Renteria said. “You get no complaints from anybody in our clubhouse, any of the staff. We’ve asked him to do every single thing that we’ve wanted him to do, and he’s doing it. So for me, that’s just his past; I can’t speak to it because I wasn’t there. I can only speak to what we’ve seen here, and we’re really happy that he’s here.”

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### **Five observations: Trayce Thompson’s walk-off redeems difficult night for Reynaldo López**

By James Fegan / The Athletic / May 3, 2018

Between their four-game losing streak, the absence of Reynaldo López’s best stuff and the defensive miscues that shoved them into a 5-1 hole against the playoff-hopeful Twins, the White Sox (9-20) had no business winning Thursday’s game.

But by the sixth inning, the deficit was erased, and by just after 10:00 p.m. on a drizzly night at Guaranteed Rate Field, Trayce Thompson deleted the night’s difficulties from memory with a towering, two-out, walk-off home run to left off Addison Reed.

It was Thompson’s third — and most dramatic — homer since coming over from the A’s. Thompson has hit walk-off home runs before (he hit two with the Dodgers), but Yolmer Sánchez’s celebration of dunking himself with ice water while waiting for Thompson at home plate was unprecedented.

“That’s the first time I’ve ever seen that in the game,” Thompson said. “And I wouldn’t expect it to come from anybody else. It was really funny.”

Thompson shows enough glimpse of his promise

Massive, and now dramatic home runs have been the bright spots of Thompson's already-tumultuous season with four different organizations, and he's hoping the Sox will see the promise in his ability to jump on low 3-1 fastballs and look beyond the overall struggles his season line indicate. He was 0-for-3 with a pair of ugly strikeouts going into his final at-bat, and he admitted he's still making tweaks to try to re-find the form that made him a trade asset after the 2015 season.

"I feel like I haven't been taking advantage of it, honestly," Thompson said when asked about the opportunity he's getting in Chicago. "I feel like the quality of my at-bats isn't there right now. Obviously that last at-bat was good, but I've had too many inconsistent days and I've got to be better. I witnessed that with the team last year, being with a National League champion team, witnessing the quality of at-bat each day and what it takes to be a Division I player. At one point in my career, I feel like I did that, and I know I can get back to that. I have to take it one at-bat at a time and try not to do too much. I'm happy to be here. I want these guys, I want this group to really win."

Palka Fest continues

Daniel Palka came into the night with a 58.1 percent swing rate. If he were a qualified hitter, and not just a guy called up the other week, this would put him behind only Javier Báez for the title of freest swinger in all of baseball. Because of this, and because Palka has typically showed a healthy willingness to walk in the minors, some sort of hard correction — be it from Palka or the league — seems imminent.

But it didn't come Thursday, as he stayed hacking with gusto, and Twins starter Jake Odorizzi hung him a belt-high slider to launch 432-feet into the night in the fourth for his second home run of the season. The White Sox are not rich enough in options to turn their noses up at riding whatever wave he's on.

Anachronisms

Manager Rick Renteria was talking the other day about how hitters aren't taught to lift their barrel for high pitches and try to "tomahawk" the ball as he was instructed back in his playing days. It's also become readily apparent for the last few years that managers are no longer willing to stick with pitchers to close out tight innings in close games if their pitch count is anywhere near 100. Yet with Odorizzi on pitch No. 106 in the sixth inning, the Twins kept him in to face Matt Davidson — unquestionably the Sox's best hitter this season — with the tying run on first. And despite Davidson's aptitude for golfing fly balls, he top-handed a high fastball to the wall in right to tie the game at 5-5.

"Joey [McEwing] when [Davidson] did that, said, 'Now that's the way you tomahawk a pitch,'" Renteria said. "He got on top of a pitch that he was able to get to and barrel it well. Everybody knows if you stay under that pitch, there's a good chance you are going to swing and miss it. He was able to barrel it and get the barrel on top of the baseball."

Bizarre lack of strikeouts strikes everyone

López came into Thursday night with the highest strikeout rate of any of the White Sox's five regular starters and has the team's only double-digit strikeout effort of the entire season. Yet

he's now punched out just four hitters in 18 innings over his last three starts, after a bizarre strikeout-free night against Minnesota.

