



### **WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF September 13, 2018**

"Anderson puts stamp on White Sox win in 12th" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"Moncada views 2018 as learning experience"... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"Every team's single-season saves leader" ... David Adler, Manny Randhawa and Do-Hyoung Park, MLB.com

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"Tim Anderson's 12th-inning homer lifts White Sox over Royals"... David Samle, Chicago Tribune

"For retiring White Sox voice Ken Harrelson, 'Hawk' documentary beats a gold watch" ... Phil Rosenthal, Chicago Tribune

"Anderson's homer in 12th helps White Sox halt seven-game skid" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

"White Sox manager hopes Moncada learned something in 2018" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

"Stark: Is there a way to fix baseball's service time mess?" ... Jayson Stark, The Athletic

"Hostetler: White Sox's 2018 draftees need time to adjust to professional ball" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

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### **Anderson puts stamp on White Sox win in 12th**

*Shortstop clubs go-ahead 2-run HR, makes 2 fine defensive plays*

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 12, 2018

KANSAS CITY -- Tim Anderson's two-run home run with two out in the 12th inning gave the White Sox a 4-2 victory over the Royals in the series finale on Wednesday night at Kauffman Stadium, ending the team's seven-game losing streak.

And it wasn't even the absolute best play the White Sox shortstop turned in during that frame, as Anderson ranged onto the outfield grass to snare a Whit Merrifield grounder and fired to first to get the Royals second baseman by a step and end the game.

"How about the last play he made to end the game? Ball in the hole, helluva throw. Strong armed it," White Sox starter Carlos Rodon said. "The kid does it all. You don't want to miss an at-bat or ball hit to him because something special is going to happen."

"To finish the game with that one, definitely had to get it out quick with a fast runner," Anderson said.

Adam Engel, who also tripled and picked up his 16th stolen base, reached with a one-out single in the 12th. One out later, Anderson connected off Royals right-hander Burch Smith for his 19th home run and his 61st and 62nd RBIs.

With 26 stolen bases, Anderson certainly is thinking of a 20-20 season.

"Now that I'm [one homer] away, yeah," Anderson said. "It would be a big accomplishment for me. Definitely something great. I'm excited to be able to chase that."

Rodon walked the leadoff hitter three times on Wednesday. But even without his best control, the lefty limited damage as most top-of-the-rotation hurlers are able to do. Rodon walked five in total over six innings, throwing 57 of his 103 pitches for strikes, but the Royals managed two runs. He also fanned five.

"Command wasn't great today but [catcher Omar Narvaez] and I had to grind it out," Rodon said. "The defense turned some nice double plays, I got through six and the boys got the win."

Kansas City grabbed a 1-0 lead in the third, but Jose Rondon quickly erased that advantage with a two-run shot off Royals starter Eric Skoglund in the fourth. His two-out drive to left scored Avisail Garcia, who walked in front of him, giving Rondon five home runs and 13 RBIs.

Adalberto Mondesi, who had four hits and two RBIs, tied the game in the fifth with a single to score Merrifield. The future White Sox bullpen was on display, as six young relievers combined to cover five scoreless innings, although Jose Ruiz walked the only batter he faced. Ian Hamilton and Jace Fry threw one scoreless inning apiece, while Caleb Frare struck out two during his two-thirds of an inning.

Juan Minaya hurled two scoreless, but he received help from pinch-runner Brett Phillips to escape the 11th. With runners on second and third and one out, Rosell Herrera hit a line drive to Anderson who made a slight leap to make the catch. Phillips already was half-way down the line on an apparent contact play and he was easily doubled up.

"I guess he didn't think I could jump a little bit," Anderson said. "It was a good play to get us out of that jam."

"It's always good to come away with a win. Pitching did a heck of a job. They kept us in the ballgame and we battled. We were able to scratch out a win."

#### MOMENT THAT MATTERED

The old 5-4: Kansas City scored one in the third off Rodon, but it could have been worse after he walked Brian Goodwin and Ryan O'Hearn to start the frame. Merrifield followed with a grounder to Rondon at third, who adeptly stepped on the base and fired to second for the second out.

Nearly a Bummer: Mondesi's speed and a slow toss by reliever Aaron Bummer allowed the Royals to load the bases with two out in the seventh when Mondesi beat that toss to first for an infield single. But Bummer, noticeably upset after the poor throw to first, composed himself and retired Alex Gordon on a grounder to first baseman Jose Abreu to end the inning.

#### SOUND SMART

Rodon has recorded a strikeout in each of his 83 career appearances, the fourth-longest streak by a White Sox pitcher to begin his career. He trails only Jose Contreras (148), Freddy Garcia (98) and Javier Vazquez (98).

#### HE SAID IT

"Let's shoot for the stars. Why not." -- Anderson, on whether he thinks he can become a 30 home run, 30 stolen base player in the same season

#### UP NEXT

After an off-day on Thursday, White Sox right-hander James Shields (6-16, 4.58) will make his 32nd appearance and 31st start of the season at 6:05 p.m. CT on Friday against the Orioles at Camden Yards. This will be Shields' 13th start on the road and second start against the O's. He has worked at least six innings in 23 of his 30 starts this season, but the veteran is 0-8 with a 5.88 ERA over his last 12 road appearances (11 starts). He earned his last road win on Opening Day (March 29) against the Royals.

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#### **Moncada views 2018 as learning experience**

*White Sox second baseman's goal is to keep improving for '19*

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 12, 2018

KANSAS CITY -- As the 2018 season winds down for Yoan Moncada, there are a few admissions the White Sox second baseman can make concerning his first full big league season.

For starters, Moncada admits to hanging his head at times in a somewhat uneven performance, including a .224 average, .695 OPS and a Major League-high 196 strikeouts over 522 at-bats entering Wednesday's series finale against the Royals at Kauffman Stadium.

"It happened to me a few times," said Moncada, who outwardly has been the picture of calm and steadiness, through interpreter Billy Russo. "Some games when things weren't, they weren't going the way I wanted. Some games that I struck out in a big moment or have too many strikeouts.

"Those games were kind of tough for me to digest. But I learned that I just have to leave this game in the past. I did it. Now, I just think tomorrow is another day, another opportunity. I will have the opportunity to do better. And that's the way I approach this game, those situations. Just with a better and positive attitude and mindset."

That understanding leads to a second Moncada revelation in that he doesn't consider 2018 a bad season at all. There are things he needs to improve, a fact from which Moncada doesn't hide. But important factors exist for Moncada beyond the numbers.

"I wouldn't say it has been a successful season, but it has been a good season from the point of view of experience and development. That's the way that I see it right now," Moncada said. "I've learned a few things. I will say the most important is being able to make adjustments as quick as possible, even during the games.

"You can't wait for the next day or next game. You have to make adjustments right away. Another one is just to be calm, play with calm and confidence in yourself. And the third one is be aggressive. Be aggressive every time."

Moncada's aggressiveness produced a slight dip in strikeouts recently, with 13 over his previous 56 plate appearances entering Wednesday. He also had just one home run and one double in that same 14-game stretch.

Although this season hasn't been perfect, Moncada isn't taking an attitude of looking forward to it ending. Instead, he's more excited about applying what he now knows to 2019 and beyond.

"Absolutely. I just want to finish this season as strong as possible and just to put in practice what I've been learning this season," Moncada said. "That's my plan for next year, to put in play all the things I learned.

