



WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF JUNE 8, 2018

"Shields bitten by long ball as Sox fall in finale" ... Brian Hall, MLB.com

"Surprise All-Star candidates in the AL Central" ... Rhett Bollinger, MLB.com

"Daily White Sox prospects update: Luis Robert with two hits in his second game of season" ... Vinnie Duber, NBC Sports Chicago

"No, White Sox haven't brought Carlos Rodon back yet, but they did call up potential sign-and-flip candidate Xavier Cedeno" ... Vinnie Duber, NBC Sports Chicago

"Daily White Sox prospects update: Blake Battenfield has a ridiculously low 1.58 ERA" ... Vinnie Duber, NBC Sports Chicago

"White Sox drop series finale to Twins, 7-2" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

"White Sox moves look like prelude to Carlos Rodon's first start of 2018 on Saturday" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

"Five observations: Berríos, Escobar continue to haunt White Sox" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

"Five observations: Early season power surge is no surprise for a newly healthy Luis Basabe" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

"Nothing but positives about White Sox 38th-round pick Matt Klug" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

Shields bitten by long ball as Sox fall in finale

By Brian Hall / MLB.com / June 7, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- James Shields is in the midst of the longest winless stretch in his career, but it hadn't reflected how the White Sox right-hander had pitched over the past month.

A return to Target Field in Minnesota didn't help Shields' outlook.

Shields had his string of quality starts snapped at four with another tough outing at Target Field as Chicago lost, 7-2, to the Twins on Thursday.

Shields (1-7) had pitched into the seventh inning and allowed three runs or fewer in his last four starts, but he fell to 0-5 with a 6.60 ERA in his last five starts in Minnesota.

"The homers got me today," Shields said. "Left the ball up to three hitters, and they got me. That cost me the game. I was kind of up in the zone early in the game."

Yoan Moncada and Jose Abreu had RBI doubles for the White Sox, but the team missed an opportunity to win its second straight series. Chicago split with the Twins after taking two of three games against Milwaukee.

The White Sox offense sputtered against Minnesota right-hander Jose Berríos (7-5), who allowed no hits or walks until Omar Narvaez hit a two-out, ground-rule double in the fifth inning.

"I feel like we've played a little better baseball here over the last five, seven days," Chicago manager Rick Renteria said. "I thought we ended up losing one I thought we could have had in the first game of the series. Today was a game in which they were able to put the bat on the ball pretty well, scored some runs, kept us at bay on the offense."

Shields allowed a season-high-tying seven runs and hasn't won since Opening Day against Kansas City. He surrendered eight hits and two walks while striking out six, but was bitten by the long ball again.

After giving up three home runs in his last start, he allowed three on Thursday to Minnesota. Shields has yielded 10 home runs this season.

Shields had rounded into form since the start of May, perhaps giving the young White Sox a potential trade piece as the summer continued. Shields had a 3.45 ERA in 47 innings since the start of May and had allowed an opponent's batting average of just .193 while posting six quality starts in seven outings.

The Twins jumped on the veteran right-hander quickly on Thursday. Eddie Rosario doubled with one out in the first, and Eduardo Escobar followed with a two-run homer. Ehire Adrianza added a solo shot in the second, and Minnesota tallied four runs in the fourth, including a three-run homer by Rosario.

"It was up in the zone," Shields said. "It was right down the middle up in the zone. They're good hitters over there, and they took advantage of it. I have got to minimize those pitches right there and kind of know the situation a little bit better and execute my pitch right there."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

The White Sox might have had a chance to break through for more in the later innings against Berrios, but Narvaez was thrown out twice on the bases. After getting the first hit off Berrios in the fifth, he was thrown out at the plate by Rosario while trying to score on a single by Jose Rondon.

In the seventh, Narvaez hit a one-out single to right but was out trying to reach second.

SOUND SMART

Shields has not enjoyed his trips to Target Field, the outdoor ballpark that opened in 2010. He tied Rick Porcello for the most starts among opposing pitchers at the park with his 12th on Thursday. The three home runs he allowed gave him 13 surrendered at Target Field, the most of any opponent.