Not only was López's fastball two ticks below his season average of 95 mph, but he inexplicably abandoned his slider, throwing it just twice when it's been his breakout pitch this season. Considering getting knocked around for four earned runs in 6 2/3 innings and allowing a Logan Morrison homer constituted his worst start of the season, he will probably work to reverse the trends of this night.

"I think that today none of my pitches were working as they were supposed to work," López said through team interpreter Billy Russo. "It was a constant battle for me. I have to battle, I have to grind through it and I'm finding ways to just get an out. It was with all my pitches. Today it wasn't my best stuff and it was a battle."

Passed balls is not a great category to lead the league in

Catching defense is complicated, deeply nuanced and not easily reduced to anything statistically measurable. But it is (mostly) possible to count the number of pitches a catcher lets squirt by that he shouldn't, and the White Sox are just doing a whole lot of it. A pair of rapid-fire passed balls from Omar Narváez in the top of the third vaulted him to five on the season, the most of any catcher in baseball despite this being only his 11th start, and took the Sox's team total to eight, also the most in baseball. The miscues allowed Morrison to score the Twins' first run of the game and allowed Gregorio Petit to put himself in position for a sacrifice fly for their second.

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### **Seby Zavala has a history of sneaking up on people, but his hot start is difficult to ignore**

By James Fegan / The Athletic / May 3, 2018

Bernardo Sebastian Zavala was stalking around in the outfield during a mid-week game for San Diego State when Nick Hostetler got around to seeing him ahead of the 2015 draft, at the behest of White Sox west coast crosschecker Derek Valenzuela. Beset by injuries, strikeouts and, until his junior year, an underwhelming slugging percentage, Zavala had inspired his share of doubters who didn't trust a late power surge from a college player without a clean medical report. But the Sox scouting staff loved the athleticism, clearly on display with a catcher running around the outfield, and he certainly impressed in the small window he had to prove himself.

"He swung the crap out of it that night," Hostetler, the White Sox's director of scouting, recalled.

Fast-forward three years and Zavala is in a similar boat. As a 12th-round pick who didn't stand out in his first full year in the organization, and who is slotted behind 2016 No. 10 overall pick Zack Collins, it's been hard to know how much credence to give to Zavala seemingly producing numbers comparable to or better than a former top-100 prospect.

On a Double-A Birmingham team with Collins and Eloy Jiménez, Zavala is tied for the team lead in home runs (six, along with the surprising Matt Rose), and pacing the club in slugging percentage (.597). He's also striking out a lot (31.6 percent), and his breakthrough as a prospect to watch is coming at an age (he'll turn 25 in August) that makes it hard to be sure how much to believe in his potential to be the White Sox's catcher of the future.

"This is what's great about baseball," Hostetler said. "Guys just click at different times. He's in terrific shape. He's had a hard time in the past keeping weight on. He figured out the proper diet

and is in great shape. As much as people want black and white, there is a whole lot of grey area in prospects.”

Like Collins, though, Zavala has faced his own defensive questions. With five passed balls already this season, he has more than nearly every other team in the Southern League, and his throwing arm has been described as “fringy,” though his caught stealing rates have taken a turn for the better since the Arizona Fall League (42.8 percent since October). Zavala has always been revered for his game calling, and curtailing the running game matters less than ever these days, so a league scout who recently watched him expressed confidence he could stick behind the plate if he becomes more of a bat-first guy. Which again raises the question of how real this unfathomably hot start to 2018 really is.

That Zavala could challenge Collins was a fun notion last year, when Zavala hit .282/.353/.499 in a year split between Kannapolis and Winston-Salem. But now it’s more of a real consideration. After an extremely slow start, Collins punctuated an eight-game hitting streak with a home run Wednesday night to go along with his recent Southern League Player of the Week honors and his constantly gargantuan walk rates. He’s also still incorporating a swing change to reduce his hitch and has plenty of work to do defensively despite improving his throwing accuracy and fitness for the 2017 season.