"Keep up with the development process because I still know that I can do better, I can develop as a better player. That's my goal for next season: try to work harder in every aspect of the game, my defense, offense and my running game."

#### Assessing Baltimore

Even with Hurricane Florence heading towards parts of the South and Southeast, the White Sox look as if they will miss the brunt of its full force during their weekend series against the Orioles at Camden Yards. Friday's forecast shows an 80 percent chance for thunderstorms, but that chance dips to 20 percent and cloudy on Saturday and Sunday.

White Sox manager Rick Renteria has a view well beyond baseball in this instance.

"I know we want to play our games, but we're also very aware of how many people it can affect over there," Renteria said. "Hopefully people are heeding the warnings and getting themselves out of harm's way. I know everybody is doing the best they can along the coast to prepare for it.

"Hopefully we'll be able to get through this, manage it. Hopefully the people who are actually going to be hit with this are going to be able to get through it."

Third to first

- The White Sox had struck out 1,401 times entering Wednesday, the most in the Majors and the single-season high in franchise history.
- Yolmer Sanchez reached base safely in 27 of his previous 28 games, hitting safely in 24 of those, entering Wednesday.

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### **Every team's single-season saves leader**

By David Adler, Manny Randhawa and Do-Hyoung Park / MLB.com / September 12, 2018

Edwin Diaz's chase for history is in its final weeks. The Mariners have 18 games left in the regular season. Diaz has 54 saves -- eight shy of the Major League single-season record of 62, set by the Angels' Francisco Rodriguez in 2008.

However, even if Diaz doesn't reach K-Rod's mark, he's already had one of the best seasons by a closer in MLB history. His 54 saves are the most for any pitcher in the decade since Rodriguez's record-breaking campaign, and Diaz already has the fifth-highest single-season saves total of all-time, not to mention a Mariners club record.

How does Diaz's 2018 season in Seattle stack up to the greatest closers from the other MLB franchises? Here are the single-season saves leaders for each of the 30 teams.

#### AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST

Blue Jays: Duane Ward, 45 saves, 1993

Next best: Roberto Osuna, 39, 2017

Ward was a big part of Toronto's second consecutive World Series-winning season, leading the AL in saves in 1993 while earning his only career All-Star nod and finishing fifth in the AL Cy Young Award voting. In the Fall Classic that year, Ward saved two of the Blue Jays' wins over the Phillies -- Games 1 and 4 -- and he was the winning pitcher in the deciding Game 6, pitching a scoreless top of the ninth before Joe Carter ended the Series with his iconic walk-off homer in the bottom of the ninth.

Orioles: Jim Johnson, 51 saves, 2012

Next best: Johnson, 50, 2013

Johnson broke out with an All-Star campaign for Baltimore in 2012 -- his first of back-to-back 50-save seasons. His Major League-best 51 saves helped the O's make their first postseason appearance since 1997. Johnson finished seventh in the AL Cy Young Award voting, and he closed out the Orioles' AL Wild Card Game win over the Rangers and both of their Division Series wins against the Yankees (although he also had a loss and a blown save in the series, which Baltimore lost in five games). Johnson is one of only three pitchers in Major League history to save 50-plus games twice, along with Eric Gagne ('02-'03) and Mariano Rivera ('01 and '04).

Rays: Fernando Rodney, 48 saves, 2012

Next best: Alex Colome, 47, 2017

The well-traveled Rodney has saved 30-plus games in a season with four teams -- the Tigers, Rays, Mariners and D-backs -- and the ones with Tampa Bay and Seattle were both 48-save seasons. Rodney's 2012 season with the Rays, though, was the best of his career. In fact, it's one of the best ever by a closer. Rodney not only saved 48 games, he had an ERA of just 0.60 -- setting a record at the time for the lowest in history by a reliever with at least 50 innings pitched. (Rodney now ranks second to Zach Britton's 0.54 ERA in '16.) Rodney was a '12 All-Star and finished fifth in AL Cy Young Award voting that season.

Red Sox: Tom Gordon, 46 saves, 1998

Next best: Derek Lowe, 42, 2000

Gordon was a starter for the first 10 years of his career, even winning 17 games in 1989 while finishing second to Baltimore's Gregg Olson (and one spot ahead of Ken Griffey Jr.!) in the AL Rookie of the Year Award voting. But the Sox moved Gordon to the bullpen full-time in 1998, and he never started again after leading the AL in saves and games finished (69) that year.

Yankees: Mariano Rivera, 53 saves, 2004

Next best: Rivera, 50, 2001

No surprise here. Rivera, MLB's all-time career saves leader with 652, of course holds the Yankees' single-season mark. Mo's 53 saves in 2004 gave him his second career 50-save season, putting him in the group of three with Gagne and Johnson as the only pitchers to hit that mark twice. Rivera was an All-Star for the sixth time (of 13 career selections) in '04, and he finished third in the AL Cy Young Award voting as the Yanks won the AL East for a seventh straight season.

## AL CENTRAL

Indians: Jose Mesa, 46 saves, 1995

Next best: Joe Borowski, 45, 2007; Bob Wickman, 45, 2005

Mesa was as dominant as closers come in 1995, saving 46 games over a strike-shortened 144-game schedule. He posted a 1.13 ERA and 1.03 WHIP for the AL champions, finishing second in the AL Cy Young Award voting to Randy Johnson. It was an incredible season for Mesa and the 100-win Tribe, but it ended with a six-game loss to the Braves in the World Series. Mesa would go on to save 40 or more games three more times in his 19-year career -- in 2001 (42) and '02 (45) with the Phillies, and in '04 (43) with the Pirates.

Royals: Greg Holland, 47 saves, 2013

Next best: Holland, 46, 2014

In the season before the Royals truly burst onto the scene with a run to the World Series in 2014, Holland set the franchise record with 47 saves. It was a career year for the right-hander, who posted a 1.21 ERA in 68 appearances, striking out 103 of the 255 batters he faced (40.4 percent). Holland would be the closer for a vaunted Kansas City bullpen that played a key role in getting the club to the Fall Classic in '14 (seven-game loss to the Giants) and again in '15, when the Royals won their first title in 30 years (although Holland's season was cut short by injury).

Tigers: Jose Valverde, 49 saves, 2011

Next best: Francisco Rodriguez, 44, 2016

Valverde was among the game's best closers from 2007-11, a span during which he saved 191 games and had a 2.74 ERA for the D-backs, Astros and Tigers. But '11 was a career year for the right-hander, as he posted a 2.24 ERA and set a franchise record with 49 saves to help Detroit reach the postseason for the first time in five years. Valverde was hit hard in six playoff appearances, however, surrendering six runs in 7 1/3 innings against the Yankees and Rangers.

Twins: Joe Nathan, 47 saves, 2009

Next best: Eddie Guardado, 45, 2002

Nathan originally came up with the Giants as a starting pitcher, but after San Francisco traded him to Minnesota in 2003 in a package for catcher A.J. Pierzynski, the Twins converted Nathan to a reliever, and he became one of the best closers in baseball. He would go on to save 260 games and make four All-Star teams over seven seasons with Minnesota, including a franchise-record 47 saves in '09.

