



### **WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF September 17, 2018**

"Palka's 2-HR day sets Sox rookie record in loss" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"White Sox' Yoan Moncada ready and willing to adjust"... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

"White Sox will bring their Sunday best for Cubs" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

"Where will the future White Sox get their OBP?" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

---

### **Palka's 2-HR day sets Sox rookie record in loss**

*Giolito hurt by mistakes in Orioles' five-run first inning*

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 16, 2018

Even with six runs (four earned) allowed over six innings, White Sox starter Lucas Giolito deserved a better result during the Orioles' 8-4 victory Sunday afternoon at Oriole Park at Camden Yards.

Giolito allowed five runs in the first inning against Baltimore, but he should have escaped giving up one run and maybe completely unscathed.

"It happens," Giolito told reporters after falling to 10-11. "We just didn't come out, ready to play defense, myself included."

Cedric Mullins opened with a solid double to left-center, but the White Sox had a chance to nail Mullins as he got stuck between second and third on Joey Rickard's bunt in front of the plate. Catcher Welington Castillo fielded the bunt but waited too long on the throw to second and Mullins slid back in safely.

Jonathan Villar followed with a run-scoring single, and Adam Jones dropped a single into right for a 2-0 lead. After a Trey Mancini strikeout, Villar scored when Yoan Moncada tried to come home on DJ Stewart's hard-hit grounder to second with the infield in. Moncada made a nice pickup, but his throw to Castillo was a little up the first-base line, allowing Villar to race home from third and slide in safely.

First baseman Matt Davidson's fielding error on a Renato Nunez grounder brought home the fourth run, and Breyvic Valera's sacrifice fly completed the five-run first. After that tough opener, Giolito yielded one run over the next five innings, striking out one and walking two.

"Quite a few pitches that inning that I left up over the plate and the next thing you know, five runs on the board," said Giolito, referring to the first. "But after that, tried to grind through the rest and tried to get through six."

"It wasn't actually one of those things where you go, 'Gosh, they're really getting to him.' For the first inning being what it was, he really did actually do a very nice job," White Sox manager Rick Renteria told reporters. "Ate up some innings, gave us some ups, and we were able to get back into the latter half of our ballgame with some of our relievers."

The long ball provided the White Sox offense. Daniel Palka homered twice, giving him a team-high 24, and breaking a previous tie at 22 with Pete Ward (1963) for the most homers by a left-handed hitting rookie in White Sox history. Yolmer Sanchez also went deep, a two-run shot as part of a three-run fifth.

"We chipped away," Renteria said. "We tried to come back, we scored some runs."

"I'm happy with how I pitched after the first inning," Giolito said. "Hung a changeup that was a home run. My changeup overall today, didn't have a good feel for it. Kind of like last week, but I tried to make pitches and grind through."

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Palka banged up: Palka exited in the ninth after trying to make a sliding catch on Nunez's leadoff double to right, sustaining a jammed right knee and tweaking his left side.

"I just kind of jammed into the ground. It was more just, I don't get what happened, kind of bad ground. It just kind of stuck when I slid," said Palka, who is day to day. "Yeah, yeah. I'll be fine."

"They checked him out. He seems fine," Renteria said. "I'm sure he'll be a little sore tomorrow, and we'll know a little more. Day to day. He should be fine."

#### SOUND SMART

Moncada struck out three times in Sunday's setback, giving him a Major League high 201 overall.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Palka's first home run had a 111.8 mph exit velocity and 40 degree launch angle, per Statcast™. It was his 10th home run hit with 110+ mph exit velocity this season, tying him for third-most with Nelson Cruz, behind Joey Gallo (16) and Giancarlo Stanton (15). Palka also hit his second homer with both 110+ mph and 40+ degrees, making him the only player since Statcast™ began recording data with more than one 110+/40+ home run.

#### HE SAID IT

"It's not really something I thought about -- leading or not leading. I kind of thought I knew what I could do, and I'm sitting right around there. Kind of gave away the other two at-bats with guys on base, but yeah, it was a good day." -- Palka, on taking the team lead with two homers, while also leaving four on base with a groundout and a strikeout

#### UP NEXT

Following a Monday off-day, Carlos Rodon (6-5, 3.10) is scheduled to make his 18th start of the season, 10th on the road and fourth of the season against Cleveland with a 6:10 p.m. CT first pitch scheduled at Progressive Field Tuesday. Rodon and Dylan Covey had their starts flip-flopped, with Rodon going closer to regular rest after pitching last Wednesday in Kansas City, while now also being able to face the Cubs on Sunday. He is 3-1 with a 1.98 ERA lifetime at Progressive Field.