Former Chicago pitcher John Danks previously held the record with 11 homers surrendered in 10 starts.

HE SAID IT

"That wasn't necessarily a very good baseball play. We talked a little bit about it. You're down by five runs. He hit the ball very hard. Obviously got to the wall quickly, they got to the wall quickly ... He's got to keep his head up, see the play. You know the score. You know the situation. You read and recognize. It's OK to pull up, nice hard turn, that's great. They stop it and you can return. I think there was a little exuberance there." -- Renteria, on Narvaez being thrown out at second base

UP NEXT

Chicago's three-game, weekend series in Boston begins with a matchup against an old friend. Chris Sale (5-3, 3.00 ERA) starts Friday's 6:10 p.m. CT game for the Red Sox as the White Sox counter with right-hander Dylan Covey (1-1, 2.82 ERA). Chicago put up six runs -- five earned -- in five innings against the left-hander in their only meeting last season. Covey will be making his fifth start of the season after allowing just one unearned run in five innings in his last outing against Milwaukee.

Surprise All-Star candidates in the AL Central

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com / June 7, 2018

The All-Star Game is a special event that brings together the best players in the world on one stage, but sometimes those players aren't household names just yet.

Every club has at least one under-the-radar All-Star candidate, and it's no different in the American League Central. Here's a look at stealth candidates for each AL Central club for the 2018 All-Star Game, which will be held at Washington's Nationals Park on July 17.

Indians: Trevor Bauer

The case for him: On the position-player side, there is nothing surprising about what Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor or Michael Brantley are doing at this point. The intriguing All-Star cases for the Indians are on the pitching front, and Bauer is at the top of that list. Heading into Thursday's off-day, Bauer ranked in the top five in the AL in Fielding Independent Pitching, strikeouts per nine innings and homers allowed per nine innings. He is also in the top 10 in the AL in a variety of other categories. Bauer has been Cleveland's most consistent starter behind ace Corey Kluber.

Royals: Whit Merrifield

The case for him: Merrifield has emerged as one of the most dynamic offensive players in the league. Merrifield led the AL in stolen bases in 2017, and he has already swiped 14 bags this season. After a slow start, Merrifield has a .289 average with a .368 on-base percentage and a .418 slugging percentage, entering Thursday. He can beat you with his speed and his power. Merrifield has also emerged as perhaps the top super utility player in the league -- he can play all outfield and infield positions. He's a smart player who is aggressive on the basepaths.

Tigers: Jeimer Candelario

The case for him: Candelario, acquired in the trade that sent reliever Justin Wilson and catcher Alex Avila to the Cubs at last year's non-waiver Trade Deadline, got a taste of the Majors in 2016 and '17, but he has really put it together offensively this season. The 24-year-old has shown an impressive blend of power and patience at the plate, hitting .267/.361/.513 with nine homers and 26 RBIs through his first 50 games this season.

Twins: Eduardo Escobar

The case for him: Escobar has played well in the absence of starting shortstop Jorge Polanco, who is serving an 80-game suspension. Escobar's 24 doubles lead the Majors. Escobar has filled in capably at third and shortstop, but it's his surprising power -- despite his small stature -- that makes him an intriguing All-Star candidate. Escobar set a career-high with 21 homers last year, and already has 11 this season. He is having a breakout season in the last year of his contract with the Twins.

White Sox: Reynaldo Lopez

The case for him: Remember when Jose Quintana consistently put up quality starts for the White Sox but had a .500 individual career record to show for it? Well, this season Lopez has taken over that harsh role. Despite posting a 3.42 ERA over 12 starts and 71 innings pitched, Lopez has a record of 1-4. His ERA also is skewed by 13 runs given up over 4 2/3 innings in starts against the Pirates and Indians. He has held opposing hitters to a .212 average with 54 hits yielded, and beyond Jose Abreu, Lopez is the most deserving All-Star candidate on the White Sox.

Daily White Sox prospects update: Luis Robert with two hits in his second game of season

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / June 7, 2018

Here's your daily update on what the White Sox highly touted prospects are doing in the minor leagues.