White Sox: Bobby Thigpen, 57 saves, 1990

Next best: Keith Foulke, 42, 2001

Until Francisco Rodriguez broke it with the Angels in 2008, Thigpen's 57 saves for Chicago in 1990 was the single-season record. Though he had saved 34 games in each of the previous two seasons, Thigpen's '90 campaign was by far the best of his career. His ERA was 1.83 and he finished fourth in AL Cy Young Award voting and fifth in AL Most Valuable Player Award voting.

## AL WEST

Angels: Francisco Rodriguez, 62 saves, 2008

Next best: Brian Fuentes, 48, 2009

Rodriguez posted a trio of 40-save seasons from 2005-07 to establish himself as one of the premier young relievers of the day, but his historic '08 season put him in hallowed ground. He became the only pitcher in MLB history to surpass 60 saves, and his 62 saves remain the single-season mark to beat. Along the way, K-Rod finished third in the AL Cy Young Award voting and sixth in the AL MVP Award tally, as he also became the youngest closer to register his 200th save. Rodriguez's record campaign earned him a three-year, \$37 million contract with the Mets the following offseason.

Astros: Jose Valverde, 44 saves, 2008; Billy Wagner, 44, '03  
Next best: Brad Lidge, 42, 2005

Valverde only spent two of his 12 big league seasons with the Astros, but he was a bright spot amid a largely forgettable stretch in Houston history, when he saved an NL-best 44 of the Astros' 86 wins in 2008 -- his first year with the club -- to tie the franchise's all-time mark. Wagner's '03 season was the last of his nine years in Houston, and he posted his best numbers since he finished fourth in National League Cy Young Award voting in 1999, notching a career-best 44 saves and a 1.78 ERA om '03.

Athletics: Dennis Eckersley, 51 saves, 1992  
Next best: Eckersley, 48, 1990

Eckersley likely would not win the AL MVP Award in today's game for the kind of season he put together in 1992, but that shouldn't take away from the achievements that netted him both the AL Cy Young Award and the AL MVP Award that year, as the A's raced to their fourth AL Championship Series in five seasons. Eck's 51 saves led the MLB by a wide margin, while his 1.91 ERA was the third-best mark of his career (his career-best 0.61 ERA and 48 saves in 1990 didn't garner nearly as many votes for the major awards). The Hall of Famer's numbers took a sharp downturn a year later, but he saved 151 more games over his final six seasons.

Mariners: Edwin Diaz, 54 saves (and counting), 2018  
Next best: Fernando Rodney, 48, 2014

Though over 15 batters per nine innings have become strikeout victims to Diaz's electric fastball and slider in 2018, the most prominent casualty of the young fireballer's quest for the history books was Seattle manager Scott Servais' hair, after the skipper promised to match Diaz's creative hairdo if the closer could reach 50 saves. A significant factor in the Mariners' well-documented success in one-run games in 2018, Diaz is on pace for 61 saves -- one shy of Rodriguez's single-season record.

Rangers: Francisco Cordero, 49 saves, 2004  
Next best: Joe Nathan, 43, 2013

Cordero took over the Rangers' closer job during the 2003 season following the trade of Ugueth Urbina to the Marlins, and in Cordero's first full season as the closer in '04, he set Texas' single-season mark with 49 saves and was named to an All-Star team for the first time in his career. Cordero was traded to Milwaukee in '06, and he made two more All-Star appearances in '07 (with the Brewers) and '09 (with the Reds), saving 210 games in the NL in his 14-year career.

## NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST

Braves: John Smoltz, 55 saves, 2002  
Next best: Craig Kimbrel, 50, 2013

After forming arguably the greatest starting rotation of all-time with fellow Hall of Famers Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine on the Braves' dominant teams of the 1990s, Tommy John surgery forced Smoltz to reinvent himself as a reliever. In 2002 -- his first full season as Atlanta's closer -- Smoltz set the NL record with 55 saves for his first of three consecutive 40-save seasons, as the Braves won the 11th of their record 14 straight division titles. Gagne tied Smoltz's 53-save mark the next season with the Dodgers, but no NL reliever has exceeded that total.

Marlins: Armando Benitez, 47 saves, 2004  
Next best: Antonio Alfonseca, 45, 2000

Benitez had his ups and downs after establishing himself as the Mets' closer in the late 1990s, but his 2004 season with the Marlins was the best statistical year of his career. His 47 saves led the NL, and he had an

ERA of just 1.29, his lowest in any full season. From April 8 through June 4, Benitez did not allow an earned run in 27 appearances while collecting 20 saves in that span. He also earned the second of his two career All-Star nods in '04.

Mets: Jeurys Familia, 51 saves, 2016

Next best: Familia, 43, 2015

Familia led the Majors in saves in 2016, his one All-Star season to date, as he helped the Mets make the playoffs for a second straight year as one of the NL Wild Card teams. Familia's 51 saves in '16 eclipsed his own franchise record established the year before, when he saved 43 games and the Mets won the NL East. In the '16 Wild Card Game, though, Familia gave up the decisive three-run homer in the ninth inning of a scoreless game, and the Mets fell to the Giants.

Nationals: Chad Cordero, 47 saves, 2005

Next best: Rafael Soriano, 43, 2013; Drew Storen, 42, 2011

Cordero was one of the bright spots for the Nationals in their first season in D.C., as he saved a Major League-best 47 games with a 1.82 ERA in an All-Star campaign. He saved 15 games in June alone, tying the MLB record for the most within a single calendar month, along with John Wetteland's 15 saved for the Yankees in June 1996 and Lee Smith's 15 for the Cardinals in June 1993. Cordero finished fifth in the NL Cy Young Award voting.

Phillies: Mesa, 45 saves, 2002

Next best: Mitch Williams, 43, 1993

The Phillies are the second team that has Mesa sitting atop its single-season saves list, as he also owns the Indians' record with his 46 saves in 1995. That was the only season in which Mesa saved more games than he did for Philadelphia in 2002, when he posted his second straight 40-save season with the Phils after joining the team in '01 and saving 42 games.

## NL CENTRAL

Brewers: John Axford, 46 saves, 2011

Next best: Francisco Rodriguez, 44, 2014; Francisco Cordero, 44, 2007

The Brewers reached the postseason in 2011 for the second time since 1982, in no small part thanks to a dominant season from Axford. The right-hander was in his third big league season, and it became his best thus far, as he posted a 1.95 ERA and finished ninth in the NL Cy Young Award voting. Axford also saved three games in the postseason (one in the NL Division Series against the D-backs and two in the NL Championship Series against the Cardinals).

Cardinals: Trevor Rosenthal, 48 saves, 2015

Next best: Jason Isringhausen, 47, 2004; Lee Smith, 47, 1991

Before injuries derailed his career, Rosenthal used his 100-mph fastball to put together a two-season stretch from 2014-15 for St. Louis in which he was dominant, particularly in '15. That's when he set the franchise record for saves, posted a 2.10 ERA and was named an NL All-Star.

Cubs: Randy Myers, 53 saves, 1993

Next best: Rod Beck, 51, 1998

Of the 347 career saves Myers recorded over a 14-year MLB career, 112 came during his three seasons with the Cubs from 1993-95. Though the best year of his career came earlier with the Reds as part of the "Nasty Boys" relief corps, including a 1990 World Series championship, the '93 campaign was his finest with the Cubs. Chicago didn't make the postseason that year, but the left-hander notched a save in 63 percent of the club's 84 victories while posting a 3.11 ERA.