If nothing else, scouts trust Zavala can turn around a fastball, which is what Collins is trying to prove with his swing. But Zavala will be tested to show he can hold up and make contact against advanced sequencing and breaking stuff in the upper levels. With the steps both face in their development, it’s conceivable that the 12th-rounder becomes the more reliable major league contributor than the guy Hostetler claimed he would have taken first overall in 2016. Or they could wind up in the same timeshare they’ve been a part of at their past two minor league stops. Or Collins’ raw power and stable on-base rate could win out. Hostetler would count either result as a major victory, even if his reputation as a scouting director is more heavily staked on Collins.

“I pulled Seby’s name off the board too,” Hostetler said. “I don’t give a damn where they come from in the draft. I will be more than happy to see them both playing in Chicago.”

#### Other Barons notables

- Dane Dunning has allowed three runs in 12 innings over the course of two starts since being promoted to Double-A, including six scoreless frames Wednesday night. A league scout praised the life on his fastball and his feel for his slider in his Southern League debut, and Dunning has issued just six walks in 36 1/3 innings so far this year.
- Jiménez must be human after all, because he actually seemed rusty after missing the first two weeks of the season. He’s homered four times in the past 10 games, and while he’s not getting on base at a good rate yet, someone with Jiménez’s power striking out at only a 14 percent clip so far this season should be scary for everyone (in a good way).
- I will be in Birmingham next week. My early goal is to interview around a third of the team.

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#### **Stark: Useless Info Dept., Not Josh-ing Edition**

By Jayson Stark / The Athletic / May 3, 2018

Yeah, not much happened in baseball this week. Only the greatest save of all time. And a man stealing his first base in nine years. And a guy who thinks a normal day at the office involves hitting three home runs.

So never fear. Our Useless Information Department investigators are on all those cases – and much more, of course!

## CRAZY EIGHTS OF THE WEEK

It was the save of the week, the save of the year, the save of the century. It's a box-score line that comes with its very own breeze, at no extra charge.

It was perpetrated by Brewers whiff machine Josh Hader, Monday against the Reds. And we've never seen anything like it:

Eight outs, eight strikeouts. Drive home safely.

"He's more like a guy in a video game," Brewers catcher Jett Bandy told Useless Info. "It's like you created this guy. He's left-handed. He's got the long hair. He's throwing across his body, so it looks like the ball's coming out of the first-base dugout. And he's running it up there at 97 (mph) sometimes. And every time you look up, somebody is swinging and missing."

Yeah, that about covers it, all right. Swing. Miss. Swing. Miss. Swing. Miss. That was Josh Hader's night: 37 pitches, 17 swings, zero balls put in play. In an actual major league baseball game.

Asked what it looked like to his teammates, Bandy (who actually didn't catch Hader that night) let out a chuckle as he searched for the right words.

"Dominance," he said. "Not fair. Supernatural. Just complete domination, really. Just Josh being Hader."

Josh being Hader. Now that's a scouting report with a ring to it. And if you've watched this 6-foot-3 left-hander unleash his untouchable fastball/slider combo on the defenseless earth, as his shoulder-length locks rustle in the breeze, you know just what Jett Bandy is talking about.

Let's take a look at Hader's historic save and his astonishing season. You'll get the idea!

## THE SEASON

— How unhittable has this man been this year? How about this: He has thrown 287 pitches – and given up four hits. Then again, it's hard to give up a hit when the bat never meets the ball. Of those 287 pitches, only 19 have even been put in play (and one of those was a bunt).

When we relayed those numbers to Bandy, he literally shouted: "Oh...my...God. He's got to be pitching from like 46 feet, right?"

— All right, try to digest this: 18 innings, 39 strikeouts, 4 hits. That's Hader's stat line for the year. Got it? Now take another look so it really hits you. There's an argument that this is the most dominant 18 innings of pitching anyone has ever had. Ever. Starter. Reliever. Johnny Vander Meer. Ever.