Class A Kannapolis

Luis Robert picked up his first two hits of the season, one going for extra bases, and he drove in two runs in a 6-4 win. He also stole a base. Lincoln Henzman lowered his ERA to 2.56 on the season with six innings of one-run ball.

Class A Winston-Salem

Luis Alexander Basabe hit his eighth home run of the season, which leads this team packed with offensive talent. Blake Rutherford had three hits, including a double, in the 9-4 loss. Alex Call had two hits, including a triple.

Double-A Birmingham

Jordan Guerrero had a relatively brief outing, allowing six runs in his four innings of work in this 8-4 loss. He's got a 6.55 ERA in his 12 starts this season. Eloy Jimenez had two hits, a walk and an RBI, and Zack Collins and Seby Zavala each walked.

Triple-A Charlotte

Jordan Stephens had a rough outing, surrendering seven runs in just four innings in a 7-0 loss. It was his first start giving up more than two earned runs since joining Charlotte last month.

No, White Sox haven't brought Carlos Rodon back yet, but they did call up potential sign-and-flip candidate Xavier Cedeno

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / June 7, 2018

Kudos to the White Sox on a very nice fake-out.

The team sent relief pitcher Aaron Bummer to Triple-A Charlotte after Wednesday night's game in Minnesota, sparking speculation that the corresponding move would be Carlos Rodon coming back from his rehab assignment and joining the South Side starting rotation. Instead, though, the White Sox simply made a bullpen swap, bringing Xavier Cedeno up from Charlotte to join the relief corps.

Made you look.

Now, that's not to say that Rodon won't be joining the team soon. Signs seem to be pointing to him coming back and making his first big league start of 2018 in Saturday's game against the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park. The White Sox are listing their starter for the second game of that three-game set as "to be announced," sandwiched between Dylan Covey on Friday and Reynaldo Lopez on Sunday. That would figure to be a perfect slot for Rodon to slide into.

Rodon, who is in the final stages of his comeback from shoulder surgery last September, has made four rehab starts in the minor leagues, posting a 1.53 ERA with 28 strikeouts in 17.2 innings.

Cedeno, meanwhile, could be a prime sign-and-flip candidate should he replicate what he's done at the Triple-A level in the major leagues. The White Sox added the seven-year MLB veteran on a minor league deal during the winter. He's got a career 3.98 ERA in 201 big league games. This season has been sparkling at Charlotte, though, with opposing hitters batting just .162 against him.

The White Sox traded away much of their bullpen last summer in deals that netted rebuild-aiding prospects. A similar strategy seemed to be in play during the offseason, with the addition of a number of veterans to the relief corps. Things haven't necessarily worked out as planned to this point, but Joakim Soria and Bruce Rondon could intrigue some teams if they pitch well over the next couple months. Perhaps Cedeno could be in that mix, too.

Daily White Sox prospects update: Blake Battenfield has a ridiculously low 1.58 ERA

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / June 7, 2018

Here's your daily update on what the White Sox highly touted prospects are doing in the minor leagues.

Class A Kannapolis

Blake Battenfield allowed just one run in six innings in this 2-1 loss, lowering his ERA to a dazzling 1.58. Luis Robert was 0-for-3 with a strikeout.

Class A Winston-Salem

Alex Call walked three times, and Luis Alexander Basabe and Micker Adolfo each had a hit and a run scored in a 7-3 loss.

Double-A Birmingham

Seby Zavala had two hits and scored a run in a 5-2 win. Zack Collins walked for the 54th time in 54 games.

Triple-A Charlotte

The Knights grabbed a 3-1 win thanks to a great outing by Donn Roach, who gave up zero earned runs in seven innings.

White Sox drop series finale to Twins, 7-2

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / June 7, 2018

Something must have been in the air Thursday at Target Field.

The Twins seemed as if they couldn't miss James Shields no matter where he tried to place the ball. The sound system blasted "Let's Go Crazy" on late Minneapolis native Prince's birthday after Eddie Rosario hit a 385-foot homer to right field, and the Twins did just that in Shields' first four innings — to the tune of seven runs with three homers.