Pirates: Mark Melancon, 51 saves, 2015

Next best: Mike Williams, 46, 2002

Melancon's emergence as a strong reliever was one of the keys to the Pirates breaking their 20-season playoff drought with an appearance in the NL Wild Card Game in 2013. The right-hander got better and better, becoming Pittsburgh's full-time closer in '14. But it was the next season that he put himself into the

echelon of elite closers, saving a franchise-record 51 games while posting a 2.23 ERA and 0.93 WHIP. In 3 1/2 seasons with the Bucs, Melancon saved 130 games with a 1.80 ERA.

Reds: Jeff Brantley, 44 saves, 1996

Next best: Jeff Shaw, 42, 1997

Brantley had been a solid reliever for eight Major League seasons entering the 1996 campaign, but he had never saved more than 28 games. When the Reds signed the right-hander as a free agent prior to the '94 season, they made a solid investment that returned a 2.64 ERA and 88 saves over four seasons, including a franchise-record 44 in '96.

## NL WEST

D-backs: Valverde, 47 saves, 2007

Next best: J.J. Putz, 45, 2011

The D-backs tried out Valverde as their closer immediately upon his debut in 2003, but an injury in '04 and inconsistency the following two seasons prevented him from fully seizing the role. All that changed in '07, when Valverde held the closer job from Opening Day through Arizona's run to the NLCS. He set the young franchise's single-season record with a Majors-best 47 saves. Valverde saved his postseason debut in the NLDS against the Cubs, but took the loss in his only NLCS appearance as the Rockies swept the D-backs in four games.

Dodgers: Eric Gagne, 55 saves, 2003

Next best: Gagne, 52, 2002

Of course, it's Gagne who tops the Dodgers' leaderboard with his legendary 2003 season, when he converted all 55 of his save opportunities to tie Smoltz's NL record from a year earlier. That '03 season was just part of Gagne's MLB-record 84 consecutive saves converted from '02-04, but it certainly represented his peak during that stretch, as Gagne posted a career-low 1.20 ERA and struck out 15 batters per nine innings, which was, at the time, the best ever among relievers with at least 40 appearances. For his effort, he became the first reliever to win a Cy Young Award since Eckersley's 1992 AL MVP Award campaign -- and no relief pitcher has won since.

Giants: Brian Wilson, 48 saves, 2010; Rod Beck, 48, 1993

Next best: Robb Nen, 45, 2001

A young, beardless Wilson assumed the Giants' closer role in September 2007, and while he saved 79 games and was named to his first All-Star Game over the following two seasons, Wilson unleashed his full potential in '10, posting a career-best 1.81 ERA and a Majors-best 48 saves while pushing the Giants to their first World Series championship in 56 years. It was during that postseason run that Wilson began growing his trademark beard, as he saved six playoff games, including the decisive World Series Game 5. Wilson matched Beck's breakout 1993 campaign, when Beck saved 48 games as a 24-year-old in the first of five full seasons as San Francisco's closer.

Padres: Trevor Hoffman, 53 saves, 1998

Next best: Heath Bell, 47, 2010

The newly minted Hall of Famer had the best season of his 18-year career in 1998, when his 53 saves led the Majors as the Padres won the National League pennant for the second time in franchise history. It marked the first of seven All-Star campaigns for the game's second-most prolific closer, who posted the only 50-save season of his career. Hoffman made eight appearances during the '98 postseason, collecting three saves but blowing a save in his only World Series outing, as the Yankees swept the Padres in four games.

Rockies: Greg Holland, 41 saves, 2017; Jose Jimenez, 41, 2002

Next best: Wade Davis, 38 (and counting), 2018

The Rockies took a chance on Holland with a one-year contract after he missed the entire 2016 campaign while recovering from Tommy John surgery, and he posted one of the best first halves in franchise history, saving 28 games with a 1.62 ERA before the All-Star break. Though his performance tailed off dramatically in the second half, Holland still tied the Dodgers' Kenley Jansen for the NL lead in saves and earned the



NL Comeback Player of the Year Award. Holland tied Colorado's record of 16 consecutive saves to open a season, set by Jimenez in his 2002 campaign, when the former starter went 2-10 but set the young franchise's record with 41 saves.

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### **Is Jose Rondon emerging as a sleeper for the White Sox?**

By Dan Santorimita / NBC Sports Chicago / September 12, 2018

Jose Rondon isn't making any prospect lists or even many future lineup projections for the White Sox, but the 24-year-old is showing some ability this season.

Rondon was acquired for cash considerations in the offseason after the Padres designated him for assignment. He made his MLB debut in 2016 with the Padres, going 3-for-25 in eight games, but has gotten more of an opportunity with the White Sox this year.

The infielder has been up and down between Triple-A and the majors this season. He has shown something in his game that wasn't really there before: power. Rondon had six home runs in 2016 and seven in 2017, but erupted with 18 home runs with Triple-A Charlotte in 80 games. That power has continued, in limited games, with the White Sox.

Rondon's homer on Wednesday was his fifth in 33 games. He is hitting .256/.318/.513. Rondon isn't much of a contact hitter and doesn't draw a ton of walks, but his ability to play multiple positions on the infield and hit for power could make him a valuable piece going forward. He likely won't supplant Tim Anderson, Yoan Moncada or even Nick Madrigal down the road, but could earn a utility infield role.

His 23 combined home runs between the minors and majors place him second in the organization. Only Daniel Palka, who has 25 between Charlotte and the majors, is ahead of Rondon.

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### **Tim Anderson's 12th-inning homer lifts White Sox over Royals**

By David Smale / Chicago Tribune / September 12, 2018

Tim Anderson kept the White Sox in the game with his glove before he won it with his bat.

Anderson hit a two-run homer in the 12th inning, and Chicago beat the Kansas City Royals 4-2 on Wednesday night.

Anderson's blast off Burch Smith (1-5), the sixth Royals pitcher, landed just beyond the fence in left-center. It was his 19th homer this season.

"It was a good way to cap off the night," Anderson said. "I was looking fastball. The at-bat before that, they started me off with a slider. The first pitch was a fastball up, and I had a feeling that he would throw me another one. I was able to jump on it."

In the bottom of the 11th, Rosell Herrera lined out to Anderson at shortstop, and he threw to third to double off pinch-runner Brett Phillips.

"It's a bang-bang play," he said. "I guess (Phillips) didn't think I could jump. It was close, but it was a good play to get us out of the jam."

Juan Minaya (2-2) pitched two scoreless innings for the win. Hector Santiago, the eighth Chicago pitcher, picked up his second save in as many chances. Jose Rondon also homered for the White Sox, who snapped a seven-game skid, one game short of their season-worst losing streak.

"Tim put a good swing on it," manager Rick Renteria said. "All the guys in the dugout were hoping he would do something there, and he did."

"Both teams did a good job of protecting the strike zone and limiting the scoring."

Adalberto Mondesi tied a career high with four hits and drove in both of Kansas City's runs.

Both teams wasted plenty of scoring chances. The Royals had five runners retired on the bases, while the White Sox left seven men on base.

Royals starter Eric Skogland pitched five innings, allowing two runs on two hits, with two walks and two strikeouts. He made his first start since May 25 after a long stint on the disabled list with a sprained ulnar collateral ligament. He returned Sept. 4 and had pitched two scoreless innings in relief.

"(Skogland) threw the ball really, really well," Kansas City manager Ned Yost said. "Our pitching did a great job. ... We just couldn't find ways."