Here's Hader, compared with the closest stretches I could find:

PITCHER	IP	H	K	BALLS IN PLAY		
Josh Hader (3/29-4/30/18)		18	4	39	19	
Aroldis Chapman (8/13-9/28/14)	17.2		4	35	19	
Craig Kimbrel (5/20-7/13/12)	18	4	34	25		
Pedro Martínez (9/4-10/99)	17	3	32	20		
Eric Gagne (7/9-8/14/03)	18	2	29	33		

— Oh. And there's also this: Guess which pitcher leads the Brewers' team in strikeouts, here in the first week of May? Right you are. It's Josh Hader, relief pitcher.

The Elias Sports Bureau tells us he's the seventh reliever since 2010 to strike out more hitters in a calendar month than anyone on his team. But to actually lead his team in K's heading into May? Just two other relievers could say that: A.J. Ramos of the 2015 Marlins and Tyler Clippard – who somehow led the 2010 (pre-Strasburg-ian) Nationals in K's in April and May (with 40 in 34 2/3 innings).

— More fun with Hader's single-season numbers: His strikeout rate (19.5 per 9 innings) was the highest by any pitcher in any month in the history of baseball...He has faced the opposing No. 3 hitter nine times this year – and not one has put a ball in play (0 for 9, with 9 K's)...He has reached a two-strike count on 53 hitters. Those 53 have gone 0-for-49, with 39 strikeouts and four walks...And when he's pitched with a one-run lead, opponents have gone 1-for-18 with 16 strikeouts. The hit was a Freddy Galvis bunt single. Of course.

So imagine life as a man with a bat, standing 60 feet away from that guy. Asked what the hitters say to him when Hader is pitching, Bandy said: "They don't say anything. They're just baffled."

## THE SAVE

— Has there ever been an 8-out, 8-K save – or an 8-out, 8-K appearance of any kind – before Josh Hader arrived on the mound Monday? Of course not!

— In fact, this was the longest outing by any pitcher in history in which every out was a strikeout. The previous record was seven – shared by the eclectic trio of Dylan Bundy (July 6, 2016), Tom Niedenfuer (May 18, 1985) and Tim Stoddard (April 30, 1979).

— Now consider how hard it is to strike out eight hitters and only throw 37 pitches. It's so tough that no one, in the three decades in which we have pitch-count data, has ever done it. The old record in an outing with that few pitches: 7 whiffs, by (who else?) Shawn Camp, on June 5, 2007.

— And then there's the best tidbit of them all from that night: No Brewers starter has struck out eight in a game in over three weeks (23 straight games – since Zach Davies K'd 8 on April 7).

Just so you know, Elias reports that in the last 20 years, only one relief pitcher has had the biggest strikeout game for his team in a season. That was Liam Hendricks of the 2013 Twins. He also did that by punching out eight – but had to face 24 hitters to do it!

Meanwhile, no Brewers starter has struck out more than eight in their last 50 games. Last to do that was Jimmy Nelson, last Sept. 1. But their closer struck out eight Reds on Monday – in a game in which he only got eight outs. Unreal.

There is actually an incredible GIF out there from that performance that shows Hader blowing away Alex Blandino with a 95-mph inferno-ball – and then shaking his head in disgust because he missed his spot. Now that's dominance. Or is it?

"I don't know," Bandy quipped. "He was probably just shaking his head to get his hair out of his eyes."

Well, whatever he was up to, he spun off the most overpowering relief outing of all time. So we asked Jett Bandy what he would tell his friends and loved ones someday about the night Josh Hader struck out pretty much everybody.

"I'd tell them, 'Go to YouTube,'" Bandy replied, "'and type in 'Josh Hader.'"

### MOOKIE OF THE YEAR WATCH

Does it feel like Mookie Betts hits three home runs in a game once a week, just for his own amusement? Hey, pretty close. A few of our favorite Useless Mookie Info tidbits, after his latest trifecta Wednesday:

### THE FENWAY FACTOR

3-HR games by Mookie in the last 1,478 regular-season games at Fenway: 2.

3-HR homer games by everyone else in that same span: 2 – by Hanley Ramírez (July 20, 2016) and Mark Teixeira (May 8, 2010).