The White Sox's bats were flying, just not after getting hits. Yolmer Sanchez and Matt Davidson splintered bats making outs and Omar Narvaez had one fly out of his hands into the stands behind the Twins dugout. Sox hitters hardly touched Jose Berrios until the sixth inning, when he gave up two runs, as he struck out 10 in a complete-game victory.

When the dust settled, the Sox had a 7-2 loss that looked more lopsided. To say Berrios made quick work of the Sox is an understatement — the 2-hour, 14-minute affair was their shortest since a 2:10 game against the Rays on Sept. 28, 2016.

Sox manager Rick Renteria said Berrios worked both sides of the plate effectively with his fastball and mixed in some changeups, bottling up both left-handed and right-handed hitters.

"You have to tip your hat to the kid," Renteria said. "He put a little hold on us."

Shields took his seventh loss and is now winless in a career-high 13 consecutive outings since his victory against the Royals on opening day.

"Homers got me today," he said. "(I) left the ball up (in the strike zone) to three hitters and they got me. That cost me the ballgame."

His manager tried to find the positives.

"James got into trouble, but, boy, I tell you (he) kept grinding, ate up some innings (and) saved our bullpen," Renteria said. "A couple of balls up got him, but (he) continued to pitch."

Shields collected himself after a four-run fourth inning and managed to go 1-2-3 in the fifth and sixth, allowing Xavier Cedeño and Chris Beck to mop up and sparing the rest of the frequently used relievers.

"(Pitching coach Don Cooper) came in and asked how I was feeling after the fourth, and I said, 'Look, I'm going to go as deep as I possibly can.'" Shields said. "And I ended the game strong."

Narvaez doubled twice, but his lasting visual will be getting thrown out at the plate in the fifth after trying to score from second base on Jose Rondon's line-drive single off the left-field wall. Rosario collected the ball in one fluid motion and gunned it to catcher Bobby Wilson to retire Narvaez.

"That wasn't necessarily a good baseball play," Renteria said of Narvaez's decision. "We talked a little bit about it. You know, you're down five runs, (Rondon) hit the ball very hard (and) obviously they got to the wall quickly."

Renteria said Narvaez probably got excited but added that he has to read the play and recognize he can stop at third for a moment and then try for home if it's clear Rosario can't make the throw in time.

"As soon as it came off the bat, I thought Narvy — I know he's not the fleetest of foot — had a chance to score," Renteria said. "I thought Rosario just did a nice job of attacking and making the perfect throw."

Meanwhile, Jose Abreu extended his hitting streak to seven games with his RBI single in the sixth. Earlier in the inning, Yoan Moncada doubled and drove in a run.

White Sox moves look like prelude to Carlos Rodon's first start of 2018 on Saturday

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / June 7, 2018

White Sox manager Rick Renteria wouldn't say so officially, but Carlos Rodon is likely to start the second game of the Red Sox series Saturday in Boston, which would be the promising 25-year-old's first major-league action since shoulder surgery last September.

Since May, Rodon has made four minor-league rehab starts, his last coming with Triple-A Charlotte on Sunday in Buffalo, where he gave up two earned runs on six hits and struck out eight in five innings.

Renteria has been coy all week when fielding questions about Rodon, as he was again before Thursday's series finale against the Twins.

"'Los? He's still, uh, he's with us. And we will make some kind of announcement here, see how he's doing," Renteria said with a Cheshire cat smile. "But we have to get through a couple more days."

Dylan Covey leads off the Red Sox series against former White Sox ace Chris Sale, and Reynaldo Lopez is slated to go against Rick Porcello. The middle start against David Price has been listed as TBA, likely a placeholder for Rodon.

The Sox will need to make a roster move before Saturday, but they brought up left-handed pitcher Xavier Cedeno from Charlotte on Thursday. The 31-year-old took the roster spot of fellow lefty Aaron Bummer.

The Sox sent Bummer down to the Knights after Wednesday night's victory over the Twins. Renteria said after the game that Bummer had been progressing well, but Renteria wants him to continue working on his command.