Carlos Rodon pitched six innings, allowing two runs on five hits.

"My command wasn't great today," Rodon said. "The defense turned some nice double plays, I got through six and the boys got the win."

Whit Merrifield stole two bases to bring his season total to 35, a new career high. He led the AL with 34 swipes last season and tops the league again this year.

After Merrifield stole second in the third inning, Mondesi drove him in with a single for the game's first run. Mondesi stole his 22nd base, his 17th since the All-Star break.

The White Sox answered with two runs in the fourth on Rondon's homer to left, scoring Avisail Garcia, who reached on a two-out walk.

The Royals tied it in the fifth but had a chance for a bigger inning. Ryan O'Hearn reached on a one-out walk, and Merrifield followed with a double to the wall in left center. But O'Hearn went too far around third and was picked off. Merrifield then stole third and scored on Mondesi's second RBI single.

The White Sox had runners on second and third with one out in the seventh, and then loaded the bases with two outs. But Glenn Sparkman induced a fielder's-choice grounder from Anderson to end the inning.

The Royals loaded the bases in the seventh as well but did not score.

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### **For retiring White Sox voice Ken Harrelson, 'Hawk' documentary beats a gold watch**

By Phil Rosenthal / Chicago Tribune / September 12, 2018

As retirement gifts go, "Hawk" is far better than some fancy gold watch.

Ken "Hawk" Harrelson hardly needs anything to remind him of time's passage as he ends his 33-summer run as a White Sox announcer, and it matters little that a wristwatch might appreciate in value.

What this hour produced jointly by the ballclub's video crew and NBC Sports Chicago does is tell Harrelson they appreciate and value him.

Set to make its debut on the cable channel and its digital platforms at 7 p.m. Thursday, "Hawk" is the sort of send-off one suspects Harrelson might give himself.

And to an extent he does, in that "Hawk" casts him as tour guide on a carefully mapped trip down memory lane that's more Hawk-umentary than documentary.

Harrelson, 77, reminisces in Savannah, Ga., where he shows viewers a childhood home and a school he attended. In Boston, he drops in on one of his postgame watering holes from a half-century ago, when he was a bit of a dandy off the field, and prowls Fenway Park.

There's a round of golf at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club in Florida, as well as stops in Chicago and at his family home in Indiana.

Rounding out the sentimental journey are testimonials from family, friends, colleagues, peers and former players who seem to regard him as highly as he regards them.

"Hawk" is proof a TV program can be in high-definition and gauzy soft focus at the same time, which is not a criticism but an acknowledgement the primary audience is his dedicated fan base, not detractors.

Those detractors get passing acknowledgment, but "Hawk" is polished to a gloss lovingly by Ryan McGuffey, Matt Buckman and Sarah Lauch from NBCSCH and Brad Boron, Matt Dahl, J.V. Trammell and Blake Evaristo of the Sox.

The emphasis is on how Harrelson's off-camera sentimentality (as Ken) informs and complements his impassioned public persona (as Hawk).

"Hawk's best attribute, honestly, is he doesn't give a (bleep) about anything else that anyone says about him," Jason Benetti, who has been eased into his role as Harrelson's successor on Sox telecasts, says.

Ken, however, cares a good deal.

"The fans in Chicago," he says in "Hawk," choked with emotion, "they will never know how much I love them. There's an affair there. There's a love affair, and I love it."

"Hawk" plays in spots like a long-form campaign ad in support of his bid for the coveted Ford C. Frick Award, the Baseball Hall of Fame's honor for broadcasters.

Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf sings his praises and analyst Steve Stone — a Cy Young Award-winner only six years younger and a solid Frick candidate himself — is among the chorus in "Hawk" to talk of when Harrelson will get a Hall pass, not if.

Former MLB Commissioner Bud Selig says he has "a profound admiration and respect for (Harrelson) both as a person and a baseball man, and that's the highest compliment I can pay anybody."

Bob Costas, this year's Frick honoree, notes that Harrelson stands out in an increasingly homogenized field, and "I don't know if we'll ever see anyone exactly like Hawk Harrelson again."

"Hawk" does not set out to be a definitive biography.

In its zeal to credit Harrelson with the nicknames (such as "The Big Hurt") and catchphrases (such as "He gone" and "You can put it on the board ... yes!") he coined and/or popularized, it lumps in preexisting terms (such as Red Barber's "can o' corn") he has kept alive in baseball's vernacular.

"Hawk" dwells on how his wife since the early 1970s, Aris, helped him straighten out his life and how he has doted on a son and daughter from that marriage.

But it steers clear of Harrelson's first wife, Betty Ann, whom he married when they were both 17, and the four kids they had during their tempestuous relationship before divorcing in 1971.

"Hawk" essentially leapfrogs from Harrelson's erstwhile resistance of a trade from the Red Sox to the Indians in 1969 to being teamed in the White Sox booth with Don Drysdale in 1982.

Harrelson's playing days away from Boston — with the A's, Senators and Indians — get short shrift, along with his stints as a pro golfer, announcer for the Red Sox and Yankees and his time as White Sox general manager.

“Hawk” prefers to strike a largely celebratory tone, and anecdotes such as Benetti recalling how, when he was young, he impersonated Hawk.

“He’s very much a part of the reason I do this,” Benetti says.

Not even the most expensive timepiece can tell its owner that.

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### **Anderson’s homer in 12th helps White Sox halt seven-game skid**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 12, 2018

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It was a good thing having Carlos Rodon on the mound Wednesday night, as good a candidate as any to stop the bleed of a seven-game losing streak oozing over the mess of this White Sox September.

First came word this month that outfielder Eloy Jimenez, overly qualified to receive a September call-up, if not sooner, was not getting promoted. Worse yet, then came the gut-wrenching blow that Michael Kopech had blown out his elbow and would need Tommy John Surgery and miss all of the 2019 season.

Since the Kopech news, a team that won 17 of 29 games in August and two of their first three in September lost five games in a row, extending the losing skid to seven. Rodon set out to snuff it out in the final game of a three-game series against one of two teams worse than the Sox, and his six innings of two-run ball helped get the job done.

Tim Anderson did the rest of the heavy lifting, breaking a tie with a two-run homer in the 12th inning against Burch Smith, and seven relievers combined for six scoreless innings to give the Sox a 4-2 win that snapped the skid.

“The main thing is to stay focused, keep driving, keep pushing,” manager Rick Renteria said. “The season is not over.”

A win avoiding a series sweep to the lowly Royals notwithstanding, it is starting to feel that way, though, for a fan base which embraced the rebuild at SoxFest and spring training, was taken aback by losing months of April, May, June and July, and then charged up again by a better brand of baseball in August and the arrival of Kopech in September. And the team itself? It seems reasonable to believe the Kopech injury staggered it, as well.

“It took one of our dominant starters out of the rotation,” said Anderson, who hit his 19th homer and finished the game by going to his left in the hole to retire Whit Merrifield. “But we have to keep going.”

“Pitching is what wins games in the major leagues,” Matt Davidson said. “Obviously Kopech was a part of that.”

Rodon, who could be the staff ace in 2019, gave up two runs over six innings but was not at his best Wednesday walking five Royals. He did strike out five and benefited from two double plays — one on a flyball — to help him overcome three leadoff walks and four Royals stolen bases.

“Command wasn’t great today but [catcher] Omar [Narvaez] and I had to grind it out,” Rodon said.