---

### **White Sox' Yoan Moncada ready and willing to adjust**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 16, 2018

BALTIMORE — Yoan Moncada is ready to expand his horizons.

The White Sox' 23-year-old Cuban second baseman said he wants to do his media interviews next season in English.

"I want to learn in the offseason using Rosetta Stone," Moncada said in plain English. "I am going to try to speak some English next season."

"It's important because people will know you are trying to adjust, to be part of their society," Moncada said through a translator. "Just to be a better person."

Moncada also said he would be willing to play third base, should first-round draft pick Nick Madrigal work his way into the lineup as a second baseman down the road. Moncada made his major-league debut at

third with the Red Sox in 2016, and while such a move hasn't been discussed publicly — Madrigal hasn't played above Class A yet, and he will get a look at shortstop and perhaps third — it's probably good to know Moncada is willing to go with the flow.

"If they approach me and ask me to play another position, I will do it," he said through a translator. "Whatever the team wants me to do."

It has been quite the first full season for Moncada. He has put together a solid September, but he went 0-for-5 and struck out for the 199th, 200th and 201st times in the Sox' 8-4 loss to the Orioles on Sunday, a feat he'll have to wear forever but one that won't keep him awake at night, he said.

"I don't like to dwell on it," he said of being one of seven players in baseball history with 200 or more strikeouts. "The stats are the stats. I'm not sitting here going, 'I'm leading the league in strikeouts.' I'm trying to focus on improving and getting better. That's it."

Moncada also knows his strikeout frequency dropped in the last 30 days, during a stretch that has seen him reach base 23 times in 24 games while batting .270, well above his season average of .226. His 26 doubles, 17 homers and six triples help offset the monster strikeout numbers Moncada said he wants to address next season.

"That's something that was very important for me, so it's good to see [the frequency] coming down as we get to the end of the year," he said.

Elevating his hands has helped, he said, making his swing "freer" and allowing him to use the hands better.

"Every staff member has had conversations with him about different aspects of his game," manager Rick Renteria said. "We realize he's a talented young man but also get him to focus and do the necessary things to have success. To have a sense of urgency in everything he does, at the plate and in the field."

Moncada made one of three questionable defensive plays or decisions by the Sox in the first inning that helped the Orioles score five runs against Lucas Giolito (six runs, four earned), who deserved better after grinding through six innings.

First baseman Matt Davidson muffed a routine grounder, catcher Welington Castillo picked up a sacrifice bunt and threw late trying to catch Cedric Mullins off second and Moncada, playing in, threw late to home trying to cut down a run when he should have probably taken an out at first.

"It happens," Giolito said. "We just didn't come out in the first inning ready to play defense, myself included. Next thing you know they have five runs."

The Orioles (43-106) salvaged a victory in the three-game series and halted a three-game winning streak for the Sox (59-90).

It wasn't Moncada's only rough day of this his first full season, but all said and done he has had increasingly better ones of late. He figures to shake this one off, hear from Renteria and staff about what went wrong and turn the page to the final two weeks of the season.

"I've been working a lot, all season, trying to find ways to improve," he said. "The results in the last month have been better. It's a result of the work I've put in."

"I want to finish strong and use it as a [springboard] for next season."

---

### **White Sox will bring their Sunday best for Cubs**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 16, 2018

BALTIMORE — White Sox manager Rick Renteria said that he “looks forward to every series” and that he tries not to emphasize one opponent over another.

But with the Cubs coming to the Sox’ ballpark for a rare late September three-game series next weekend, why not manipulate the starting rotation to make sure Carlos Rodon gets a start?

The games are big for the Cubs, who are in a dogfight for first place in the NL Central. And there’s no doubt the Sox, from chairman Jerry Reinsdorf to Renteria to their players and fans, would like nothing more than to inflict harm on that “other” team in Chicago.