"He was getting better over the last couple of outings," Renteria said. "We need him to continue to pitch. We need more outings for him (and) right now we weren't able to get them."

Renteria wasn't ready to throw Bummer into the kind of high-pressure situations relievers Jace Fry and Luis Avilan have faced lately.

Renteria said he can use Cedeno against lefties and righties — for the couple of games he's likely to be with the Sox. Cedeno relieved Thursday starter James Shields in the seventh inning and threw 10 pitches with four strikes, giving up no hits and a walk.

"We'll get a good look at him," Renteria said of Cedeno before the game. "He has been around a while."

“He has been throwing very well down in the minor leagues. He just gives us another arm we can hopefully trust and use in any situation.”

Timely time off: Shortstop Tim Anderson had a two-run double and stole a base in Tuesday night’s victory over the Twins, and Renteria figured the series closer against the Twins would be a good day to rest him before the team travels to Boston.

“(Players) will come in and argue (about taking a rest day), but (Wednesday) I told coaches there’s no arguing with me on this one,” Renteria said.

The decision gave Anderson a chance to recharge but also got some at-bats for Jose Rondon, who has made five starts at designated hitter, two at second base and one at shortstop. Rondon is hitting .272 and has homered in three of his last five starts.

Anderson is on pace to reach career highs in home runs (30) and stolens bases (36). That many long balls would set a Sox record for shortstops.

Five observations: Berríos, Escobar continue to haunt White Sox

By James Fegan / The Athletic / June 7, 2018

It would appear that winning back-to-back series would be flying just a little too close to the sun for the 2018 White Sox (20-40) at this juncture. While James Shields’ run of nine-straight starts of six innings or longer did not come to an end, his run of sharpness and fastball command surely did, as the Twins torched him for three home runs in a 7-2 series-closing defeat.

Twins starter José Berríos did not quite flatten Sox hitters to the degree he did at Target Field in April, and his performance wasn’t followed by the onset of a blizzard this time, but he did twirl a complete game, 10-strikeout performance. The next five-to-15 years of dealing with him should be fun for the White Sox organization.

1. A return of a homer-ravaged Shields

After getting pilloried for more than two home runs per nine innings for the first two seasons of his White Sox career, Shields’ return to a reliable form has coincided with the end of the league-wide home run boom. But on Thursday afternoon, Eduardo Escobar, Ehire Adrianza and Eddie Rosario proved every bit capable of taking fastballs and cutters that were already overly elevated from Shields’ drop-down delivery, and continuing to elevate them over the right-field wall for six runs worth of dingers. After such a strong stretch, this day read more like a stretch of command struggles rather than an indictment of the effectiveness of his new arsenal. Then again, it is harder to get away with location mistakes at 90 mph.

2. A seemingly personal grudge

Despite every hit of his being a sort of painful reminder of a 2012 trade deadline gamble that didn’t pay dividends, Escobar’s career numbers against the White Sox were pretty underwhelming until the beginning of last season. Since 2017, he’s hit a thunderous .352/.448/.659 in 105 plate appearances against the Sox. Going for a homer and a single Thursday gave him more total bases against the Sox than he had against them all of last season, so things have seemingly turned up a notch. But then again, everything about his game has.

3. Hopefully not a personal grudge

With nine innings marred only by a brief barrage of Cuban doubles in the sixth inning, Berríos lowered his career ERA against the Sox to 2.28 over 47 1/3 innings with a whopping 54 strikeouts. Sitting with an easy and lively low-to-mid 90s fastball and a darting low-80s curveball, Berríos looks like he should be bordering on unhittable on a regular basis, but White Sox games seem to be where perception meets reality.

4. Omar Narváez hit the ball hard, but it did not bear fruit

The Target Field official scorer was not willing to see Narváez's clout to the right-field wall in the seventh as a double on which he overslid the bag. If the scorer had been so generous, it would have given Narváez his first multi-extra-base-hit game of the season, but it was already one of the first times this year he had repeatedly driven the ball over the outfielders' heads. Unfortunately, he neither had the foot speed to make a double out of a quick carom to Robbie Grossman, and he certainly wasn't fast enough to outrun Eddie Rosario's cannon to score from second on José Rondón's single to left in the fifth. Any return to the sneaky good offensive contributor he was in his first two seasons could be a stabilizing force, though.