“It’s big, man. How about the last play [Anderson] made to end the game? Ball in the hole, helluva throw. Strong armed it. The kid does it all. You don’t want to miss an at-bat or ball hit to him because something special is going to happen.”

Third baseman Jose Rondon belted his fifth homer in his 77th at-bat, a two-run shot against Royals lefty Eric Skoglund to give the Sox a 2-1 lead in the fourth. The Royals got RBI singles from Adalberto Mondesi in the third and fifth innings.

The Sox (57-89) need to win six of their last 16 games to avoid losing 100 for the fourth time in franchise history and for the first time since they went 56-106 in 1971. They were 67-95 in the first season of the rebuild last year.

"We don't want to lose 100, not at all," Davidson said. "Nobody would want to do that.

"I think we're paying more attention to where we're at, trying to catch Detroit [in third place in the AL Central], chasing the people ahead of us."

Anderson said he wasn't exactly sure what the Sox record was, "but losing 100 would be something to avoid."

"I can't quite put a label on the losing," Anderson said. "We just have to continue to play, pick one another up and keep battling."

Hector Santiago pitched a perfect 12th for his second save.

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### **White Sox manager hopes Moncada learned something in 2018**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 12, 2018

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Yoan Moncada's progression as a second baseman and hitter has been mixed in his first full season.

No matter what the numbers say, the 23-year-old switch hitter's .224/.304/.391 batting line with 17 homers, six triples, 24 doubles, 11 stolen bases, 57 RBI and a major-league high 196 strikeouts and team-high 18 errors through Tuesday will jump off the page for reasons both good and bad. Manager Rick Renteria emphasized the importance of Moncada taking what he has learned and putting it to use in 2019.

"From conversations we've had, he's realizing there's much more involved than the at-bats," said Renteria, who did not start Moncada against Royals left-hander Eric Skoglund on Wednesday. "Things he has to do on the field and the bases. How much more aware [players] have to be, having a swivel in the infield when things are going on around them."

Renteria, who has questioned Moncada's focus at times this season, suggested he is discovering the depth of all that goes on during a game, from basics to nuances.

"It's been a great experience for him," Renteria said. "Beyond the numbers, he's gained a lot of understanding of what's going on. He realizes there is a lot to be learned . . . he understands there is importance to routine and preparation.

"He's one of [these] kids who is learning a lot, even through the struggles and ups and downs that he's had."

Aches and pains

Moncada, who has struggled against lefties, got the day off to rest a sore hip, Renteria said.

Matt Davidson, who said he felt "a pull" in his left calf against the Angels on Friday, was out of the lineup for a third consecutive day but was available and likely will be ready to go Friday in Baltimore after the day off Thursday.

Watching Hamilton

September call-up Ian Hamilton, a potential closer of the future who has allowed a run on two hits in his first four appearances, says the experience will be invaluable going into the offseason.

"It will be huge," Hamilton said. "This gives me an idea of what I need to do in the offseason, too, as far as keeping the arm in shape. Knowing what I know now, I'll be more game-ready for spring training. Instead of coming in low 90s, I'll be coming in throwing what I'm throwing at the end of the season."

Hamilton said his head is still spinning as he experiences the big league life for the first time.

"Everything is better," he said. "I don't want to leave."

Broadcast news

Jason Benetti and Steve Stone will call 10 of the final 16 games. Here are the changes to the TV lineup.

Friday at Baltimore: Chuck Swirsky and Stone, with Benetti missing the broadcast due to ESPN college football play-by-play duty.

Tuesday at Cleveland: Benetti and Tom Paciorek with Stone missing broadcast for Yom Kippur.

Thursday at Cleveland: Stone and Paciorek, with Benetti missing for ESPN college football play-by-play duty.

Sept 21-23: Ken Harrelson and Stone, with Harrelson calling the final three games of his career.

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### **Stark: Is there a way to fix baseball's service time mess?**

By Jayson Stark / The Athletic / September 12, 2018

In 2015, it was Kris Bryant. In April, it was Ronald Acuña Jr. And now, in a September in which we just can't stop talking about who isn't in the big leagues, it's Eloy Jiménez and Vladimir Guerrero Jr.

What do they have in common? They'd done everything they needed to do to reach the major leagues. But it wasn't enough – because baseball is broken.

Oh, not the game itself. Or the players. Or even the front offices that make these decisions which everyone enjoys so much. That isn't the part of baseball that needs fixing.

It's just the foundation of the sport. That's all.

Is there any other sport that provides such massive incentive for teams not to have their best players on the field – or even on their roster?

Of course not. Because that's crazy. That's borderline self-destructive.

Except not in this sport, apparently. In modern baseball, one long-time executive admits, these choices that teams make, to keep their elite young players from reaching free agency and/or salary arbitration for one extra year, are worth "millions of dollars – millions."

So the way to fix this, he told The Athletic, is simple: To just "not make it so profitable."

OK, cool. There you go. All they have to do is fix that.

Just don't ask how.

That, you see, is what we've been doing for the past week. We've asked people on both sides of baseball's service-time mess to give us their best ideas for how to solve one of this sport's most embarrassing problems.

You know what we learned? That merely asking the question made their head pound.

"It's not good for the game," said an official on management's side of this aisle. "I just don't know how to fix it."

"What I've got for you is zero," said one prominent agent. "We've all struggled with this. Everyone I know. No one can come up with anything better – not within this bargaining agreement and the conventions of baseball as we know them."

So is this an issue worth blowing up baseball over? Or is there an answer out there someplace? Here come five of the best potential solutions we heard. But there's also this warning: Every "solution" seems to create a whole new set of problems!

#### COUNT "YEARS," NOT JUST "DAYS"

The first thing you should know is, this survey tapped into an anger that we very rarely run across when we explore these sorts of issues.

"If this trend continues like this," said an agent of one young player who wasn't recalled this month, "where teams continue to put 'smart and analytical' ahead of the human side, this is how strikes happen. It's going to force the union to deal with a lot of anger from these younger players. And they're going to dig in."

We found quite a few seething agents out there. One who volunteered to speak out publicly was New York-based rep Seth Levinson, who said it's time for players, agents and the union to fight back.

"Clubs cannot be allowed to manipulate service time which results in damaging the player's career and earning power," Levinson said in an email to The Athletic. "Given that approximately 10 percent of all major leaguers play after their 35th birthday, STEALING another year of control should be viewed as a capital offense in this game."

His proposal? Don't merely measure players' path to arbitration and free-agent rights by counting days in the big leagues. Let them also accumulate service time even if they only play part of a season in the major leagues. So if they spend just one day on the active roster, that should count as a "year" of partial service, he proposed.

Then, if a player plays parts of three or four seasons in the big leagues, he would be eligible for arbitration even if he lacks enough "days" of service. The same with free agency, where parts of six or seven seasons would be enough to qualify.

WHY COULD IT WORK? What's the common thread running through every one of these controversies, from Bryant to Vladdy Jr.? It's counting "days" – because it's so easy for teams to work around allowing players to accumulate the days they need.

So if there is any potential solution that doesn't fall under just blow it up, it either has to A) do away with counting days entirely or B) provide players some kind of secondary path to arbitration and free agency. Well, his does that. In fact, Levinson believes, it's "the only way to prevent a club from intentionally finessing the clock" that leads to arbitration and free agency.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? There's only one significant downside to this idea that we see: There's still counting going on. It's just counting "years" instead of "days." So this wouldn't help Vlad Jr., for instance. Think the Blue Jays would call him up in September if even one day counted as part of a year in the big leagues? No. Chance.