### TWICE IN 15 DAYS

All right, this guy doesn't really hit three in a game once a week. But he did just pull that off twice in 15 days. Only four other hitters in history could say that:

DAYS	HITTERS	DATES
5	Doug DeCinces	Aug. 3-8, 1982
7	Johnny Mize	July 13-20, 1938
11	Willie Stargell	April 10-21, 1971
13	Sammy Sosa	Aug. 9-22, 2001

### THE LEADOFF FACTOR

Two 3-HR games in a season out of the leadoff hole:

Mookie Betts (2018).

End of list.

### THE LITTLE PAPI FACTOR

Career 3-HR games by Mookie – 4

Career 3-HR games by David Ortiz – 0

### THE ONE-MAN TEAM FACTOR

3-HR games this season:

Mookie – 2

Royals – 1

Padres – 1

Marlins – 1

### THE SUNSHINE FACTOR

Bonus note! Betts and Edwin Encarnación hit three on the same day Wednesday – both while playing in the afternoon sun. How 'bout this fun list of times that has happened in day games in the last 75 years (a.k.a, the post-light-bulb era):

May 2, 2018 – Mookie Betts, Edwin Encarnación

Sept. 3, 2006 – Albert Pujols, Ryan Howard

July 20, 2004 – Albert Pujols, Travis Hafner

July 26, 1970 – Johnny Bench, Orlando Cepeda

June 6, 1965 – Johnny Callison, Tom Tresh

### THE OHTANI WATCH

Due to twisted ankles beyond our control, it was a slow week on the Shohei Ohtani beat. But there was this!

Last Friday, he launched a 410-foot home run off a Luis Severino heater that was clocked by Statcast at 97.2 miles per hour.

So perhaps you're wondering how many men have both thrown a pitch at 97 mph or faster and homered off a pitch at 97 mph or faster? Well, thanks for wondering. In the pitch-tracking era (2008-18), just two other guys have done that. Shockingly, neither of them was named Noah Syndergaard:

Jake Arrieta, June 27, 2016 – HR off 99.3 mph pitch from Michael Lorenzen.

Michael Lorenzen, Aug. 19, 2016 – HR off 97.2 mph pitch from Pedro Báez.

And now there are three, thanks to the one, the only Shohei Ohtani.

### ROYAL VISITOR OF THE WEEK

In his first game in Kansas City this season (Opening Day), Matt Davidson hit three home runs. In his third game in Kansas City (last Thursday), he hit two home runs. In his fourth game in KC (last Friday), he hit two more home runs. Which is already pretty flippin' cool.

But what makes it cooler, of course, is that Matt Davidson doesn't play for the Royals. He plays for the White Sox.

Kauffman Stadium opened 45 years ago. And in those 45 years, a total of 405 different men have made it to home plate wearing a Royals uniform.

George Brett never had three multi-homer games in a season at Kauffman Stadium. Bo Jackson never did. John Mayberry never did. Mike Sweeney never did. Just Steve Balboni (1985) and Billy Butler (2009) ever did that.

So the Royals' record for multi-homer games in any season in Kansas City is three. Over 81 games. And a guy who plays for the White Sox just tied that record – in four games. Baseball!

## STRANGE BUT TRUE FEATS OF THE WEEK

— Things I never saw coming: Kendrys Morales has as many stolen bases this season as José Altuve. By that we mean: One. Really.

Altuve led the league in stolen bases in 2014 and 2015. Morales, on the other hand, just swiped his first base in nine years on Tuesday.

According to Baseball-Reference.com's awesome Play Index, he'd gone 919 consecutive games without a steal at the time – the longest streak by any Rickey Henderson Not Wannabe since Tony Clark (yes, that Tony Clark) went 1,010 games without an SB from 1999-2009.

— Don't try this at home: Tuesday night in Houston, the Yankees struck out 14 times (and scored zero runs) against Justin Verlander. And their own starting pitcher (Jordan Montgomery) had to exit after one inning. And they still won.