5. An interesting debut

Lefty reliever Xavier Cedeño was called up to replace Aaron Bummer Thursday, even though the young left-hander had put together a decent stretch of appearances interrupted by one disaster in Cleveland. Cedeño has been putting up god-like numbers in Triple-A (1.25 ERA, 25 strikeouts, four walks in 21 2/3 innings), and presumably is more of a trade piece than Bummer. But it's a weird arsenal (nothing but high-80s cutters) that probably needs a long track record to inspire faith from scouts. He walked the leadoff man, but still escaped a hitless seventh inning on just 10 pitches.

Early season power surge is no surprise for a newly healthy Luis Basabe

By James Fegan / The Athletic / June 8, 2018

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Luis Basabe is listed at 6-foot and just 160 pounds on the Winston-Salem Dash roster. Given how form-fitting his "SOX-27" T-shirt has become, the latter figure is probably underselling him significantly at this point, but the former might still be a bit generous. Nevertheless, on a roster with Gavin Sheets, Micker Adolfo, and soon, Luis Robert — guys whose purpose at the plate is clear after one look at their massive frames — Basabe is not too surprised to be leading his team through 51 games with eight home runs and a .500 slugging percentage.

"To be honest it's not surprising because two years ago, I was in Greenville and I hit 12 home runs, and I think I can hit with power," Basabe said. "That comes when you have when you have free hands and you can put the barrel on the ball. It comes easy."

In fact, everything in the 21-year-old switch-hitter's stat line looks like it should belong to a hulking corner outfielder more so than a speedy center fielder, as he's also second on the team in walk rate (13.2 percent), and less ideally, third in strikeout rate (25.9 percent). It's rare for any player to have a perfect, injury-free ascent through the minors, so writing off an entire season due to something like playing through a torn meniscus in his left knee in 2017 can seem like an oversimplification.

Yet the Basabe the White Sox thought they were getting from Boston in the Chris Sale trade was a speedy center fielder with surprising pop. And after he slugged just .320 with five home runs and an .099 ISO in 2017 at the same level, they have a specific idea where that pop was lost.

"He wasn't able to really push off that back side," Winston-Salem hitting coach Charles Poe said. "And he couldn't really slow himself down when he was starting to run because it was always giving him problems."

Blake Rutherford — whom Basabe leans on both to learn new words in English and a bit to model his swing after now that Eloy Jiménez (his favorite hitter) is gone — has been crediting his progress in power production to a sturdier leg base. And Basabe believes that being able to leverage his swing with his surgically repaired back leg is bringing out his natural pop. Strangely enough, all of Basabe's eight home runs have come from the left side, but his splits reveal an equally valuable hitter of completely different types.

As a lefty: .246/.368/.500

As a righty: .333/.364/.500

While switch-hitters, as Yoán Moncada has shown, typically see their right-handed production lag because of fewer opportunities, Basabe still thinks of himself as a natural right-hander and feels more fluid over there. His right-handed approach is thus more reactive and instinctual, and his left-handed approach is more about staying within a refined approach and driving the ball despite a sizable amount of swing-and-miss.

Luis Basabe could be reunited with Eloy Jiménez in Birmingham soon enough. (Photo by Ron Vesely/MLB Photos via Getty Images)

“Right-handed I don’t hit too much,” Basabe said. “I just take one round [of BP] because that’s my natural hand. When the game comes, and they come with a lefty pitcher, I just try to hit the ball, you know what I mean? Left-handed is more mechanical so I have to think a bit more. Left-handed I think about where my hands are going, how I can make contact.”

Poe would list a healthy knee as a big reason for Basabe’s turnaround, but it’s certainly not all he would mention. Basabe was a constant presence working in the White Sox spring training facility in Arizona once his surgery was completed, despite not being originally listed on the instructional league roster. And he was still there in January, shoulder-to-shoulder with his current roommate Adolfo, and Robert at hitter’s camp, modeling their work and habits some more.