But this would be the answer to the "Kris Bryant Rule." No need to send any phenom to the minor leagues for the first two weeks of a season if he'd still get credit for a year of service time as soon as he reached the big leagues. Which means that, in the case of a Vlad or Jiménez, you might not see them in September. But you'd see them next Opening Day.

So this is an idea that deserves some serious conversation. Just remember one thing:

As long as any service-time rule involves counting, there will always be a way for teams to manipulate their way around it.

#### FREE AGENCY AFTER FOUR YEARS

And now a proposal from someone on management's side. What was the big issue among players last winter? Free agents in their 30s suddenly discovered they had approximately the same bargaining power as the dudes on their grounds crew. So how could baseball fix that – and also solve the service-time brouhaha?

How about free agency after four years in the big leagues instead of six – but with one massive tradeoff:

Replacing arbitration with a fixed salary scale for all players in their first four seasons.

So what's in this for players? Many more reaching free agency in their 20s instead of their 30s. But the price they'd pay is: No more Bryce Harpers and Josh Donaldsons raking in over 20 million bucks in their final season of arbitration eligibility – unless that fixed four-year salary scale is a lot more generous than we'd expect owners to have in mind.

WHY COULD IT WORK? Let's think about how the NFL and NBA avoid service-time crises in their sports – with standard entry-level contracts. So salaries for all players are set – until those contracts expire and lead them to restricted free agency, then unrestricted free agency.

This proposal is about as close as baseball could come – with locked-in salaries in the years leading up to free agency. So of course Bryant and Acuña would be on the Opening Day roster. Why wouldn't they be? Their salaries for their first four years would have nothing to do with service time. And it would have no effect on when they became free agents.

"If arbitration wasn't a factor," said the longtime exec who proposed this idea, "why would I care if Kris Bryant made his debut on April 1, April 25 or June 22? There's no difference. The idea is to try to eliminate all the ways teams manipulate days. So to do it, players would have to give up something and owners would have to give up something."

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? There are small changes, and there are humongous changes. Guess which one this is.

In case you're not an aficionado of modern baseball labor relations, we can sum them up this way: MLB and its players union would have a tough time these days agreeing on what New York deli to meet at for a pastrami on rye.

So now ponder the odds of these sides successfully negotiating a whole new system that would wipe out salary arbitration, perhaps the signature imprint of union legend Marvin Miller, after 45 years.

"It would take a major change," said an executive who has played an active role in labor talks for many years. "And the only ways that can happen are either one side finding itself flat on its back after a work stoppage or an agreement on both sides that they want to make a major change. And I'm not sure which of those I could imagine happening right now."

#### THE SUPER-FIVES

This idea comes from another agent who represents a prominent client affected by service-time manipulation. It would allow a group of players to reach free agency early, even though they haven't quite logged the full six years of service time they need under the current system. So a couple of extra weeks in the minors for someone like Bryant wouldn't be enough to give his team another year of control.



The model here is obviously the “Super Two” arbitration rule – which gives salary-arbitration rights to about 20 extra players every year, even though they fall just short of having three years of service time.

“So let’s say that you had a Super Five rule,” the agent proposed. “If a player had, say, five years plus 100 days of service, he’d be part of a certain percentage of the five-year class who would become free agents.”

Among the players who would have jumped into that imaginary Super Five free-agent class after this season if 5 years, 100 days were the cutoff: Nolan Arenado, Alex Wood, Yasiel Puig, Khris Davis, Gerrit Cole and Didi Gregorius.

WHY COULD IT WORK? This is an idea designed, in theory, to help the super-elite player who is now being routinely sent to the minors on Opening Day, only to return a couple of weeks later to delay his free agency for an extra year. Evan Longoria was once in that group. So were George Springer, Bryant, Acuña, etc.

So the thinking is: If the price a team pays to get that extra year of control goes from a couple of lost weeks to a couple of lost months, it could theoretically change everything. If you’re the 2015 Cubs and this is finally The Year, you can live without Kris Bryant for two weeks. But can you live without him until June or July if you’re truly trying to win? Maybe not.

“The safety valve behind this whole system,” said one person on the players’ side, “has been that clubs would always want to win, first and foremost. So that would govern most of their decisions in situations like this. But if that’s no longer the case, we’re in a whole different world.”

WHAT’S THE PROBLEM? When we ran this idea past one official in the management sphere, he had no trouble understanding the logic behind it. But he also said this: “Anything based on service time doesn’t make sense.”

Once again, the potential fatal flaw here is that same old snafu: Counting days of service.

You would like to believe that teams would think twice if living without an impact player for almost half a season was what it took to delay a star player’s trip to free agency. But the way they’ve handled their potential Super Two players tells a different tale.

Have we mentioned in the last few paragraphs that that extra year of control is worth millions? OK. Then follow the money.

#### COUNT AGE, NOT SERVICE TIME

One popular idea we’ve seen tossed around a lot lately would base free agency on a whole different standard:

Age.

Grant every player free agency at age 27 or 28. That’s the concept. Then, theoretically, you’d remove all incentive to keep players out of the big leagues for pretty much any reason.

The NHL uses this principle (although only with players who have been in the league for seven seasons or more). And it has generally worked well within their structure.

“The idea behind going to an age-based model,” said one baseball official, “is that you’re not counting days. You’re counting seasons. But everybody becomes a free agent at 27 or 28.”

WHY COULD IT WORK? This isn’t particularly complicated – on its surface, anyway. The only number anyone would be counting is years on the planet, not days on the roster. So the incentive for all teams would be to get players to the big leagues sooner, not later – because the later they get there, the less bang you’re getting for your buck before their free-agent age buzzer goes off.

"It's more common in hockey," said one longtime official with ties to both sports, "for players to become really valuable really young – at 19, or 20, or 21. That doesn't really happen as frequently in baseball."

And do you see the Edmonton Oilers trying to delay Connor McDavid's arrival, even for one day, let alone six months? Of course not. So this is an interesting concept. But would it actually translate to baseball?

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? For what seems like such a basic concept, you'd be surprised by all the complications this idea would cause when you try to apply it to a sport like baseball, with such a different structure and history. In fact, we encountered almost no support for it on either side.

"Everything creates a new set of problems," said one baseball official who has spent significant time studying this issue. "And an age-based system creates all sorts of problems."

For one thing, think of how this would penalize the Juan Sotos, Mike Trouts and Bryce Harpers of this sport, who arrive at 19 or 20. Would you force them to play eight or nine seasons before allowing them to become free agents? They'd be delighted, we're sure.

"The only way around that," said one official, "is to do some sort of combination of age and service time. Otherwise, you're severely penalizing the guys who come up and contribute at 18, 19 or 20."

Then imagine the impact on college players, many of whom aren't reaching the major leagues until age 24 or 25. Why would any of them ever go in the first round? If you're handing out \$8-million signing bonuses, why would you give one to a guy who might only play for your team for three years – when a high school player might give you seven or eight seasons for the same bonus money?

"You have to be really careful with this one," said one of the officials quoted earlier. "Ideally, you want to have a mix of high school and college players. You don't want to create too much incentive for kids not to go to college."