“It’s an inner-city rivalry,” said Renteria, who managed the Cubs in 2014 but was let go in favor of Joe Maddon before the 2015 season. “It’s important for the whole community, everybody lives and thrives on it.”

When Jerry Manuel managed the Sox from 1998 to 2003, he would often set things up to enhance his pitching matchups for the Cubs. With days off around their series in Baltimore, Renteria was able to move Rodon (6-5, 3.10 ERA) ahead of Dylan Covey (5-13, 5.64) to start against the Indians on Tuesday in Cleveland, thereby allowing Rodon to face the Cubs next Sunday instead of Covey.

The Indians clinched the AL Central on Saturday. Reynaldo Lopez, with a 1.10 ERA over his last five starts, faces the Cubs on Friday, followed by Lucas Giolito on Saturday.

“We certainly want to represent the South Side as well as we possibly can and give ourselves a chance to play some good baseball and come up with some victories,” Renteria said.

Palka clubs two homers

Daniel Palka homered to right and left, his 23rd and 24th homers, which put him in front of Jose Abreu (22) for the team lead and past Pete Ward’s record for most homers by a left-handed Sox rookie. Ward hit 22 in 1963.

Palka jammed his right knee and left the game in the eighth inning as he charged a Renato Nunez soft line drive that deflected off his arm and fell for a double. He is day-to-day but said he should be able to play Tuesday after the Sox’ day off Monday.

Yolmer Sanchez hit his eighth homer of the season.

Sunday is a day of rest

Tim Anderson, like most players this time of year dealing with too many aches and pains to count, had the day off.

“He’s been pushing. He’s been playing great,” Renteria said. “My eyes are telling me he might be a little gassed. Being able to give a day today and a natural day off tomorrow should be very helpful.”

Anderson is tied with Sanchez for the team lead in games played with 143. Jose Rondon started at shortstop.

Garcia sits, too

Avisail Garcia, who homered in the first two games of the series, sat out in favor of Palka. Garcia has played through knee and hamstring issues — he said he will get his right knee scoped after the season — and had most of his right leg heavily wrapped after getting treatment Sunday morning.

“He’s been a little sore but he’s working through it,” Renteria said. “You’ll see him at a time of need giving you everything he’s got. Other times I’ll say, ‘You don’t have to give me a whole lot, just keep moving.’”

---

## Where will the future White Sox get their OBP?

By James Fegan / The Athletic / September 16, 2018

Listening to Cubs fans worry about their team at an Athletic subscriber event is a surprisingly illuminating experience.

It's mostly because they complain about characteristics of the team as a unit, which is not something we do a lot of when analyzing a rebuilding team. When it comes to breaking down the White Sox, it's usually: "Is Player X good?" or, "Is Player X good enough to be a part of a good team in the future?"

Questions like "Does the offense have enough speed? Power? Do they get on base enough?" tend to fall by the wayside on the South Side for now, because team wins don't matter as much as the level of play from individuals that goes into them. And those questions aren't going to be answered by trade additions, nor promoting top prospects. So how much point is there in asking?

Something that comes up a lot when parsing why a good offense like the Cubs goes through cold snaps is consistency. A good offense that strikes out a lot can struggle to manufacture runs when it needs to, or a low-power one can struggle to get the big hit to take advantage of all the baserunners it generates, or a power-dependent team with low on-base percentage can find itself dealing with a lot of strikeouts and fly-outs. Every offense has bad stretches, but one that can do it all — make contact, draw walks, hit for power, manufacture runs — tend to have fewer, and a protracted process like what the Sox are undergoing should afford them the opportunity to try to build an ideal unit.

Which finally segues into our point: despite being on a record-setting strikeout pace in 2018, the White Sox are not an awful offense. They're 19th in baseball in wRC+, a metric which gives more weight to the importance of on-base percentage, and 16th in OPS+, which does not. But they're 26th in baseball in on-base percentage, and for the three games in which Omar Narváez sat with an injured finger against Boston, they trotted out a lineup that had no one with an on-base percentage as high as what the Red Sox average as a team.