So when was the last time a team did that? That would be never. Naturally. According to Elias, there hasn't been a single other game since 1893 in which any winning team had its starter go no more than one inning while its lineup was fanning 14 times or more against the other team's starter.

— Don't try this on the road: Here's a little rarity for you, pointed out by our friends at @BrewerNation. On their last road trip, the Brewers got swept in a four-game series (at Wrigley) – and still had a winning record on the trip! (They went 5-0 in Kansas City and Cincinnati.) Must be the ivy.

— Definitely try this on the road: The Rockies won a 1-0 game in Miami last Friday. What made that kind of notable was that the only run was doubled in by Antonio Senzatela. Who is a relief pitcher. Well, you don't see that much.

Last reliever to get a win and drive in the only run in a 1-0 game for any team: Joe Niekro for the Astros, on Aug. 23, 1980, according to Stats LLC.

The only other reliever since 1920 to get a win and drive in the only run with an extra-base hit: Johnny Klippstein for the Reds, on a 13th-inning homer off Don McMahon, on Aug. 6, 1962.

— Walk this way: Buck Showalter intentionally walked Mike Trout three times in four trips to the plate Tuesday. Meanwhile, his own hitters walked zero times, intentionally or otherwise – in 33 trips to the plate. It isn't quite up there with Showalter intentionally walking Barry Bonds with the bases loaded – but speaking of that...

The last player, according to Elias, to get that many intentional walks from a team that never drew any walks itself was – yessir – Barry Bonds, courtesy of Bob Melvin’s Diamondbacks on April 27, 2007.

Last to do it in the American League? That would be George Brett, on July 27, 1985, with Pat Corrales ordering all that intentional walking.

#### USELESS INFO OF THE WEEK

— According to Baseball-reference.com, there have been 13 men who played in the big leagues and were known as “A.J.” There have also been five B.J.s, six C.J.s, five D.J.s, 8 J.J.s, two P.J.s and three R.J.s. That three-homer game by A.J. Pollock on Monday was the first by any of them. You’re welcome.

— They have been playing baseball at Wrigley Field since 1914. So when something happens there that had (gulp) never happened before, it kind of gets our attention. Well, Tuesday was one of those days, according to Elias.

Charlie Blackmon led off the top of the first inning with a homer for the Rockies. Then Anthony Rizzo led off the bottom of the first with a home run for the Cubs. So if you’re paying attention, you know what’s next. No other game, in a century of baseball at Wrigley, had started with both teams’ leadoff hitters bopping a home run.

— That same day, the Rockies’ first two hitters (Blackmon and David Dahl) homered to kick off the game. Not to suggest it had been a while since that happened at Wrigley. But the only other time the visiting team’s first two hitters went deep at The Confines, it was during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration – when Roy Johnson and Rabbit Warstler did the honors for the Boston Bees on Aug. 6, 1937.

— Every time the Yankees rip off a nine-game winning streak (or more), we think about this: Since their last nine-game losing streak (36 years ago), the Yankees have had 15 winning streaks of nine or more.

— Dee Gordon got five hits for the Mariners on Tuesday. Which was one more than the team the Mariners were playing – the A’s (who got four). Last time a player got five hits and the other team got fewer hits than that, according to Elias: Yunel Escobar out-hit the Royals, 5-3, on July 26, 2016.

— Here’s a box-score line that ought to be impossible, courtesy of Doug (Kernels) Kern. Sergio Romo, last Friday against the Red Sox: 2 IP, 0 hits, 0 runs, 0 walks, 3 strikeouts... and one blown save.

Imagine our shock when we dialed up the Play Index and discovered it’s the 21st time since the dawn of the modern save rule that a pitcher has blown a save in an outing of no hits, no runs, no walks and at least three whiffs. Last to do it: Tyler Thornburg on Sept. 11, 2016.

— Finally, it’s Buster Posey’s 10th season as a Giant. He’s one of the most accomplished offensive catchers of his generation. So how about this list of all the four-hit, four-run, three-XBH games by a Giants catcher since Posey arrived in 2009:

Nick Hundley: One (on Wednesday).

Buster Posey: Zero.

Repeat after us: BASEBALL!

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