While Basabe relies on Rutherford, Ti’Quan Forbes, Joel Booker and regular classes to sharpen his English now, he was practicing it with hitting coordinator Mike Gellinger throughout the offseason. Poe thinks Basabe came out of the offseason more selective in his approach, and the White Sox are hoping his increased comfort and communication means he’ll chime in and let coaches know a bit sooner the next time he fouls a ball off his knee in April and it never stops hurting.

The crowded Dash outfield situation doesn’t bother Basabe much, since between Rutherford, Booker and Alex Call, he’s mostly sharing time with guys who have manned center field in the past — or still do now — and have the range to decrease his coverage responsibilities in center field. He’s eager to be reunited with Robert when he returns to Winston-Salem, but chances are — as the Dash team leader in OPS by a significant margin — he’s the best candidate to move up and create room for the roster crunch Robert will create.

If he does, despite a seemingly lost 2017 season where he put up poor numbers and repeated the level, he would instantly be the second-youngest player on the Birmingham Barons roster, older than only Eloy Jiménez. This type of precocious production and advancement is the type of stuff that sends guys up prospect lists, even if no one is throwing star projections on Basabe now or in the future.

“He really figured some stuff out, just having a better approach and being more selective, a better hitter,” Poe said. “He’s a solid player, high ceiling. He’s one of the top prospects in the organization as well. I see him going far in this game because he’s a very good player on both sides of baseball.”

Nothing but positives about White Sox 38th-round pick Matt Klug

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / June 6, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — In Matt Klug, selected in the 38th round of the MLB Draft, the White Sox picked a high school senior you probably will be rooting for even if he doesn’t have much of a baseball-playing future.

Klug lost his mother, who died in November 2016 after bouts with COPD and emphysema, and his father, who battled cancer for seven years, a year later.

Klug, from Brookwood (Georgia) High School, was a part-time outfielder on his team, but he was such a full-time inspiration to his teammates that his coach, Titus Martin, nominated him for a local Positive Athlete award that Klug won.

Tools? Klug pales in comparison to the other Sox draftees taken in the last 20 rounds Wednesday. Makeup? The others might have to get in line behind Klug.

"It's been the worst two, three years anybody could imagine," Klug said. "A stretch of unexpected experiences and tragedy. It will knock you down, but my parents would have wanted me to get back up, to be as positive as I could be. I know they're proud of me. I'm sure my dad is looking down, going crazy that I got drafted.

"[Losing my parents] kept me humble. You know how valuable every day of life is."

Sox scout Kevin Burrell suggested the selection of Klug, who was drafted in the same round as Mark Buehrle in 1998. While Klug won't actually sign and play, his selection has been in the works for weeks.

"I was on a plane reading an article [about Klug], and it really struck a chord with me," Sox scouting director Nick Hostetler said. "Kevin was fully on board, and we wanted to make sure it was something Matthew would be encouraged by. To do something to help a kid who has been through what he has, you're proud you can do it."

When Burrell called Wednesday to tell him he had been drafted, Klug broke down in tears.

"I was speechless," said Klug, who will get a jersey and other gifts from the Sox. "My coach knew it for about a month. What I've gone through, it just meant everything to me."

Eleventh-round pick Kelvin Maldonado, a high school shortstop from Puerto Rico, was the Sox' top target on the final day of the draft, Hostetler said.

Hostetler also was pleased to get Miami Hurricanes third baseman Romy Gonzalez in the 18th round.

This and that

Avisail Garcia tested his right hamstring by running on the bases for the first time since suffering a Grade 2 strain and will test it again Thursday, hoping to go on a rehab assignment next week, he said.

The Sox' starting pitcher Saturday in Boston is listed as TBA, but left-hander Carlos Rodon is expected to make his season debut. Rodon is with the team after completing his rehab assignment following shoulder surgery in September.

Trayce Thompson (.129/.185/.248) is producing far below left-handed-hitting Daniel Palka (.282/.313/.555, six home runs), but he started against right-hander Jake Odorizzi as Palka works "on his defensive skills so he can help us and put himself in the lineup more consistently," manager Rick Renteria said. Designated hitter Matt Davidson's return from a back injury also will cut into Palka's at-bats.