It would be unwise to reduce Daniel Palka to his .294 on-base percentage in his rookie season and ignore the pop on command he offers, and it would be woefully shortsighted to reduce Tim Anderson to his .288 on-base percentage given the power, speed and defense he provides out of a position that usually doesn't offer much offense. But to take advantage of their talents and eventually create a well-rounded offense that balances their weak points out, they will need some OBP hounds. Anderson and Palka could just get better, but a real plan would account for them remaining similar players. That's the sort of disparity in a particular skill set that will make future White Sox teams go cold at the wrong time — a division race, a playoff series — and be vulnerable to teams that can suppress power, so it's where they'll need to show progress in the next two years.

The primary disappointment of Yoán Moncada's struggles this year, and the general question surrounding the development of the White Sox positional prospects group, is wondering whether the team will be able to replace the production of Adam Eaton, a on-base machine at the top of the lineup. Or more particularly, a few of them to complement the slew of power potential options they have in their system. As it currently stands, it's pretty clear how they'll eventually replicate or replace José Abreu.

Just based on his minor league performance, ZiPS projects Eloy Jiménez to settle into a long career of batting in the .290s, getting on base around a .350 clip and slugging varying degrees above .500 relatively quickly. Given that he's coming off a combined .337/.384/.577 campaign in the minors this year, it's easy to imagine a little more, and he will surely improve the White Sox's on-base rate as well as every other meaningful offensive category the moment he arrives.

But he also showed plenty of Abreu in his approach as his walk and strikeout rates shrank this season. Rather than a traditional all-or-nothing power hitter approach, where he keyholes on a specific area and is content to let anything that falls out of it pass by, he places a lot of trust in his hit tool, covers the whole

plate and sprays the ball all over the field. Which is all to say he seems more like a .350-.360 OBP guy who drives in a ton of runs than a .380-.410 sort of on-base monster who tempts his manager to move him up to the top two slots in the order.

Moncada has still walked over 10 percent of the time even in a deeply difficult season, so there's still hope of ~.350 OBP upside if the hit tool improvements everyone anticipates surface. The White Sox are obviously still chasing that potential, given Moncada's continued presence at the top of the lineup even as he closes in on the single-season strikeout record. But with the Sox floating around being an average power-hitting American League team by ISO, and about to add Jiménez, the key figures to be whether they can develop on-base ability internally or if it's something they need to target externally.

They just drafted their prototypical leadoff man in Nick Madrigal, who recovered from a slow adjustment to Winston-Salem to finish with a .306/.355/.347 line. With his approach, he doesn't figure to take many walks, but if he can consistently bat for .320 average like his backers believe he will, he won't really need to either. Zack Collins is the purest example in the organization of someone whose offensive game is based in on-base ability. A 101-walk campaign in Birmingham is a testimony to that, but looking at his .234/.382/.404 line in Double-A, and a 29.8 percent strikeout rate, it's an open question how much higher level pitching will exacerbate his contact issues. Moncada is a pretty good walking reminder of the limitations of patience to a fault at the highest level. But if Collins' fits and starts are merely the difficulties of developing offensively while also working to stick behind the plate defensively, maybe we could reasonably expect a .360 OBP and .420 SLG from him consistently, which is what Omar Narváez is currently sitting at, bad finger and all. And that's also why he likely hangs around despite his defensive warts, because his skill set is rare in the organization as a whole, not just among catchers.

Luis Basabe has consistently walked at a rate of 11 percent or above since joining the White Sox system, even while going through adjustment growing pains at each level. Luis González's monster season involved posting a .376 OBP at High-A Winston-Salem while shaving his strikeout rate to 16 percent. Even Micker Adolfo recorded a .369 OBP for the Dash before his injury, despite not being known for an advanced plate discipline before this season. Even as much as Luis Robert has struggled to regain his form after multiple thumb injuries, he was walking as much as he struck out just last year in the Dominican Summer League.

It's not a wasteland by any means, and there's not necessarily a shortage of guys in the organization with the tools and the potential to be the answer for what ails the White Sox offense going forward. But much like their starting rotation when/if James Shields departs and with Michael Kopech injured, it's a hole at the major league level, and the rebuild's success will in part be measured by the team's ability to fill it.

There's no world where the White Sox don't need to spend both extensively and effectively to return to any kind of World Series contention, but their success in internally developing a skill that is at such a premium as on-base ability will be part of determining their degree of difficulty in pulling this off.

---