Finally, there are major international ramifications – because no player would be more valuable to any team than a kid from the Dominican who signs at 16 and reaches the big leagues at 19. So how could baseball possibly go to age-based free agency without a worldwide draft?

"Like all of these," said the same official, "this might reduce it [the service-time manipulation game]. But it doesn't 100 percent solve it."

#### THE WINDS OF WAR?

All right. If we're going to wipe out baseball's entire arbitration/free-agent structure as we know it, then why not really wipe it out? Here's a radical idea: Why not base all of this on how players actually perform?

Why not tie everything to Wins Above Replacement?

Hey, just a thought. It's not a perfect tool. But it's the first stat ever devised that truly attempts to measure everything that takes place on a baseball field every day. So why base arbitration and free agency around counting days, when it's now possible to use advanced metrics to reward the players who actually play the best?

WHY COULD IT WORK? Why could it work, you ask? Because it's the 21st century, we say. So why not create a system where the most talented players, the men who make the biggest impact, earn the most money and earn the most important rights?

Pick the metric. We could use Wins Above Replacement. We could use wRC+. We could use Adjusted ERA-Plus for pitchers. We could use any metric – or combination of metrics – that both sides could agree on. Then, one exec proposed, why not use the current Super Two percentage and allow the top 22 percent in that group to qualify for arbitration and free agency?

"We're basically using a model now," he said, "that started with Marvin Miller and the way he viewed workers in the '60s and '70s. Isn't it fair to ask whether that model is outdated now, all these years later?"

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? Obviously, it's fair to ask that question. Obviously, it's fair to think way outside baseball's current box. But the problem, or at least the main problem, is just is obvious.

This is an idea so far outside any box that has ever existed in this sport — how could this union and this rendition of baseball management possibly find common ground on a concept this radical when they can't even agree on issues as basic as how to market their star attractions?

"I honestly believe," said one of the officials quoted earlier, "that this would not be a difficult problem to fix if you had two sides that truly want to fix it. But therein lies the problem — on pretty much every issue you can think of."

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### **Hostetler: White Sox's 2018 draftees need time to adjust to professional ball**

By James Fegan / The Athletic / September 12, 2018

If you have a hard time battling your nerves when top White Sox draft picks — supposed future cornerstones of the rebuild — don't immediately dominate upon their arrival to professional baseball, you're not too different from the man who pulled their names off the draft board this June.

"I had a scouting director who's been doing it for 20 years tell me to not to look at box scores of the first-year guys because it will drive you crazy," White Sox scouting director Nick Hostetler said by phone. "I had to. That was killing me, it was eating me alive to literally watch the ups and downs of all these guys we pick and sign. It really was truly affecting me mentally, physically."

It also, he determined, was ultimately not serving much of a purpose. Both 2018 fourth overall pick Nick Madrigal and second-round pick Steele Walker played for USA Baseball the summer before their junior years, eliminating any real breaks in their grueling schedule between that and getting drafted, beyond a short pause for winter holidays.

Between ending a long college season that included a championship run for Madrigal at Oregon State, transitioning to swinging with wood bats, joining a new organization, facing better competition and shaking off nagging injuries (hamstring for Madrigal, oblique for Walker), there were too many grains of salt to be sprinkled on their early performances. Walker hit .186/.246/.310 in 31 games at Low-A Kannapolis and will probably return there next season as a result, and Madrigal hit a productive but power-starved .306/.355/.347 (103 wRC+) in 26 games at High-A Winston-Salem. But after getting advice about dealing with developing players from his friend Tom Crean (current Georgia men's basketball coach and the father of 2017 White Sox 35th-round pick Riley Crean), Hostetler is shrugging off any shortcomings in both lines.

"Some of these guys had really good years, some of them had really solid years and others had years where it is what it is and they're getting acclimated to the game," Hostetler said. "Next year when they have a full offseason, ready to go, that's when I'll start paying a bit more attention to it, a bit more focus on it. I really had to learn that."

General manager Rick Hahn spent a lot of time managing expectations this year for Luis Robert, who has also struggled, saying the larger focus for the year was to have him acclimate to life in pro ball. The young men in the 2018 White Sox draft class might not have changed countries, but Hostetler said the same sentiment could carry over to his draftees, who are still learning to manage a full season's workload.

"Nick still battled through a wrist break during his college season. I'm sure he's still trying to get his strength back," said Hostetler, who is bullish on Madrigal's ability to hit for power down the road. "He'll never tell you if it's true or not. He's still getting his strength back and then he's dealing with a hamstring or a thumb issue. Those types of things, it wears on you after a while."

"I asked him when I was in Winston, 'Are you tired?' And this was after asking some of our other guys the same question. This was at the end of August, and Nick smiled and said, 'No, not at all,' and you know that's just Nick and that's what he is. You ask the other guys and they've far blown past the point where they're going to shoot you straight and they'll say, 'I'm dead, man.' It's great to see, but that's also part of the things that Nick has to learn. There's times when he is going to need a day off to give him time to rest. (Player development director Chris Getz) has a tough task with a kid like Nick to convince on those types of things."

Such a cautious approach applies double for the slate of college starters (Konnor Pilkington in the third round, Jonathan Stiever in the fifth and Codi Heuer in the sixth) the White Sox grabbed in the first 10 rounds. Of the three, Heuer's 38 professional innings were the most this season, Pilkington's 14 were the fewest after a deep College World Series run for Mississippi State, but none of them were allowed more than three innings per outing as they were eased in.

"Those are kind of almost irrelevant," Hostetler said. "That's the one thing hard from a player development standpoint when you draft some of these starters that have thrown 100 innings already: Where do you push? Where do you keep going? Where do you stop? The kid kinda tells you. They can kinda tell you everything you need to know from their stuff, their performance and whatnot and our guys do a great job of monitoring that. You almost have to look at those guys as starters like these are literally meaningless innings from the standpoint of production and numbers. It's more just acclimation innings."

As a product of the 2016 draft, reliever Ian Hamilton holds a special place as the first player selected during Hostetler's reign as White Sox scouting director to make it to the majors. But as an undersized right-hander in college who struggled through a rough junior season at Washington State as he tried to transition to starting, he's also a big draft win as an 11th-rounder who has not only advanced to the highest level, but is showing plenty of potential to stick long-term.

"This is going to sound a little bit crazy," Hostetler said. "Obviously we can't miss on our first-round picks, our second-round picks, we've got to get the majority of those right and we've got to hit a high percentage and we know that, we understand that and from sitting in this chair I know I have to get those right. But to see a guy like Ian Hamilton, the process that we put in to evaluating him from our looks in the Cape Cod League, seeing him pitch in the Cape Cod All-Star Game as a reliever, seeing the power that he can bring, goes to Washington State and (scouts) Robbie Cummings and Derek Valenzuela both spending time up there and seeing him up there and understanding what we were looking at, looking outside the box and not just walking in on a 5-11, 6-foot right-handed pitcher who is a max effort guy and he's struggling a bit, and just walking away. They stuck with him, they stuck with the summer evaluations. It's a feather in the cap of those two guys."

Hostetler said the White Sox knew around the eighth round of the 2016 draft that Hamilton was going to be their priority at the start of the third day if he hung around. After sweating out three more rounds, they were able to nab him, and now Hostetler is hoping they saved Hahn some budget room that he would have otherwise had to throw at a lockdown reliever when the time comes to build a contender.

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