After the game Wednesday, the Sox optioned left-hander Aaron Bummer to Class AAA Charlotte. A corresponding move will be made Thursday.

Five observations: White Sox jump on tiring Jake Odorizzi, win second-straight in Minnesota

By James Fegan / The Athletic / June 6, 2018

Is there a way to quantify whether a team won every big moment in a game? Judging by the White Sox's (20-39) slim advantage (3-for-10) with runners in scoring position over the Twins (2-for-7) in their gritty 5-2 come-from-behind win in Minneapolis, not really.

The drama of their return from a 2-1 hole in the sixth inning was that Jake Odorizzi was ostensibly smothering their offense all night, and Héctor Santiago had cleared 85 pitches before the end of the fourth inning. That the White Sox managed to turn the result of the game during the tiny window of Odorizzi tiring in the sixth and Ryan Pressly coming to his relief and splitting the plate with sliders is the sort of targeted opportunism that winning teams have been pulling on them for two months.

Maybe things are not going to just keep going wrong all year.

1. Tim Anderson as a game-changing dynamo

Anderson's BABIP has yet to adequately mirror his improved contact rates, partly because more of those balls in play are leaving the field of play entirely, but it should produce more nights like Wednesday, when spraying breaking balls across the diamond positioned him to drive in three runs.

He poked an Odorizzi splitter back up the middle to tie the game at 1 with two outs in the fourth, and whatever shame he drew from getting thrown out trying to stretch that play into a double was erased as he keyed the Sox's four-run sixth. Anderson lifted a hanging Pressly slider to left-center to plate a pair and put the Sox up 4-2 before unleashing his speed to steal third (his 13th of the year) and score on a perfect Adam Engel squeeze bunt. Somehow after all that, he managed to still be mad at himself when he struck out in the eighth.

2. Where has Kevan Smith been all season?

The newly arrived Smith didn't get any RBIs for either of his two singles, but they were both hockey assists. He sprayed a single to right field to put Matt Davidson on third for Anderson in the fourth inning, and stayed back and sprayed another Pressly slider to right to load the bases for Anderson in the sixth. He could have been credited with doing it a third time, but apparently the Target Field scorekeeper didn't view a warning-track fly ball that Eddie Rosario took his eyes off of and dropped as being worthy of a hit. Smith has always been more than content to take the single to right field on pitches on the outer half, but he probably can only bat .375 for so long before he starts getting jammed.

3. A gritty farewell

With Carlos Rodón on the comeback trail and Lucas Giolito grabbing a quality start his last time out, this was likely the end of Santiago's time in the starting rotation no matter the result. It was an outing that laid bare his struggles while also revealing his charm as he gritted his way through five laborious innings of two-run ball, walking three, striking out two, burning through an incredible 104 pitches and flipping to his curveball on occasion to grab strikes that his typically darting fastball could not. Yolmer Sánchez robbing Ryan LaMarre of a two-run double in a dicey second inning probably changed the face of the game.

It's unlikely the Sox get through the season without turning to Santiago again, but given he's more of a swingman, putting him back into that role is a step toward getting their rotation from the future in place.

4. Bruce Rondón has a 1.90 FIP

There have been some lapses in slider command that have earned Rondón his elevated ERA, but with home runs cratering league-wide, and his walk rate coming down into the upper band of acceptable, he's emerged as a regular late-inning contributor for the White Sox. His slider was sharp and snapping Wednesday as he struck out three in 1 1/3 innings of scoreless work and he looked like someone who had no business being available on a minor-league deal this spring.

5. Joakim Soria is a save machine, as predicted

Just like intrepid beat writers were predicting in February, Soria — who manager Rick Renteria is apparently calling “Jack” now — is racking up saves again, recording them on back-to-back nights for the first time since the end of April in Kansas City. Dropping down in his delivery, especially to right-handers, is making his curve and changeup pop significantly more than earlier in the season. He’s struck out seven in 4 1/3 innings with two hits allowed in his last four outings.
